

# workers power

**INSIDE**

Rank and file lead  
the fightback  
page 4&5

For Internationalism, Socialism and Workers' Revolution

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## March for Justice

12.30pm 7 October  
Hackney Downs  
London



For Joy Gardner, Brian Douglas,  
Stephen Lawrence, Shiji Lapite,  
Winston Silcott, Oliver Campbell  
and all victims of state racism  
Details 0181 533 4533

## 5 million on poverty pay



# We need a national minimum wage!

Lobby TUC  
Brighton  
12 September

MORE THAN a third of all British workers earn wages of less than £5.88 an hour. This leaves them living below the decency threshold. This is not a figure invented by wild-eyed revolutionaries, but agreed by the bureaucrats of the European Union.

Low pay reduces millions to desperation. It leaves homes sparsely furnished, kids ill-fed and ill-clad, workers exhausted and without the chance of a decent holiday or entertainment. Yet a simple law could abolish it overnight.

So why won't Tony Blair set a figure for a national minimum wage?

Just that question will dominate debate at this autumn's TUC and Labour Party conferences. Two unions—the FBU, representing the firefighters, and the UCATT building workers' union—are pressing for the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



# Anti-racism

# Unite the struggles

**O**PERATION EAGLE Eye, the Metropolitan Police "crackdown" on street theft, is under way. Right from the start the police left no doubt that it was aimed mainly against black youth. The campaign followed hot on the heels of police chief Paul Condon's widely publicised claim that black teenagers were responsible for most "muggings" in the capital.

He tried to cloak his racist slur with a nauseating show of liberal concern. He recognised that "mugging" is caused by unemployment and school exclusions. Come and talk it over, he said to the "community leaders". Anyway, it will all be done with cameras and surveillance, he assured them.

Why single out black youth? Why no mention of crimes like burglary, that are mainly carried out by white men, or fraud, which is the preserve of middle-class white professionals?

Now, after four weeks of Eagle Eye, the truth is out. Police monitoring groups in Newham, Greenwich and Brixton have reported an "alarming and dramatic" increase in the "stop and search" of black youth, with the inevitable increase in racist abuse and police harassment on the streets.

According to the Newham Monitoring Project:

"In the last four weeks the number of people coming in and complaining about aggressive police behaviour has tripled. We have had 50 or 60 young black men saying officers have been much more aggressive, racist and violent."

Make no mistake—Eagle Eye will lead directly to further cases of beatings and killings by racist police.

Brian Douglas, the latest fatality resulting from stop-and-search, was buried last month. Brian died after a violent blow to the head from a US-style police baton in the course of his arrest in Clapham, South London on 3 May. Despite obvious facial paralysis he was left in a cell for 15 hours without medical treatment, then dumped at the casualty unit of St Thomas's Hospital by police who told nurses he was drunk.

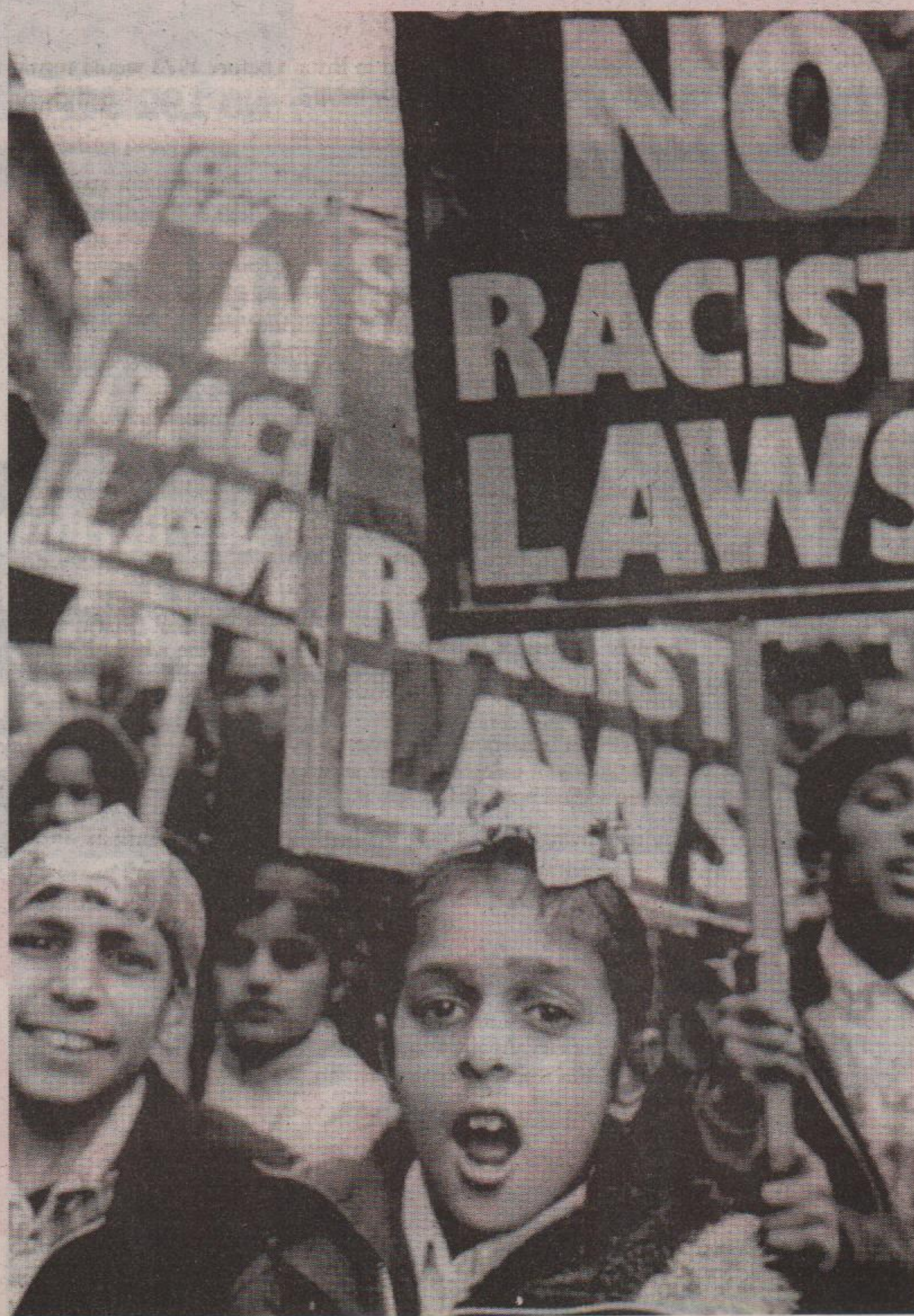
He went into a coma, and died on 8 May. The Justice for Brian Douglas Campaign is awaiting a decision from the Police Complaints Authority as to whether Brian's killers—PCs Harrison and Tuffey—will be charged. So far they have not even been suspended.

The notorious case of Joy Gardner shows that even if legal action is brought against the killers, justice is far from guaranteed. The three officers charged with Joy's murder were acquitted after a legal farce, leaving Joy's relatives and friends with no means of bringing her killers to justice.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen whether the private prosecution brought by the family of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager murdered by racist youths, will be any more successful. The public prosecutor has already turned down attempts to try the youths suspected of Stephen's killing, because of "lack of evidence".

So how can this be stopped?

Last month a national demonstration in London demanded an end to police harassment of black youth and justice for all the victims of police racism. The march



included delegations from the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, the Free Satpal Ram Campaign, the Mark Harris Truth and Justice Campaign, as well as those campaigning for justice for Joy Gardner and Brian Douglas.

Though angry and militant, this was a small demo, reflecting nowhere near the scale of anger in black communities, or opposition to racism across the Labour movement. Sadly, one of the main reasons for this was that the organisers—the Socialist Workers Party—made no effort to co-ordinate the planning and building of the march with the many other campaigns and groups around the country. Activists from the Justice for Brian Douglas Campaign were astonished when posters went up declaring that they were sponsoring the march—the campaign had not even been approached by the time all the decisions had been made.

If this was how the march was built for around the country, then perhaps the low turnout was unsurprising. If problems such as these are to be avoided in future, a more responsible approach is needed to ensure the greatest possible unity and co-ordination between all those fighting racism.

Now two further demonstrations have

been called. The first, on 7 October, has been organised by a coalition of anti-racist campaigns including many of those listed above. The second, on 28 October in

Manchester, has been called by the TUC.

To co-ordinate the 7 October demonstration an ad-hoc committee has been set up. Workers Power members and supporters will be campaigning for trade unions, community organisations and local campaigns to sponsor the demonstration and build for the largest possible turnout on the day.

But we now need to go a step further. The time has come to transform the situation in the anti-racist movement.

Many different local campaigns, each spending weeks or months learning the lessons already learned in other areas and struggling for finances, will not, on their own, be able to mount a sustained national challenge to state racism. Neither will an uncoordinated series of marches and rallies.

This is not to criticise the tireless work of these campaigns, whether they be against deportation, police harassment, or the murder and imprisonment of black youth. Nor is it to decry the idea of marches and rallies every time a major act of police racism requires it.

But to keep the police in fear of the immediate and militant response they can expect to their racist crimes, to wake up the workers' movement and to mobilise communities under attack for self-defence, we need *unity in action* on a national scale.

We desperately need a national campaign to co-ordinate the struggles of local anti-racist groups and to broaden them onto the national terrain. Unfortunately, what is on offer from the reformist leaders and "race relations" professionals is not enough. The Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), a reformist talking shop, has fallen apart in bickering and disarray. Its replacement, the National Assembly Against Racism, suffers from all of the defects of ARA.

It can book a committee room in the House of Commons and guarantee the signatures of Labour MPs on worthy anti-racist statements. But it cannot mobilise the community or the wider labour movement to actively fight racism.

We do not need an organisation like this. We need a mass campaign that can co-or-

dinate day to day struggles against state racism, without being reliant on state funding.

For this reason Workers Power is arguing for the ad hoc committee, set up to build the 7 October demonstration, to issue the call for an anti-racist conference with the goal of uniting in one national organisation all campaigns committed to the struggle against state racism.

Such a conference should be the opposite of a talking shop—it should establish a united national campaign committed to action against the main aspects of state racism.

## Campaign

A campaign of this type could raise money from the labour movement and sympathisers up and down the country, and with it establish strong national and local centres for monitoring every instance of harassment of black people by the police, Home Office and employers, providing legal and practical campaigning support to victims and families.

It could fight for an end to operations such as Eagle Eye, for the prosecution and dismissal of police who have carried out racist attacks and murders, for the disarming of the police and the dissolution of their thuggish "riot" and instant response units.

It could build on widespread opposition to the Criminal Justice Act to press for the abolition of all repressive and racist legislation.

It could fight for the closure of Campsfield and all Britain's barbaric detention centres for immigrants, an end to all deportations and opposition to Tory attempts to strengthen laws against asylum seekers still further. It could publicise the cases of all black people framed up and wrongly convicted by the racist courts, and set about building local patrols to defend ourselves against racist attacks—wherever they come from.

That way we can break out of the cycle of division and confusion, and build a movement capable of mounting a challenge to the horrific racism of the British state. ■

## Oliver Campbell is innocent!

**O**LIVER CAMPBELL is a victim of a classic police frame-up. Sentenced to life for murder back in December 1991, he has now been in prison for 5 years.

The facts surrounding his case make terrifying reading.

On 22 July 1990 two men attempted to rob an off-licence in Hackney, during which a shopkeeper was shot dead. Witnesses all described the killer as between 5'8" and 5'11". A baseball cap was found near the scene, which witnesses said was identical to that worn by one of the attackers.

Oliver was arrested after an acquaintance told the police that he had bought a similar cap. Despite the fact that Oliver did not fit the description given by witnesses—he is 6'4", which surely would

have been noticed—he was arrested for the crime.

Oliver has severe learning difficulties and has been described by a psychologist as being very susceptible to pressure. The police—eager to "solve" the murder investigation—conducted a series of interviews with him, putting him under great duress, on each occasion without a solicitor being present. This finally culminated in a "confession". Oliver's co-defendant admitted being involved and made mention of someone else as being his accomplice, but this was discounted by the police without even investigating it.

At the trial the judge stretched the law beyond all recognition by ruling that admitting the confession as evidence would not have an adverse effect on the fairness of the proceedings. What is more, a fo-

rensic expert reported that the hair found in the baseball cap at the scene of the crime was not Oliver's but belonged to someone else.

Despite all this, Oliver was found guilty. But he is still protesting his innocence and still fighting for justice.

The Justice for Oliver Campbell Campaign is demanding an immediate review of the case, and will be joining the March for Justice on 7 October.

Get your union or organisation to back the campaign.

Write to:  
Justice for Oliver Campbell Campaign,  
PO Box 6580, London E6 3TL.  
Write to Oliver at the following address  
Oliver Campbell MV3344,  
HMP Wormwood Scrubs,  
Du Cane Rd, London W12 0AE.

## We need a national minimum wage!

### CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

TUC to campaign for £4.15 an hour. But Blair and TUC general secretary John Monks are determined to stop them. They've argued vehemently against setting any figure.

Monks argues that fixing a figure would damage Labour's election chances. But this is absolute rubbish. As FBU leader Ken Cameron has pointed out, this would be "a vote winner, both because of the disgrace of low pay and executive greed, and because it is clearly understood by the majority of people."

Monks says, "We cannot say to the La-

bour government you must do something—we are not in that kind of a relationship." Why then do the unions continue to provide most of the Labour Party's funds if it can't ask a Labour government to do anything for them?

A national minimum wage cannot be imposed simply by unions acting against their respective employers—it needs an act of parliament to outlaw low pay. Workers should demand that Labour actually do something for us for a change.

Blair and Monks insist that fixing a figure should be left until after the election when a Low Pay Commission made up of well-paid union officials and multi-millionaire

bosses will decide how much ordinary workers can be expected to live on. The very people responsible for paying poverty wages will be able to block any effective law against them.

The argument for a minimum wage is simply that millions can't afford to live on less, while millionaires award themselves fat salaries.

Any employer who pleads poverty or bankruptcy as a reason for avoiding the legal minimum should be forced to open their books to inspection by the workers and their unions. Any company that is indeed bankrupt should be nationalised without compensation, its wages bill funded

by taxing the profits of the super-rich.

That way we will not only abolish poverty wages, but take a step towards an economy owned and controlled by the working class majority rather than the exploiters and parasites that monopolise wealth today.

Workers should back all attempts to force the TUC and Labour to campaign for a fixed sum.

TUC congress managers have already made it clear that they will be working overtime to keep the proposal for £4.15 off the agenda. Union members should do everything possible to stop them. We need to tie the unions and Labour Party to the

highest possible figure.

While £4.15 is better than no figure at all, it is still a poverty wage, nearly £2 below the decency threshold. Socialists should support all attempts to pin the labour movement leaders to this figure, but there is no reason why workers should settle for poverty wages.

There is no necessity for the minimum to be fixed at only half of the average industrial wage. The currently average hourly wage is £8 for a male industrial worker doing a 40-hour week. No-one should earn less than this. All workers should be pushing for a legally guaranteed minimum of £8 an hour. ■





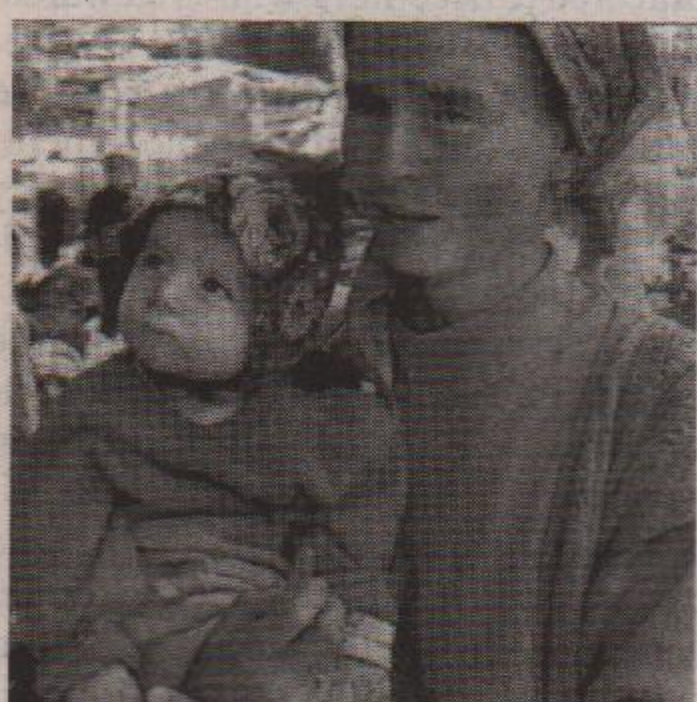
**Labour and the left**

Tony Blair's ruthless purge of any opposition and junking of established policies has demoralised the left of his party. Many who for decades refused to consider life outside the Labour Party are disoriented. Colin Lloyd and Jeremy Dewar weigh up their options—pages 8/9



**Engels: materialism and dialectics**

In the last of a series of articles commemorating the centenary of Engels' death, Richard Brenner refutes the charge that Engels imported an alien, mechanical materialism into Marxism and unmasks the motives of his critics—page 6



**A fake internationalism**

It is pretty obvious to outsiders that many SWP members are uncomfortable with their leaders' refusal to back the Bosnians' fight against annihilation. Paul Morris challenges the arguments of *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Review* head on—page 14

**In the next issue**

Workers Power 193, out in October, includes:  
• Militant Islam; a force for progress or reaction?  
• A to Z of Marxism: E is for Exploitation  
• Labour Party conference—will anyone fight Blair?



**Krajina, Bosnia**

**Imperialists reward ethnic cleansing**

**C**ROATIAN PRESIDENT Franjo Tudjman launched Operation Storm in early August to occupy the entire Serb Republic of Krajina (RSK). As a result over 120,000 Serb refugees have fled into Serb-held northern Bosnia and beyond.

Since the Krajina Serbs' national chauvinist government under Milan Martić was engaged in joint actions with the Bosnian Serb Republic to destroy the Bosnian Muslim Bihac enclave, the plight of the Serb refugees drew little international protest. Indeed the invasion has been widely hailed by US and European politicians as laying the basis of a settlement.

Workers should reject this crass indifference to the suffering of the Krajina Serbs. We should reject the ideas of "national guilt" and "reactionary peoples". The mass of the rural and urban population of Krajina have had no say in, let alone control over, their leadership's criminal actions. In Knin, as in Pale, a corrupt military-police dictatorship reigned.

The perpetration of the biggest act of ethnic cleansing since 1992-1993 will simply add another brutal element of national

oppression to the situation in former Yugoslavia.

Workers must oppose all acts of forced population transfer, as well as the forcible retention of majority populations of entire regions within states to which they do not wish to belong.

Of course, the political leadership of the RSK under Milan Martić are not innocent victims. In 1990-91, with the aid of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and the "Yugoslav National Army", they drove over 200,000 Croats out of the Krajina. By the bombardment of the coastal roads and ports, by their blockade of the road and rail system linking Croatia proper to the Dalmatian coastal regions, they brought Croatia to the verge of disintegration as a state.

In doing so they were denying the Croats their right to self-determination. They pushed forward and occupied territory only inhabited by a minority of Serbs before 1990. They have joined in the assault on the hard-pressed Bosnian Muslims in the Bihac enclave.

The RSK leadership's objective was and is to create a Greater Serbia no matter what

the cost in terms of displacing their Croat and Muslim brothers and sisters.

Clearly, socialists cannot support such war aims. That is why in the war between the RSK and Croatia, workers could not take sides.

But revolutionaries can and do support the right to self-defence of all ethnic communities and peoples against pogroms and ethnic cleansing, even in the midst of reactionary wars.

*Workers Power* fully supported the right of the Serb communities of the Krajina to defend themselves against the ethnic cleansing which was a hypocritically concealed objective of the Croatian offensive. This might have meant a military bloc with RSK force to prevent Serbs being driven from homes and towns they had occupied for hundreds of years. But Martić sounded the retreat on Radio Knin and the RSK army led the exodus.

This does not mean that we supported the RSK and its government during the short-lived war with Croatia. The state they established in 1991 was founded on the driving out of thousands of Croats from the Krajina.

The geographical, economic and ethnic composition of both the RSK and Croatia always made complete separation a reactionary utopia. Attempting to realise this has embroiled the Krajina Serbs thoroughly in the Bosnian conflict and in the project of a Great Serb state.

Only a renewed federal system, based on the freely given consent of the various nationalities and ethnic groups, or on a genuine and full autonomy for all minorities, can bring an end to the terrible conflict.

Only a Socialist Federation of the Balkans will allow for the restoration of full economic links which can provide a decent existence for all nationalities and ethnic groups.

- Stop the Ethnic Cleansing in Krajina and in Serb-held Northern Bosnia!
- Withdraw the Croat army and militia from the former Serb majority areas!
- All refugees, Serbs, Croats and ethnic Muslims must have the right to return to their homes!
- For a Socialist United States of the Balkans!

**“**WHILE LOSING the enclaves has been unfortunate for Bosnia, it's been great for us" an unnamed White House official told the *New York Times* last month.

These words signal yet another attempt to found a reactionary peace on the mass graves of the victims of ethnic cleansing.

After the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa, and the reported mass murder of over 2,500 prisoners of war, the London Conference promised to "draw the line" at Gorazde—the biggest enclave, with 65,000 potential victims.

Any attack on Gorazde, John Major threatened, would be met with air strikes by NATO.

Anybody who still retains the illusion that the UN can play a progressive role in Bosnia should look at the actions that have followed these words.

The only people the British "defenders" of Gorazde managed to shoot were Bosnian soldiers, foraging for desperately needed food and ammunition. Then they left, giving the Serb three-fingered salute as they drove through surrounding Serb militia checkpoints.

The threat of airstrikes to defend Gorazde, whether real or a cynical cover, is only part of an imperialist plan to impose defeat and ethnic partition on multi-ethnic Bosnia as a whole.

On the heels of Croatia's victory in Krajina, the USA has been touting a new peace plan. According to *Balkan Watch*:

"Under the proposal Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia would grant diplomatic recognition to each other. The plan would also reportedly grant the Serbs more contested territory than last year's take-it-or-leave-it Contact Group offer, by expand-

ing the geographical links between Serbia and Serb-held regions of Bosnia and Croatia. It would also cede all three of Bosnia's eastern enclaves to Serbian control."

The plan is backed by the threat of force against the Bosnian Serbs should they, as with the Contact Group Plan, reject it in favour of a continued war.

What the UN/NATO is doing in Bosnia is not peacekeeping. It is enforcing the ethnic carve-up of a whole region.

Again *Balkan Watch* writes:

"Long term provisions of the plan reportedly would allow Croat and Serb controlled regions of Bosnia to federate with Croatia and Serbia respectively."

Thus, behind closed doors, using the carrot and the stick, Bosnia is being dismembered. Military aggression and ethnic cleansing are being rewarded with the

title deeds to the towns and cities captured.

Two new nationalist regional powers are being shored up to guarantee imperialist order in the Balkans.

We have opposed the UN presence from day one. We warned the advocates of UN intervention that any imperialist military intervention can only lead to the imposition of a reactionary settlement. Now it is happening.

The workers' movement must take sides with Bosnia. We must demand the immediate withdrawal of all UN troops and the lifting of the arms embargo so the Bosnians can defend themselves. We need massive working class solidarity with the Muslims and multi-ethnic communities of Bosnia. We are their only progressive and trustworthy allies, and time is running out. ■

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## London Underground Extend the action!

**A**S WE go to press, the RMT union leadership appeared to be sticking to its call for two 24-hour strikes against London Underground Limited (LUL). RMT assistant general secretary, Bob Crow, has announced a mass meeting for Thursday, 31 August.

The first walk-out on Friday, 25 August gave LUL bosses a nasty shock. Action by 200 strategically-placed RMT drivers and thousands of other signalling, maintenance and station staff forced them to close 15 stations and cancel more than 100 trains in the morning rush hour. On the Victoria Line, trains ran without overnight inspections. At one Central Line signal box, an unqualified operator was pressed into duty.

Though the action did not totally paralyse the network, it did make a mockery of LUL's claims to be operating a 70% service.

So far, management has responded to the strike by dropping hints that it is prepared to go to the conciliation service, ACAS, to cobble together a deal. The RMT has not yet responded but activists need to be alert to the possibility of a sell-out behind closed doors.

Unfortunately, the RMT membership is now fighting on its own for a decent pay rise and job security in the face of plans for piecemeal privatisation.

The leadership of ASLEF, which represents the majority of tube drivers, called off its planned strike, that was supposed to coincide with the RMT's, only 28 hours before it was due to start. The union's executive is now pushing for its members to vote in favour of a deal that offers a 3% basic pay rise. This is effectively a pay cut with inflation running at 3.5%.

The supposed sweetener for ASLEF members is a 90-minute cut in the basic working week to 37 hours. Union officials claim that this tops up the value of the deal to 5.8%. Management are claiming victory as well – and with good reason. In exchange for the hours cut, management will be able to slash rest days and introduce part-time working. There is a flimsy pledge from management that part-timers will be on the same rates of pay as other staff. But the LUL offer looks remarkably similar to the one imposed by ASLEF general secretary, Lew Adams, on drivers at British Rail – after they had clearly rejected it in a postal ballot on a turn-out of 73%.

The ASLEF bureaucracy has cynically used overwhelming "yes" votes in strike ballots on both the tube and British Rail as bargaining chips to be casually thrown away at the negotiating table. Even though the Tories' rail privatisation plans are currently in disarray, the ASLEF leadership squandered an opportunity to stop them once and for all. In effect, Lew Adams has accepted the principle of privatisation and with it the end of national bargaining on pay and conditions.

Despite the impact of the RMT's 25 August strike, a strategy based on a series of one-day actions is extremely unlikely to budge management. But, at present, this is all the RMT leadership has to offer. RMT activists on the tube must act swiftly to take control of the dispute from the union bureaucracy. An elected strike committee, accountable to mass meetings, is an urgent necessity. It needs to press for the building of solid picket lines that could convince ASLEF drivers not to cross, while also fighting to up the stakes through all-out, indefinite strike action until LUL's bosses concede the full 6% claim with no strings attached.

Above all, militants on both the tube and rail must begin to forge unity among activists and many angry members in both the RMT and ASLEF. Cross-union rank and file committees are the only answer to the bureaucratic bungling and betrayals of the summer. ■

**LOBBY THE TUC**  
Tuesday 12 September  
For a national minimum wage!  
Details: 0114 267 0706



## Sheffield library strike

# Lessons of a landmark victory

**E**IGHT WEEKS after going on an all-out, indefinite strike, Sheffield library workers defeated the Labour-controlled city council's attack on their pay and conditions.

The 350 strikers, most of them low-paid women, began their action on 5 June in protest at the council's refusal to commit itself to upholding a national agreement on pay rates for weekend and overtime working.

The council was effectively trying to introduce local pay through the back door, by cutting the rate for working unsocial hours. The 78% "yes" vote and the virtual absence of any scabbing on the strike indicated the strength of feeling provoked by the council's attack.

After an eight-week strike and the threat of another 80 workers from the leisure department joining the action, the council caved in and agreed to retain the existing package of nationally-negotiated terms and conditions.

The strike had already closed virtually all the libraries in what is probably Britain's largest local library service. The possibility of another strike shutting six leisure centres in what the council itself has declared the "UK city of sport" was obviously too much for councillors to stomach.

The library workers' strike and eventual victory have even greater significance because in 1992 and 1993 the city council, and the then Nalگو branch leadership, had collaborated to make ordinary council workers pay for cuts imposed by central government. First, the local union bureaucracy went along with the loss of car allow-

ances, allowing the council to break a national agreement. The following year the council imposed a pay cut on its employees, claiming this was the "only solution to the budget crisis".

The effect of these needless defeats was a wave of demoralisation throughout the branch as attendance slumped at both general meetings and the branch executive committee. Activists were not immune as fewer and fewer people were prepared to act as shop stewards.

Against this background, the library

**"The victory was tremendous—but we have to build on that success to ensure that when the next round of cuts is threatened we can get all council workers out and stop the council making us pay for their crisis."**

strike and eventual victory proved that decisive action in defence of pay and conditions can win. The council must now see that if it persists in trying to make the workforce pay for its decision to impose the Tory cuts it can expect a fight.

The active participation of so many rank and file library strikers was especially inspiring. Previously passive union members were involved in addressing meetings, rallies and union conferences up and down the country, along with organising of picket rotas, demonstrations and the writing of leaflets. The strikers also exercised a high degree of democratic control through twice-weekly mass meetings to discuss the strike's progress, while an elected strike committee met daily.

Though the strike was a defence of library workers' pay and conditions, other sections of the Sheffield council workforce walked off the job to join lobbies of the council. Among them were GMB members in the leisure department, who shut down the Ponds Forge centre to join an afternoon protest by strikers. Even in the local Labour Parties, there was active support for the fight, with a third of the ward parties taking a stand against the council.

While strikers themselves collected more than 20,000 signatures on petitions

and Worcester is threatening its workforce with a cut in pay for weekend working. Those who don't accept, risk dismissal.

Sheffield Council is still threatening to close six branch libraries. The library workers have already started the campaign against this. Next year's council budget will be no better than the last few: jobs, services, pay and conditions will all be in the firing line.

The increased participation of the library workers in the union and in the fightback against cuts must not be allowed to dissipate. Already six library workers have volunteered to become new shop stewards. A way of maintaining rank and file involvement of all the library workers must be found: we need a rank and file movement.

The lessons must be learned. One day strikes do not defeat cuts. All out indefinite strike action does.

There were dangers in leaving the strike isolated in one department. Other departments were facing attacks of their own in this period.

Following successful ballots in those departments the council backed down immediately, before they could come out on strike. If the rest of the council workforce had come out, the strike would have been won far sooner.

In many departments, Unison is not the only union. Cross-union action should have been fought for and organised.

The victory of the library strikers was tremendous—but we have to build on that success to ensure that when the next round of cuts is threatened we can get all council workers out and stop the council making us pay for their crisis. ■

and raised some £70,000, material support from their national union, Unison, was patchy.

Unison was only prepared to pay £62.50 a week strike pay, not the full take-home pay that the strikers were asking for. Though Unison Conference donated £10,000 to the strike fund, another £25,000 was only forthcoming after strikers lobbied Unison HQ.

The strikers were fighting to defend a national agreement against a council with a reputation for pioneering attacks on national terms and conditions. If the strikers had lost, it would have opened the floodgates for other councils to try to break the agreement.

As it is, the Lib/Lab council in Hereford

## FBU: step up Merseyside strikes!

**T**HE MEDIA has pointed the finger of blame at members of the Merseyside FBU for the tragic death of a 24 year-old student in a blaze in Liverpool on 24 August. But the real responsibility lies squarely with chief fire officer Andrew Best for this, and any other, loss of life during the present dispute between the FBU and the Labour-controlled fire authority.

To date, Merseyside firefighters have staged a series of four nine-hour strikes since 18 August in an effort to stop management cutting another 20 jobs and ex-

tending the already crippling hours worked by the remaining crews. The regional authority has axed 100 posts in the past five years.

Chief Best's response has been to try and break the strike. For the first time since the FBU's national pay battle in 1977, the army's Green Goddesses are back on the streets. An authority that pleads lack of money as its pretext for cutting jobs is quite prepared to spend £230,000 on preparations for the army operation and some £48,000 for each day the Green Goddesses are in use.

Other fire authorities in Britain are keeping a close eye on this dispute, which they see as a test case. Defeat for the FBU on Merseyside would send a clear signal to other employers to launch an all-out attack on staffing levels and firefighters' hard-won terms and conditions.

Many FBU members recognise what is at stake in this fight, as is shown by the 7,000-strong march of FBU members from around the country in Liverpool at the start of strike action.

While management may be on the brink of some concessions, with talk of going to

ACAS for renewed negotiations, Merseyside FBU members should not back down from further action in the face of the media's cynical campaign about public safety. The best way of ensuring a swift and successful conclusion to the dispute – and of lessening the risk to ordinary people – is to escalate from the current protest strikes to indefinite action as soon as possible.

Messages of support to: Merseyside FBU, c/o 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool, L3. Tel.: 0151 709 2646. Fax: 0151 709 6737. ■



# UCH/Middlesex Strike to reinstate Dave Carr!

**O**VER 900 HEALTH workers at the UCH/Middlesex Hospital Trust are set to begin indefinite strike action this month. They are fighting the victimisation of Dave Carr, their Unison branch chair, who was summarily sacked for "gross misconduct" after an argument with a manager.

The Trust management have picked this fight in the middle of a prolonged dispute over "multi-skilling". Up to 400 domestics and porters are threatened with privatisation and redundancy in a scheme which will force porters, clerical and domestic staff to do each others' jobs.

In the background is the threat of another 600 redundancies, and the axing of 100 beds, when the Tories' plans to merge the two central London hospitals are announced.

Dave was involved in a heated argument with management in his role as a Unison negotiator.

As he told a 200 strong public meeting in Camden, on 24 August:

"In April, when talks over multi-skilling broke down at ACAS, I was coming back into the hospital with the Branch Secretary to report back when we met a group of domestics, quite angry, remonstrating with their manager.

Myself and the Branch Secretary got involved and all that ensued was an argument. There were no threats, no verbal abuse, no swearing and no violence. I have had arguments like this many times before and since.

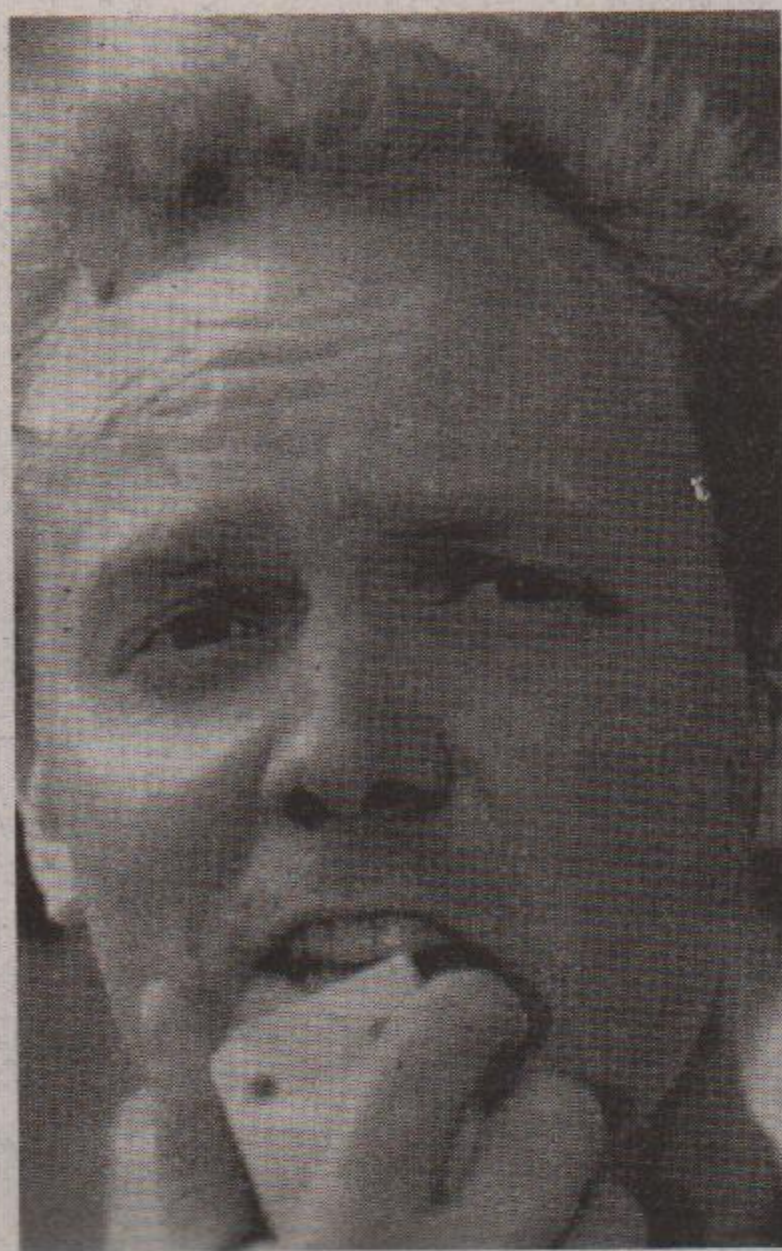
Nothing was said to me at the time about disciplinary action. Two months later I was told I would face a disciplinary. After another two months I attended a hearing.

The management's correspondence doesn't mention that the possible outcome could be dismissal. Nor was this mentioned at the hearing.

Ten days later I was summarily dismissed for "gross misconduct". I was told to leave the premises immediately and not return.

No one has been sacked at this hospital without first being suspended. But throughout this time I was allowed to go to work and carry out my union duties. It is clear that I have not been sacked for "gross misconduct". I have been sacked for my union activities."

The UCH/Middlesex is one of the strongest health branches in Unison, and one of the few workplaces where porters and domestics have not been privatised.



Don't let them sack this nurse!

In 1993 workers at UCH fought a successful struggle against ward closures, forcing an extra £1.8 million out of the government.

This kind of deeply-rooted, militant organisation should serve as a model for other Unison branches. The blatant nature of Dave's victimisation has, for once, stirred the Unison hierarchy into action.

They have given the go-ahead for a ballot for an indefinite strike, with an official recommendation to vote "yes", and have so far put the union's resources right behind the branch activists.

Support has been forthcoming already from the TUC, the London regions of Unison and the FBU and the national executive of the RMT. Once the strike begins UCH/Middlesex has the potential to strike a blow not just for Dave Carr but

for workers across the entire NHS and beyond.

There should be massive solidarity, from day one. Official strike pay of £62.50 a week must be topped up with collections and donations from across the trade union movement. Support committees must be formed amongst the communities served by UCH/Middlesex. Best of all there should be solidarity action from other workers.

Above all, the strike must be made to hit management. Emergency cover should be just that: a level of cover to deal with emergencies only. As one Unison steward told *Workers Power*:

"In general, for nurses, that means night shift levels plus one. But on some wards this is already what they are down to with regular staff. The rest are made up from agencies. As for the non-nursing and medical services, Unison should cut them back to the minimum. It is the responsibility of managers to provide the service. If they want corridors cleaned, they will have to clean them."

As in the 1993 fight against closure at UCH, workers need to be prepared to impose workers' control over emergency cover levels, and walk out altogether if management starts playing games.

Any attempt to move patients out, or use the strike to shut parts of the hospital, should be met with an occupation.

And the fight to save Dave Carr must be used to strengthen the fight against the management's multi-skilling offensive.

Across Unison, not only in the NHS but the entire public and privatised sectors, rank and file workers will see the UCH/Middlesex strike as a rallying point. That is why it is vital to deliver a big vote for strike action in the ballot.

And once on strike UCH/Middlesex should become the focal point for a rank and file initiative to start the fightback across London and across the country. ■

## What you can do:

- Write a protest letter to the Trust Chairman, Sir Ronald Mason, at 140 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 9LN (Fax 0171 380 9728)
- Support the picket line
- Send donations and messages of support to UCH Unison c/o Middlesex Hospital, Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AA (Petitions available).

## Newham

# Building Bosnia solidarity

by G.R. McColl

**T**HE ONE-time hero of Britain's reformist left, Tony Benn, has lined up with apologists for genocidal Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic in the name of "anti-imperialism". Meanwhile, the Socialist Workers Party and Militant Labour have shamefully abstained from the battle to defend the ethnic-Muslims and the range of peoples dedicated to the defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Others on the left – who should know better – have joined the chorus of those demanding that imperialism intervene on the Bosnian side. At a national level, sectarian manoeuvres and anti-democratic practices have beset the attempts to create a single, united Bosnian solidarity movement.

Amid this generally gloomy picture,

there are some hopeful signs, however. In the East London borough of Newham, for instance, a determined group of campaigners has established a Newham Aid for Bosnia group.

At present its ranks consist of supporters of *Workers Power*, the *Workers Revolutionary Party (Workers Press)* and *Socialist Outlook*, alongside non-aligned individuals and activists around the Newham Monitoring Project.

The group's stated objectives include raising money for convoys carrying aid, but it is also committed to the political task of demanding the immediate lifting of the

arms embargo. The group's first leaflet specifically calls for an end to ethnic cleansing, the defence of multi-ethnic Bosnia and the right of all refugees to return.

Newham Aid for Bosnia has already launched regular Saturday morning collections at Queens Market in Newham's Green Street, will be participating in the 3 September Newham Unity Festival and plans to seek trade union and Labour Party branch support in the coming weeks. ■

Newham Aid for Bosnia  
The 382 Centre, 382 Katherine  
Road, Forest Gate, London, E7  
8NW  
0181 548 0468.



Dave Carr's case (opposite) is not unique. Reports from around the country suggest that the victimisation of union activists is rife. George, an NUJ Father of the Chapel (shop steward) looks at "unfair dismissals" and how to resist them.

## Unfair dismissal

# Stop the bosses' sacking spree

**A**MID THE recession of the early 1980s, the victimisation of leading trade union activists became almost routine. Among the casualties were Derek "Red Robbo" Robinson, long-standing Communist Party member and Convenor at Rover's giant Longbridge car plant. Alan Thornett, a key union militant at Rover's Cowley factory, lost his job in 1982 on the flimsiest charges.

By 1989, prominent T&G shop stewards in the docks faced the sack for union activities. The bosses at Tilbury in Essex dismissed five dockers' leaders as the prelude to de-recognition of the T&G. After the longest tribunal proceedings in British history – dragging on for more than two years – the five men won around £35,000 each in compensation.

The tribunal found that the employer had sacked the men for "legitimate" trade union activities, hence the unusually large award. But, of course, they didn't get their jobs back and the bosses at the port of Tilbury have continued raking in the profits with a much-reduced and casualised workforce.

In recent weeks, we have seen not only the victimisation of Dave Carr, but an attempt by Railtrack management in Manchester to sack a 19 year old signal worker and RMT activist for allegedly fiddling a 50 pence fare on his staff rail pass. A leading member of the Socialist Caucus in the CPSA has also been summarily sacked this summer. NUJ activist, Dave Wilson, recently took redundancy from the *Daily Mail* after a long-running campaign of victimisation and harassment.

Cases such as these are just the tip of the iceberg. Tens of thousands of workers get the sack with barely a word of explanation – and the majority of them do not even get the benefit of union representation. On 16 August, Labour Party employment spokesperson Ian McCartney announced the most recent official statistics on industrial tribunals. These show a dramatic rise both in the number of cases heard by tribunals and in the number of claims for unfair dismissal.

In 1989 there were over 19,000 applications for unfair dismissal, out of a total of 29,304 cases before industrial tribunals (ITs). Five years later unfair dismissal claims have more than doubled to 39,397, while the tribunal caseload as a whole nearly trebled.

Since 1989, the number of successful claims has also risen by 54% to 4,828 in 1994-95.

The increase is even more startling given that before a sacked worker can apply for an unfair dismissal hearing they must have been continuously employed by the same boss for a mini-

mum of two years. If not, you have next to no legal protection at work.

Applicants are not even eligible for legal aid. The process of moving from an initial application to an actual hearing is usually long and drawn-out so that scant savings are rapidly exhausted. The ITs have also adopted an ever narrower definition of what constitutes "unfairness".

Most importantly, a sacking that should be a cause for collective action at the workplace becomes an individual grievance removed from the workplace.

And tribunal victories are often hollow ones. The ceiling on awards is £22,480 for a maximum period of 26 years employment, though that may be increased in cases of victimisation for union activities or on the basis of racism. Most successful claimants receive compensation of less than £2,800.

Recently there was a significant change in the power of tribunals: they can now grant damages for earnings lost as a result of unfair dismissals (a power granted in by law in 1978 but only enacted in July 1994!). However this power is still to be tested and does not alter the fact that tribunals cannot get you your job back.

The massive increase in unfair dismissal cases shows the bosses see compensation as a small price to pay for getting rid of militants.

If you ultimately face no choice but the tribunal route, the official statistics also show that your chance of winning is better when you have union representation.

But the best way of defending a worker who is unfairly dismissed is to be in a position to threaten the employer with strike action.

An inspiring example came last year when Liverpool postal workers walked off the job – in total contempt of the Tories' anti-union laws – after the suspension of a workmate with a speech impediment, who lost his rag with a supervisor who had routinely mocked him. This sort of spontaneous strike is an undeniably tall order, especially in smaller, less-organised workplaces, but it gives an indication of what needs to, and can be, done.

RMT activist and London Underground train guard, Pat Sikorski, won reinstatement after a model campaign. In Sikorski's case the Tube bosses were anxious to be rid of him and at one stage even offered him nearly £50,000 to go, but the management soon backed off altogether when his fellow RMT members on the Central line showed they were prepared to strike in his defence.

The message is clear. We need to rebuild the unions at workplace level and fight every victimisation with strike action. ■

**"Tribunals cannot get you your job back"**

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX





# Engels and the revolution in human thought

As the first and most eminent of Marx's followers, Engels took responsibility for presenting their shared ideas on materialism and dialectics. In the last of our articles celebrating the centenary of Engels' death, Richard Brenner explains why the attempt to drive a wedge between the two men on these issues is politically motivated as well as just plain wrong.

**"ENGELS' MATERIALISM** was a cold, unremitting and remorseless system. Men had little impact on fashioning . . . history and nature. Rather than being the subject of history, men were basically the passive objects of unrelenting external forces".

This judgement, by "academic Marxist" Norman Levine, is typical of a whole school of thought which, since the 1960s, has tried to distinguish two different "methods" in the work of Marx and Engels.

George Lichtheim declared the rupture between Marx and Engels' thought to be total:

"The 'dialectical' materialism put forward in [Engels' books] the *Anti-Dühring* and . . . *Dialectics of Nature* has only the remotest connection with Marx's own viewpoint."

The truth is entirely different. Engels and Marx were the *joint* founders of scientific socialism. They were in fundamental agreement on all principal questions of theory, and in his later writings Engels developed Marxism and legitimately applied it to new spheres of human knowledge.

## Attacks

The most general explanation of their philosophical premises was set out in the *Anti-Dühring*, a work by Engels which appeared in 1878. This was principally written by Engels and has therefore attracted the major attacks of the anti-Engels academics. Yet Marx wrote the economic section of the book and read the entire manuscript of the work. And while Engels' philosophical work *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* was published three years after Marx' death, it was based on an early manuscript prepared by Marx and Engels in the 1840s.

To assess whether Engels was indeed a "crude", "mechanical" materialist we need first to define what is meant by *materialism*.

Many people considering political ideas for the first time are surprised to discover that Marxism describes itself as materialist, because the word is generally used to describe people who are greedy, self-centred and obsessed with petty possessions. Similarly, it can seem strange to hear for the first time that Marxism rejects *idealism*, because this word has come to mean a selfless aspiration to change the world for the better.

In fact materialism and idealism are the two fundamental schools of philosophical thought. They give directly opposite answers to the basic question of philosophy: the *relation of thinking to being*, or put another way, whether nature came before the mind, or mind before matter.

The mainstream Church theologians of the medieval world resolutely rejected materialism as a dangerous concession to atheism. The primary source of the physical universe for them was, of course, the mind of God. But by the late 16th and early 17th centuries philosophers were striving to keep pace with the surge of scientific investigation and discovery that had been unleashed by the rise of the capitalist class across Europe.

Philosophers such as Hobbes and Descartes were enthused by the ability of science to uncover the laws governing the behaviour of the physical world, and began to construct mechanical models of the

universe and of the human mind. Descartes believed that animals, and also to an extent humans, were "automata", their behaviour determined in the same way as that of machines. A later materialist, Diderot, believed that the brain operated like a wax drum, faithfully recording the imprint left by the outside world in the form of thoughts.

These were revolutionary ideas, stressing as they did the importance of scientific knowledge rather than idealist conjecture.

But mechanical materialist determinism soon ran into serious problems. The first of these was how to explain the fact that in nature, as in human society, a continual process of change and development can be observed. If human beings are simply automata, then what was the source of this constant motion and change?

In contrast, the idea that humanity is not merely a passive element responding to the influences of nature, but through work, is able to react back upon nature and change it, was central to Marx and Engels' thought. In *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Engels carefully examines the relationship between the conscious aims of individuals and the given historical circumstances in which they and the rest of society find themselves:

"Men make their own history, whatever its outcome may be, in that each person follows his own consciously desired end, and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history. . . . But, on the one hand, we have seen that the many individual wills active in history for the most part produce results quite other than those intended—often quite the opposite; that their motives, therefore, in relation to the total result are likewise of only secondary importance. . . ."

## Justice

This conclusion—that men make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing—recurs frequently in Engels and Marx' writings on the role of individuals in history. The notion that Engels regarded mankind as passive and as having little impact on fashioning history is ludicrous.

The real reason for the widespread antagonism to Engels cannot therefore be that he wrote off human action and agency ("free will"), but that he brought our ideas about how these operate back down to earth.

In particular he insisted that the motives that determine the circumstances under which individual decisions are made are in the last analysis *economic*. Hundreds of university social science lecturers allow themselves a smug smile as they condemn the "crude reductionism" involved in this economic determinism. But Marx and Engels never suggested that the economic

was the *sole* determining factor in history. In a letter to J. Bloch in 1890, Engels wrote that:

" . . . According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase."

The mechanical materialism of the 18th century was, above all, unable to solve convincingly the riddle of change; it was, however, solved by the modern materialism of Engels and Marx. The impetus towards development and change is provided not by some mystical force external to nature, but by the contradictions and conflicts inherent *within* nature and *within* human society.

In *Anti-Dühring* Engels was able to show how capitalism emerged within feudal societies in Europe. The rise of trade, cities, science, factories and mass production continued until such a point that these forces of production came into conflict with feudal social relations to such an extent that the nascent bourgeoisie was obliged to undermine and eventually to overthrow the feudal social system. Society thus develops through gradual change and sharp revolutionary breaks as a result of its own *internal contradictions*.

It is this stress on contradiction and change—dialectics—that so many of Engels' critics find intolerable. The dialectic is often decried as obscure and mystical. But Engels defines the dialectic as:

"The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away. . . ."

And in the *Anti-Dühring*, he points out how all things must be understood not in isolation one from another, but in their interconnections and their development, or to use a more modern metaphor, how the world should be seen not as a collection of still photographs, useful as that can be, but as a moving picture.

The dialectic provides us with new categories of logic by which to understand the real universe of constant development and change rather than the ensemble of abstract and fixed categories that previous logic had dealt with exclusively. Three of these are of particular importance:

*The Unity and Interpenetration of Opposites*: no single phenomenon or thing is to be regarded as fixed or static, as being absolutely identical to any other thing, or

even (as a result of its constant motion) as being identical to a fixed or static version of itself. On the contrary, the motion of each object is impelled by inner contradictions, by an antagonistic relationship between differing aspects of its composition.

Take, for example, the modern nation state. Nationalists of every type present the nation as an eternal, single, internally cohesive entity with a common interest and fate. Yet nations today are divided between differing groups of citizens—classes with antagonistic interests. The victory of the working class as a result of the unfolding of this contradiction will result in the abolition of the modern nation state and the absorption of its cultural achievements into a new global civilisation.

*The Transformation of Quantity into Quality*: Gradual changes in an object's development eventually reach a point at which the thing itself is radically transformed. Take the Labour Party, which today is being subjected to a relentless attack on its links to the trade unions and working class. Each successive change represents a quantitative weakening of its character as a part of the working class movement. At some stage, unless Blair is defeated, a qualitative transformation will take place, severing the link altogether and thereby transforming its character as a bourgeois workers' party.

*The Negation of the Negation*: In some ways this law incorporates and unites all other laws of the dialectic. In the course of the unfolding of inner contradictions, a change in the quality of an object takes place, yet the original object is not merely obliterated by a separate thing which takes its place. A more complex process occurs by which the original thing and the prevailing force that transforms it are both themselves transcended and replaced by a new higher development incorporating aspects of the character of both. Thus capitalism, as a result of its inner contradictions, can and must be overthrown by one of its key components—the working class. Yet in abolishing—negating—capitalism, the proletariat as an exploited class itself is also negated, establishing a society without classes: socialism. The negation is itself negated.

## Nature

Some critics of Engels focus on his development of the dialectic and in particular his attempts in *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature* to derive the dialectic not only from the history of human thought, but also from nature. Alfred Schmidt wrote that:

"It is only the process of knowing nature which can be dialectical, not nature itself."

The error here, quite apart from ignor-

ing the myriad instances in which dialectical processes can be observed in the natural world, consists in the old dualist practice of separating thought from nature entirely.

For the consistent materialist, thought is a reflection of nature, which the human mind orders, categorises and reflects upon. Thought is a product of the brain, which in turn is a product of an organism which has arisen in intimate connection with and as part of the rest of the natural world. If the dialectic is a useful means for understanding human thought, it must be because it accurately reflects something beyond mere thought. Otherwise we are left with idealism once more, or in Lenin's memorable phrase, with "thought without brain".

"Nature is the proof of dialectics", wrote Engels. And indeed its laws can be observed in countless natural phenomena. Many simple illustrations abound. An acorn, for example, contains within itself a contradiction between its outer form and the needs of its development.

At some point, unless accident intervenes and it is destroyed or withers away, the quantitative unfolding of its tendency to growth will shatter its outer shell, marking its qualitative transformation into a young oak. The acorn is thus negated, but its nature is not obliterated. It reappears in a higher form as the new tree produces more acorns in the process of its reproduction.

This natural source of the proofs of the dialectic did not dry up with Engels' death in 1895. The 20th century has seen more dramatic confirmations of the validity of the materialist dialectic than any other. Freud's discovery that the mind itself is divided into an antagonistic relation between the conscious rational element and basic libidinal and erotic impulses; Einstein's discovery of the interrelation between energy and matter; the discoveries of quantum physicists concerning the interaction of subatomic particles and the origins of the universe—each of these constitutes a powerful addition to the dialectical materialist conception of a universe in constant motion and change, a state that can be understood only by applying the higher laws of logic codified by dialectics.

## Proud

Thus Marxism adopts a scientific method and is proud of it. Few would dream of accusing engineering, medicine or physics of being too scientific. But countless academics conclude their lectures against Marxism with a condescending dismissal of the "19th century scientism" of Marx and Engels.

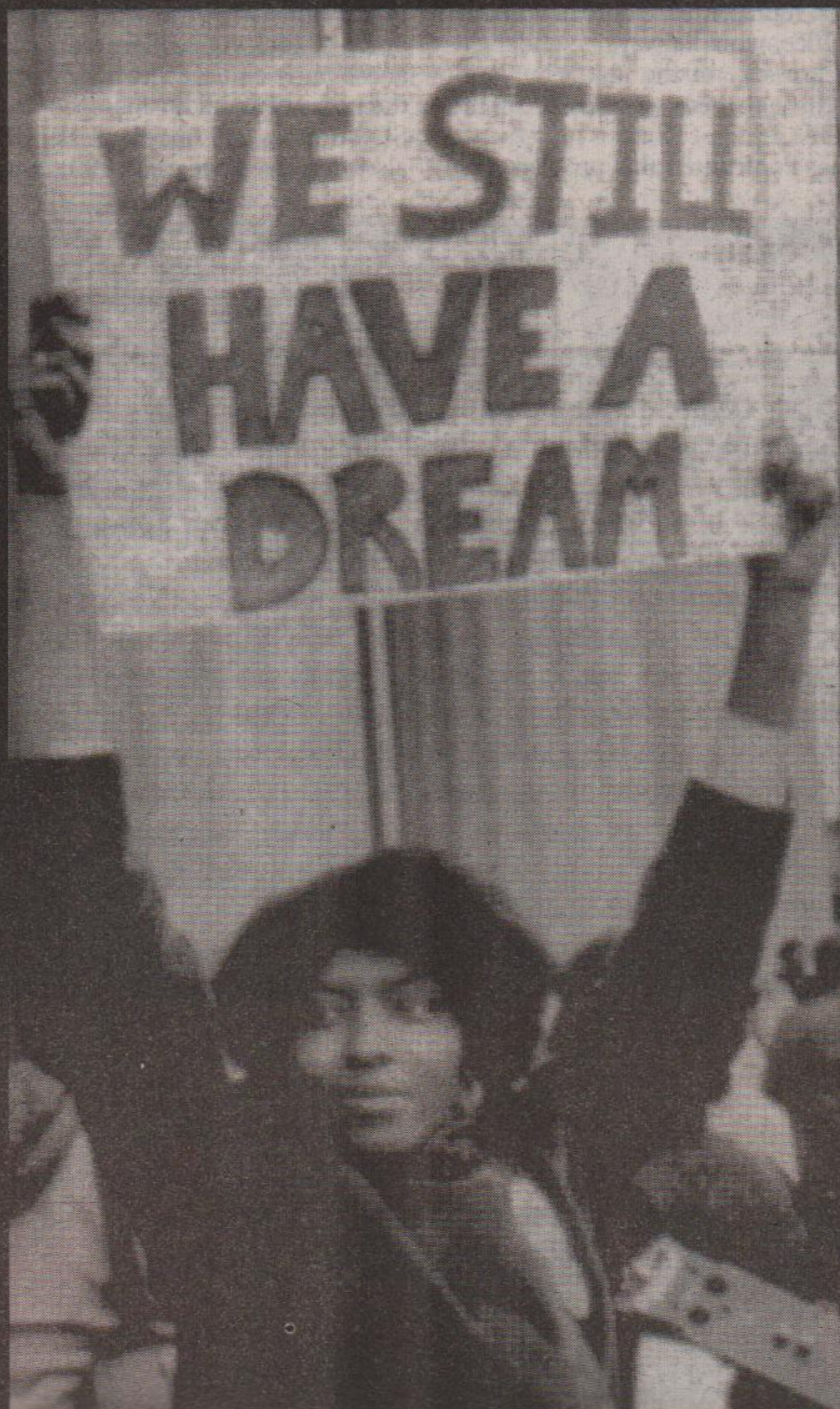
Why the hue and cry when the scientific method—the only method that has ever taken human knowledge forward—is applied to the affairs of human society?

The answer is simple: because vital interests are at stake. As Lenin later pointed out,

"If the laws of geometry affected human interests, attempts would be made to refute them." The very fact that the revolutionary working class movement stands by the highest achievements of human thought and science, whilst the bourgeoisie and their ideologues are obliged to resist them, should be for us—as it was for Frederick Engels one hundred years ago—the source of an unshakeable optimism. ■



# NEW PAMPHLET! OUT NOW!



This new pamphlet from Workers Power answers a crying need. It presents a Marxist analysis of the origins and nature of racism, together with a critique of the ideas of black nationalism, modern anti-racist theorists and the crude approaches of the main organisations of the British left.

But this is not just a commentary, it aims to make a practical contribution to the struggle against racism today. The concluding chapter of the pamphlet sets out a clear programme for a revolutionary challenge to the oppression of black people in Britain, linking the fight against racism to the struggle for a socialist society in which the material foundations of racial oppression can be uprooted.

In a climate of heightened racism from the police, employers and the government, *Socialism and Black Liberation* is already selling fast. Buy it, read it, and discuss it.

## Socialism and Black Liberation



The revolutionary struggle against racism

Available from  
Workers Power  
BCM 7750,  
London  
WC1N 3XX  
Price: £1.50  
inc P&P  
(cheques to  
Workers Power)

## Socialism and Black Liberation

### LAUNCH MEETING

7.30pm Thursday 5 October 1995  
Brixton Recreation Centre  
Station Road, Brixton, London SW9

### Speakers include

• Donald Douglas (Justice for Brian Douglas Campaign) • Workers Power

## Debunking post-modernism in art

**G**EN DOY the author of a new book, *Seeing and Consciousness*, a Marxist critique of feminism and art theory, spoke to Workers Power.

**WP: How did you come to write this book?**

GD: I'm a teacher of art history and a Marxist. I wanted to write a book about women's oppression and how this relates to the work women artists do and the way artists and photographers have represented women. I wanted to show that everything written about women or that's interested in women's issues isn't necessarily feminist. Marxists have got the method (and the desire) to look at the position of women in society and other sorts of social oppression, and lots of feminists deny this. If Marx or Engels or Lenin say anything about women, then what they say is defined as "feminist", so it is made to look as if Marxism, as Marxism, cannot say anything about issues specifically affecting women.

**WP: Don't you think Marxists have got more pressing things to do than write art history books?**

GD: Absolutely! But since my job is teaching and writing about art I may as well write a Marxist book! Why leave the whole area free for feminism and the sort of idealist theorising that passes for radical thought these days? Anyway, it's a mistake to think that Marxists are only interested in strikes, demos and going to political meetings. If the whole point of liberating the oppressed is to enable us to lead fuller and more interesting lives, free from the daily grind that workers have to endure, then the ability to enjoy culture and art will be part of most people's lives.

Also, in the here and now, it's clear that images play a significant role in shaping our perception of the world and the way issues of class, race and gender are presented and conceptualised, so it's important to look at these images from a Marxist standpoint.

**WP: Your book discusses images from the French revolution, the Paris Commune, the Soviet revolution and its later degeneration and also in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. You end with a discussion of women and post-modernist theory; what is the "post-modern" and why do you think it is important to include it?**

GD: Briefly, "post-modernist" theory argues that "modern" analyses of historical change have proved inadequate. This includes Marxism which "post-modernists" claim has failed to understand the new world order and the collapse of Stalinism. Similarly, bourgeois theories of progressive historical evolution have also failed. So, therefore, we can't have a coherent theory or narrative of history. All we can know is fragmentary "texts", "discourses" and images that are more real than material reality. These "messages" of words and images construct people as individuals.

A Marxist would obviously argue that this is all upside down. People construct texts and images, not the other way around. I wanted to show how images of women in the so-called "post-modern" period still need to be understood as rooted ultimately in the material reality of an imperialist world, which is not what post-modernist theory argues. This might all seem pretty irrelevant, but unfortunately lots of the more lively and critical students are presented with all this at college and are given no alternative materialist method to argue against it.

**WP: What are you most pleased with in the book?**

GD: The reproductions of the working class women who were arrested after the defeat of the Paris Commune. Although the photos were intended to show them as criminals and were taken in prison, the determination of the women and their complete lack of remorse for fighting against the French state is apparent in the looks on their faces as in every bit of their bodies. ■

## Who's served by science?

Pete Ashbury  
reviews

*Forbidden Science: exposing the secrets of suppressed research*  
by Richard Milton  
Fourth Estate, 1995

“ANYONE WHO switches on an electric light, turns on the television, makes a phone call, watches a film, takes a photograph, uses a computer, drives a car, or travels by aeroplane has the lone eccentric to thank, not institutional science. This should be profoundly disturbing to anyone who cares about how efficiently public money is spent on scientific research.”

While over-stating the case against publicly-funded research, Richard Milton has the justifiable aim of, "showing that there are legitimate areas of scientific research that are being neglected for non-scientific reasons, that a form of censorship is being applied to such research, and that, as a result, important scientific discoveries may be ignored, or lost entirely."

### Thesis

Milton's central thesis is that a type of "thought police" exists within the scientific establishment which suppresses research. New scientific ideas that challenge "sacred wisdom", are made taboo subjects, condemned by official bodies so that no funding is made available. The ideas often disappear, sometimes to be resurrected at a later date if they fit in more easily with scientific understanding.

He gives many good examples of this process in action across all fields of science. In 1989, for example, two electrochemists in the United States, Flashman & Pons, demonstrated the existence of "cold-fusion", that is nuclear fusion at room temperature, through an experiment

carried out in a jam jar.

Researchers had previously thought that only very high temperatures and gravitational forces could initiate the fusing of hydrogen atoms, so producing the self-sustaining reaction in which hydrogen burns as fuel. "Cold-fusion" was immediately condemned as "implausible", faked by "outsiders", with no credentials in fusion research.

The real reason for this sweeping dismissal of Flashman & Pons' experiment was not based on a serious scientific critique. Instead, the development of cold-fusion techniques would have posed a threat to established funding for scientific research. (And, of course, fusion itself doesn't provide plutonium for nuclear weapons).

To this day, the United States Department of Energy refuses to fund any research into cold-fusion, and the US Patents Office refuses all applications, despite Flashman and Pons' results being repeated in laboratories in ten other countries. Thus, a potentially cheap and clean energy source for the world is being ignored, at least by capitalist-driven science.

Take another example.

There is a clearly established link between a person's state of mind and their physical health. For example, psychological counselling can significantly increase the life span of a cancer patient. Also, the effectiveness of certain holistic "alternative" medicine such as hypnotherapy acupuncture, and acupressure has been well-proven. Milton claims that acupressure can virtually eliminate morning-sickness in pregnant women.

Such findings confront the scientific establishment with the possibility of "mind over matter" answers, and the prevention of, rather than cure or treatment of diseases. This is a serious threat since in Britain for example, the funding of medical

research bodies since the 1940s has been concentrated almost entirely on drug-based "magic bullet" cures.

The second half of the book, where Milton attempts to give a fuller explanation of the actions of the scientific establishment, is much weaker. Milton's answers, like those of most other liberal-thinking bourgeois scientists, are weak and insufficient to radically change the nature and funding of scientific research. His calls for greater end-user involvement, the appointment of a scientific ombudsman and more funding for preventative measures, while supportable, are insufficient.

What is clearly lacking is any attempt at a class analysis. Marxists, unlike liberal bourgeois scientists, understand science as an intrinsic product of the capitalist system we live in.

### Concerned

Capitalism is concerned not with meeting human need but with profits; this applies as much to scientific research as any other part of capitalism. From this perspective it is clear why many discoveries that fundamentally challenge the "official" positions of science must be condemned, since established funding could be removed and/or profits affected. Likewise, the competition between research groups for funding often leads to research being duplicated and the pressure to publish results which have not been sufficiently validated, often with tragic results (e.g. Thalidomide).

There is clearly a need for the state to plan scientific research, identifying the priorities and funding them accordingly. This process must also fully involve scientists themselves, at all levels, utilising to the full their skills and knowledge. In this way we can begin to take control of science, as part of the fight against the capitalist system itself. ■



**L**ABOUR IS in an ideal position—or so many Labour MPs and their working class supporters must have thought after trashing the Tories in the May council elections. With a clear 20% lead for Labour in the polls, John Major even had to organise a leadership election so he could stand a chance of winning something.

All Labour had to do was stand up, denounce the Tories' record and spell out their conference policies.

But it has spent the summer attacking the left, denouncing workers who fight the Tories, and preparing to implement whatever the bosses want when Labour's time for office comes.

In the process Blair has ripped up not just the remnants of "left" Labour policies but most of what Neil Kinnock would have recognised as "socialism" as well.

Last month even Roy Hattersley, Kinnock's former deputy and scourge of the Labour Party left, attacked the Blair leadership for paying too much attention to middle class voters and neglecting the poor. Hattersley has now been named as the main speaker of the centre-left *Tribune* rally at this year's party conference.

Education policy, the issue that got Hattersley fired up, is a prime example of what "New Labour" is prepared to do to win the next election.

For nearly a year now, there has been growing dissent against the whole range of the Tories' schools programme. Not only are working class parents and teachers hit by the government, but large sections of the middle class are also resentful of the promises of "choice" being broken by funding cuts.

This spring, even Boards of Governors, packed with local shire-Tories, tendered

illegal budgets against the government's attacks.

Labour's response? With the policy of schools "opting out" of local authority control dying through lack of interest, New Labour dresses it up as "foundation" schools and promises to relaunch it. When class sizes of thirty-plus cause concern, education spokesperson David Blunkett merely promises government powers to sack "bad" teachers and shut down schools. When parents and school students indicate widespread support for teachers' right to strike against overcrowded classes, Blair coordinates a witch-hunt of militant ("bad") teachers, aided by NUT General Secretary, Doug McAvoy.

Then, just when you think it can't get worse, Education Minister, Gillian Shepherd, unveils plans to make working-class 14-16 year-olds act as slave labour, "if thereby we can avoid demotivation and do something useful for employers at the same time".

Just how packing shelves at Sainsbury's can be motivating is hard to imagine, though the prospect of free labour for the bosses is undoubtedly useful for profits. True to form, Blunkett rushed to welcome the news, merely adding that the policy direction had been "pioneered by Labour education authorities".

As with education, every other policy area is busily being rewritten. The internal market in the NHS will remain, though renamed. Labour's social security "expert" Frank Field has compiled a whole list of work-for-dole schemes pioneered by Reagan but considered too harsh by Thatcher to implement in Britain. Launching the report of the cross-party (Lib-Lab) Dahrendorf Commission, Field declared

that, "the days when you could draw income support and live on it forever are over."

Elsewhere, as with re-nationalisation of the utilities and British Rail, and the setting of a figure for the minimum wage, existing policies are being ignored, undermined and denied.

But it is in Labour-controlled local authorities that Blair's New Labour is really taking shape. Here, we have a foretaste of what New Labour would look like in office. Millions of workers are experiencing first-hand cuts at the hands of Labour councils.

Labour's right wing policy stampede is

not just the result of one power mad yuppie and his clique. It is the logical next step after Kinnock's "centre" attacked the "left".

What has dogged Labour leaders for the past twenty years is the problem of convincing the bosses and the middle class electorate that they can be trusted with power. No matter how much Kinnock or John Smith cringed in front of the bosses, the employers always knew that the trade union link represented a threat. Labour, once in office, would always be under the potential pressure of the union bureaucracy, and through them, the pressure of the rank and file.

Blair has confronted this problem first

of all by removing Labour's ideological links to the working class. Most dramatically, he has got rid of Clause 4's commitment to egalitarianism and social ownership.

Whilst few people thought the Clause would, or indeed could, be used to usher in socialism, it was a touchstone for working class Labourism for decades.

Almost immediately Blair has gone onto the offensive against Labour's organisational links with the working class. The unions' block vote will be reduced to 50% at the party conference. Blair has dredged the ranks of small businesspeople, former SDP traitors and middle class professionals to produce over 100,000, largely pas-



# New Labour

**Blair has spent the summer attacking the left. Jeremy Dewar (above) surveys the damage. Colin Lloyd (right) examines the Labour left's response.**

**“**SOCIALISTS MUST now prepare to found a new socialist labour party in Britain... It means initially launching a campaign to get our organisations to disaffiliate from the national leadership at Walworth Road..."

"Let's leave the SDP Mark 2 to campaign for New Labour and relaunch the left as True Labour..."

"As I now see it our task is to build a mass communist workers' party which will be Red, Green and Feminist and, guided by a critical and non-dogmatic Marxism, will lead the fight for communism..."

These are not the ravings of the ultra left. They are just three examples from the anguished letters page of *Labour Briefing* in recent months. Written by long time left-Labour activists they represent the mood of a whole section of the party faced with Blair's overwhelming victory over Clause Four.

As a result of the debate about the way forward after Clause Four, *Labour Briefing* itself has now changed its name to *Socialist Briefing*. It has admitted onto its editorial board former *Socialist Organiser* supporters who produce the paper *New Left*, and announced its intention to build a "broad based" publication with activists inside and outside the Labour Party.

These developments are a symptom of widespread political confusion on the left. It infects not just the layer of left reformist constituency activists around *Briefing*, but also currents as diverse as *Militant Labour* and *Socialist Organiser*.

Since the scrapping of Clause Four on 29 April these tendencies have gone through a left wing silly season, putting their own former perspectives and analyses up for grabs.

They are all in mourning for the Labour Party as they thought they knew it. What they all want, to differing degrees, is a replacement for it.

What they all agree on is that the replacement cannot be a revolutionary combat party but some surrogate, mass, left reformist force into which they can burrow, accommodate and dissolve as per usual.

Throughout the 1980s their schemas for transforming the Labour Party meant abandoning not just particular revolutionary policies, but the whole project of building an independent revolutionary party.

*Militant*, when it worked exclusively in the Labour Party, always referred to La-

bour's "socialist heart" and "socialist origins". It believed, as Peter Taaffe recently reiterated, that,

"From [the trade union link] would come a limitless supply of workers who would move in and transform the party."

According to this view, which Taaffe wrongly attributes to Lenin, Labour's politics were determined by the absence of a mass working class membership.

Once the workers joined in their millions, and under the pressure of revolutionary events, Labour would be pushed to implement the beginnings of a socialist programme.

Much the same schema was adopted by the diverse "entrists" currents in the late 1970s and early 1980s: *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Challenge* and later *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook*.

For *Socialist Organiser* Labour could become a "roughly adequate" instrument for the creation of a workers' government.

For all of them entry into the Labour Party was a strategic choice.

Labour was their true home. And they would sacrifice revolutionary socialism to avoid eviction. Ted Grant, *Militant*'s former leader, spelled it out most clearly, when he urged his supporters not to allow political

fighters with the Labour leadership to get in the way of staying in the party.

The practical result of this advice was a continued refusal to mount a determined fight against the right's witch-hunt until it was too late to beat it.

The right went on the rampage. The left reformists gave in, and the disoriented entrists were plunged into crisis.

Today not even the most pessimistic Labour left-wingers believe the union link which makes Labour a workers' party has been finally cut. Neither do we. But the diminution of union influence and the ascendancy of the Blair-ite right wing has thrown the former Labour entrists into confusion and despair.

There are basically two schools of thought. The first, now adhered to by *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Action*, the majority within *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser* envisages a swing to the left after an initial honeymoon with Blair.

This, they hope, will put the whole "transform Labour" project back on course. That is why they are busy keeping the jaded and increasingly irrelevant left reformist projects like the Socialist Movement and the Campaign Group going.

Theirs is a vain hope. It takes no account

of the collapse of left reformism in Blair's party or the potential for building a revolutionary party that any upsurge of radicalism against Blair in office could bring.

An alternative view, now advocated by Peter Taaffe of *Militant Labour*, is that Labour is on the road to becoming a thoroughly bourgeois party.

Taaffe writes:

"Is it still not possible for the trade unions to enter the Labour Party and transform it in a leftward direction under the next Labour government? One could not rule out such a development. But there are powerful obstacles now set in place by the right-wing which make such a process difficult if not unlikely."

This is not just a departure from the decades long perspective of *Militant*, but even from the initial rationale for the launch of *Militant Labour*.

Under the pressure of the Labour witch-hunt, and after the refusal of millions of Poll Tax activists to follow *Militant* into the Labour Party, *Militant* broke with its long time leader, Ted Grant, and announced a "detour" in its strategic path of transforming Labour.

A few years of independent work would be necessary until conditions became suit-

## Marxists and the Labour Party

AT THE heart of the confusion with all of these tendencies is a misunderstanding of the real nature of the Labour Party and the contradiction at the heart of its continued existence.

Marxists characterise Labour as a "bourgeois workers' party"—to use Lenin's famous phrase. It is totally pro-capitalist in politics—even during "left" phases. That is why after six post-war Labour governments we are not one step nearer socialism than we were each time Labour took office.

But the Labour Party is working class in the sense that it is the party of the mass trade union movement, with the organised allegiance of the working class.

Blair is certainly seeking to dilute this aspect of Labour. That is why there is so much talk about making the party amenable to the middle classes. But he has not yet broken this organised link with the working class.

This contradiction cannot be resolved merely by the working class pressurising Labour gradually leftwards. The party is led by representatives of the bosses and they will always choose to defend the bosses' system.

Labour cannot be transformed into a revolutionary party. It cannot implement socialism. The "socialism" of Clause Four was vague phraseology aimed at heading off the rise of the

Communist Party after World War One. It was never a practical programme for socialist change.

Of course, this does not mean that revolutionaries abstain from struggles within the Labour Party or alongside Labour-supporting workers.

We have to place demands on Labour and enter into united fronts with the party, including voting Labour in the elections. The reason for this is that the overwhelming majority of workers do not share our analysis. They believe Labour can become a vehicle for social change.

It is even possible for revolutionaries to work inside the Labour Party at certain times—as long as they don't dissolve their politics into those of left reformism, as long as they continue the fight for revolutionary socialist politics and the building of a revolutionary tendency inside the party.

But through it all we have to remember the purpose of these tactics: proving to workers that Labour can't bring about socialism and that we need to build a fighting revolutionary workers' party, politically and organisationally distinct from Labour. We have to clearly delineate revolutionary politics from left reformist phrasemongering.

This is what the majority of the left failed to do in the 1980s.



sive, new members in the last twelve months.

For Blair himself it has been a summer of symbolic gestures. He crossed the planet to tell Rupert Murdoch and his News International union-busters that he admired Mrs Thatcher because she "got some things right". He flew back just in time to tell the TGWU conference that they were "stupid" for demanding a meagre £4.15 an hour minimum wage. To cap a good week's work he went on to claim that Labour's 1945-51 reforms—the NHS, state education and the welfare state—were all down to the good work of the Liberal Party.

While the press have thundered about a "summer of discontent" against Blair, the recent spate of criticism has been mild in the extreme.

Mesmerised by the Blair leadership, tied to the same goal of a Labour government at any price, all that the Left can do is condemn Blair for stirring up disunity and call for tinkering reforms in the election of the NEC.

Compared with the task at hand, this is a miserable response.

Workers should be in no doubt. Blair is a Tory to the marrow of his bones. His every instinct is based on class hatred of the wrong sort, never flinching before sticking two fingers up at the working-class base of the Labour Party.

Blair, Gordon Brown, Peter Mandelson and co. believe that it is necessary, and possible, to break the Labour Party from the working class completely.

The attempt by Jack Dromey to unseat traditionalist Bill Morris at the T&G, the replacement of the PLP chief whip by a Blair-ite, the rapid recruitment of a middle class membership, the hints that a radical

revision of party structures will remove delegate based committees entirely . . . these are preparations for an attack on workers inside and outside the party.

It is a clear pre-emptive strike, aimed at removing the possibility of a revolt during the first term in office. The *Economist* summoned up a picture of Blair's nightmare:

"Imagine, then, Mr Blair's Labour government half way through its first term. Unemployment is rising. Labour's spending lobbies are baying for money. The polls are bad, local-council election results are terrible and every by-election is lost. The new members of New Labour whom Mr Blair has recruited are leaving to cultivate their gardens, and the old left is crawling self-righteously out of its bunker. Then, Mr Blair would be truly tested." (22 July)

The only serious opposition to Blair's leadership of the Labour Party today is to be found in the unions. The anger of millions of workers, sickened by sixteen years of Tory rule, jars ever more sharply against Blair's praise for Margaret Thatcher and aping of her policies.

Notwithstanding the radicalisation of youth against racism and repression, it is still within the unions that this anger has its clearest voice. Whilst expectations in a Labour government are undoubtedly low, workers do expect—and are prepared to demand—some progressive reforms from Blair.

These expectations are most keenly felt by those union leaders who represent low-paid, public sector workers in the TGWU, GMB, Unison and the RMT. That is why John Monks of the TUC is so keen to stress that the unions will be adopting their own policies on the minimum wage and campaigning for them.

The picture that is emerging is clear. Whole sections of the ruling class, fed up with a split and directionless Tory leadership, are looking for a politician with "vision".

They no longer want somebody who will manage and maintain the "gains" of Thatcherism.

They want somebody with Thatcher's radicalism and drive, who will think up and push through new ways of screwing more profits out of the working class. That is the role Blair has to contend for, and his rivals are not Major and Heseltine but the neo-Thatcherite Tory right of Redwood and Portillo.

That is why Blair is prepared to tear up the centre-right consensus of the Kinnock-Smith years. He is doing it now and he will do it faster once in office.

We have to organise workers to fight. First of all against the attacks being rained down today—by Labour council and Tory government alike. Workers have to realise that the worst possible strategy is to sit back and wait for Labour.

As the election approaches we need to focus the power and influence of the trade unions onto the task of demanding and obtaining real measures which meet working class needs. Most immediately these should include: a minimum wage of £8 an hour to abolish poverty-line pay, the re-nationalisation of the privatised industries, and a massive injection of funding for health, education, transport and local services raised by taxing the profits of the super-rich.

A workers' movement mobilised to fight is the best and only guarantee that Blair will not prove as bad or worse than the Iron Lady he praises every time he speaks. ■

# ew Left?

able for the renewal of entry work:

"Militant sees Labour as the traditional party of working people who in years to come will force it back to the left. We have no intention of abandoning it . . . We will be building a force inside and outside the party that will in the end transform Labour". (Taaffe, letter to the *Guardian* 4 September 1991)

Now Militant Labour clearly believes that the "objective law", by which workers supposedly *always* enter and transform their existing organisations, no longer applies.

In addition to carrying out their own small scale electoral campaigns, *Militant* now sees the possibility of a break-away, left reformist party emerging from the discontent with Blair. Taaffe writes:

"It is more likely that the growing opposition will be reflected in demands for the unions to break with the increasingly bourgeois Labour Party leaders."

But this new perspective bears all the methodological flaws of the old one. Before, it was the objective conditions of class struggle, a spontaneously emerging centrist mass current, that would transform the Labour Party. Now according to Taaffe:

"On the basis of big events a radical, socialist mass wave will develop in the unions. Then the question will be posed point blank: either use the trade unions to enter the Labour Party and brutally push out the bourgeois elements, or to put a minus against the present organisation of the Labour Party and commence to create a new mass socialist political party".

Clearly Taaffe is not talking about a spontaneously revolutionary movement, but an emerging left reformist force. Until such a force emerges Militant Labour will soldier on. But:

"At the same time unlike the sects, who in the words of Marx 'emphasise their own shibboleth rather than what they have in common with the movement', Militant Labour will fight for the creation of the widest possible socialist force in Britain."

The problem with Taaffe's schema should be obvious: the working class needs a replacement "left" reformist party like a hole in the head.

Peter Taaffe cites a number of examples of left parties emerging from the ruins of Stalinism and Social Democracy in Europe: the United Left (IU) in Spain, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, and in France the 1.6

million votes for the left wing Lutte Ouvriere and 2.6 million for the Communist Party. "Throughout Europe," he writes, "there is now a significant section of workers and youth alienated from 'all politicians' but with a big layer looking for a socialist alternative."

If that is the case then it is the duty of revolutionary socialists to give them that alternative—not a rehash of Stalinism and left reformism.

**"If a layer of workers and youth is looking for a socialist alternative then it is the duty of revolutionaries to give them that alternative—not a rehash of Stalinism and left reformism."**

The politics of the Spanish IU, the Rifondazione in Italy, and the French CP are the politics of a declining hard-line Stalinism, steeped in decades of class collaboration and national chauvinism.

While Lutte Ouvriere's vote was significant, it was gained by that organisation standing on what it believes to be an uncompromising Marxist platform.

Lutte Ouvriere's own post election exercise of calling for a wider workers' party has met little response.

Left reformism and orthodox Stalinism are in decline, because the systems they are based on are either withering or dying.

Left reformism can no longer attach itself to the Keynesian economic policies of the bosses and advocate a more radical version, as it did in the 1960s and 1970s. Stalinism has lost its credibility since the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Interestingly, even those who want to stay within the Labour Party, such as *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser*, now see their salvation only in an unprincipled lash up with the remnants of these currents.

Maria Exall of *New Left* (an independent paper produced by *Socialist Organiser* supporters) writes:

"There is no good reason why the broad

Labour and trade union left, including the socialists grouped around the journals *Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Outlook*, *Campaign Group News* and *Tribune*, should not combine to produce one paper".

No reason except that the Campaign Group includes supporters of Serbia and *Outlook* supporters of Bosnia, and that *Tribune* supports NATO intervention into Yugoslavia.

But according to Maria Exall, to raise this is the "senseless spirit of intolerance and fanaticism about secondary issues". She continues:

"Such unity would produce dialogue, discussion and maybe progress where now we often have small chapels of socialists singing solos".

Inside or outside the party, the strategic entrists of the 1980s cling desperately to the remains of left reformism.

But the job of revolutionaries is not to give credence to the remnants of Stalinism and left reformism but to fight them, ever more vigorously, for the support of the layers of young workers who are disenchanted with the established workers' parties.

The "workers' party" tactic of Taaffe, and the "left unity" offensive of *Socialist Organiser* and *Briefing* offers the left fakers a new lease of life when what we want to serve on them is a death warrant.

Only revolutionary socialism can meet the challenge of a new generation looking for socialist change.

If left reformist currents emerge from decaying Labourism and Stalinism we must relate to them—not in order to shore up doomed projects of "real Labour" "True Labour" or "Socialist Labour" parties—but to assist the best militants and fighters amongst them to make a clean break with reformism.

The need for a revolutionary workers' party has never been greater.

The masses of workers and youth who are being radicalised and will be radicalised by the coming struggles do not need to be dragged through the experience of a party led by the Benns, Livingstones and Scargills of this world—with hundreds of *Briefing*-style acolytes doing their bureaucratic bidding—before they can experience a real revolutionary organisation.

They need a revolutionary alternative with a revolutionary programme. Building that is the project that revolutionaries should unite around. ■

# O is for Dictatorship and democracy

The A-Z of Marxism

IT'S COMMON-SENSE to most people that dictatorship and democracy are completely opposed to each other. Dictatorship is bad because it excludes the population from political life and concentrates all power in the hands of a despot. Democracy is good, because it makes political power accountable to the people.

As with most "common-sense" political ideas, this view hides the truth. Marxists make a distinction between forms of government and the class nature of the state. We always ask, "which class interests are served by a state?" If they are those of the capitalist class then, whatever its political form—parliamentary republic, constitutional monarchy and the rest—it is a capitalist state.

Every state in history has been an instrument of coercion, by which one class enforces respect for its property and secures its rule against resistance and revolt. Capitalist states—including those in which all citizens have the right to vote—exist to defend the rule and the property of a tiny handful of multi-millionaire exploiters.

In Britain—thanks to generations of struggle—all citizens have the right to vote and parliament is, formally at least, sovereign. But however preferable this may be to a military or fascist dictatorship, methods and structures are built into this system to ensure that the working class can never use it to take wealth and property from the exploiters.

MPs can make fine promises during elections—which they are then free to break with no way for their electors to recall or replace them. An unelected House of Lords can delay and obstruct legislation. The Monarchy still retains real powers including the right to veto laws, to suspend parliament, to sack the prime minister and to declare war.

Election campaigns are dominated by a press owned by a handful of millionaires. TV stations are controlled by unelected trustees of the ruling class. They manufacture "public opinion" and then duly discover it fed back through opinion polls. These findings are then used to rule out of consideration all "extreme" or "offensive" views.

Real power does not rest in the parliamentary talking-shop anyway and never has. Fundamental decisions concerning economic and political life are made in the boardrooms of the large corporations, banks and multinationals, by faceless civil servants and judges. The inner core of the state—the army, police and secret service—remain at all times firmly in the hands of the agents of the capitalist class itself.

Democracy means literally "the rule of the people". But in a society divided into classes with directly opposed interests there is no possibility of the whole of the people ruling. For that reason Marxists describe Britain as a bourgeois democracy—a state in which the working class majority has won certain rights but which remains a dictatorship of the capitalist class. This is why the belief that it is possible to introduce socialism through parliamentary means has always resulted

either in disillusion, frustration or tragic failure.

That is why Marxists are revolutionaries. Whilst fighting for the fullest democratic rights under capitalism, we recognise that to remove society's wealth from the ownership and control of the capitalist minority, the power of the military and the bureaucracy will have to be broken up—smashed, as Karl Marx put it—by the violent action of millions of workers.

The working class can create a system that is infinitely more democratic for the overwhelming majority of the population.

The experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the early years of the Russian Revolution, show that a proletarian democracy can be established. In place of the standing army we would have an armed population and a democratically organised workers' militia. Society would be ruled and administered by workers' councils—assemblies of delegates elected in every workplace and locality, with each delegate subject to immediate recall if their actions proved unacceptable to their electors.

Administrative tasks would be rotated to avoid the emergence of a permanent bureaucracy. No official could earn more than the average wage of a skilled worker, to prevent careerism and corruption taking hold. This sort of state would be only "half" a state, since it would be made up of a large proportion of the armed population and thus unable to stand over and coerce the majority or extort privileges from it.

Yet even this working class democracy would continue to be a state, an instrument of coercion and thus a dictatorship—not against the working class majority but against the capitalist minority at home and abroad. The working class has no need to conceal this fact.

It says openly and honestly that the capitalists would be denied the right to treat the means of production as their private property, the right to sack workers, the right to control the media and the right to live in luxury while others do all the work.

Faced with revolt from within or attack from without, a workers' revolutionary dictatorship would not flinch from all the emergency measures of a war to prevent the capitalist minority from using force to recover their power, privileges and property.

Indeed, such a state would, after many decades of democratic socialist planning, be able to finally overcome the legacy of the division of society into classes, removing the necessity for a state apparatus of coercion altogether.

The institutions of proletarian democracy could gradually be absorbed into society at large, as ever fewer of its functions required the use of authority. The classless society would therefore become also a stateless society—democracy itself would wither away. Then, as Frederick Engels put it, "the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things". ■

by Keith Harvey



# One year after IRA ceasefire

## Fragile peace, but where is the justice?

Twelve months have passed since the IRA's dramatic ceasefire announcement, suspending its long war with the British state. Yet Sinn Fein remain excluded from all-party discussions. Mark Harrison looks at the reasons behind the impasse.

**T**WENTY FIVE years after the British troops went onto the streets of Northern Ireland the guerrilla war waged by the Provisional IRA against their presence ground to a halt. On 31 August 1994 both sides recognised there was little prospect of a conclusive military victory for either side.

In 1969, Harold Wilson's Labour government sent the army to Belfast and Derry—not to shield the Catholic population from loyalist pogroms but to shore up the sectarian Orange state. The mass anti-unionist revolt had shaken that state to its foundations, beginning with the civil rights movement in the late 1960s and moving towards a civil war by 1969.

Direct rule by the loyalist bigots over the oppressed Catholic minority could not, however, survive a revolt on this scale. The Stormont government, which had ruled the "Protestant state for a Protestant people" since 1922, fell in 1972 under the weight of mass protests.

But its fall did not lead to unity with the rest of Ireland, or even an end to discrimination against the Catholics and republicans. Instead, Stormont was replaced with direct rule from Westminster.

### Internment

Direct rule meant ruthless harassment against republican activists: SAS assassinations, internment without trial and the banging away of innocent people under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Successive British governments—Labour and Tory alike—could not allow a part of the United Kingdom to secede by means of revolutionary struggle. Such a defeat for British imperialism would have provoked an enormous political crisis at home.

If the IRA could not win militarily, then neither could Britain—despite the presence of 30,000 troops, the investment of billions of pounds and a battery of repressive legislation. By 1992, John Major, along with the then Irish prime minister, Albert Reynolds, decided to press for a settlement.

The December 1993 Downing Street Declaration, in which Britain announced that it had "no selfish or strategic" interest in the Six Counties, marked a new phase. Instead of "counter-insurgency", the British decided to use "the peace process" to disarm and isolate militant republicanism. Behind Britain's shift lay pressure from the Clinton administration in the USA, keen to conclude another "peace" settlement after South Africa and the Middle East, and courting a significant soft-nationalist Irish lobby at home.

By this stage, republicanism had boxed itself into a dead end, leaving Sinn Fein and the IRA susceptible to this overture. Its strategy of guerrilla war had meant demobilising the masses in favour of the armed actions of a handful of courageous volunteers. And, while it retained support within the masses, its actions were increasingly separated from the active concerns of those very people. Its war was not merely getting nowhere. It was beginning to have a negative impact on the struggle, notably with the Warrington and Shankill bombings.

Faced with the palpable war weariness of its own supporters, the IRA were cajoled by the Dublin government and the middle-class SDLP in the North to suspend the armed struggle. "Peace now and justice later" was the promise. In return, the British promised only that they would not stand in the way of an agreement reached between the loyalists and the republicans.



Republican protestor in half nelson after demo

The loyalists, in turn, promised nothing but more bigotry.

But the one reward for the republicans was to be official recognition at the negotiating table with British imperialism. To be treated as an Irish Nelson Mandela was now Gerry Adams' main hope, a trade-off for the thousands of lives sacrificed in the name of a united Ireland.

A year ago the relief on the streets of Belfast, Newry and Derry was obvious; the ceasefire was hailed as a new beginning. British soldiers swapped their tin hats for berets. Gerry Adams became a jet-setting diplomat, addressing chat shows instead of heavily policed demonstrations.

### Decision

At the time of the ceasefire *Workers Power* was a dissenting voice amidst the widespread praise for the IRA's decision. This was not because we believed the IRA's guerrilla strategy was the way forward. It was because the British state could only construe the ceasefire as meaning the first act in the IRA's surrender to Britain. It was an unwarranted concession in circumstances where Britain had not taken a single practical step towards relinquishing its imperialist grip on the Six Counties. The republicans got nothing in return for the ceasefire.

As consistent anti-imperialists, supporting the Irish struggle, we continued to seek the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. We defended the IRA be-

cause their war, despite their fundamentally wrong strategy, was a war for these goals. The cessation of the war was not a step forward towards our strategy of mass working class struggle to continue the fight for these goals, but a step back towards manoeuvres through negotiations. It was a new form of elitism—with bourgeois diplomacy replacing guerrilla war.

The reality of the past year has vindicated these criticisms.

Britain's "shift" towards negotiations with Sinn Fein, as part of what Major called an "imaginative and generous" response to the ceasefire, was largely a ploy, a means of buying time and a propaganda victory for John Major.

Look at the record. Britain has held a handful of meetings with Sinn Fein. First, it spent months delaying any meetings on the spurious grounds that the IRA ceasefire statement did not contain the word "permanent". After resolving this verbal wrangle, the British erected a new obstacle.

It continued to block Sinn Fein's entry into the negotiating process alongside other parties unless and until the IRA "decommissioned" its weapons. This has now become its precondition for allowing the republicans into the "peace process". This precondition flies in the face of what the British government representatives had told them during the negotiations leading up to the ceasefire.

Sinn Fein leader Mitchell McLaughlin pointed out that "those who played piv-

otal roles in negotiating the IRA cessation have repeatedly verified that decommissioning was never an issue." The former Dublin Prime Minister, Albert Reynolds, said that he would never have signed the Downing Street Declaration if he had known that Britain would make decommissioning a precondition.

### Crisis

Britain's position has plunged the "peace process" into crisis. Gerry Adams has been forced to raise the temperature by reminding a Belfast rally that the IRA "have never gone away". In a major statement on Sinn Fein's response to Britain's demands he declared:

"... the IRA will not decommission or surrender its weapons to anyone as a precondition for all party talks. This is not a negotiating position. The reality is that Sinn Fein has no room to manoeuvre."

And that lack of room has obliged the party to step up its street protests. In the face of provocative Orange parades through Catholic areas, Sinn Fein has mounted counter-demonstrations. And Britain has sanctioned the RUC to attack the republicans. Throughout the summer's "marching season", Belfast's Ormeau Road has looked like a battleground, with one republican demonstrator shot by a plastic bullet. How long before a lead bullet is fired?

While ending night-time patrols by its troops, Britain has rigidly maintained undercover operations, surveillance, RUC

patrol squads, a fully armed RUC, the Emergency Powers that allow non-jury trials and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Northern Ireland Secretary, Patrick Mayhew, told the Police Federation conference in June that there were no plans to introduce any reforms into the thoroughly sectarian RUC.

And all this is after a year of peace. So what is Britain up to?

Though it remains the case that Britain will most probably allow Sinn Fein into all party talks, it will only do so on British terms. In short, the IRA's military capacity is destroyed.

This aim underlies its delaying tactics. The British government wants to prolong the whole process of negotiation so as to further isolate the IRA.

The longer there is peace, the better its chances of doing this. The British calculate that if the IRA are the ones who return to military operations, a war-weary population, grateful for peace, will feel bitter towards the IRA, not the treacherous British government. If Sinn Fein are seen to endorse any IRA actions, then they can be shut out of the peace process altogether.

### Tactics

Last, but not least, the delaying tactics reassure mainstream Unionists that while Britain may seem willing to negotiate with the nationalists, it will never abandon the Protestants. And, if there is a return to military action, under conditions of increased isolation, British repression against republicans will be inflicted all the more viciously and effectively.

The response to the evidence of the past year from every republican in the north ought to be to change course. To turn from the false promise of negotiations to the road of class struggle—the mobilisation of the working class against the attacks on democratic rights, against the continued RUC harassment, against the continued presence of the troops, against the system that still discriminates against Catholic workers and against the partition of a country against the will of the majority of its people.

This is the socialist answer to the impasse in the peace process, an answer based on the fight to revive the mass struggle against the division of Ireland, to link it to the workers' struggle for socialism and a workers' republic across the whole of Ireland. As such, it is an answer the republican leaders cannot and will not give.

Gerry Adams' chosen means to overcome his isolation is not to rouse the masses for a serious struggle but to enlist the support of his middle-class SDLP allies and John Bruton's right-wing, Fine Gael-led coalition in Dublin.

All-party talks, even if they commence soon, won't break the real impasse, caused by Britain's commitment to maintaining the veto of the Protestant minority, in Ireland as a whole, over the corner of the country that they carved out against the will of the majority back in 1921. Yet the call for one such talks is the only answer Sinn Fein have.

A year on we repeat our answer—not all-party talks, but an all-Ireland revolutionary workers' party to drive out the British state and to fight for a workers' republic. That is the road to real peace, to the only just peace and to the peace that those who have fought British imperialism for so long and with such courage truly deserve. ■





Kashmiri nationalists condemned the beheading of the Norwegian hostage (bottom left). But the western media pay a hundred times more attention to a western hostage crisis than to Indian government repression in Kashmir.

# Kashmir's long fight for freedom

**T**HE PLIGHT of the western hostages taken by the mysterious Kashmiri nationalist group, Al-Faran, has occupied the press over the last month. Particularly after the beheading of the Norwegian hostage, the media have turned to portraying Kashmiris as bloodthirsty people prepared to carry out meaningless acts of terror for no apparent reason.

But whoever and whatever Al-Faran is, the great majority of Kashmiris and their nationalist organisations condemned the gruesome "execution". Their struggle to exercise the elementary right to self-determination is a long one. It stretches back to 1948, when the partitioning of the Indian sub-continent led to India and Pakistan both claiming it as part of their territory. In 1949 a UN resolution endorsed the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination. India ignored it and continues to do so to this day.

Since 1962 more than forty thousand lives have been lost in the struggle. In the past five years this struggle has intensified. On 14 July, two Britons, a German, American and Norwegian were captured. The kidnapping of these western tourists is the fifth of its kind in the state during the past five years of fighting, but this is the first death of a hostage. Hostage taking has become a defensive tactic routinely used by the Kashmiri fighters up against the full might of 500,000 Indian occupation forces. In most cases the hostages are army personnel and civilians, used to secure the freedom of imprisoned fighters who daily endure atrocities in Indian detention.

Today, the liberation movement is heavily divided, with signs of successful infiltration by Indian agents, and even suggestions that undercover commandos had a role in this latest hostage taking. Certainly, it has worked to discredit the Kashmiri struggle. Whatever the truth, this killing is a clear signal that Al-Faran is at best a desperate and disoriented part of the national liberation movement.

## General strike

The last couple of months have shown them to be completely marginalised from the masses of workers and peasants in the valley. Al Faran is widely thought to be linked to the Harkat-ul-Ansar which has its bases in Azad (Pakistan) Kashmir. The 24-hour general strike called by the All

Party Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC)—a grouping of 30 Kashmiri political and religious groups—in protest at the killing of the hostage received widespread support, completely paralysing the whole region.

On 11 May the Indian Army stormed a 15th century Mosque and holy shrine in Charar-E-Sharief, a town in the Kashmir valley, burning it to the ground and killing at least 35 people. The army believed that amongst them was Mast Gul, labelled the most wanted man in India, leader of the Hizbul Mujahedin, the dominant force amongst the Kashmiri liberation fighters. His capture or death would have been a major coup for the Indian Army. They were unsuccessful. But in the aftermath of the raid the whole town was set ablaze. In many such incidents, army reprisals have left more than 30,000 people homeless.

The present upsurge is the direct result of an offensive unleashed by the beleaguered Indian Congress government—under electoral pressure from Hindu communalist and chauvinist parties. It has tried

by Laura Watkins

to beat them at their own game by showing how tough they can be against Muslim Kashmir.

**The workers and poor peasants of Kashmir, regardless of religion, should form militias to protect their civil and democratic rights and guarantee complete security against communalist attacks.**

Angry protest demonstrations have been held in both parts of Kashmir. In Pakistan, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) have organised marches and rallies in the capital Islamabad. At the same time, in the Indian controlled areas, where the JKLF and other liberation groups are banned and operate underground, protests have been led by the APHC.

Reactionary communalist clashes have enormously increased as a result of the suppression of political life and democratic rights. There have been scores of retaliatory attacks against Hindus in the area. Demonstrators torched three temples in Pampore. Such actions, like the Hindu chauvinist provocations, will lead to dis-

aster. They may even act as a pretext for a new Indo-Pakistan war—a reactionary conflict on both sides.

For western imperialism, no particular interest would be served by such a war. The Economist is clearly worried that a conflict over Kashmir could de-stabilise the whole region:

"The trouble with Kashmir is that too many people mind about it. Sitting among the mountains where India, China and Pakistan meet, it is too interesting strategically to be ignored."

## US pressure

Washington's rapid dispatch of advisers to the area underlines this concern and appears to have succeeded in pressurising both sides to avoid armed combat.

Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, is keen to placate his western backers, since his economic strategy is centred on an "opening up" of India to western multinationals and strict adherence to the wishes of the IMF. In particular, he has to soothe

US and British concern that further atrocities might spark a clash with Pakistan. He is also under pressure to reduce the massive drain on the economy caused by the cost of the huge security presence in the area.

But Rao is terrified that any deal in Kashmir will encourage the multitude of secessionist movements throughout India. Similarly, he is mindful that such concessions may boost support for his main rivals in Congress, the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Apart from the BJP, all political parties favoured the holding of the July elections by which some pretence of local autonomy could be established.

The vast majority of Kashmiris are opposed to participating in such elections. Even the moderate Hurriyat coalition has

been actively mobilising a mass boycott. This leaves support for the election of a local assembly coming only from the tiny, privileged Hindu minority.

Pakistan is also urging a boycott of these elections and calling for the implementation of a United Nations mandate to hold a plebiscite. According to Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani prime minister, a plebiscite would allow the people of the majority Muslim state to decide to leave India and join the Muslim-confessional state of Pakistan.

Support for the boycott appears solid, with estimates of the likely turn-out as low as 2%-5%. Any assembly will be a puppet of Delhi. Revolutionary communists should support the boycott and call for the simultaneous, total and unconditional withdrawal of all Indian and Pakistani armed forces from both parts of Kashmir.

## Action programme

The workers and poor peasants of Kashmir, regardless of religion, should form militias to protect their civil and democratic rights and guarantee complete security against communalist attacks. Then, and only then, should elections be held to a sovereign constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage, with delegates accountable to, and recallable by, the workers and peasants of Kashmir.

Revolutionaries would fight within and outside such an assembly for a workers' and poor peasants' government. Such a government could set about satisfying the masses' demand for land and freedom from hunger.

Rather than joining the confessional Pakistani state revolutionaries should fight for a workers' and peasants' republic in Kashmir as part of a socialist federation of the entire sub-continent.

They should fight for an action programme whose key demands are:

- full rights for independent trade unions
- build a revolutionary workers' party
- a secular state which will ensure the religious freedom of all
- full political, social and economic rights for women
- land to those who work it
- an end to the exploitation of the imperialist multinationals and their local bourgeois agents.■

## A world to win

### Bolivia

THE STATE of emergency declared on 18 April was supposed to end on 17 July. Article 111 of the Bolivian Constitution lays down that a State of Emergency cannot last more than 90 days. Any extension must get the approval of Congress. Nevertheless, the government renewed it citing the refusal of the coca growers of the Chapare region to eradicate any more of their cultivated land and the call of the COB (Bolivia's TUC) for workers "to prepare actions".

The good news is that the four teachers leaders (see previous issues of Workers Power) are no longer in detention, although the charges against them have not been dropped.

But there are more than 90 people still in detention, the majority of them peasants from Chapare including the coca union leader, Evo Morales. The peasant militants have been "exiled" to inhospitable regions of the country. According to the Chapare leaders there have been five deaths and various injuries as a result of a confrontation with the special "anti-narcotic" police.

The USA is pressurising the government to impose a full-scale military occupation of the coca growing areas. The CSUTCB (the peasants union) called for a nationwide week of protest from 31 July. They also launched a hunger strike of 2,000 women in Cochabamba on 24 July to demand the release of Evo Morales.

The COB issued a call for a 24-hour strike to resist the new state of emergency on the 25 July, and the teachers and government employees responded to this call. In Santa Cruz, the 18-strong regional civic committee announced a hunger strike from 24 July in protest against the "arrogance, intolerance and myopia" of the government.

Clearly, despite determined repression by the government of president 'Goni' Sanchez de Losada, the struggles against his neo-liberal plans continue. They still need the solidarity of the international workers' movement. In Britain the Bolivian Union Solidarity Campaign (BUSC) will continue to mobilise to achieve this.

Contact BUSC c/o BCM Box 7750 London WC1N 3XX■

### USA

OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES of the AFL-CIO and Detroit Newspaper unions representing the striking workers at the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* were calling for a mass picket of the Sterling Heights plant on Saturday September 2, 1995.

The vote for a mass picket was taken at a meeting of 1,000 union members from the striking papers on 24 July. The rally is aimed at stopping the entire production and distribution of the scab paper.

The Detroit Labor Day parade planned for 4 September has been re-routed and is set to end with a mass rally in front of the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* headquarters.

On 12 August and again on 19 August, strikers rallied to stop the scab plant from moving papers. The picket on the 19th was so large and militant that strikers stopped the scabs and papers for over three hours. Sterling Heights riot police tried to break up the picket by marching with helmets, shields, and clubs, beating picketers, grabbing them, and dragging them across the highway. But the strikers and their supporters held their ground, and fought back, forcing the riot police to back down and run to the side of the highway.

Messages of solidarity can be E-mailed to the striking Detroit unions via the Internet. They have a web page at <http://www.rust.net/workers/strike.html>. Also please send copies to [labr.publish@conf.igc.apc.org](mailto:labr.publish@conf.igc.apc.org).■



## Dave Stockton



## VJ Day: An outburst of chauvinism

**I** DON'T normally buy the *Sun*. But an eight page pull out on Japanese war atrocities was such a gross idea that I felt compelled to part with my 25p. The *Times* printed a colour supplement on the same theme. I didn't watch BBC's VJ weekend screenings of *Tenko* and the *Bridge on the River Kwai*—further dramatic recreations of the horrors suffered by prisoners. This on top of endless documentaries on similar themes. But there was no way you could mistake the message of this whole hatefest: "No forgiveness for the Japs".

The "celebrations" began with repeated and arrogant justifications of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Terribly scarred survivors of the Hiroshima bomb were lined up and asked to account for the mistreatment of British prisoners. No apology for them! As "Japs" they had to do the apologising! It continued with the press baiting of premier Tomiichi Murayama. Was he going to apologise or not?

When Murayama did express "remorse and heartfelt apology", the media went into positive apoplexy. One radio chat show host expressed agreement with a veteran who said that even if the Japanese emperor crawled down the Mall on his face it wouldn't do.

It all ended in an extravagant patriotic fireworks display on the Thames in the City of London. From the top of my house in South London I marvelled at the 18-ton visual extravaganza. Thankfully, I was too far away to see Elizabeth Windsor lead a thousand torch-carrying schoolchildren down the Mall or hear the orgy of patriotic songs outside the Palace—"I vow to thee my Country", "Rule Britannia", "Land of Hope and Glory".

Mrs Windsor, referring to the VE Day celebrations in May, said "we met our enemies in a spirit of reconciliation", precisely in order to underline that this was not the case with regard to Japan. This was also yet another an obsequious nod to the German ruling class that its Nazi past had been forgiven. After all, in the war they always treated "us"—the British ruling class officer corps—with the proper respect.

Was this just a nasty version of the silly season or was it a conspiracy to prepare the masses for future clashes with a resurgent Japan?

Neither the one nor the other. It was not initiated by Major and the Tory Cabinet, who played a rather muted role in it all. Hardly surprising given their policy of advertising Britain as a Trojan horse for Japanese multinationals to breach the walls of Fortress Europe.

Other commentators have drawn attention to the fact that even in the United States, which was more centrally engaged in the Pacific War, there was nothing like this approach. So why did the British media, the royal family and its hangers on engage in this outburst of rancorous chauvinism, so much at odds with the policy and self-interest of the British capitalist class?

The answer is relatively straightforward. The British ruling class, particularly those royal and military representatives who survive from the 1930s and 1940s, have a lot to cover up. Firstly, unlike the war in Europe, they cannot easily pretend that they were "fighting for democracy and against fascism" (however false these claims are too). They were fighting, nakedly, to preserve their colonial empire, their rule over hundreds of millions of Asian slaves. Secondly, they were humiliatingly and easily defeated in 1940-41 by an Asian imperialist power; that is, by what they considered at the time to be an "inferior race".

The white British world masters found themselves imprisoned and mistreated by Asians. This was indeed horrible and brutal. It has been the lot of oppressed peoples, the colonised, the exploited who rebel throughout history. The British ruling class were not used to being the victims, only the victimisers. All the atrocities which mark two hundred years of the British Empire are not allowed to be mentioned in this context. But whatever they did our rulers could not dispel the powerful and undeniable odour of decomposition which hung over the celebration in a heavy cloud.

This "last opportunity", this "last time we will have to see such a spectacle", oozed the commentaries.

Let us hope so! Lots of vows to remember were taken on VJ Day. We should take one too; to work doubly hard to shovel all this stinking debris into the rubbish bin of history. ■

## USFI 14th Congress Peering over the edge

By Mathieu Roux

**S**UICIDE IS the ultimate act of despair. A collective suicide all the more so. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), meeting for its 14th World Congress on 6-10 June 1995 did not actually put an end to its suffering but it certainly wrote a joint suicide note. It is quite possible that the organisation will pass from the word to the deed before its next congress.

In modern psycho-babble the USFI's self-esteem has hit rock bottom. It has long despaired both of the revolutionary programme and of the ability of the working class to realise it. Now it sees no essential role for itself as an organisation either.

This harsh judgement is entirely justified by the decisions of the Congress, which make remarkable reading for any self-respecting revolutionary. Whether discussing the crisis of capitalism, the restoration process in Eastern Europe or the main political tendencies in the current period, the Congress accepted that the USFI has little to offer the oppressed and exploited of the world, apart from vague expressions of sympathy.

In their analysis of the world economic and political situation, the USFI correctly, if unremarkably, believe that the revolution has never been as necessary as it is today. As Ernest Mandel put it recently, "what is at stake today in the world is dramatic; it is literally a question of the physical survival of humanity."

However, they immediately follow this with the view that revolution has never been further away. To make matters worse the revolutionary programme is obsolete. Trotsky's "Transitional Programme", written in 1938 and the founding document of the International, will have to be abandoned to be replaced by a new document.

This will be not a re-elaborated, updated version of Trotsky's programme to meet the new tasks of the international class struggle, but one in which there will have to be "a re-evaluation of the classic and fundamental division between 'revolutionaries' and 'reformists'." In other words a retreat to the era of the Second International. This is obviously the reason the USFI leaders said in their draft documents that the historic cycle which began in 1917

is finished". Bolshevism is finished, the October revolution is finished.

Rather than regarding the collapse of Stalinism as showing the historic validity of the Trotskyist programme and organisation, the USFI has decided that the opposite is true. Since Stalinism collapsed, they claim, Trotskyism faces a crisis of identity. Or rather, the USFI does.

The USFI will not be the future mass International, claimed the Congress. It will not even be the nucleus of that International. Instead, it mumbles that it is but a "minor, but specific tributary" of the "world revolutionary movement". It has "abandoned the pretension, born of another time, to be the 'world party of the revolution'." That "pretension", of course, was Trotsky's. Doubtless, as co-leader of the October revolution he was entitled to his pretensions. But the shrunken USFI obviously finds his mantle a crushing weight on its shoulders.

What a confession of moral and political bankruptcy! What a proof of the uselessness of the USFI's whole method. Over forty years ago, the USFI's founders decided that the main force of the revolution would no longer be the working class and the sections of the International, but rather a variety of leftward-moving forces, from Tito's Yugoslavia to the FSLN's Nicaragua, from Castro's Cuba to Mao's China.

At every stage, the USFI hoped that the "dynamic of the world revolution" would be expressed by one of these forces, virtually all which were tinged (at least) with Stalinism. If they aped its slogans and methods, if they acted as political attorneys for the "radical" third world Stalinists then at a later stage the "Fourth International" would come into its own.

Now that Stalinism—radical as well as conservative—is dead or dying, the USFI doesn't know what to do. All its expectations of the development of a "left" wing of the bureaucracy came to nothing. As a consequence of repeated imaginary ideological adaptations to it, "deep *perestroika*" and so on, the USFI's programmatic responses to the crisis of Stalinism were in-

adequate at best, and more often embarrassingly wrong.

This was partly shown at the Congress by the fact that the USFI has not been able to build at all in the ex-USSR. Their weak forces in Russia are huddled inside the Party of Labour, which sent one representative to the Congress.

But none of that really bothered the Congress. Their main concern was to lay the basis for "a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle" which would, of course, blur the differences between reform and revolution, and would most certainly not be Trotskyist.

This latest turn did not go unopposed. A series of minority groups, notably from Britain, France and the USA, struck an orthodox stance against the majority, arguing that the labour movement was still affected by a crisis of leadership, that the restoration of capitalism would inevitably provoke a working class response and against the threat of dissolution of the USFI.

But the minority was weak and powerless given its umbilical ties to the majority. With no more than 20% of the delegates, it has no hope of changing the USFI's line. Its "orthodoxy" is only pre-1989 Mandelism unwilling to face the logical conclusion that its authors drew.

Bound by a fetishistic loyalty to what they mistakenly claim remains the Fourth International of Trotsky, the minority will go down with the majority unless they act decisively.

They must recognise that the current demoralisation of the USFI has clear political and methodological roots that go back several decades.

The positions of the present leadership are not accidents, nor temporary aberrations. They flow from the politics of the USFI from its very foundation. And they lead, as one delegate actually proposed towards the end of the Congress, to the dissolution of the USFI.

The minority must realise that the only way to avoid being part of the USFI's collective suicide is to join a functioning democratic centralist international organisation with an operative programme. In short—join the LRCI now. ■

Ernest Mandel

## "Reconciling reform and revolution"



By Keith Harvey

**E**RNEST MANDEL, leader of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), and one of the key figures of post-war Trotskyism, died on 20 July 1995 at the age of 72.

Mandel had a far greater influence and was more widely known than any of the other post-war leaders of the Fourth International, such as Healy, Lambert, Moreno, Frank or even Cannon.

Mandel joined the Belgian section of the Fourth International in 1939. Under the Nazi occupation, aged 19, he became a member of its leadership. Later he participated in the 1944 underground European conference of the Fourth International. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested for the third time and spent the rest of the war in a Nazi labour camp.

After the war, Mandel became a key figure in the new International leadership team being reconstructed by Michel Pablo.

Together with Pablo, Mandel led the "International Secretariat" wing of the FI after the split of 1953. For the next ten

years he was the main advocate of re-unification with the International Committee. In 1963 when the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) was created, Mandel became its major theoretician and leader.

Mandel's life mirrored the history of the USFI and its predecessors. After the 1948-51 collapse of the FI into centrism, Mandel's method was to look for other social forces apart from the working class itself to play the role of the locomotive of the revolution.

In Yugoslavia, Tito's split with the Kremlin in 1948 was hailed by the FI leadership as a break with Stalinism. This was to be merely the first of many expressions of the "world revolution" that the FI was to attach its hopes to. And each time, Mandel played a central role in finding a "Trotskyist" alibi for the new opportunistic turn.

In his obituary of Kautsky, Trotsky ar-

gued that the pre-1914 "pope of Marxism" was, "a propagandist and populariser of Marxism (who) saw his principal theoretical mission as the reconciling of reform and revolution".

Though he was formed in a different epoch, the same can be said of Mandel, with whom the parallels with Kautsky are striking. Mandel became a prominent writer on political economy from the 1950s onwards. Works such as *Late Capitalism*, though flawed, made a serious contribution to the development of modern Marxist political economy.

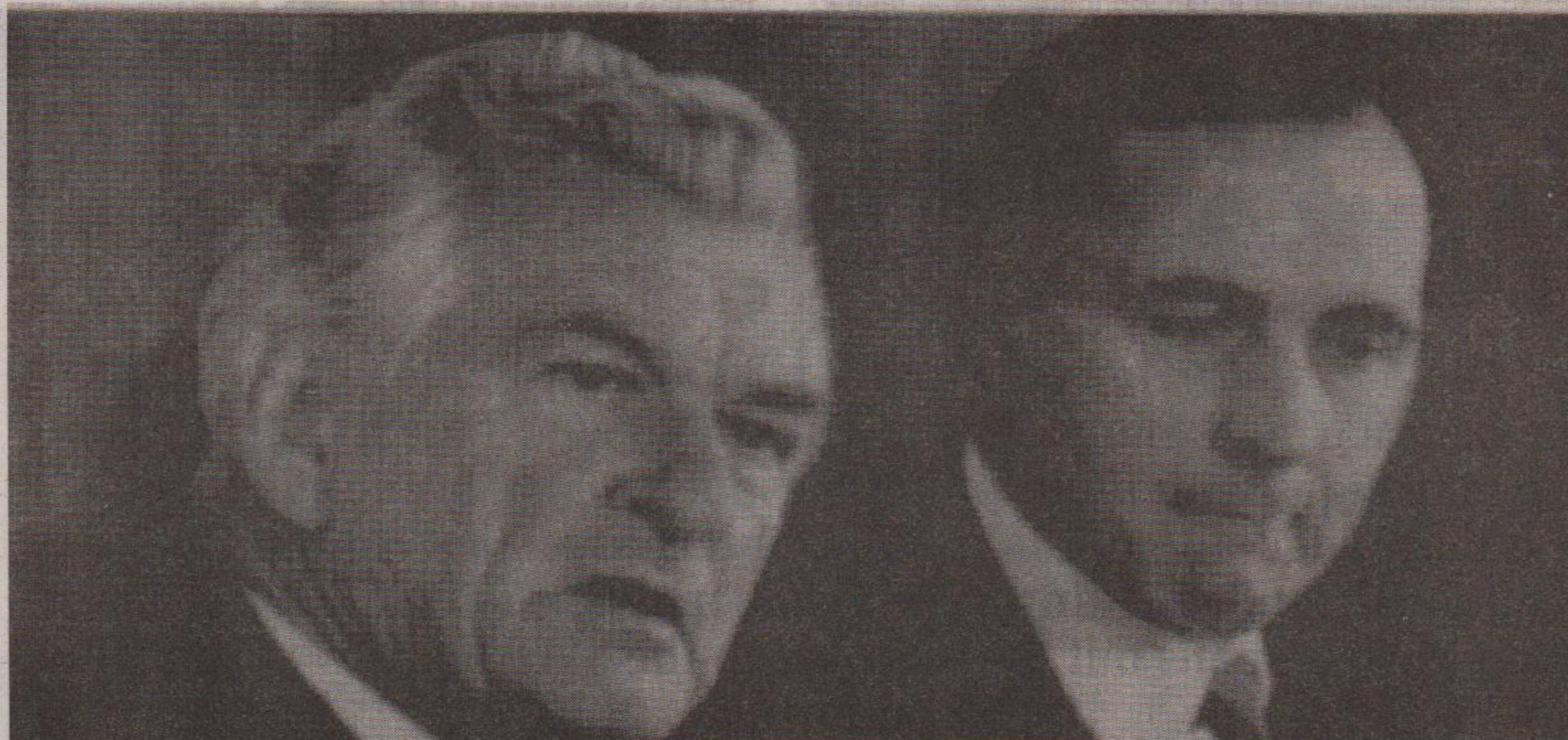
A talented intellectual, like Kautsky, he made valuable contributions to defending the formal elements of the Marxism he inherited. But he failed ultimately to develop that theory, to apply it in a living, revolutionary fashion when faced with decisive developments in the post-war class struggle.

An extended appreciation of Mandel's life and work will appear in Trotskyist International Issue 18, published in late September. ■



## Australia

# Students fight back



Hawke and Keating - past and present of Labour's drive for austerity

Students at La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia, recently occupied their administration block to resist the imposition of "voluntary" student unionism on them, which effectively outlaws political action by students. *Workers Power (Australia)* were in the thick of the struggle and here report on the background to these events.

such as the Student Unionism Network in Victoria. While attendance has fluctuated, the demonstrations in Victoria have attracted up to 5,000 students, and the police presence has been consistently heavy-handed.

To undermine resistance to these attacks the Liberal government of the state of Victoria is trying to cripple effective unionism among students. In 1994, the Kennet government passed the Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) law. Behind the predictable rhetoric of freedom, accountability and voluntary association, stood the reality of coercion.

Given the green light by the VSU, several university administrations have sought to impose "funding agreements" on student unions. The purpose of these so-called "agreements" is to ensure that the funding of any activity that might possibly be deemed political becomes "illegal". The university administrations seek to coerce student unions to sign these regulatory agreements under the threat of losing all their funding.

Needless to say, these funding agreements have provoked anger on the campuses, as well as highlighting and intensifying the divisions between students and student union officials.

To date, Monash and La Trobe universities in Victoria have been hardest hit by

VSU legislation. Attempts by the Monash University administration to get the union officials to sign agreements met opposition from a majority of students at the first of two student general meetings. After this vote, a Liberal Party member on campus telephoned the state's Liberal Party. In turn, it contacted the university within hours and demanded that the administration comply with the VSU legislation by imposing an agreement, despite the union's refusal to co-operate.

The university administration immediately restricted the union's access to telephone and fax services and threatened to withdraw the salaries of its full-time employees, until the union officers signed the agreement.

Union officers were soon running scared and immediately launched a campaign to "save" the student union (i.e. their pay) by overturning the initial vote against the funding agreement. Posters appeared proclaiming, "Sign or we are dead", "Sign and organise to fight VSU" and the ironic "Sign to save our union!". The combined pressure of the university administration and the student union officials proved too much for students and for anti-VSU campaigners.

The second student general meeting saw a majority vote to sign the funding agreement, thereby conceding to VSU on the

Monash campus, and to a crippling of the student union which provides services but has no real scope for autonomous political representation of students.

The administration at La Trobe University tried virtually identical tactics to impose a funding agreement just over a month after the defeat at Monash. Yet this time developments took a different course.

After initially agreeing to sign a funding agreement, student union bureaucrats were stunned when the University administration itself refused to sign. Instead, the administration stopped the loan that had been funding the student association until an agreement was signed, and demanded the repayment of A\$97,000 (£46,200) within ten days. In addition, they demanded the imposition of a general manager to oversee the running of the association before they would enter into any future funding agreement.

The University's vice-chancellor combined this with veiled threats against the editors of the student newspaper, after it published an article on techniques for more effective shoplifting.

These events and the virtual paralysis of the student union as funds ran out, compounded the pressure from militant students, so that the union bureaucrats had no choice but to call a crisis meeting. Fearing an upsurge of student militancy, the

La Trobe administration quickly decided to sign the funding agreement without conditions. But it was too late. An overwhelming majority of the hundreds of students at the meeting voted to reject the administration's belated peace offer, and resolved to fight back against VSU.

After the meeting some 150 students marched on the administration offices. After smashing the locked doors, the angry students occupied the building. Within two hours, the university administration backed down, agreeing to release student funds with "no strings attached".

Students elsewhere in Australia, fired up by this example of militancy, can draw important lessons from the partial victory at La Trobe. The VSU legislation remains in place and even at La Trobe the fight is far from over, but for the first time in several years, students glimpsed what can be achieved through militant and determined collective action.

But student militancy on its own will not be enough to save the state education system from the ravages of capitalist restructuring. Students need to recognise that their own struggle is but one front in a protracted war over the welfare state. In this war the working class has most to lose from defeat, yet also has the power to put a stop to the attacks.

Only by linking up with workers and supporting their struggles can real and lasting victories be won by students. In our joint work with other students resisting fees and in opposition to the anti-student union legislation, *Workers Power* members in Australia have consistently argued for the building of closer links with workers' struggles. Future victories in the campuses will be solid and lasting gains only if we succeed in this attempt. ■

## Mumia Abu Jamal

# Alive, Now free him!



AS 17 AUGUST approached—the date set for Mumia Abu-Jamal's execution—he won a sudden and welcome reprieve. The "hanging judge", Albert Sabo, who sentenced Abu-Jamal to die at his 1982 trial, finally caved in to pressure from a growing international campaign on 8 August. Judge Sabo granted an indefinite stay of Abu-Jamal's execution until his appeal for a new trial is completed.

Though convicted of the fatal shooting of a Philadelphia cop in a blatantly unfair trial, Abu-Jamal's real crime was to be a fighter for black rights and campaigning journalist. A telling writer and broadcaster, author of the volume *Live from*

Death Row, Mumia's was one voice that the police, prison authorities and Pennsylvania's recently-elected Governor Tom Ridge, wanted silenced.

A member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence from the age of 15, Abu-Jamal was no stranger to the racist brutality of the Philadelphia police. Since his arrest for the killing of one of their own, Philadelphia's Fraternal Order of Police have waged a vicious, unremitting campaign to ensure that Mumia dies. They did not reckon, however, on the extraordinary impact of Governor Tom Ridge's decision to set a date for Abu-Jamal's execution.

That death notice sparked protests from

Philadelphia to Pretoria. By Governor Ridge's own admission, thousands of letters have piled up on his desk, most demanding that Abu-Jamal be allowed to live and many demanding his immediate release from prison. In Germany, thousands took the streets of Berlin in Mumia's name, pushing even Klaus Kinkel, the SPD foreign minister, to write to Pennsylvania on Abu-Jamal's behalf.

In Britain, while the National Union of Journalists made him an honorary member on 29 July and paper support appeared from other sections of the labour movement, the campaign has been muted. A demonstration called by the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) attracted

fewer than 300 people on a July Saturday afternoon in central London.

Workers Power members joined the march and have helped establish lively campaigns in several areas. But the two biggest left organisations in Britain, Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party failed to send even a single person to the 22 July demo. Their absence was inexcusable only weeks before the scheduled death of the USA's most prominent black left-wing political prisoner.

Thankfully, Mumia is still alive, though the outcome of his appeal is by no means certain, and he could be back on death row before the end of 1995. A retrial may still convict him but not sentence him to

die. This would still be a gross injustice. But the reprieve from the notorious Judge Sabo suggests that there is a real possibility of Abu-Jamal winning his complete freedom.

That would be a real cause for celebration and could also serve as launch-pad for a renewed drive to abolish capital punishment and the racist justice system in the United States that criminalises so many other black Americans.

• Continue sending letters/faxes to Governor Tom Ridge, Main Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg PA, 17120, USA (fax: 00 1 717 783 1396) demanding that Abu-Jamal be freed immediately.



# SWP and Bosnia

## Take sides against genocide

### "The Bosnian government is just as bad as the rest"

The SWP's opposition to taking sides with the Bosnians rests on this assertion. At the most general level it is true. Alia Izetbegovic's government is bourgeois, pro-imperialist, nationalist, and contains powerful Islamist influences.

But the political character of a government or army leadership does not dictate where the class line is drawn in war. This should be obvious to anybody who knows the SWP's position on the 1991 Gulf War. The SWP rightly stood for the victory of Iraq. Yet Saddam Hussein is ten times more brutal and oppressive than the rulers of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Iraq's victory over imperialism would have stimulated anti-imperialist forces. His defeat strengthened our own rulers.

The Bosnians' state and its multi-ethnic population consisting of a majority of ethnic Muslims but also of ethnic Croats and ethnic Serbs too, has become the systematic target for destruction by both Croat and Serbian nationalist forces. That is why, once it was clear that the Bosnian people had been marked down for destruction by both sides, revolutionary socialists had to side systematically with them and their defenders.

For Marxists the victory of the BiH forces in the present war would be progressive, despite the bourgeois politics of the leadership, because it will:

- prevent the genocide or dispersal of the Bosnian people and weaken the Milosevics and the Tudjmans of the region.
- strengthen the hand of those who want a multi-ethnic solution, especially the working class and all the progressive elements amongst the Serbs and the Croats as well as the ethnic-Muslims.
- thwart the plans of imperialism to carve up former Yugoslavia into ethnically based miniature national states.

### "But the Bosnian government is engaged in a land grab."

According to Duncan Blackie:

"By turns the Bosnian leadership has found itself in alliance with Croatia, accepting Western demands for a solution based on separation, and then from the end of 1993 combining both these policies with Muslim ethnic chauvinism to carve out the greatest possible slice of territory with offensives in central Bosnia".

This, the SWP leaders say, proves that supporting the Bosnians can only lead to a deepening ethnic conflict. They are wrong. And to understand why—without giving the slightest political support to the Bosnian government—we have to understand the limits of its nationalist project.

Quite simply, the Bosnian Muslims—defined as a nation by their enemies, not themselves—stand in the way of the ethnic carve up of Yugoslavia between Serbia and Croatia. Pre-war Bosnia was a multi-ethnic society in which nationality mattered little and religious differences were tolerated.

The cities and towns especially were the home of a multi-ethnic and intermarried working class. Their labour and student movements stood in the forefront of the mass opposition to war, to partition and even to Izetbegovic's declaration of independence—because they saw, correctly, that it would play into the hands of the fascists: the Serb neo-Chetniks and the Croat neo-Ustashe.

Even today, after years of war and racism, the working class cities of Bosnia remain multi-ethnic. There are not only Croats, not only Jews, Gypsies and ethnic Hungarians, but Serbs too in the BiH armed forces. When Serb artillery killed seventy two young people in the murderous shelling of a square in Tuzla three months ago, five of the victims were ethnic Serbs drinking in the same coffee bars, hanging out in the same square, as ethnic Muslim and Croat teenagers.

This shows why, despite the national

The *Socialist Workers Party's* position on the Bosnian war is a disgrace, and many of its members know it. The SWP's refusal to take sides with multi-ethnic Bosnia against ethnic cleansing is a misguided attempt to remain "internationalist" in the face of national conflict. Many SWP members want to change this line. Paul Morris spells out the answers to the SWP leaders' arguments on Bosnia.



Victims of Serb fascist genocide.

chauvinism of the Bosnian government, its aim cannot yet be an ethnically based solution. Whereas Karadjic and Mladic repeat that "Serbs cannot live in the same state as Muslims and Croats" and have displaced, and killed many hundreds of thousands to prove it Izetbegovic has to proclaim his *opposition* to ethnic partition.

As for the military offensives of the BiH in central Bosnia, the first thing Duncan Blackie and the SWP leaders should remember is that this land was once lived in by hundreds of thousands of ethnic-Muslim peasants. They have no other state than Bosnia where they will be welcome. Is it a "land grab" to try to recover your farm or village from a fascist militia which has driven you out? Is it a land grab to try to push back the heavy artillery which is shelling defenceless working class communities of your home city?

### "But the Bosnian Muslims have carried out ethnic cleansing"

This, too, is true. There have been examples of ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Muslim militias. During the recent siege of Srebrenica a UN observer reported that during a Muslim breakout attempt several Serb villages were set on fire and villagers shot down. But the real question is what attitude the government, the army leadership and the mass of the working class has taken to such atrocities, and whether they have been systematic.

All unbiased accounts accept that the BiH forces have not engaged systematically in ethnic cleansing. Where this has taken place it has been punished by the army command. The Muslim nationalist leader of the "green berets" who was implicated in ethnic cleansing was expelled from the army. The government includes Serbs and Croats, as well as ethnic Muslims, and officially condemns ethnic cleansing. For Bosnian Serbs ethnic cleansing is not an abhorrent exception, a criminal lapse, but

the very *core* of their strategy. Events after the fall of Srebrenica show this clearly.

### "The Bosnian Muslims have reactionary allies"

In recent weeks *Socialist Worker* has hammered away at the idea that the Bosnian Muslims can't be supported because of their reactionary allies—the Croats and more widely the western imperialists:

"Anyone who thinks that the Balkan war is between the 'good' Bosnian side and the 'bad' Serbs should look at the Bosnians' friends. The Bosnians signed a military alliance with the Croats . . . There is also mounting evidence that the Bosnians are receiving heavy shipments of arms from the Western powers . . ." (SW 5.8.95)

This is true. Indeed, Bosnia has done more than sign a military alliance with Croatia, it has formed a "Muslim Croat Federation" with the right wing Zagreb regime. This is potentially disastrous for the people of multi-ethnic Bosnia and should be condemned. Why? Because it is a step to the subordination of multi-ethnic Bosnia to the war plans of the ultra-nationalistic, ethnic-cleansing regime in Zagreb.

At the military level, however, we cannot condemn a temporary alliance with Croat forces where and when this helps defend multi-ethnic Bosnia. But we warn that the price of victory through such alliances could be high. The inhabitants of Bihac, starved and surrounded for months, cheered when a combined push from Croat and BiH forces liberated the territory. But Croatia's Franjo Tudjman clearly sees Bihac as a prime candidate for effective annexation into a greater Croatia.

As for the US involvement *Socialist Worker* wilfully takes it out of context and inflates its true extent. It is certain that covert US operations are supplying the BiH, probably with US M16 rifles and uniforms, as SW suggests. But they are not

being supplied with heavy artillery and tanks, firstly because the US ruling class is too split to allow this and secondly, because they do not want to see BiH too strong so that it will not accept the partition deal. This is precisely the significance of the limits of its aid to an "unofficial" and freelance nature, by US ex-officers etc. This is also why the *Economist* on 19 August reports:

"Fearing that the Bosnian government may block the plan America is taking drastic steps to bring its friends to heel . . . the United States is putting pressure on Mr Tudjman to freeze the military accord. If he does what the Americans tell him, Croatia will abandon plans to help the Muslims in central Bosnia."

The Bosnians need heavy weaponry and training in how to use it. Otherwise they will be condemned to sit the war out inside their own cities or bogged down in wasteful trench warfare. They need tanks and heavy artillery, and yes if possible planes and Scud missiles to hit back at the murderers of Srebrenica. Where they get them from and who trains them to use them—as long as there are no strings attached—we do not care.

Far from condemning the BiH because they are carrying US weapons revolutionaries should demand the lifting of the arms embargo completely, massive working class aid to Bosnia and maximum necessary arms to the BiH forces.

Unfortunately those with the arms are generally imperialist countries or third world dictatorships. The question for a progressive side in a just war is not who supplies the arms but whether receipt of these arms involves surrender to the dictates of the supplier.

In Ireland, for example, it was not the "socialist" Kalashnikov but the "imperialist" Armalite (US made) which the IRA used to fight the Britain occupation forces for a whole period.

### "But lifting the arms embargo will just lead to more killing"

The problem is that the arms embargo is a piece of imperialist intervention. You cannot call for an end to imperialist intervention at the same time as supporting it. It guarantees that the Bosnians are left defenceless faced with the Croat and Serb forces who have powerful and committed international allies and arms industries of their own.

*Socialist Worker's* real rationale for opposing calls to lift the arms embargo is that it coincides with what a section of the imperialists and the pro-imperialist left wants: lift the embargo, air-strike the Serbs, and use the UN forces to defend Bosnia.

The SWP leaders like their members to think the only position opposed to this is their own. But it is not. Thousands of trade unionists and socialists opposed to the UN intervention marched for UN Out!, Lift the Arms Embargo! in London on 22 July, the week of the Srebrenica massacre. For all its profession of outrage the SWP mobilised not one person to protest.

### "The only answer is for workers to unite"

Instead of taking sides in the conflict, *Socialist Worker* tells us, the only answer is for workers in each of the states of former Yugoslavia to unite against their own bosses:

"The only solution is for workers of different backgrounds against all right wing politicians and bosses" (SW 22.7.95)

Wherever the class struggle can't be reduced to the basic economic struggle of the workers against the bosses the SWP runs in terror from the complexities. That is what we call "economism" and it is at the root of this totally abstract non-answer.

How much more "united" can the workers of Tuzla get? They have a multi-ethnic town council, trades council, workers' militia and, in many cases multi ethnic families!

While they have their "own bosses" to fight there are times when the "main enemy" is not the boss of your factory but somebody who wants to drive you out of your factory and your home and wipe you off the face of the earth.

Are the Palestinian bourgeois the enemy of the Palestinian masses? Yes. But their main enemy, for now, is the murderous Israeli state. This should be ABC to any socialist.

In order to stave off the influence of the nationalists and chauvinists and pro-imperialists in Bosnia you need to be able to say: "Don't rely on the USA, the Saudi princes or the Turkish generals. All over the world the working class, with your socialist brothers and sisters in the forefront, is building the only solidarity we need. It's from them that we will get the money, the food, the guns and the solidarity action".

Unfortunately, whilst socialists and trade unionists in Britain, including Workers Power, have helped raise hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of aid, taken several huge convoys to Tuzla, linked up with trade unionists from all over Europe in the process, the SWP has not lifted a finger to help the victims of the Yugoslav war.

It is time to change that situation.

### "What can we do?"

Those in the SWP who want to change the leadership's disgraceful line should submit a simple motion to the SWP's November Conference:

**"Lift the arms Embargo  
UN/Nato out of former Yugoslavia  
Build working class solidarity with  
multi-ethnic Bosnia"**

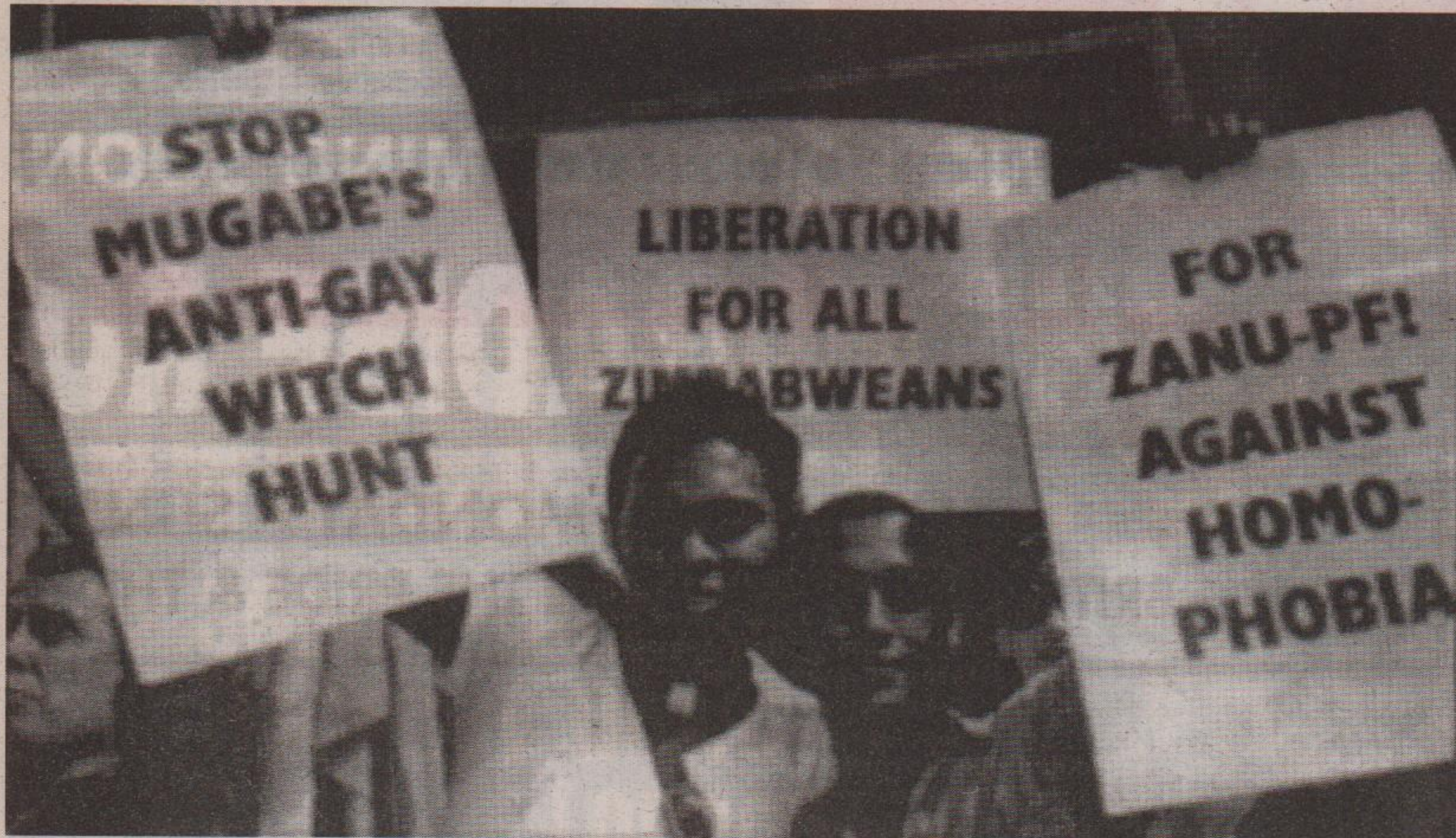
The SWP has more influence in the workers' movement than most groups on the British left; it is time the party added its voice to the cause of saving multi-ethnic Bosnia. ■



# LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 192 SEPTEMBER 1995

## Homophobia in Zimbabwe



Dear Comrades

Watching *BBC World* one night recently while working here in Zimbabwe I caught the news about Michael Barrymore coming out on a gay radio station. I'll be curious to see whether this damages the career of "TV's most popular light entertainer". Whatever, Barrymore is now but one of several high-profile out, gay figures in Britain.

The next day I woke up to find a rather different climate—and I don't mean the weather! Robert Mugabe, hero of the ZANU independence movement against white rule and Prime Minister since 1980, acquired a reputation as a "Marxist". In fact, he is a conservative and very religious nationalist. In mid-August he launched a thoroughly reactionary tirade in support of banning a lesbian and gay stall at an International Book Fair here in Harare.

Ironically, the theme of the event was human rights!

Mugabe's outburst described homosexuality as bestiality, declared that it was not African and insisted that he would never allow it to be promoted among the nation's youth. Catholicism here is very strong and the evangelical churches are growing. They and the press have piled-in behind Mugabe: "We don't want such moral decadence in our country—such beastly, corrupt, satanic behaviour..."

Church women's groups have already organised one homophobic rally in August and the Church Council has planned another for September.

The government and church say that homosexuality is "un-African", a western import. While this is, of course, nonsense it has not stopped Mugabe welcoming in western churches, the IMF advisors and

their money. Nor did he object to the massive presence of Coca-Cola as sponsors of the All-Africa games in September.

While Mugabe's recent rants reflect his own prejudices, it is probably no coincidence that his stoking-up of homophobia comes in the wake of large-scale student protest and riots and successful strikes in some sectors of industry.

The fact that homosexuality is just "human" is proven by the existence of many thousands of African lesbians and gay men, black and white, in Zimbabwe. Fortunately, some of them packed a meeting in Harare in support of the right to have a stall at the book fair. They need help and solidarity in their fight for recognition and equal rights.

In comradeship,  
Clare Heath,  
Harare, Zimbabwe

## Democracy in Greenpeace?

Comrades,

This is written in response to the article on Greenpeace in the last issue of *Workers Power* (no. 191). I was much impressed by reading the piece and agree with all that it said.

I am not writing this letter without any information or personal experience of Greenpeace, as I recently resigned my membership for the very reason of lack of democracy, the lack of any membership, say. I originally joined Greenpeace through observing its direct action around various green campaigns. I viewed most of these affairs on TV and felt like doing something about the problems, so I foolishly joined. This highlights one major problem that Greenpeace has. It is a bureaucratic organisation which tags itself on to major "news breaking stories", not the real environmental crimes that are behind the capitalist, exploitative system.

I attended some local Greenpeace

meetings to find out that all local members did was collect money which ended up going straight to head office, supposedly for their campaigns (not for the full-timers and executives' wages I'm sure!). Apart from being asked to collect money on the street directly, every single letter that I received from Greenpeace just asked me for more and more money. Within the bulletins that I was sent, there was either no or only minimal mention of Annual General Meetings and other decisions made by the executive. In the whole time that I was a member, which was unfortunately for over a year, I do not remember any time that I received an "invitation" to an AGM or to relate any proposals that I had to the national organisation.

As the article pointed out, Greenpeace did play one role in the Brent Spar affair; "they reminded everyone that the multinationals cannot be trusted". Greenpeace

is an organisation that appears to be run in the style of Stalin - a group that recruits as many members as possible but leaves them completely unaware and unclear of its line and policy, yet dominated by a small clique of executives who control everything that goes on, with no say from its ordinary members. Need I say any more?

Adam K.M.  
a dissatisfied ex-Greenpeace member

### Meetings

**Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia - the Socialist Answer**  
Leeds Tuesday 19 September  
7.30pm Adelphi Hotel  
Sheffield Wednesday 20 September  
7.30pm SCAU, West Street

### Summer School

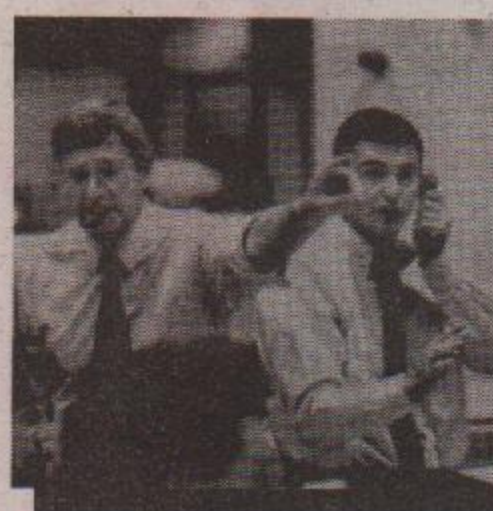
At the end of July *Workers Power's* held its annual summer school in Birmingham. All comrades present took part in a course of five sessions on the life and work of Engels. There was also plenty of other short courses and one-off sessions to choose from, ranging from the class struggle during the American Civil War to developments in the Criminal Justice System.

Comrades from the Irish, French, New Zealand and Austrian sections of the LRCI were present. Comrades from Colombia and Sweden added to the international atmosphere of the event. Two comrades from the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) of the Spanish state presented a lively session on the crisis facing the Spanish Socialist Party government.

After a final session on Blair and the crisis of the Labour left, £1375 was raised to help finance the work of our French and Australian groups, both growing and anxious to expand the range of their publications.■

## Where We Stand

### 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.

### The Trade Unions



must be transformed by 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.

### October 1917



The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin 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 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. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' 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.

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.

### Social oppression



is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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.

### Imperialism



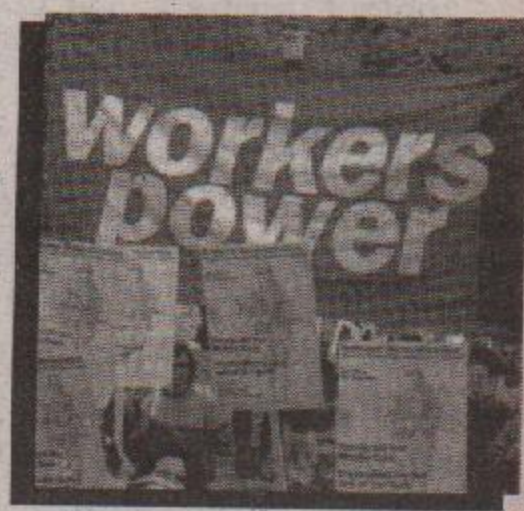
is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third and Fourth Internationals. *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!★



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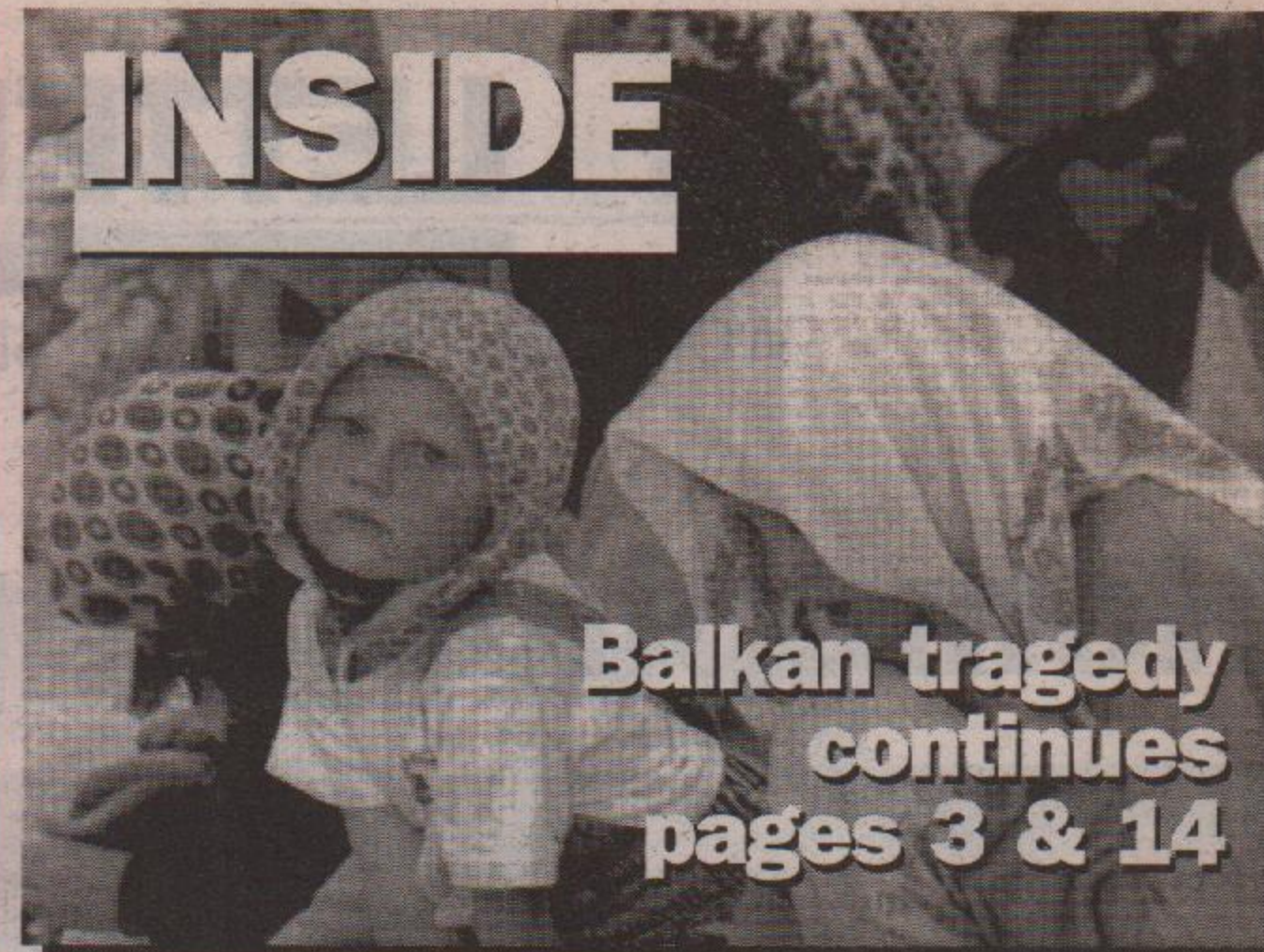
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# workers power

INSIDE



Balkan tragedy continues pages 3 & 14

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

No 192 SEPTEMBER 1995 ★ Price 50p

## IRELAND

The British state has always denied that there are political prisoners in its jails. The 600 or so republican fighters held in prison are, we are told, simply common criminals.

But now Northern Ireland Secretary Patrick Mayhew has let the cat out of the bag. He has announced the early release of around 100 loyalist and republican prisoners, mainly as an attempt to console Sinn Fein for their exclusion from all-party discussions.

The irony is that this "concession" is—in its own way—a tacit admission that these are political prisoners. So is their treatment in jail.

Though ordinary criminals are entitled to 50% remission on their sentences; republican and loyalist political prisoners are allowed a maximum of 33%.

Even when the prisoners are released they will be out on licence and capable of being recalled at the whim of the Home Office. Sinn Fein have rightly rejected Mayhew's move as inadequate. They demand a total amnesty for all the political prisoners.

### Conflict

They would not be in prison if it were not for the political conflict in Northern Ireland.

In return for the IRA ceasefire, Britain has only granted an early release to one person imprisoned for murder in Northern Ireland—Private Lee Clegg of the Parachute Regiment, who gunned down a young Catholic joyrider.

They did better than release him. They promoted him to Lance Corporal and attached him to the Paras' recruitment and training company on his release. Compare this with the treatment of republican prisoners like Patrick Kelly in Whitmoor prison, Cambridge-shire.

He was so badly abused that he went on a blanket protest along with other republican prisoners. They were segregated, subjected to prolonged exposure to artificial light, put onto a cold diet and denied vitamin substitutes.

Patrick Kelly has a cancerous growth that needs urgent medical attention. He was deliberately denied treatment for a long time.

In Belmarsh and Whitmoor the Home Office operate a closed visits system which denies any direct access to republican prisoners. If you want eye contact during a visit you cannot speak to the visitor.

### Enemies

If you want to speak to them you cannot see them. This calculated cruelty is not only the state's vengeance against its political enemies. It is a way of preventing lawyers from properly consulting with prisoners during the preparation of a defence case.

A lawyer currently defending a number of republican prisoners,

# Free all Republican POWs now!

Gareth Pierce, accused the Home Office of "interfering" in the defence preparation. Even a leading judge, Lord Stuart-Smith, said of the closed visit policy that, "it is plainly wholly unsatisfactory to expect solicitors to carry out their work in closed conditions if they are unable to communicate freely with their clients."

### Attack

Criminals don't get treated like this. Political prisoners do.

That is why Britain is using the issue of the prisoners to attack the republican movement still further.

It has operated the policy of transferring Irish prisoners to Irish jails at a snail's pace. And

Mayhew's much-vaunted proposal to restore 50% remission means nothing more than allowing republican prisoners the rights that are afforded others. Hardly any republicans would benefit from this change until the year 2000.

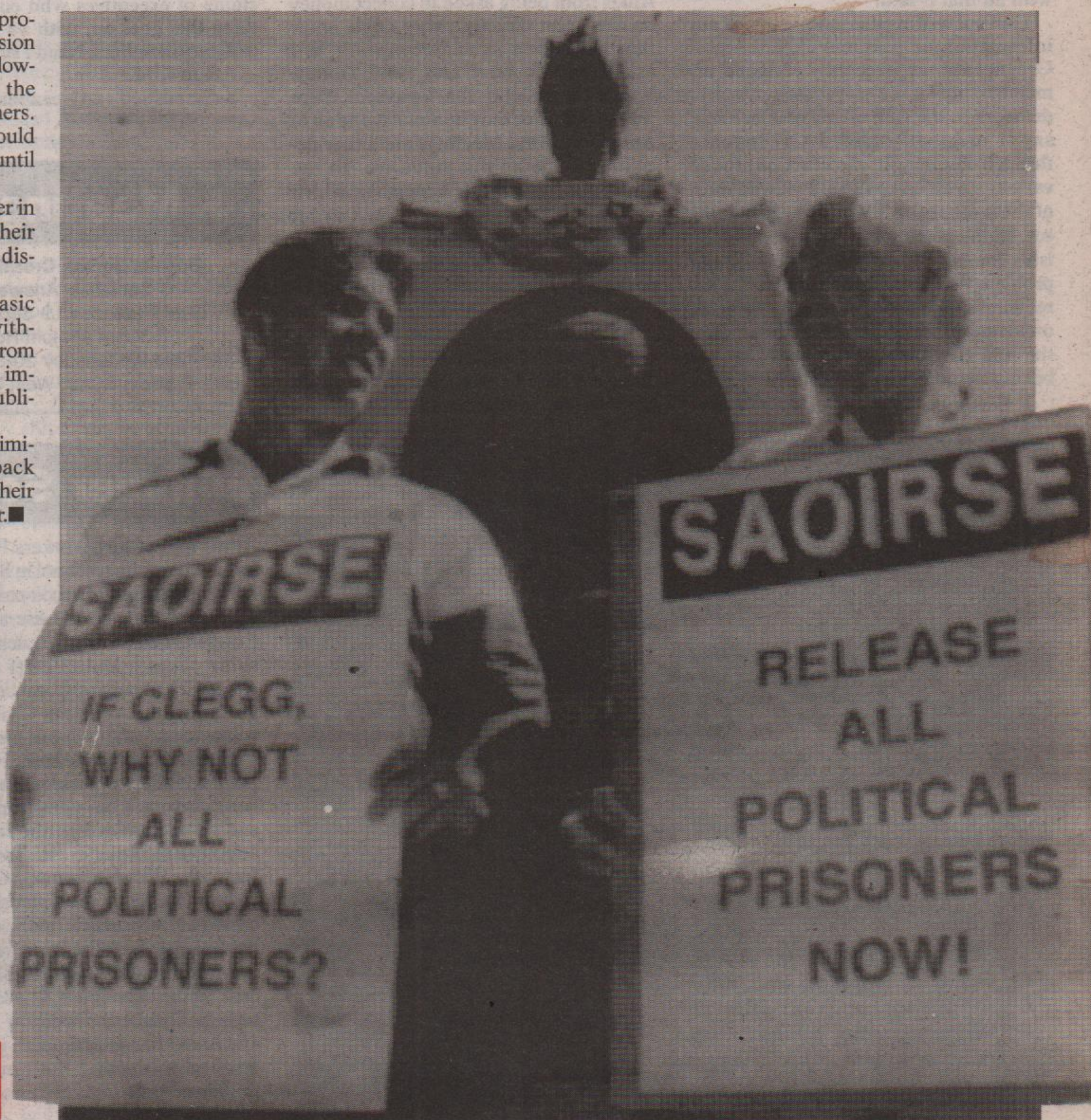
Every republican prisoner in jail is a prisoner of war. Their treatment by Britain is a disgrace.

Just as we raise the basic democratic call for the withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland, so we demand the immediate release of all republican prisoners.

They are guilty not of criminal acts but of fighting back against the occupation of their country by a foreign power.■

Affiliate (£10) to the  
**Campaign for the Release  
of Irish Political Prisoners  
(Saoirse),**  
PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA

**London Saoirse  
Conference,**  
Caxton House, St Johns Way,  
1pm – 6pm  
Saturday 2 September



Inside the peace process – turn to page 10