

Workers power

Where is Labour going?

pages 3&4



Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 204 October 1996 ★ 50p



France: unfinished business

page 13



SLP: Stop the witch-hunt

page 14



Internet censors run riot

page 10

10,000 teachers sacked while class sizes soar

Education is a right!

FOR SALE - One second hand, run down education system. In need of total refurbishment but potentially profitable . . .

Everything else has gone in the great Tory closing down sale; it seems that only education is left on the shelf.

Like everything else which has been prepared for privatisation, education has been cut to the bone.

Take Glasgow as an example. This year Glasgow's schools face a £14 million budget cut. That could mean the closure of 16 primary schools and five secondary schools.

As schools and colleges get less and less government money, middle class kids, in opted-out schools, will be supported by Tory bribes, vouchers and tax breaks for their parents. Working class kids will face larger classes, less attention from teachers and fewer support staff.

Over 10,000 teachers were sacked last year. If the planned cuts go ahead, 8,000 more will go this year. Class sizes—already far too big, especially in primary schools—look set to increase again.

Will Blair's New Labour defend education? Are bishops celibate?

Blair and Harman have made clear their stance on state education: "not for our kids, thank you". Blair's kids and Harman's kids have been opted into the Tory schools system. The Labour Party will not promise an end to opting out and selection, nor a single penny to improve the miserable conditions in working class schools.

Working class kids, their parents and teachers have been fighting against the cuts and defending state education for years.

Now the leadership of largest teaching union the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has woken up to the crisis. In the past the union's president, Doug McAvoy, has boycotted anti-cuts campaigns and demos such as those organised by FACE. Instead he invited Tory Education Minister Gillian Shepherd to address union conference last Easter. But now the NUT leaders have been forced to call a national demonstration to save education.

We have to make the demonstra-

tion on 19 October as big and as militant as possible. We must use the demonstration to build momentum in the fight against cuts in education, in the fight against selection and privatisation. Teachers and students in France have shown us that a real fight is possible. Students from Austria to Australia have fought back against education cuts.

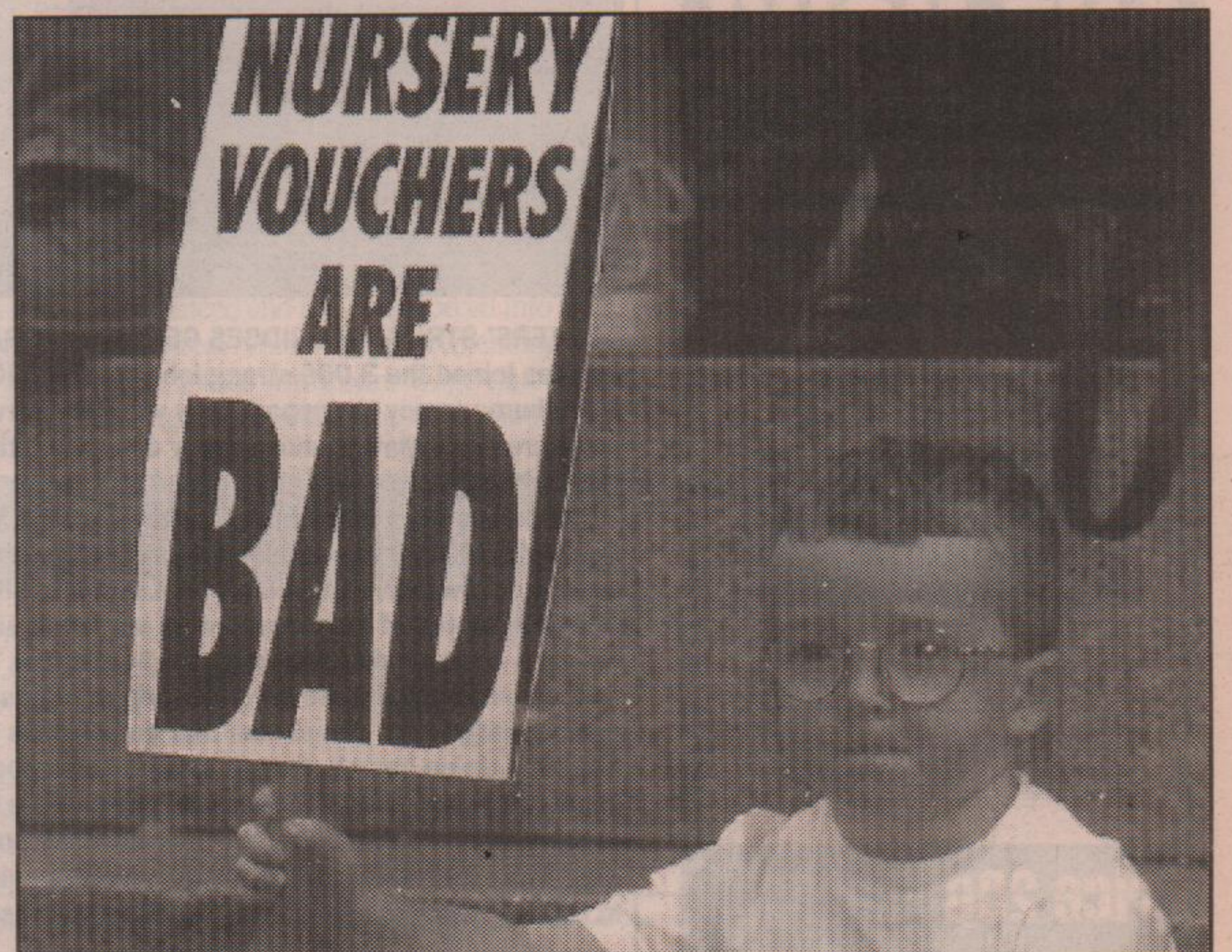
The last thing the union leaders want here is a real fight with the Tories. They are spending half a million pounds to advertise the demo as a "fun day".

Coaches and trains are being hired by the union. We have to make sure that they are packed with people who don't just want "a day out" but who want to fight, now, to force the Tories to reverse the education cuts.

To force Labour to reverse the cuts and to fight for an education system which will be worthy of our kids, an education system which will meet their needs, not the needs of the bosses.

Let's tell the Tories to keep their hands off our kids' future!

Demonstrate: Saturday 19 October Embankment, London 11am



Support Magnet strikers - page 5

Activists Diary

Hillingdon Strike

Saturday 5 October: Hillingdon strikers commemorate one year of struggle. March and rally. Assemble 12 noon at Civic Centre, near Uxbridge tube station.

Cable Street Remembered

Sunday 6 October: Demonstration and rally to mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street. Assemble 12 noon at Altab Ali Park, E.1. Nearest tube: Aldgate East.

CPSA Strikes

Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 October: Strikes by CPSA members in the Benefits Agency coincide with the introduction of the Job Seekers' Allowance.

Kurdistan Solidarity

Monday 7 October: Public meeting organised by the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee: "The Kurdish Nation - The Way Forward", 7.00 pm in the Council Chambers, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, WC1. Nearest tube: Kings Cross. For further information, ring the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee on 0171 250 1315.

Dockers Support

Thursday 17 October, 7.00 pm: Manchester Dockers' Support Group public meeting, Manchester Town Hall. Speakers from Liverpool Dockers/Women of the Waterfront, Post and Rail

NUT/FACE demo

Saturday 19 October: "A Day out for Education", demonstration called by the NUT and FACE. Assemble 12 noon at Embankment for march to rally at Hyde Park.

Workers Power meetings

Central London

Wednesday 16 October, 8.00 pm. "New Labour and the Unions: will Blair break the link?" Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road

Cardiff

Thursday 24 October, 8.00 pm. "Women's Oppression and the fight for socialism". See seller for venue.

Liberal Democrats

Left of Labour?

BY MARK ABRAM

IF PADDY Ashdown had his way, 16-year-olds would be voting at the next General Election. Opinion polls suggest that a good many of them and of newly eligible voters between 18 and 22 would vote for Ashdown's Liberal Democrats. But if they genuinely desire radical social change, they'd be absolutely wrong to do this.

It is hardly surprising that many potential young voters - those who aren't completely alienated from electoral politics - should think that in casting a vote for the Liberals they are voting for something more radical than Blair's Labour Party. At September's Liberal Democrat conference Ashdown made much of the fact that Labour under Blair has moved to the right so far and so swiftly that his party looks to be the left of Labour.

After all, the Liberals say they will increase tax for those earning more than £100,000 a year; Labour remains silent about taxing the rich. Blair refuses to commit Labour to spending extra money on education whereas the Liberals will pour £2 billion into schools, raised from increased income tax.

Moreover, if Ashdown were PM he would outlaw incitement to anti-gay hatred, get rid of the hereditary House of Lords and renationalise the railways—a frontbench Labour MP openly

pushing such an agenda would face the prospect of disciplinary action under Blair's regime.

So why not vote Liberal Democrat?

In general, the Liberal programme is what it says it is: a bourgeois democratic programme, committed to more "open" government and an extension of legal protection to oppressed groups. The demands for the abolition of the Child Support Agency, increased spending on education and the NHS reflect the importance attached to these issues by their voting base, made up largely of the more progressive three million or so of the affluent middle class in England.

Echoes

But the Liberals are anti-working class whenever it comes down to overtly class questions. Ashdown echoes the chorus that claims the benefits system is "too big and unaffordable"; he is happy to retain all the anti-trade union legislation passed by the Tories.

We don't have to wait for Ashdown to get to Number 10 to see the truth of this. Whenever Liberal Democrats have been in power in local government they have passed budgets which have resulted in cuts that have hit working class kids in schools or on council hous-



ing estates very hard. The Liberal group that controlled Tower Hamlets council in East London for eight years actively sought to divide the local working class and poor by whipping up racist sentiment against local Bangladeshi residents.

A vote for the Liberal Democrats would also be a wasted vote - not because they won't win - but because the main force for progressive social change in Britain is the working class. And the overwhelming mass of it, in excess of 13 million at the next election, will almost certainly vote Labour. Some will vote because of Blair and many others despite him and his very right wing programme.

Revolutionaries start out from a different premise to reformists in elections. Labour has had more left wing programmes in the past, Liberals have had more right wing ones. But all these programmes are pro-capitalist ones; they may reflect the pressure from below for change, but they all seek to defend the major institutions of repression and power over ordinary working people. They refuse to seriously challenge the vast amounts of wealth held by the key private sector companies and banks, wealth which we will need to expropriate to achieve serious and fundamental change.

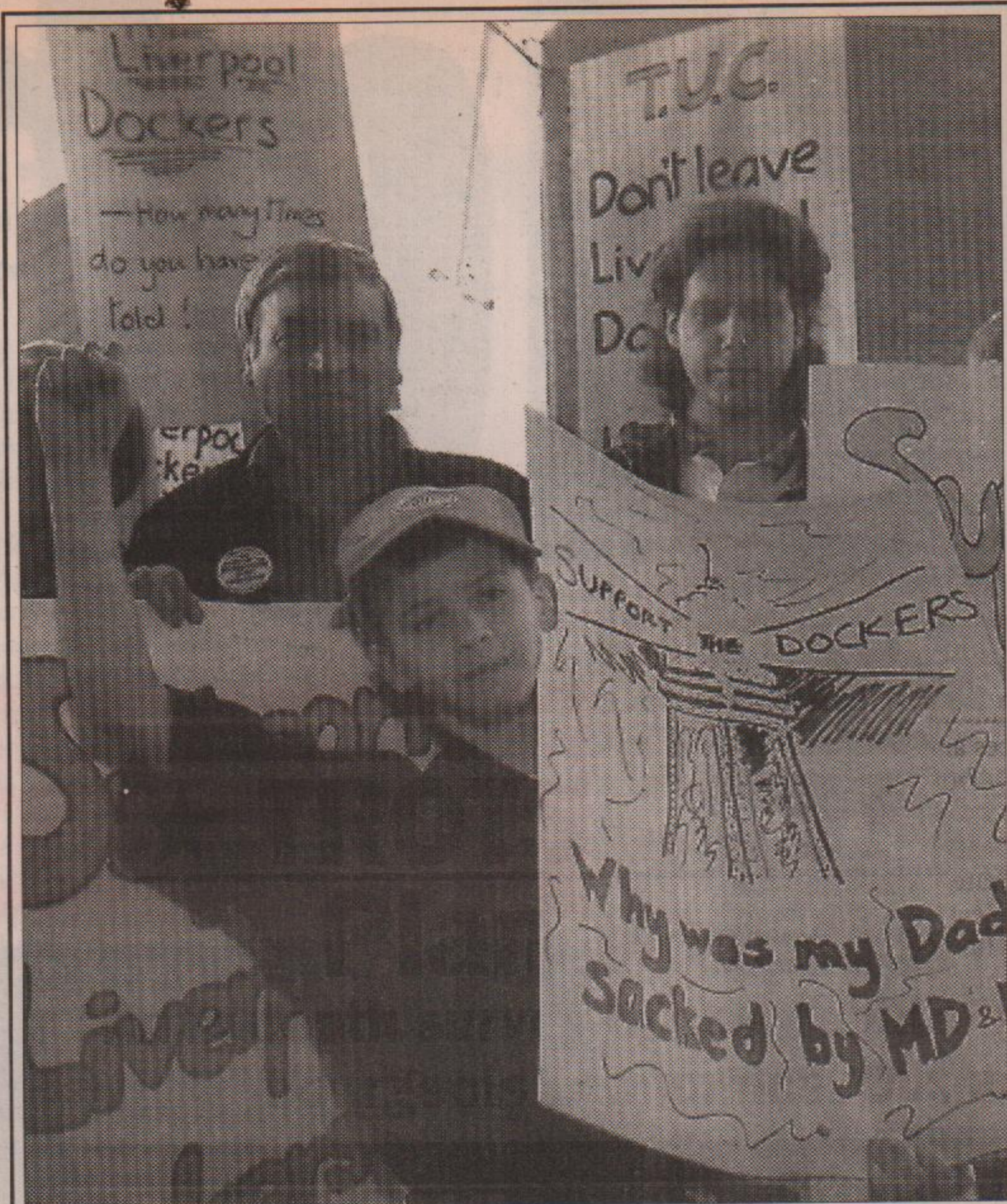
All Liberal or Labour programmes,

however "radical" they sound, will not stand the first serious objection from the magnates of industry and finance, the hostile bosses' media and the chiefs of the armed forces.

Faced with such a prospect many might despair and cynically abstain from the election. But cynicism is not an alternative. The key is to get the working class to wake up to the fact that serious, lasting, social and political change will only come when they take power into their own hands, build it from below in the housing estates and factories and offices and use it to tear down and replace all the talking shops which mask where real power lies - boardrooms and Whitehall.

Believe

But at present the mass of workers still believe that Labour will make a difference after 17 Tory years. We do not share this illusion but it needs to be shattered in practice by putting Blair into office and exposing him during the course of a struggle to force a Labour government to carry out the policies that workers need. When millions see that he is unable to act in their interests and refuses to bend to the pressure of the working class, we will be better placed to win them to the revolutionary alternative of a real workers' government and working class power. ■



DOCKERS' STRUGGLE BRIDGES GENERATION GAP: Liverpool dockers and their families joined the 3,000-strong lobby of the TUC on 9 September to press the union bureaucracy to support their year-long struggle for reinstatement. Despite widespread sympathy among many delegates, the TUC as a whole continued to turn a deaf ear.

The anniversary of the mass sackings by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) saw thousands take to the city's streets. Hundreds of Turkish and Kurdish workers travelled from London to show their solidarity. The participation of hundreds of roads protesters and other single issue campaigners helped create a carnival atmosphere on 28 September. As we go to press there is more serious business at hand as dockworkers from some 20 countries take action against cargo from companies that do business with the MDHC. In Australia, the Maritime Union has pledged to block all Liverpool-linked shipping from the country's ports. Send donations to: Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee Appeal Fund, c/o Mr J Davies, Secretary, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. Ring 0151 207 3388 to invite a docker to speak at your meeting. In London, you can also contact dockers' representatives on 0171 387 4771.

Free Satpal Ram!

NEXT MONTH marks the tenth anniversary of a gross injustice, an injustice which has led to a decade in prison for Satpal Ram. Satpal's crime was simply to defend himself against a racist attack in a Birmingham restaurant. He was convicted of murder after fighting back against six violent racists. During the attack Satpal sustained several stab wounds.

Over the past ten years of imprisonment Satpal has faced constant harassment by the prison authorities. He is currently classed under "phase 5 rule" as a potentially disruptive prisoner and can be moved from prison to prison every 28 days. He has been strip searched, physically attacked and

put in segregation. He has also been denied proper meals and a change of clothes.

Satpal has been a tower of strength through much of his ordeal, but friends and supporters are extremely concerned at the effect that this treatment is having on his health.

The anniversary of the attack which led to Satpal's imprisonment will be marked by a demonstration and rally in Birmingham, organised by the Free Satpal Ram Campaign.

The campaign is calling for Satpal's release from prison and is asking that letters protesting at his imprisonment and appalling treatment to be sent to the Director of the Prison Service. ■

SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATION:

Assemble 12 noon

Saturday 16 November

Holyhead School, Holyhead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham

Rally 3 pm Wheeler Street, Lozells.

For further information phone Sulman or Stan

0121 507 1618

OUT NOW!
Revolution Issue 17

REVOLUTION
RECLAIMING THE STREETS

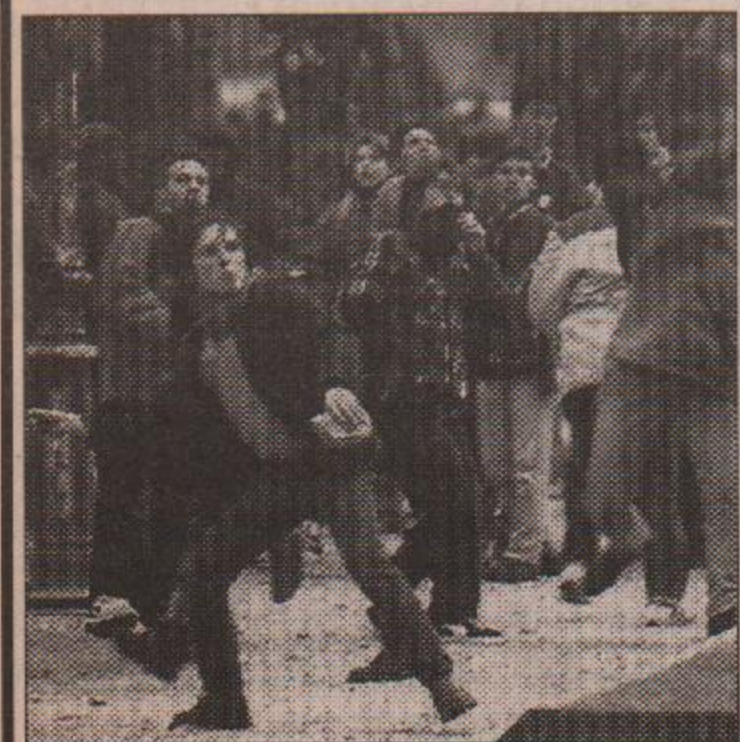


Price 20p

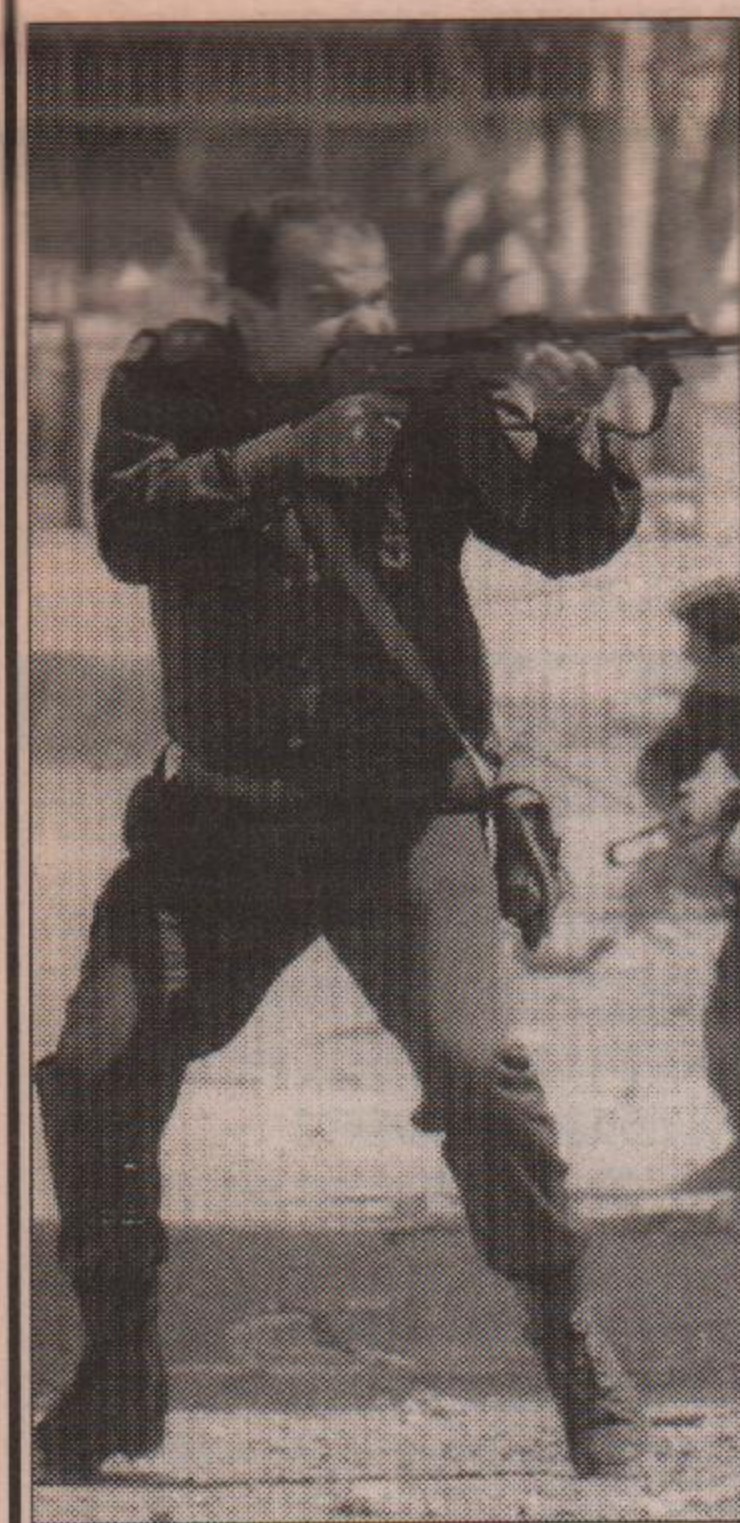
in this issue



Kurdistan
Betrayed by Barzani
- pages 8&9



France
A hot autumn? Workers resist
austerity plans
- page 15



Palestine
Forging an alternative to Arafat's
betrayals
- page 12

Socialist Labour
Scargill cracks down on left
- page 14

P is for Proletariat
- page 9

Cyber-struggles
Colin Lloyd on the internet wars
- page 10. Letter page 15

Reviews
Cable Street; Rhodes;
Revolutionary History -page 7

Clara Zetkin
Socialism and women's
liberation -page 6

EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 204 OCTOBER 1996

LABOUR: The modernisers' manifesto

Blair targets union link

OVER THE last month Tony Blair and his inner clique of "modernisers" have declared open season on the trade unions. As a result even *Tribune*, critical of, but essentially loyal to Blair, wrote in its editorial that "a crisis has developed at the heart of the labour movement" and that "the coming Labour conference is one of the most important in its history".

Tribune is right; nothing less than the very class character of the Labour Party itself is at stake.

Blair has gone so far as to claim that the TUC's decision back in 1899—to break with the Liberal Party and set up Labour—was a mistake.

He wrote, in *The Observer*, that we have had so many Tory governments over the last 100 years because of "the division in radical politics at the end of the last century and beginning of this, between Liberals and the Labour Party". This division was blamed on the unions. It was, according to Blair, a "distortion" which New Labour will correct.

Character

When Labour was founded it was a major step forward in the class consciousness of the British working class movement, expressing as it did a break with the open and unconcealed party of a major fraction of the capitalist class. Of course, Labour was then and has always been a bourgeois party, a party committed to the defence of capitalism.

But it is not simply a bourgeois party. Its link with the trade unions has also given it a subordinate, but nevertheless real, working class character. This link is expressed not just institutionally via union representation in the party, but politically through reforms Labour has carried out which have benefited the unions.

It is, and so far remains, a bourgeois workers' party.

This is a contradiction. But it is a contradiction that Labour's previous right wing leaders, and even the bosses themselves, have been willing to live with. In the name of serving its working class base Labour has been able to demobilise the working class, and pacify it in order to defend capitalism.

The union link has helped Labour fulfil this role. Union leaders have been allies with Labour leaders more times than they have been foes, working together in the name of class collaboration against the forces of class war. Some reforms have been the necessary price of this strategy, but they have never challenged the fundamental props of capitalist society. And they have normally been accepted by the bosses themselves when the Labour carrot was a more useful weapon against workers than the Tory stick.

Blair is determined to change all of this. He might settle for a bourgeois workers' party largely free from organised rank and file pressure and trade union control. But his personal preference is to refashion Labour as a thoroughly bourgeois party on the model of the US Democrats.

His reason for wanting this change, and pursuing it with a vigour unprecedented in the history of the labour move-



Three stooges: Bill Morris of the T&G, John Monks of the TUC and John Edmonds of the GMB plot yet another cave-in to Tony Blair

ment, is his belief that Labour can only become a fully accepted "party of government" if it frees itself from the direct, and frequently disruptive, influence of the working class.

He dresses this up in the language of "modernisation". He talks of the replacement of the working class by a "community" of all types. He attacks the notion of class struggle as outdated and replaces it with the vision of a "radical coalition" made up of "the self-employed and the unemployed, small business people and their customers, managers and workers, home owners and council tenants, skilled engineers as well as skilled doctors and teachers." (*New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country*)

This sickly sweet happy family image—more Brady Bunch than Brookside—is Blair's attempt to deny that he is a protagonist in the class struggle, on behalf of the bosses.

Attack

The truth is, and Blair knows it, that the working class and the bosses have totally different interests. So long as capitalism exists they will fight each other to realise those interests.

That is why, after the so called "end of strikes" we have strikes on the rail and Royal mail, on the Liverpool docks and at Hillingdon hospital. That is why the bosses don't want a minimum wage, while workers everywhere are demanding one. That is why Blair attacks the unions and promises "fast track punishment" for youth rather than jobs, services and money for education.

Above all it is why Blair has chosen now to step up the class struggle in the Labour Party. In office Blair wants to rejuvenate British capitalism. To fulfil this project Blair will be obliged to ruthlessly attack the pay, conditions, services and rights of the working class, starting with the public sector.

He plans to launch his attack quickly in order to crush an expected upsurge in working class struggle—so far held in check by the legacy of defeat in the 1980s and demoralisation after so many years of Tory rule. To ensure that he can win such a battle he has actually gone on to the attack in advance of the general election itself.

The TUC Congress was chosen as the site for the attack because of its symbolic importance as a gathering of the entire labour movement. By giving the unions a kicking during the Congress, Blair was reassuring the bosses that he meant business and signalling to the middle classes that he was anti-union.

David Blunkett threatened new anti-union laws which would impose binding arbitration (no-strike rules) on public sector workers and would enforce re-balancing in disputes whenever the bosses offered something new. Stephen Byers told journalists that Labour in office would cut the union link (if faced by public sector strikes) and replace union funding of Labour with new laws on state funding for political parties. Blair himself attacked the postal strikers, calling on them to give up their action and re-ballot their members.

Some people, including pro-Blair union leaders, now claim that this was all just a public relations cock up. It was not. It was a carefully planned operation.

It was a deliberate attempt to open the way to Blair's campaign to break the union link during the lifetime of the next government.

The Blairites have followed through the nuclear strike on the unions with more conventional weaponry aimed against the elderly (no increase in pensions), public sector workers ("no pay bonanza") and the low paid (no chance of £4.26 per hour as the minimum wage).

All of this should warn every worker looking to a Blair government to beware.

But it should also rouse workers to action now. For despite the clear statement of intent by the Blairites to ditch the unions, they haven't won yet. They may even have miscalculated their strength. They can be defeated.

Allies

At the TUC Congress countless delegates and even Blair's staunchest allies in the bureaucracy, like Alan Johnson of the postal workers and John Edmonds of the GMB, rounded on Labour. Blunkett's proposals on new anti-union laws were denounced and Blair was forced into a partial retreat. There were overwhelming votes for a £4.26 minimum wage and for an extensive legislative programme defend-

ing workers' and unions' rights at work—both warning shots from the unions.

Outright hostility to the threat to the union link amongst trade unionists and Labour activists was so powerful that the previously quiescent Labour left have emerged to lead a campaign defending it. The Labour Party conference—which opened as we went to press—was shaping up to be an arena of conflict rather than a glorified election rally.

In these battles the old alliances are still useful to Blair, if frayed after the ructions at the TUC. With Barbara Castle threatening to defeat the front bench over pensions, Harman turned to the old allies in the union bureaucracy to secure a majority against the membership.

Explode

In the background there is working class resentment: at the attacks we are facing from the Tories, and at those we are being threatened with by Blair. The anger will explode into action at the earliest opportunity.

These circumstances create new conditions for the struggle against Blair. His attempt to destroy the working class base of the Labour Party can be thwarted.

In every affiliated union a campaign must be launched now. Resolutions, petitions, district and regional conferences must all be used to demand no breaking of the union link, immediate implementation of a £4.26 minimum wage and immediate introduction of the TUC charter of workers' rights.

Inside the Labour Party itself activists must fight for these demands. There should be active solidarity with all workers who are in struggle now or who strike between now and the general election. The fight to force the Labour leadership to support such struggles should be pressed at the highest levels of the party.

The union bureaucrats, the Labour left and centre are cowards. They don't have the stomach for such a fight. As the months go on Blair has one almighty weapon to use against them—the ever closer prospect of a general election. The looming election will also convince many working class activists that the best bet is to lie low, to put Blair in office while relying on the backroom struggle between the "modernisers" and the union leaders to reduce him to a mere figurehead.

Be assured—that will not happen. Kinnock and Smith may have been prepared to abandon their old principles, and even to lie through their teeth, to gain office. Blair does not have to lie: he really believes in capitalism, he really hates the unions, the working class and the whole tradition of the Labour Party itself. He will split the Labour Party rather than see it return to being an instrument—however inadequate—of the leaders of the organised working class.

That is why we need not just an opposition to Blair but an alternative. We need a revolutionary socialist working class party that can lead the struggles against the Tories now, the opposition to Blairism in the bureaucracy while getting on with what the bureaucrats—mesmerised by Blair—have forgotten about: leading the fight for better wages and conditions now. ■

WORKERS POWER

Published by
Workers Power (Britain),
BCM Box 7750,
London WC1N 3XX
Telephone: 0171 357 0388
Fax: 0171 357 0344
E-mail: lrcl@easynet.co.uk

SUBSCRIBE!

GET YOUR monthly copy of Workers Power by post, only £8 for 12 issues. Subscribe to Workers Power and Trotskyist International together and receive a year's supply for only £12

I want to subscribe to Workers Power, I enclose £8

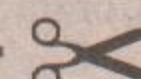
I want to subscribe to both Workers Power and Trotskyist International, I enclose £12

I want to join Workers Power, please send more details

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TEL:



PENSIONS: Labour fudges the issue with "review" pledge

End poverty pensions!

BY HELEN WATSON

BARBARA CASTLE used to be a target of trade union militants' anger. In the 1960s she tried to introduce "In Place of Strife", Labour's first set of anti-union laws. Now she is feted as a keeper of old Labour's red flame.

This latter-day reputation has been enhanced by her current battle against New Labour's front bench on the question of pensions. Castle, now in her eighties, has been transformed into the champion of the welfare state.

In the run up to Labour Party conference the front bench suits have mobilised all their media friends and advertising methods to try and make Castle appear as a mad radical intent on destroying their carefully laid plans for Britain's prosperity.

Harriet Harman - doubtless the proud possessor of a hefty private pension herself - says that this would mean a two and a half pence increase in the basic rate of tax. Since Labour will not even think about tax increases then obviously Castle's will end up in the wastebasket.

So what are Castle's proposals? They are contained in a pamphlet co-authored with sociologist Peter Townsend, entitled *We can afford the Welfare State*. The main demands are that there should be no means testing of pensions, that the link between the state pension and earnings (SERPS) should be restored, and that SERPS should be re-established as the benchmark for private pensions. Specifically they call for an immediate compensatory rise in the state pension of £5 for single people and £8 for couples.

Where did she get such extremist proposals from? From the 1992 Labour manifesto.

"Tories have failed our pensioners", it rightly said. "The Conservatives abolished the link between pensions and earnings. As a result a single retirement pension has been cut by £17.65 a week and the married pension by £28.00 a week."

The pledge? To raise the basic state pension by £5/£8, ("our first priority") and thereafter restore the link between pensions and average earnings. It added a commitment to SERPS as the standard for private pensions, a flexible retirement age between 60 and 70, and a set of legal measures to protect workers from unscrupulous private occupational pension schemes.

This summer the Labour leadership has published a new position on pensions, *Security and Retirement*, which dumps all previous Party policy on the question. The first priority has now become the 700,000 poorest pensioners, even though a third of the 10 mil-



Blair is set to abandon pensioners to poverty

lion pensioners in Britain are living in poverty.

Labour plans to introduce a means tested top up for the state pension for the poorest, called Pension Entitlement. Then there will be a new framework of "stakeholder pensions", a second tier pension scheme in collaboration with private pension companies for those who do not have access to occupational pensions. But Labour will not restore SERPS and refuse to re-establish the link between pensions and average earnings.

In Labour's policy document *New Opportunities for Business* there is a commitment to decrease the costs of pension schemes by using "partnership and competition" with private sector pension companies. But while Labour are promising tough measures against benefit fraud there is no mention of reg-

ulations to stop the bosses plundering the workers' pension funds to line their own pockets.

Under the Tories the basic retirement pension has dropped to 14% of average male earnings as a result of ending the link to earnings. It is now linked to average prices which have risen slower than earnings.

Rather than reverse this, Labour plans to pursue Tory policies. The Tories have increased the use of means testing from 17% to 34% of the social security budget. Labour will increase this further. The Tories have forced and bribed people into private pension schemes. Labour will push this further. Poverty will be increased.

Means tested benefits are neither a sensible way of saving money nor a fair way of alleviating poverty. For a start they cost far more to administer. The

administrative cost of the means tested income support is £5.45 per person per week, compared with the universal entitlement pension which costs 45p per person per week.

Secondly, the uptake of means tested benefits is lower, and a large proportion of people do not receive the money they are entitled to. Others make claims, but find they are not eligible and have to live off savings or even sell their homes.

Universal child benefit was introduced as a way of trying to reduce the effects of poverty on the health and welfare of children. It not only applied to the poorest, but was a small increase in the income to all mothers. Labour is planning to abolish a number of universal benefits. In an attempt to gain popular support they are holding up the spectre of the scrounging millionaires who receive all these benefits.

Their justification for abolishing child benefit payments for over 16s in education is that at the moment this universal benefit also goes to millionaires who don't need it. So to stop this we all lose benefits! How does this hurt the millionaires and help the millions of ordinary who need benefits and currently receive them as of right?

If Labour was really worried about the scrounging millionaires - and it isn't, it welcomes their donations to party funds like it did with Matthew Harding - it would hit them with tax. But of course this goes against the "New Labour, No Tax" mantra.

Labour's plans to introduce means testing for part of the state pension, and for child benefit for over 16s in education are just the start.

If they succeed they will go on to make more and more elements of the welfare state means tested, leading to public systems for health, education and social security that are an inadequate and underfunded safety net for the poorest, while others have to pay directly. This will inevitably lead to a further decline in the standards of public welfare provision as anyone who can afford insurance will be forced to opt out into private schemes.

Harman, Blair and Brown's argument is that "we" can't afford to increase pensions by £5/£8 a week, nor link them to earnings. This is a lie.

Because payments into the national pension scheme (through National Insurance) are linked to earnings, they are rising faster than the payments out, which are now linked to prices. At the moment National Insurance contributions are raising far more (£5 billion in 1995-6) than the government is paying out in benefits - an estimated £2 billion of the excess is going into subsidising private pension schemes and other concessions to the well off.

This money should immediately be given back to the workers who paid for it throughout their working lives - the pensioners.

Over 30 resolutions have been sent to Labour Party Conference opposed to the leadership line on pensions. The trade unions and constituencies are demanding as a minimum the reinstatement of the link of pensions to earnings, the restoration of SERPS and workers' control over pension funds.

Even this is a long way from meeting the needs of pensioners. The UN has recently reviewed pensions and concluded that private schemes are dangerous as they leave millions without any protection, and recommend a mixture of public and private pension provisions that provide about 30-40% of previous earnings on retirement. Townsend and Castle take this figure and argue that Labour should be committed to a basic state pension of 20% of average earnings, with SERPS providing another 10-20%.

But why should people's incomes drop by 60 - 80% when they stop work? Most people live for at least 10 - 20 years after they retire. Current policies mean that, for the rich this is a time to spend their accumulated wealth and pursue their interests.

Retired workers on the other hand form a growing army of desperately poor, isolated, undernourished and housebound people fearing every bill that comes through the door. Electricity charges do not fall by 80% because you are over 65. Food prices don't get subsidised. And thanks to the misnamed "community care" legislation, older people who are sick are having to sell their homes in order to pay for means-tested state nursing care.

Workers and pensioners need to organise to put pressure on Labour not only to fulfil their previous promises, but to meet our real needs. Labour must not be allowed to get away with their attacks on pensioners.

What to fight for

- Voluntary retirement at 55 years.
- For an immediate increase in the basic state pension to the average income, payable to all individual pensioners regardless of marital status.
- Nationalise all pension schemes into a single state scheme under trade union control and fixed at full rates of pay.

DIARMUID O'NEILL: Another shoot-to-kill operation

Troops out of Ireland Now!

DIARMUID O'NEILL was a young, unarmed Irishman living in London. The police suspected him of being in the IRA. So when they raided his home they shot him dead and then dragged his body down the stairs at the front of the house.

They lied and claimed they had carried him out on a stretcher. They said he was killed in a "shoot out": but later they admitted he was unarmed. O'Neill was the victim of a shoot to kill operation by the British state.

This is the reality of the British state's attitude to the Irish struggle - brutal, remorseless and with scant

regard for legal niceties. After all Diarmuid and the other "terrorist" suspects captured in the raid hadn't been charged with any crimes, let alone found guilty in a court. Yet every filthy, drink-sodden bigot working on Britain's tabloids yelped with glee at the killing and declared the suspects guilty.

By contrast Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour MP for Islington North, made a small gesture in support of the republican movement in the same week as the killing. He invited Gerry Adams to the House of Commons to promote his autobiography. Corbyn was backed in

this by Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone.

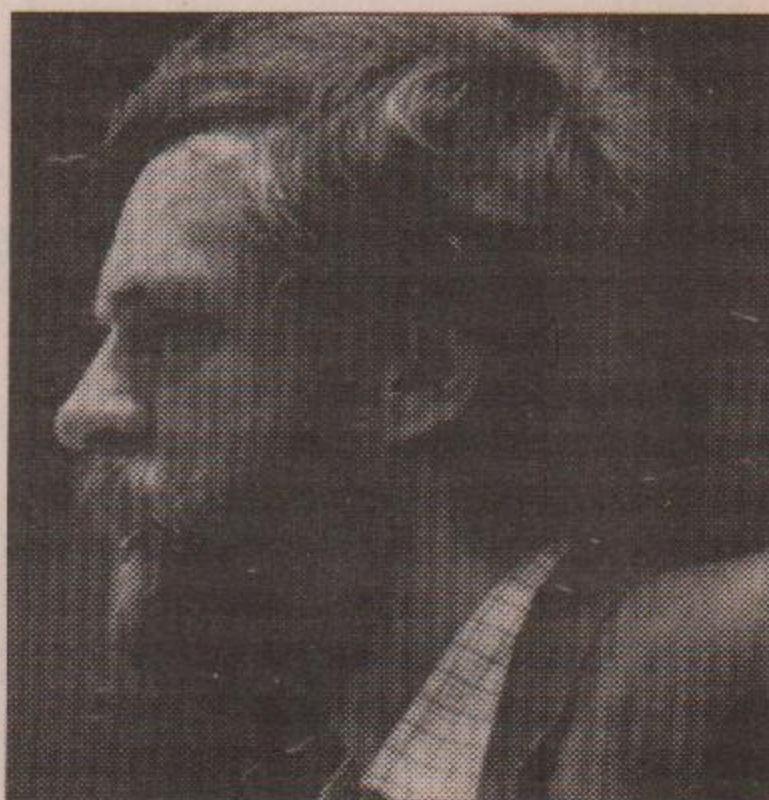
Adams a former MP; the leader of a legal party which gained 17% of the vote in Northern Ireland; he has been welcomed at Clinton's White House and has held both secret and public meetings with senior British politicians over the last 20 years. But Corbyn's gesture to Adams provoked outrage.

The Labour leadership did not even query the actions of Diarmuid O'Neill's killers or the tabloids' contempt for the truth. But they poured abuse on Corbyn, threatened him with expulsion and are now plotting to deselect him.

From a party that constantly thrusts its democratic credentials down the throats of its socialist critics this is rich indeed. It reveals just how loyal Labour is to Britain's murderous state machine and just how intolerant the Blair leadership is of any dissent in the party.

Corbyn was entitled to invite Adams. Any moves against him by the Labour leadership should be met with full-scale resistance. If Blair wants a fight on this, Corbyn and his supporters should say clearly - we'll give you one and you'll regret it.

- Defend Jeremy Corbyn!
- Troops out of Ireland Now!



Jeremy Corbyn MP

TUC CONGRESS: Blair's nuclear strike on unions

New unionism meets new Labour

THE SEPTEMBER 1996 TUC attracted more media interest than any Congress of the past decade. General Secretary John Monks' plans for the Blackpool gathering were as carefully tailored as one of his sharp suits. It was to be a polite, media-friendly affair.

Blackpool was supposed to be a showcase for the General Council's "new unionism", a partner which leading sections of the union bureaucracy assumed would be acceptable to New Labour. The emphasis would be on individual rights at work, stakeholding as the latest variant on class collaboration and, more controversially, on the promotion of European monetary integration.

Monks even hoped to have the Princess Royal give a speech to the assembled delegates. Charitable as ever Anne declined the invitation! But another invited guest who did show up at Blackpool was the recently elected secretary-treasurer of the US AFL-CIO confederation, Richard Trumka.

Praise

If the top table had been expecting a hymn of praise to the glories of credit card unionism, they must have experienced a bit of a shock as Trumka spouted fighting rhetoric about the need for unions to be "lean, mean fighting machines" taking on the "multinational corporations like Hanson which have no respect for workers in Britain, the US or any other country. Their only loyalty is to their bottom line and their only flag is the almighty dollar".

This all seemed a far cry from Monks' infatuation with European works councils as the answer to poverty pay and inadequate training.

In early September, Monks had confidently predicted that the Congress would not name a specific figure for a minimum wage in order to avoid any suggestion that the unions were about to make real demands of a Blair government. By the third day of the conference, however, delegates had given their backing to a motion proposed by Arthur Scargill and Unison's Rodney Bickerstaffe calling for £4.26 an hour.

Of course, this proved to be an ingredient in more classic bureaucratic fudge as the TUC agreed another

composite and a General Council statement stating that any specific figure was merely a bid to New Labour's proposed Low Pay Commission. Nevertheless, the vote in favour of £4.26 was an embarrassment for both Monks and the GMB's John Edmonds, whose speech against the NUM and Unison motion included a stinging attack on Scargill and the SLP. The reception given to Scargill was not rapturous, but it did symbolise his resurrection within the TUC, a setting where he has faced severe humiliation in the recent past.

Exploit

But the biggest thorn in Monks' side this year was not so much the usual suspects from the left of the union bureaucracy but New Labour. Before the vote on the minimum wage, however, the New Labour leadership had already signalled its intention to exploit the TUC as a convenient backdrop for unveiling its own determination to further curb "union power".

Shadow Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett had used the leader page of the London Evening Standard - required reading in the stockbroker belt - to moot proposals for the introduction of binding arbitration in public sector disputes and to compel unions to rebalot their members on any remotely new offer from bosses.

Blunkett was soon prevaricating in Blackpool about the actual meaning of his article, but Tony Blair, having supped privately with the TUC top table on Tuesday evening, spelled it out in black and white the following morning.

Acceptance

Blair used the media to issue a call for a ballot of CWU members in the Royal Mail over a package rejected by the union's executive six weeks before. He practically recommended acceptance by postal workers of what he called "a pretty good offer". To put it mildly, the bureaucracy was rattled and some unlikely figures within it were genuinely incensed by Blair's intrusion.

Monks' troubles were not over, however, as a quartet of journalists detonated the bombshell planted over a meal by New Labour frontbencher

Stephen Byers. Byers' suggestion of a ballot over voting rights and seats on the party's national executive left the usually buoyant Monks looking very deflated in his closing speech to the conference. He commented meekly that the "unions were looking for a surer touch from Labour".

The TUC tried to assert its independence over employment rights. While it rejected motions from the NUM and CWU calling for repeal of the whole arsenal of anti-union laws, it overwhelmingly adopted proposals for a range of employment rights that go far beyond anything Blair and Blunkett want to consider.

Protection

These include measures to make rights at work, including protection against dismissal, apply from the first day of a job. In itself, the vote did little more than reiterate the pledge made to the TUC by the late John Smith in 1993 as a concession for the loss of union influence at the TUC. But in the context of the week's strident anti-union stance by Blair and co., this was the bureaucracy throwing down the gauntlet.

The debates and votes cast at Blackpool did not herald a new unionism based on dyed in the wool bureaucrats reborn as class warriors. After all the conference continued to turn a deaf ear to the Liverpool dockers and sacked strikers from Magnet Southern in Darlington.

But Blackpool did put a serious dent in the plans of Monks and other members of the General Council for a further rightward shift. The 1996 TUC also made it plain that Tony Blair would not be able to achieve an amicable divorce from the union bureaucracy in the near future.

The week's events opened a window of opportunity that militants rejected in the period between now and the General Election. The kind of pressure from below that has prevented the likes of Johnson from selling out the Royal Mail teamworking dispute should be intensified, with the aim of driving an ever wider wedge between Blair and the union bureaucracy. But this can only be the start of a much more basic challenge to the bureaucracy itself from an organised rank and file within and across the unions. ■



Newcastle healthworkers were out on strike on 23 September. They are fighting a local pay deal which would mean an increase of just 0.75%. Further strikes are planned if management do not improve this appalling pay offer. Meanwhile healthworkers in London at the UCLH are currently balloting for indefinite action against a similar pay deal.

Magnet: Spread the strike

"THE COMPANY won't talk, it won't negotiate." These words to Workers Power from strike committee member Ian Cramond sum up the attitude of management at furniture manufacturer Magnet & Southern in Darlington. The company's bosses sacked Ian and 300 other members of four unions in late August, after they had launched a legal strike for a half-decent pay rise.

Magnet is trying to run a scabbing operation, using US-style union busting tactics, though with very limited success so far. In response, the strikers are mounting regular mass pickets of the plant and calling for a boycott of Magnet's kitchen fittings and other products. They have sent delegations around the North East, to Sheffield,

Manchester and Edinburgh to raise funds and publicise their fight.

Magnet has already admitted that it is losing money hand over fist in its effort to break the unions, but is apparently digging in for a long fight to achieve its aim of union-free production. The strikers have every right to demand industrial solidarity from other workers - over the heads of their union officials if need be. In particular, the men and women from Darlington should be fighting for action at Magnet's other factories with some 1,700 workers.

• Send cheques payable to Magnet Families' Hardship Fund, c/o Ian Cramond, 109 Jedburgh Drive, Darlington Co. Durham DL3 9UP. To invite a speaker to your union meeting, ring 01325 282389. ■

Post: vote yes!

THE COMMUNICATION Workers' Union (CWU) national executive finally caved in to threats from the Tories, Royal Mail bosses and even Tony Blair when, on 19 September, it called off further planned strike action. Up until then there had been a series of well-supported strikes against management's attempts to force teamworking on sorting offices and axe the second delivery.

Union officials announced a new ballot because Royal Mail had threatened legal action over the union's failure to report a trivial number of spoilt ballot papers in the original strike vote. The executive is also scared of the Tories making one final push for privatisation of the Royal Mail before the General Election.

The decision to call a ballot is an undeniable setback for the fight, but also gives militants the opportunity to regroup. In the new ballot, activists

must fight for the maximum "yes" vote through mass meetings that also discuss the way forward in the long-running dispute.

Many CWU members remain dead set against teamworking, but will be reluctant to carry on with limited action that doesn't look like going anywhere. Postal workers cannot afford to wait, in the words of one executive member, "until Christmas deliveries when Royal Mail might start take notice of the action".

Activists need to convene a national meeting with the aim of building the widest support for an escalation to an all-out indefinite strike. They need to prepare now for the extension of unofficial action, whatever the outcome of the current ballot. Even as the executive retreats, wildcat walkouts continue in opposition to the victimisation of union officials and petty assertions of management's authority.

At the Almeida Street sorting office in North London, workers staged two strikes in the space of as many days. First they walked out over the sacking of delivery worker Garry Wills, whose reinstatement they won - pending an appeal. Later in the day, anger erupted as the bosses reneged on a previous agreement to allow workers to attend the funeral of former colleague Brian Hagland, murdered in Australia. Both actions were, of course, completely illegal.

The whole of the executive has shown that it is not prepared to give a lead in defying the anti-unions laws, which are a key obstacle to winning an outright victory. Rank and file activists must seize the time between now and the close of the ballot on 29 October to put the control of the struggle in the hands of those members who are prepared to fight by whatever means necessary to win. ■

Derbyshire FBU

MEMBERS OF the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) have called off further action against Derbyshire County Council after winning significant concessions from the Labour-controlled authority through a summer-long campaign of nine-hour strikes. Delegates from the county's fire stations voted by two-to-one to accept an offer that will still mean the elimination of 12 posts and the axing of one appliance in Derby. There will be no

redundancies, however, since the posts are currently vacant.

Whilst council leader Martin Doughty was threatening a lock-out if action continued, the FBU's General Secretary Ken Cameron urged caution. An all-out action could have won far more, including the complete withdrawal of the whole original £1.3 million cuts package, but Derbyshire remains an inspiring example to brigades in other authorities. ■

CLARA ZETKIN: Pioneer of women's struggle

Women and the struggle for socialism

One hundred years ago, on October 16 1896, Clara Zetkin addressed the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) Congress in Gotha. Her speech, and the resolution adopted by the Party, marked a major advance for the socialist programme for the emancipation of women.

TODAY FEW socialists or trade unionists would disagree with women having the right to work, oppose women having the vote, or deny that protective legislation is needed to shield women from the harmful effects of some work during and immediately after pregnancy. Many would also agree that the question of women's liberation is inextricably linked to the struggle for socialism.

These fundamental positions, and the theoretical basis for them, were established in the German socialist movement one hundred years ago.

The German movement also argued that working class women have little in common with middle class and bourgeois women, and that there are no grounds for unity in a single feminist women's movement. Instead, they argued for a working class, socialist, women's movement fighting alongside working class men for the overthrow of capitalism.

These latter positions are far less popular today. Yet they remain correct and acting on them is vital in the fight for women's liberation.

In the 19th century most socialist parties supported some form of emancipation for women, seeing it as an extension of their general advocacy of rights (to education, voting, full equality under the law). But there were some in the labour movement who did not share even these liberal views.

The SPD was created in 1875 from a fusion of two parties, one of which was led by Ferdinand Lassalle. He advanced a thoroughly reactionary position on women, reflecting the views of sections of workers who believed that women in the labour force caused the lowering of wages. Lassalle's Workers' Association published a document in 1866 which argued that the party's aim should be:

"To bring about a situation in which every adult man can take a wife and start a family whose existence will be assured through his work . . . The rightful work of women and mothers is in the home and family . . . Alongside the solemn duties of the man and father in public life and the family, the woman and mother should stand for the cosiness and poetry of domestic life . . ."

Pitted against this view were the founders of scientific socialism—Marx and Engels—who argued that women's entry into the workforce was a necessary precondition for the emancipation of women and of the working class. Within the SPD, the Lassalleans met capable opponents in August Bebel and Clara Zetkin.

Zetkin argued in 1889: "The Socialists must know that given the present economic development, women's work is a necessity, that the natural tendency to women's work is either to reduce the working hours that every individual must render to society or to augment the wealth of society; that it is not women's work *per se* which in competition with men's work lowers wages, but rather the exploitation of female labour by the capitalists who appropriate it . . . Just as the workers are subjugated by the capitalists, women are subjugated by men and they will continue to be in that position as long as they are not economically independent. The quintessential prerequisite for their economic independence is work."

The SPD was the largest and most influential workers' party in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centu-

BY CLARE HEATH

ry. In the 1880s and 1890s the SPD was repressed in Germany, first with Bismark's Anti-Socialist Laws banning political organisations of the working class, and later with the Combination Laws which restricted the right to hold meetings and specifically prevented women from joining political parties. Despite their near illegality, the SPD were able to organise, build a mass party and trade unions, debate and develop a socialist programme, and win massive support in parliamentary elections.

Despite severe restrictions on women's political activity, the SPD was also able to build a sizeable socialist women's movement, maintain a regular theoretical magazine for women, and develop theoretical, programmatic and organisational positions. This created the basis for the revolutionary integration of the struggle for women's emancipation with that of the general struggle of the working class.

The debates on the woman question were taken forward by the publication of two key books, the conclusions of which were codified in resolutions at the Gotha Congress of the SPD in 1896.

The first book, *Woman in the Past, Present and Future*, later renamed *Woman under Socialism*, was written by SPD leader August Bebel and published in 1878. Its main strengths were in the vivid description of women's lives under capitalism and in its historical approach to women's subordination—seeing it not as a "natural" state but one born of a social division of labour.

The book's popularity was phenomenal. By 1895 it had gone through 25 editions in German, and undergone numerous translations. For several years it was the book most borrowed from libraries in Germany. One working class woman, Ottilie Baader, first read it when she was 40:

"Although I was not a Social Democrat I had friends who belonged to the party. Through them I got the precious work. I read it nights through. It was my own fate and that of thousands of my sisters. Neither in the family nor in public life had I ever heard of all the pain the woman must endure . . . I read the book not once but ten times."

Baader went on to join the SPD.

Woman, as it became known, was revised several times, not least after Engels published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in 1884. The latter work contained a more developed scientific position on the class nature of women's oppression. Engels argued that the origin of oppression was in the development of class society itself, and that the nature of the oppression changed with different



Clara Zetkin was the key figure in developing the SPD's work on women. She once boasted to Karl Kautsky, "It is no exaggeration when I state that it was in large part my personal work that defined clearly the principles of our women's movement and its relationship to our general movement on the one hand and to the bourgeois feminists on the other."

forms of class society.

It was Clara Zetkin who seized these theories and used them to develop a programme. In 1889 she published a pamphlet, *The Question of Women Workers and Women at the Present Time*, which linked the work of Bebel and Engels to her own experience of organising working class women in Germany and the Second International. She turned the theories into propaganda, launching the SPD women's magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) in 1891. She also put the SPD resolutions into practice and, in defiance of the law, organised a network of socialist women.

The success of the SPD's work on women eventually became clear in the first two decades of the 20th century. By 1914 over 16% of SPD members were women, and there were 124,000 subscribers to *Die Gleichheit*.

Zetkin presented her overview of women's oppression and a resolution on the tasks ahead to the SPD Congress in Gotha in 1896. Her speech was later published by the party as a pamphlet.

Zetkin began her speech with a description of the origins of women's oppression, arguing that, "the social suppression of women coincided with

the creation of private property". But while women's oppression existed in previous class societies, Zetkin argued that the modern woman question only arose with capitalism.

With the development of large scale machinery:

"millions (of women) were now forced to find their livelihood and their meaningful lives outside of their families and within society as a whole. At that moment they became aware of the fact that their social illegality stood in opposition to their most basic interest. It was from this moment on that there existed the modern women's question."

Zetkin described the woman question for the different classes under capitalism, making it clear that there are different issues for the women of the proletariat, the middle bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, and of the "Upper Ten Thousand"—the high bourgeoisie.

Different tasks faced each class of women. For women of the "Upper Ten Thousand" the key battle is around the demand to dispose of their property in an independent and free manner, an end to the social differences that are based on property and inheritance rights.

For the middle bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, the key question is not so much property rights, but of equality with men in order to compete with them in the professions and in business. For this class, it is a struggle against men who resist such competition, and the movement of these women is the classic bourgeois women's movement.

It is different for proletarian women, who do not have to fight for access to work, since capitalism has forced work upon them. Zetkin argues that this created a degree of economic independence for working class women. But it also cruelly exploits women, and denies them the ability to develop their individuality. The obstacle to their lib-

eration is that exploitation, it is capitalism:

"Therefore the liberation struggle of the proletarian woman cannot be similar to the struggle that the bourgeois woman wages against the male of her class. On the contrary, it must be a joint struggle with the male of her class against the entire class of capitalists."

Zetkin argues that proletarian women also share the demands of the bourgeois women's movement for equality, suffrage and education, but:

"She (the proletarian woman) regards the fulfilment of these demands simply as a means to enable that movement to enter the battle, equipped with the same weapons, alongside the proletariat."

The conclusions Zetkin draws from this analysis are reflected in the positions adopted in the SPD resolution. Firstly, to develop the party's work among women. At the time, the combination laws forbade women from belonging to political organisations, but did not prohibit the activity of individuals. So a network of representatives (*Vertrauenspersonen*) circumvented the law. They were shop stewards of a kind, whose task was:

"educating proletarian women in political and trade union matters and awakening and reinforcing their class consciousness".

They distributed party propaganda to women, organised discussions, and encouraged women to join trade unions and take part in political activity.

Zetkin also proposed continuing the magazine in order to educate the more politically developed women, and producing popular pamphlets for women on socialism. She insisted that these were not to be special women's propaganda, but rather socialist agitation among women:

"to awaken women's class consciousness and to incorporate them into the class struggle".

In relation to the programme, the SPD agreed to agitate in the press of the party, through the parliamentary fraction as well as through organising working class women, for a whole series of economic and democratic demands aimed at achieving protection and equal rights for women.

Zetkin was insistent that the struggle for these demands, and the organisation of women to achieve them, had to be independent of, and often in opposition to, the bourgeois feminists.

Zetkin's contribution was a major step forward from the earlier tendency to ignore or actively oppose women's struggles, or allowing the feminists to take the leadership and to organise working class women as supporters for their own bourgeois struggles.

Weaknesses remained, however. The most significant gap in her understanding was her limited view of the revolutionary potential of struggle around the immediate demands of women. She generally saw women as a difficult group of workers to organise, and therefore the special forms of work and propaganda that were needed were primarily aimed at allowing women to participate more fully in the struggle for the general demands of the working class.

It fell to Alexandra Kollontai (see *Workers Power* 199) to fully articulate the revolutionary potential of the fight against women's specific oppression and how this could be used positively to integrate working class women into the general fight for socialism. ■

Key Dates

1875 German SPD founded from unification of the "Lassalleans" and "Eisenachers".

1878 - 1890 Bismark's Anti-Socialist laws forbid membership of the SPD.

1890 - 1908 Combination Laws prevent women joining political organisations.

1878 SPD leader August Bebel publishes first edition of *Woman in the Past, Present and Future*, later renamed *Woman under Socialism*.

By 1895 it had gone through 25 editions in German, and undergone numerous translations. For several years it was the book most borrowed from libraries in Germany.

1884 Friedrich Engels publishes the first edition of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

1889 Clara Zetkin publishes *The Question of Women Workers and Women at the Present Time*.

1896 Clara Zetkin addresses the Gotha Congress of the SPD.

Marxism and women's liberation



Marxism and Women's Liberation an LRCI pamphlet, available from Workers Power, price £1

Rhodes: Imperialism on the Box

Keith Harvey has been watching the new BBC series, Rhodes

IHAVE A confession to make: I have danced on Cecil Rhodes' grave. I did my jig in Zimbabwe last year on a simple bronze plaque set into a granite outcrop—all that marks the resting place of this paramount British financier, diamond magnate and imperialist.

When he died they packed his body in ice and the funeral cortege travelled by rail to a majestic spot, called World's View, in the Matopos Hills, south of Bulawayo. Cecil Rhodes was fond of going to this spot, no doubt pleased as punch at being master of all he surveyed—Rhodesia—from this commanding view.

Rhodes, the new BBC drama, tells

of how he achieved this in the last thirty years of the 19th century, before he died aged 49. As a saga of one man's journey to multi-millionaire status the serial, the most expensive BBC production ever, plays fair with the main facts of his life.

But Rhodes was more than just one of many entrepreneurs of the time. He was a pioneer of a new epoch of capitalism—imperialism. From 1870 he blazed a trail in the "scramble for Africa" and eventually forced the British government to follow him, redefining its foreign policy for this new world order as it did so.

As an imperialist his ambitions were far from modest. In his will, drawn up

in 1877, he left his wealth in trust to form a Secret Society modelled on the Jesuits and dedicated to the British "occupation of the whole continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Canada (Crete), the whole of South America . . . the ultimate recovery of the United States . . ."

He was far ahead of British colonial policy at the time. In the 1870s private entrepreneurs like Rhodes had to deal with the Liberal administration of Gladstone back in London. They did not share Rhodes' aggressive expansionist view of British interests in Southern Africa.

Naval

The Cape Province had been taken from the Dutch in the early 1800s. It was the key naval base for guarding British trade routes; two-thirds of all Britain's trade called in at the biggest re-fuelling station in the world. Even the annexation of the Boer-ruled Transvaal in 1840s was only done to protect the Cape ports from an attack from the north.

But Rhodes saw a different future for British capitalism, not one concerned with guarding its trading supremacy. The development of the Kimberly diamond mines in the north of the Province foreshadowed imperialism: the annexation of mineral wealth, the monopoly of the internal market of other nations, the super-exploitation of native labour for the profit of men like Rhodes and the home government.

The transition from one policy to another involved a 20-year faction fight within the British bourgeoisie. Rhodes shows the initial influence of the "missionary lobby" both in the Cape Province and in London. Far from

attempting to exclude blacks from political life this lobby wanted to "civilise" them, by which they meant giving them the vote and allowing them the chance to compete on equal terms with the likes of Rhodes.

Rhodes despised such sentimentality. For him black people were like children and could not be expected to govern themselves. He advocated apartheid—the exclusion of blacks from political life and pressing them into wage slavery in the mines by breaking up tribal self-sufficiency.

Only in the 1890s, in a Tory government led by Lord Salisbury, did Rhodes find his political counterpart in London. From then on the export of capital to ruthlessly exploit the world's labour and resources was at the centre of Britain's quest for world power.

In the 1890s Britain realised that its interests demanded that it dominate the whole of South Africa, with its immense mineral wealth. In 1884 the Boers had been given a measure of self-rule by the British in Transvaal. Later the Salisbury government in London wanted all four self-governing republics back under its domination.

Colonies

The result was the Boer War (1899-1902). By the end of this war, Britain had 15 of the 30 colonies or protectorates in Africa, and among them the richest, including the gold of the Transvaal.

Rhodes follows the events without drawing out these conclusions. But even so, at times "facts speak for themselves". Indeed, the first two episodes were a case study in Lenin's theory of imperialism!

Arriving at Kimberly diamond mine in the early 1870s young Rhodes was

aghast to find so much competition between the miners. Hundreds of miners hacked away (or rather their black workers did) at stony plots of ground, at the mercy of diamond merchants and fickle markets. With admirable frankness Rhodes suggests that the solution is to monopolise the supply by destroying the competition and thereby determining the price. So much for the virtues of the free market!

Rhodes spends a lot of time buying off rivals, colonial government officials, tribal chiefs, even junior ministers in London. Share options in De Beers (his diamond company) or various subsidiaries were doled out by Rhodes in the 1880s and 1890s to get the concessions he wanted.

When this did not work fraud and violence were his chosen weapons. In 1890 he conned the chief of the Ndebele people, King Lobengula, into signing over mineral rights to Mashonaland (what was to become the north part of Southern Rhodesia) for 1,000 rifles and £100 a month. Six years later, Rhodes' aide, Dr Jameson, decided to forcibly annex Lobengula's homeland (Matabeleland) for Rhodes, driving the king to suicide.

Why, given this record, does the Mugabe government still honour the man? His holiday home in the Eastern Highlands was lovingly restored as a hotel. Even the Harare museum has left untouched the pre-Independence exhibitions of the exploits of Rhodes' Pioneer Corps in the their long trek to annex Mashonaland!

But at least his body was not carted back to Westminster Cathedral; there I probably would have had to pay for the privilege of dancing on his grave.

Rhodes is on BBC 1 at 9.00pm on Sunday nights throughout October. ■

Revolutionary History

John McKee reviews *Revolutionary History* (Vol 6, no 2/3) Summer 1996. Revolutionary Marxism in Britain and Ireland from the 1930s to the 1960s. Price £5.95.

THE ESSAYS in this journal vary considerably in quality and usefulness for Trotskyists attempting to analyse and learn from the history of our movement.

The historical article on "The origins of Trotskyism in Ireland" is perhaps the most disappointing, concentrating as it does on a very short period between 1939 and 1945 and dealing in microscopic detail with the individuals and events.

This approach manages to broach only in passing the key programmatic questions facing the development of Trotskyism in Ireland: the relationship between the national and the socialist struggle and the application of permanent revolution in the Irish context.

John McLroy provides an interesting article on the 1945 dockers' disputes in Britain and the role within them of both the Communist Party and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which had just been formed. The contrast was dramatic.

The CP with 45,000 members and some 300 dockers opposed the strikes and did everything in its power to get the dockers back to work. It was continuing its wartime role, showing the new Labour government how useful it could still be in containing and incorporating the workers' struggles. The RCP on the other hand with less than 500 members and a handful of dockers threw itself into the struggle and was viciously witch-hunted by the press and the government as the "evil subversives" behind the dockers.

An article by Paul Flowers looks at the activities of the CP and the Workers International League (WIL) in the first period of the war when the CP, following the Hitler-Stalin pact, opposed the war.

The WIL consistently defended the CP against government censorship and repression despite being regularly denounced by them as "Trotsky-Fascists". In 1941 the WIL intervened in a CP-sponsored Peoples' Convention against the war. The Trotskyists attempted to amend the popular frontist programme, which called for a "people's government" and a "people's peace".

Against this the Trotskyists called for "the arming of the working class under the trade unions" for a "socialist appeal to the German and European working classes" to overthrow their own ruling class, while simultaneously struggling to overthrow British capitalism and ending with a call for the United Socialist States of Europe.

An anonymous article written in 1964 attempting to explain the failure of "British Trotskyism" in its centrist

Healyite guise came into *Revolutionary History's* hands. It is fairly clear that this piece was by someone who spent some years in the Healyite group.

Healyism, more than any other brand of centrism, has spawned painful accounts of its grotesque internal regime by ex-members. This has the merit of offering some insight into the relationship between a wrong economic and political perspective and the rise of a dictatorial internal regime.

Unfortunately, the author lays all the blame at Trotsky's door as if he was responsible for turning the analysis and perspectives adopted in 1938 into an unchanging dogma of the "final crisis around the corner" repeated at every Socialist Labour League (Gerry Healy's organisation, the precursor of the Workers' Revolutionary Party) conference.

Much shorter, but more interesting, is the late Sam Levy's "A footnote for historians". It is a series of reflections about the "open party faction" which was formed in opposition to the RCP leadership's 1949 proposal to dissolve and enter the Labour Party.

Levy draws a picture of a central leadership around Jock Haston whose perspectives for work outside the Labour Party in the industrial class struggle fell apart as the wave of strikes and struggles declined in Britain under the reforming Labour government and as the impact of both the cold war and the economic recovery and boom were felt. Levy argues that the resulting demoralisation of the party leadership led to its collapse into entryism and into the arms of Healy, who had earlier entered the Labour Party.

Revolutionary History has produced another useful journal but it remains eclectic in its analysis and variable in the value of the material reproduced.

60 Years Ago

The Battle of Cable Street



Cable Street, Stepney

An eyewitness recalls: "Then, like a scene from a film someone called out 'the dockers are coming' and they swarmed into the streets in their hundreds. Many of them carried picks and they used them to pry up the paving stones — some they broke into pieces to use as missiles and some they used to build a barricade; they also had marbles to roll under the feet of policeman's horses and fireworks to scare 'em."

SIXTY YEARS ago, on 4 October 1936, Oswald Mosley tried to lead his British Union of Fascists through the East End of London.

The march was designed to intimidate the many Jews who lived in the area and show that the fascists ruled the streets. But it never even got started. The fascists—despite massive police protection—were smashed.

At the Battle of Cable Street the working class of East London came out to meet the fascists head on. They came out in their thousands.

Under the slogan "They Shall Not Pass", the slogan of the Spanish work-

ers then defending Madrid against Franco's fascists, the workers united to stop Mosley's march.

Barricades went up. Police baton charges were repelled by workers standing firm and aiming every type of missile with devastating accuracy. Fascist coaches were wrecked. The fascist goon squads were dispatched to hospital by the fists and clubs of the working class.

Jews and Irish Catholics stood together. Women and men pitched into battle side by side. The police were powerless, the fascists were routed and the strength of the working class stood out like a beacon of hope.

Mosley and his thugs did not pass. His movement was thrown into crisis. The workers won the Battle of Cable Street—a proud moment in the history of the British working class and one that should be commemorated on its anniversary and acted on as an inspiration today every time the fascists try to march or meet.

The Cable Street Group have produced a pamphlet, *The Battle of Cable Street 1936*, recalling the battle and the events that led up to it, priced £2.99, available from 178 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BJ. See page 2 for details of the Commemoration March.

Volume 6, no 2/3, Summer 1996 £5.95/\$9.50

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Essays on Revolutionary Marxism in Britain and Ireland from the 1930s to the 1960s

Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it

Kurdistan: Safe haven collapses

Betrayed by Barzani

RARELY HAS a people been betrayed so often and with such bloody consequences by its own leaders as the Kurds have been in the twentieth century. Never has a people been so repeatedly stabbed in the back by the so-called democratic capitalist powers.

The collapse of the autonomous Kurdish "safe haven" in Northern Iraq in early September provides another harsh lesson in the reactionary nature of bourgeois nationalism and the hypocrisy of imperialism.

During March 1991, in the wake of the defeat of Saddam Hussein at the hands of imperialism, the Kurdish peshmergas captured nearly all of Iraqi Kurdistan—20% of the whole country. They were encouraged by George Bush who called on the Kurds to rise up against Saddam Hussein.

But Bush allowed the Kurdish rebellion to be smashed when it threatened to establish an independent state. The imperialists preferred to see Saddam Hussein's army crush the Kurds rather than see the Kurds succeed in helping bring down Hussein through revolution. They were worried that if the Iraqi Kurds won then the whole Kurdish nation may have risen in revolt with increased aspirations for independence, leading to more instability and the break up of other states in the region, especially Turkey and Iran.

Bloody

Hussein's bloody retribution led to one million starved and freezing Kurds huddled on the border with Iran and another million straddling the Iraq-Turkey border. The US was forced to try and rescue the situation by establishing a "safe haven" for the Kurds—a no-go area for Iraqi planes and troops. For the next five years the imperialists ensured that while the population did not starve, it would not be allowed to become the nucleus of a separate state and/or a base for anti-Hussein operations in Iraq.

The imperialists' policy towards the Kurds is nothing new. They have only ever supported the Kurds up to the point where they helped to weaken a hostile Iraqi or Iranian regime. Once concessions were extracted from these regimes the imperialists stabbed the Kurds in the back.

For example, in 1988, when the Kurds fought against Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war, the imperialists per-

mitted Hussein to use chemical weapons, supplied by them, to smash the civilian Kurdish population. More than 5,000 men, women and children were killed in this way as Hussein gassed whole villages.

The attitude of imperialism and the rulers of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran is not hard to fathom. Kurdistan today is the location for the most important oil fields in Syria and Turkey. One-third of Iraqi oil production comes from its Kurdish region.

None of the regional or imperialist powers support the creation of a separate Kurdish state. All of them are afraid that it would destabilise the whole area. The French and British bourgeoisie always "remembered" the Kurds when they wanted to interfere in the Middle East. But they were the two colonial powers who divided up Kurdistan when they created the artificial states that now imprison the Kurdish people.

Another reason why the US and European imperialists oppose an independent Kurdistan is that NATO is obliged to support its only Muslim member, Turkey, where they have important military bases. For them Turkey is the model of a secular, pro-western and "democratic" republic within the Islamic world. They have no desire to support Kurdish self-determination because they do not want to destabilise the savagely anti-Kurd Turkish government.

The Kurds have a long history of fighting for self-determination this century. But the Kurds have confronted obstacles in the path of attaining genuine national consciousness. The weak development of capitalism in Kurdistan, especially in the Iraq and Iran sectors, has created an equally weak Kurdish bourgeois class incapable of leading the fight for national independence. The result is that the Kurdish ruling classes have always betrayed the struggle for self-determination and unity.

The leadership of the struggles inside Iraq is in the hands of the treacherous tribal landlords, such as Aqrabi and the Barzani clan. Their main goal has always been autonomy for the Kurds, in return for which the tribal leaders have been extended privileges and patronage in the federal state.

The tribal chiefs sometimes prove more loyal to the non-Kurdish state of which they are a part rather than risk a

Kurdish state created under the leadership of rival tribes. In every Kurdish uprising there have always been some tribes that supported the oppressor state against the rebels. Some Kurdish parties are based on tribal ties and their rivalries have tribal origins. The tribal leaders have repeatedly played a vacillating and often treacherous role.

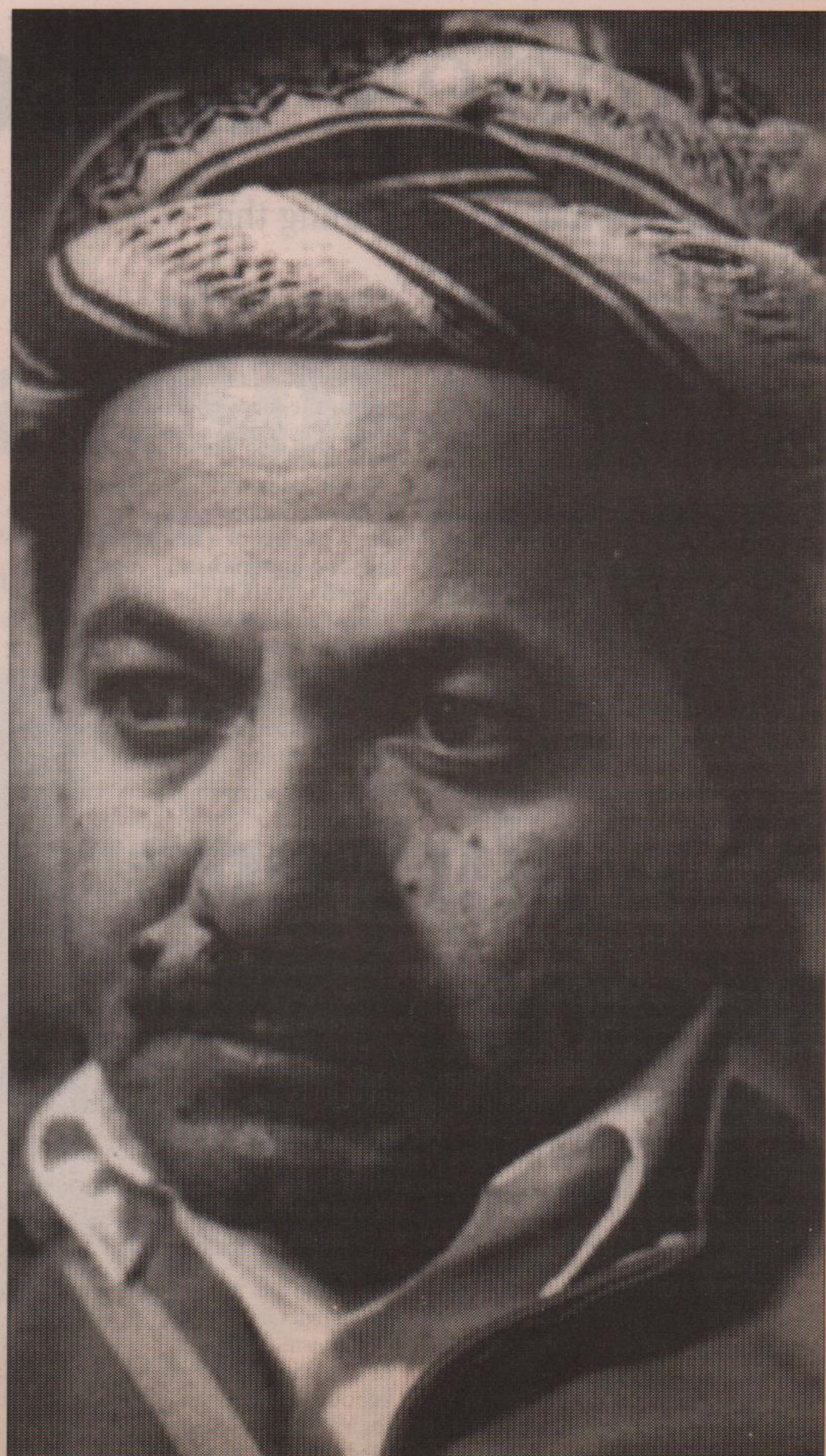
Stature

The most characteristic example of this was the best known Kurdish leader, Sheikh Mustafa Barzani—the father of Massoud Barzani who invited Hussein into the Kurdish city of Irbil in late August.

Mustafa had a similar stature within the Kurdish bourgeois national liberation movement as Mandela and Arafat had in their movements, coming to prominence in the 1931-32 Kurdish upsurge in the north of Iraq.

At the end of the second world war the Barzani family created the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). Mustafa Barzani was prepared to work with anyone, making alliances with Kurdistan's enemies in order to defeat his Kurdish rivals. Initially fighting with Soviet backing against the pro-British/US Iraqi and Iranian kings, he ended up supporting the USA, the Shah and Israel against the USSR and its Iraqi allies.

The Jalal Talabani faction was expelled from the KDP in the 1970s



Massoud Barzani, traitor to the Kurdish cause

and from the region of Kurdistan they controlled because they refused to make concessions to the ruling Ba'athists in Iraq. Talabani formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and a few years later Talabani himself made an

alliance with the Ba'athists to smash the KDP.

Barzani's alliances with the Baghdad regime were always going to come unstuck. He not only espoused the Kurdish cause but also defended the inter-

The Turkish di

EVEN AS Bill Clinton bleats about the fate of the Kurds living in the "safe haven", the United States (US) and its NATO allies have turned a blind eye to the war waged against the Kurdish people by successive Turkish regimes. Washington and the European Union (EU) have given their tacit blessing to repeated violations of the no fly zone by Turkish jets, sent to bomb positions allegedly occupied by Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) guerrillas.

Earlier this year, the Turkish army amassed 45,000 troops on the Iraqi border, threatening at one point to repeat its ground operations in southern Kurdistan. Ironically, the Turkish offensive against the PKK took place with the collaboration of Barzani's KDP, prior to its most recent alliance with Saddam.

Whilst the coalition led by Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party has suggested that it will not be quite so pliant a tool of US imperialism as its predecessors, it has made no moves to halt the war against its own Kurdish population. In fact, late September saw a major escalation of the offensive against PKK fighters in the remote valleys of northern Kurdistan.

The so-called "dirty war" conducted by the Turkish military in northern Kurdistan (south-eastern Turkey) has claimed at least 20,000 lives since 1984. Turkish troops have razed nearly 3,000 predominantly Kurdish villages in this period, creating a mass exodus of more than three million refugees. More than 2,000 Kurdish

political prisoners languish in Turkey's jails.

As a result of this reign of terror against civilians, the population of Diyarbakir has swollen to 1.5 million, compared to tens of thousands in the early 1980s. The Kurdish populations of Ankara, Istanbul and several other cities in western Turkey have also grown dramatically, while most west European capitals, including London, are hosts to Kurdish immigrants fleeing the war and the remorseless persecution of their political organisations.

In 1995 Turkey's military budget topped £2.15 billion—11% of the country's total official government spending. The generals have purchased weapons and equipment from the US, Germany and Britain. The Shorland armoured cars, often used by the paramilitary gendarmerie in attacks on Kurdish villages, originate from a Land Rover design, adapted by the Shorts factory in Belfast.

Majority

Turkey's Kurdish population numbers between 12 and 15 million, approaching an absolute majority of the world's Kurds. Historically, the modern Turkish state, since its formation in the early 1920s, has refused to recognise the existence of the Kurds as a distinct people, referring to them as "mountain Turks" and criminalising their language, which was banned from schools and all media.

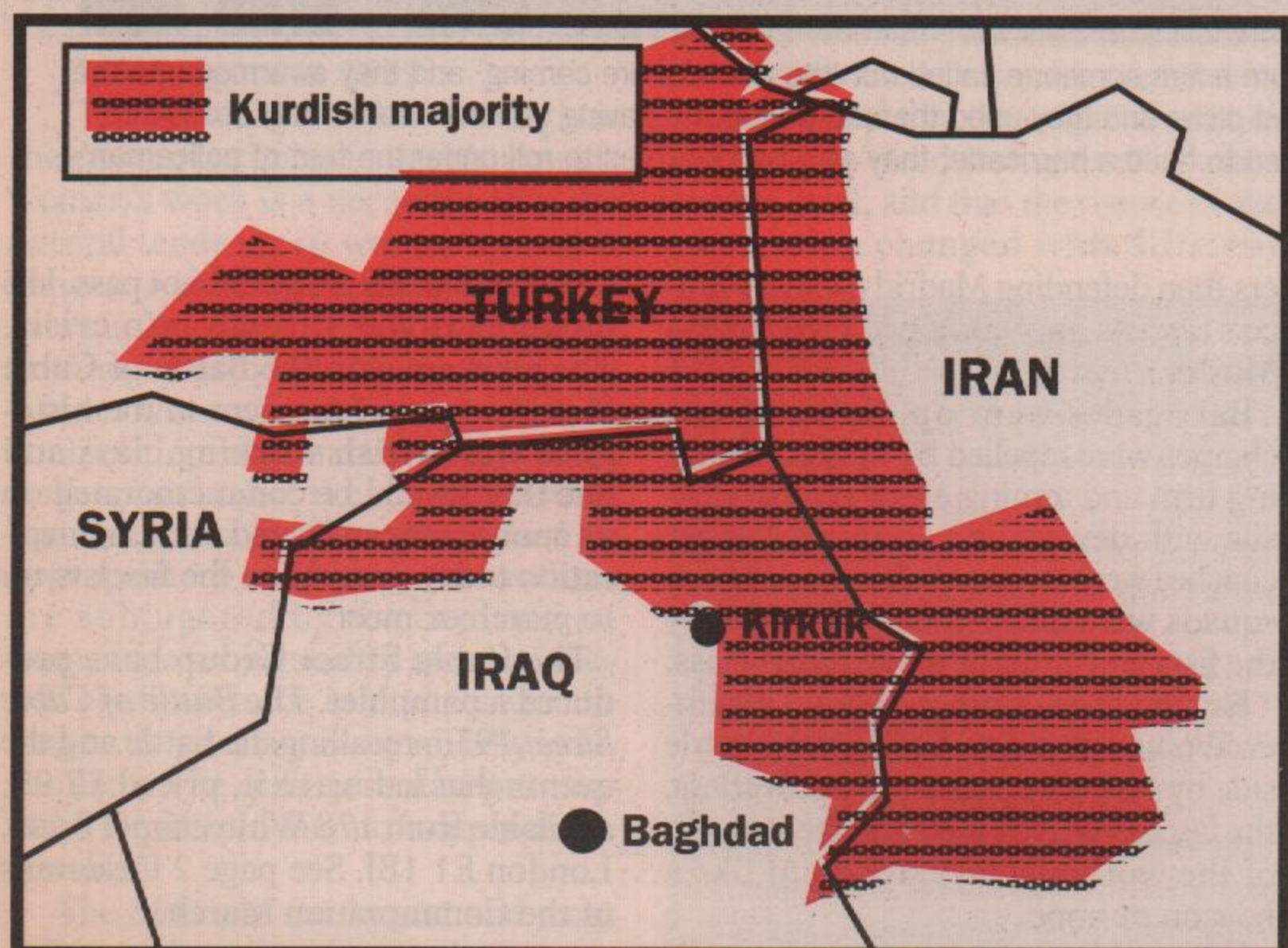
The Kurdish population of the major cities faces widespread discrim-

ination, with many of them either forming a reserve army of labour or finding themselves heavily concentrated in the worst paid, least secure jobs. At the same time, however, the Refah Party made a serious play at the December 1995 parliamentary elections for the votes of impoverished Kurdish workers in the urban areas—with some success. But Erbakan has brutally dashed the earlier hopes of the PKK leadership for a fundamentally different approach to a negotiated settlement.

The PKK as a banned organisation cannot directly contest elections, but the HADEP (Labour, Peace and Freedom) block which did stand last December is generally regarded as a surrogate for the PKK in the electoral arena. Across Turkey, HADEP captured 4.2% of the vote, insufficient to gain parliamentary representation. But in a number of the predominantly Kurdish provinces it achieved either a plurality or an absolute majority of the popular vote. In Hakkari its vote reached 54%, while 46% of the Diyarbakir electorate supported HADEP despite widespread intimidation and harassment.

In sharp contrast to the clan leaderships of the KDP and PUK, the PKK's Abdullah Ocalan claims to stand in the Marxist tradition. But the PKK's "Marxism" is a Kurdish variant of Maoist guerrillism. Its programme rests on the classically Stalinist conception of "a national and democratic revolution" as the first stage on a road to socialism.

While the bitter reality of Turkish



ests of his own landlord class which was under attack from the Iraqi state's agrarian reform. His pacts with Baghdad repeatedly foundered on these contradictions.

Barzani's KDP was and remains fundamentally rooted in the mountain villages and their clans. Talabani's social base was more urban and he gained increasing support among the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia within the Kurdish population.

Despite their episodic alliances the Kurdish nationalists never created a stable pan-Kurdish national popular front such as the PLO or ANC. The differences between the clans has proven too great and the regional powers always took advantage of these divisions. In addition, each party has turned for logistical support for their guerrilla struggle to these same bordering countries.

It is the making and breaking of pacts between the surrounding powers and the PUK or the KDP that has caused the latest catastrophe for the Kurdish people. After the Gulf War Barzani struck a deal with the reactionary Turkish government. In return for a monopoly on the lucrative custom duties for goods crossing the border between Turkey and northern Iraq, Barzani agreed to co-operate with Turkey in their fight against the PKK, the main Kurdish organisation in Turkey. Turkish forces also helped to undermine the PUK inside Iraq. In turn, Talabani responded by seeking support from Iran.

Barzani's latest act of treachery in signing up with the 1991 butcher of Iraqi Kurds, Saddam Hussein, has its roots in the failure of the KDP to deliver on its promises to Turkey to repress the PKK. The PKK proved too strong and even inflicted heavy losses on the KDP for their trouble.

Backing

Turkey withdrew its backing for the KDP, leaving Barzani vulnerable to the PUK. Talabani capitalised on this and in mid-August, with Iranian help, the PUK was able to take over much of the autonomous area.

Massoud Barzani responded as he and his father had done many times before—by making a pact with the devil. He invited Hussein to come into Irbil; on 30 August Hussein did just that.

Some 450 tanks stormed Irbil from the south alongside 40,000 Republican Guards. Barzani collaborated with the Iraqi secret police to round up members of the opposing Kurdish parties and members of the opposition Iraqi National Congress.

After this latest reverse, what turn will the struggle for self-determination take in Iraq and the rest of Kurdistan?

The events of last month prove—if more proof were needed—that the Kurdish ruling class is incapable of leading the struggle for self-determination to victory. The Barzanis and Talabanis of this world can only deliver more humiliations and disasters.

The "safe haven" provided these leaders with the possibility of showing that under their leadership their preferred option of Kurdish autonomy could be made to work. Indeed, after the Gulf War in 1991 the KDP and PUK co-operated during the uprising. This alliance continued throughout the elections of 1992 which led to the formation of a parliament and Council of Ministers to administer the autonomous territory.

For a while the PUK and KDP dissolved their separate militias into a joint police force to supervise the area. But by the spring of 1994 this united front breaking up as the tribal and local interests re-asserted themselves and Turkey's abandonment of Barzani destabilised the balance of power between the PUK and KDP.

Meanwhile, imperialism refused to provide the material assistance needed to transform the economy of the region. Hence no social stability could emerge; there was no urbanisation that could overcome the divisive fractured tribal and clan character of the Kurds in Iraq.

The 25-30 million Kurdish people remain what they have always been this century—the largest people without a nation state in the world.

The international working class movement must condemn the hypocritical "democratic imperialists" who rule out national unity and independence for the Kurdish people. They do so in the name of the sanctity of borders and existing states, yet many of these borders were arbitrarily drawn up after the two world wars to protect the interests of France, Britain and the USA.

Equally, the majority of the leaders of the Kurds, who proudly proclaim that they only seek autonomy, have used this lack of ambition to protect their own tribal, landlord and merchant particularism and localism. In seeking the support of imperialism and the bourgeois regimes of the surrounding states they also connive in the oppression of the Kurds outside their own control and patronage.

The Kurds have no consistent or sincere allies among the imperialists and their semi-colonial agents. Their genuine allies are to be found throughout the Middle East in the proletarian and poor peasant forces, to whom they must turn for material and political aid in this crisis.

Revolutionary socialists fight for the right of Kurdish self-determination up to and including the right to secede and form an independent state, even in one part of Kurdistan.

Escape

The Kurdish masses, the peasants and the working class, can only escape national oppression and express their will on which sort of state they desire if the dictatorships of the surrounding states are smashed.

Thus the national struggle of the Kurds has to be linked to the struggles of the Iraqi, Turkish, Syrian and Iranian workers and poor peasants, just as the non-Kurdish workers of the oppressor states have to support the struggle of the Kurds. Only along this path will the Kurds find their liberation.

But the final form that liberation may take is yet to be decided. If the national aspirations of the Kurdish masses are satisfied by the gaining of real equality in social and political rights within each of the oppressor states then we will support them. Should self-determination lead them as far as an autonomous region then likewise we will fight to defend this outcome.

But as a result of the treachery of its leadership and the self-interest of imperialism the unstable experiment in autonomy and self-rule of the last five years has collapsed. It is possible that more and more Kurds will see that only a powerful cross-border movement for national independence will be enough to break the cycle of betrayal at the hands of Barzani, Talabani and their regional backers. ■

Dimension

chauvinism and awareness of the atrocities committed by Ankara's forces sustains significant PKK support among Kurdish refugees in Turkey's cities, the party's programme has little to offer to a growing urban proletariat.

The truly heroic struggle by its fighters against the Turkish state has cost the Ankara authorities dearly, but has also proved incapable of winning the right to genuine self-determination for the Kurds. Even though the Turkish military appears unable to strike a decisive blow against the PKK, the Kurdish forces are extremely isolated both militarily and diplomatically.

For Turkish revolutionaries there is an absolute obligation to combat anti-Kurdish chauvinism within the ranks of the Turkish working class, with the objective of winning the masses to a battle designed to bring the war machine to a grinding halt in Kurdistan.

Solidarity

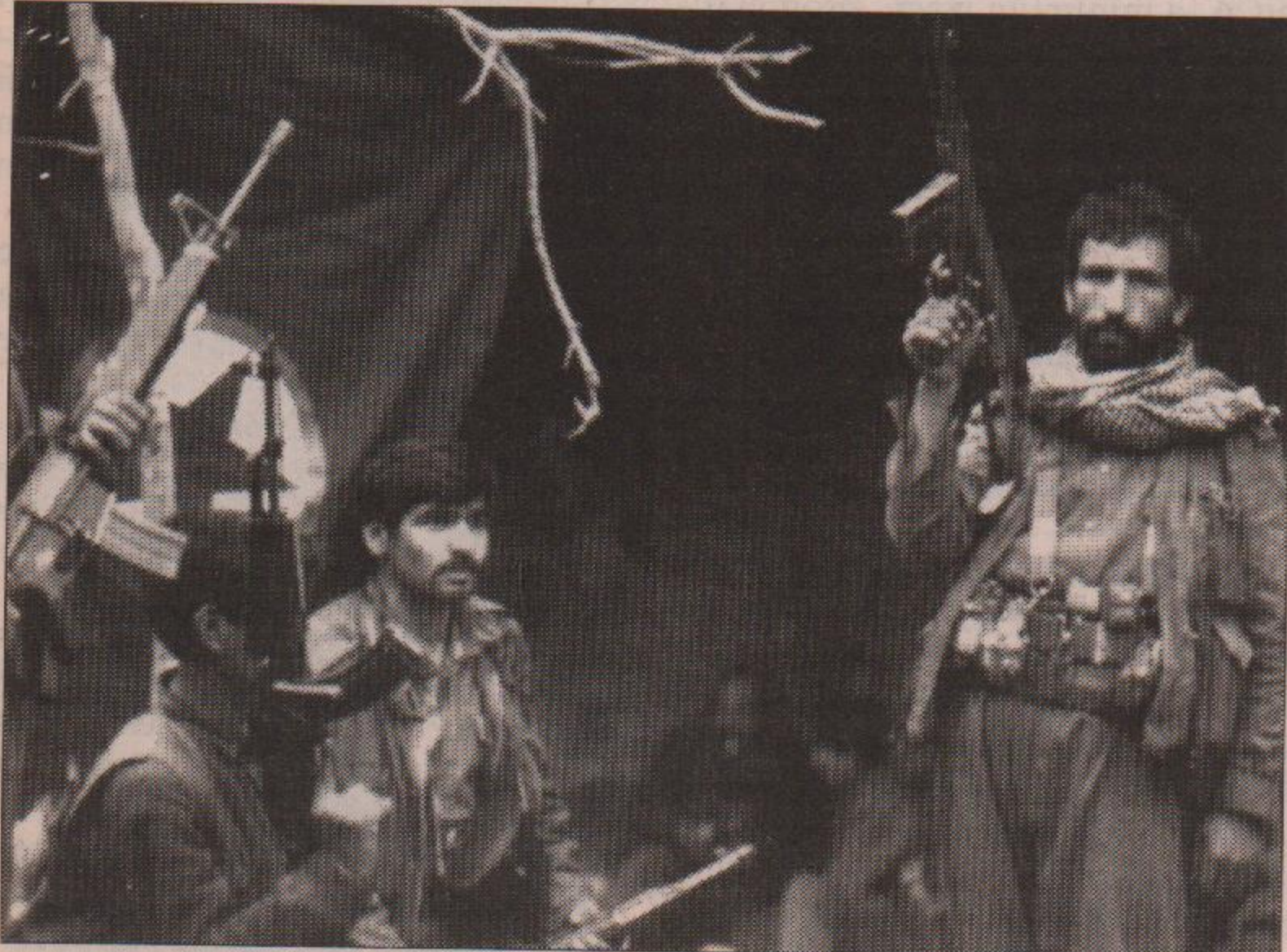
Western Europe's labour movements should be lending active solidarity to the Kurdish people's legitimate struggle for national liberation as well as to the resurgent Turkish labour movement's battles against a viciously

reactionary state, armed in large measure by the US and EU governments. Specifically, in France and Germany this means a determined campaign against current state bans on the PKK as an organisation in exile.

In Britain, much of the left has been practically silent around the case of PKK representative Kani Yilmaz, detained for nearly two years after his arrest on "national security grounds" as he visited London to address a meeting at the House of Commons. Yilmaz has faced the prospect of deportation back to Germany and ultimately to Turkey where he would almost certainly be jailed and tortured once more.

In mid-September Special Branch spearheaded a raid on the London headquarters of Med-TV, a Kurdish language channel which broadcasts to parts of northern Kurdistan. The police operation took place with the prior knowledge of the Turkish authorities. Meanwhile, police harassment of PKK sympathisers in London is routine.

In the course of their own historic struggle, the Liverpool dockers have developed links with Turkish and Kurdish exiles in Britain and have gone on a series of visits where shop stewards have witnessed first-hand the repression confronting the Turkish and Kurdish masses. Their example is one that the rest of the British labour movement should follow as a means of rendering direct solidarity to the Kurdish struggle against the brutal Turkish regime. ■



PKK under murderous assault by Turkish government

P The A to Z of Marxism is for Proletariat

BY COLIN LLOYD

WHY DO Marxists always go on about "the proletariat"?

Why don't we just say "workers"? And anyway—who are the workers? Don't bank managers and executives go to work and get a salary cheque like everybody else?

Most people can see that there is class inequality in Britain and around the world. But what they mean by "class" are differences based on language, culture, education and income. This "common sense" view of class is reinforced by academic sociology, which sees social conflicts in terms of "group behaviour".

For Marxists, class means something more fundamental. Classes, essentially, are defined by the role certain groups of people play in the prevailing system of production.

"All history", Marx wrote, "is the history of class struggle". Ancient and medieval societies contained numerous classes and sub-classes ("castes") in struggle with each other over the distribution of the surplus product.

The vast majority—whether they were exploiters or exploited—had some direct relationship as consumers to the products they produced. Throughout history small farmers and small craftsmen have produced goods for their own consumption and then traded the surplus in a small, local market—after paying what they owed to the ruling class in the form of tithes, rents and tributes.

The emergence of capitalism created a new situation. With the rise of factory production and the driving of most of the peasants from the land, the majority of working people now owned little or no property.

Craftsmen who had previously owned their tools, and peasants who had owned small land holdings, now found themselves in factories where they owned none of the instruments of production.

They owned only one thing: their ability to work. In order to eat they had to sell themselves daily to the capitalist employers. To describe this new class Marx used a term from ancient history. In ancient Rome the "proletarii" had been a small class of day labourers who owned only their ability to labour.

When Marxists use the word "proletarian" they are using a scientific category which means far more than just somebody who goes to work in the morning. The term "proletarian" may sound a bit pompous (in English speaking countries) in a factory leaflet. But it is essential when we are trying to understand, scientifically, how society works.

The proletariat, by definition, owns none of the means of production. Of course, today the better off workers own cars, houses, sound systems etc. But they do not own the factories, the offices, the machinery or the tools of their trade.

This puts the bosses at an enormous advantage. They turn their wealth into social power; they enforce the basic inequality in property ownership into inequality in the eyes of the law.

Flesh and blood can be put on this

idea if we think about the daily experience of millions of workers in non-union workplaces, facing the constant threat of arbitrary dismissal.

The boss can sack you; you can't sack him or her. The employer can make sure you "never work in this industry again".

Even the terms of dismissal reported to the DSS by the Boss can determine whether you get the full amount of dole.

If your boss breaks a contract with another boss a lengthy and expensive legal battle will ensue. The aim will be to make sure that the whole system of binding contracts, on which capitalist commerce takes place, is not undermined.

But the boss can terminate your contract of employment at will. If you have been working for less than two years at your workplace you have no right to appeal for unfair dismissal. Even if you do appeal, you do not have the right to be reinstated.

That we have got any employment rights at all, a limited working day, and in some countries a minimum wage, is due to the fact that workers exercise the only social power we have—getting together to enforce our demands through united action.

In short, the class struggle. Marx-

ists see the class struggle as a logical and inescapable consequence of class structure. Without ever hearing the word socialism—or even "proletariat"—the working class is forced spontaneously to resist the capitalists' attempts to dictate the terms of exploitation. Out of this spontaneous struggle comes collectivity.

To stand a chance against not just one boss but whole banqueting halls full of them, combined in their employers' federations, backed by their police chiefs, their newspapers and TV stations, the workers have only one weapon: solidarity.

What revolutionary communism is about is simply this: do we use that solidarity to win a bigger slice of the cake, for some of us, for a short while? Or do we want—as the old socialist saying goes—"the whole bloody bakery"?

The working class, because it owns no property of its own in the means of production, can only seize hold of the means of production collectively: by expropriation without compensation.

The proletariat is the first class in history which has a real chance of bringing in a classless society. There is no class below the proletariat for us to rule over when we win. There is nothing in our daily lives which teaches us to see other human beings as our wage slaves.

Once you understand that, the secret is out: the huddled, bedraggled mass of people, elbowing their way to work on a Monday morning; queuing up for the dole; staggering home from the pub on a Saturday night—often with their minds focused no further than next week's wage packet—are, as Marx put it, "the class which holds the future in its hands": the working class, the proletariat. ■

The proletariat, by definition, owns none of the means of production. Of course, today the better off workers own cars, houses, sound systems etc. But they do not own the factories, the offices, the machinery or the tools of their trade.

personal view

COLIN LLOYD

The struggle for cyberspace

EIGHTEEN MONTHS ago, when the first wave of internet-mania broke out, the reaction on the left divided into two camps. Some condemned it as a middle class fad. Others embraced it, lock stock and anorak, as the medium that would save the left from global oblivion.

Now the internet is hitting the headlines once again. A welter of technical developments combined with a huge increase in internet access over the past 18 months has focused the question of ownership and control of the net.

During 1994, when the net-hype was in full swing, we were told that the internet was "free"—both from commercialism and repression; nobody owned it and nobody could censor it. Now however the twin forces of state repression and commercialisation are moving into cyberspace with a vengeance.

Last month saw a world-wide moral panic over child-porn and paedophile rings on the internet. Both in Britain and Singapore individuals have been sent to prison for downloading child pornography from the net. A self appointed Metropolitan Police committee has drawn up a list of sites it wants closed, ranging from near defunct child porn sites to one called alt.homosexuality—which is about just that.

In Britain Internet Service Providers (ISPs) agreed in principle to a "self regulation" code of censorship—effectively reversing their previous stance that the net should be treated in law like the telephone network: i.e. as a medium, not a publication.

Meanwhile, the world's major media groups are throwing money at "electronic publishing"—despite the fact that all agree that there is little profit to be made from it today. They hope instead to secure a decisive advantage in the emerging market.

Big new plans are afoot to expand internet access including:

- a computer you can plug into your TV, dedicated solely to internet use;
- plans to transfer net traffic from the telephone network to satellite systems
- a link up between Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp and British Telecom to provide a dedicated "family" internet service centred on Murdoch's TV and newspaper assets.

The preparations for mass commercial exploitation, and censorship of the new "telematic" media are intrinsically linked. Both are aimed at removing the anarchic and unregulated culture that dominates internet use today. And the stakes are high.

While computer ownership, and therefore internet access, remains small in the Third World, it has reached what the marketers call "critical mass" in all the imperialist countries, and in a handful of developed semi-colonies and ex-Stalinist states.

In the USA there are 34 personal computers for every 100 people. In Britain there are 22. Figures for internet users world-wide are impossible to estimate accurately, but research by analyst John S Quarter-

man suggests there could be around 52 million today—or 0.88% of the world's population. This figure is expected to double each year.

A more accurate view of the growth of the internet can be seen from the number of registered "domains" (large web sites) and "hosts" (computers with information freely accessible) on the World Wide Web. In January 1989 there were 100,000 computers accessible on the net. By January 1994 there were 1 million. Today there are over 10 million – and these are hosts, not the individual personal computers used to access the net.

In the USA there are 3.5 million company websites, 2 million educational sites and a combined 1.5 million government, military and other non-commercial websites. The UK has over 600,000 websites. Three years ago there were none, anywhere.

It is to the wider layer of potential users that the big capitalists are turning in their search to make profits from the net. They are approaching the problem from different angles. Murdoch and BT clearly see a satellite-plus-limited-information package as the way to mass internet access, in the same way that BSKyB's limited programme range has cornered the domestic satellite market.

Bill Gates, America's richest man, is going for the route of software domination. His Microsoft Corporation is waging the so called "browser war" with rival Netscape Corp over whose computer programme will become the standard way of accessing the net.

Other specialist information providers have tried to set up "subscription sites" where valuable business or scientific information can be hoarded and sold. So far no-one has proven that this is a money-making route.

At the level of imperialist governments and their state-subsidised telecoms industries the main emphasis is on the building of a physical alternative to the telephone network. They are discussing various ways to achieve a "broadband" internet—which would be the equivalent of a gushing water-main compared to today's dripping-tap information transfer speeds. They would then have total control.

Most net users and developers who remain wedded to the progressive and anarchic character of today's internet rightly look on all these developments with suspicion.

But they in turn fail to recognise that the mass of the world's population will never have access to the net while they have no electricity, inadequate shelter and no food to eat. It is this, far simpler, technological achievement which capitalism is incapable of achieving.

Socialists should fight against all state/commercial censorship of the net. We should fight for state subsidised access to the Internet so that the mass of workers are not left on the sidelines of the information revolution. ■

- ★ See letter, page 15
- ★ LRCI Website launched, see page 15



NEW ZEALAND: Vote Labour/Alliance

Kick National out!

WHEN WESTERN economists arrive in former Stalinist countries, ready to introduce mass unemployment and rip the heart out of welfare provision, which country do they present as a model? New Zealand, which, according to the OECD, has suffered "one of the most notable episodes of liberalisation that history has to offer".

Since 1984 New Zealand's economy has been totally exposed to the ravages of international capitalism. Wage and price controls were eliminated, a massive new purchase tax was imposed, subsidies were removed and huge cuts in public spending were implemented.

The architects of this disaster for the New Zealand working class were the NZ Labour Party, under the influence of Finance Minister Roger Douglas. "Rogernomics" rolled back the social gains of decades, and inflicted damage on the New Zealand workers' organisations as well.

The Labour Party split in 1989, with a section of the left, led by Jim Anderton, forming the New Labour Party (NLP). Labour was, and is, a party like the British Labour Party, with direct trade union affiliation. But in the run-up to the 1990 election a section of the union bureaucracy disaffiliated.

Mass disillusion with Labour let the New Zealand Tories—the National Party—into office in 1990. National took over where Labour left off. The Employment Contracts Act (ECA) of 1991 was a key weapon in destroying effective trade unionism. Overnight the bosses launched an "individual contracts" offensive—and many of the individual contracts ban strike action.

National proceeded with a historic attack on the country's Maori population, with the so-called "fiscal envelope" limiting the amount that could be paid in compensation for land stolen during the British occupation.

Meanwhile, Labour pulled back from the brink of transformation into an open bourgeois-liberal party. The new Labour leader, Helen Clarke, spearheaded a return to policies which—whilst totally pro-capitalist—would ensure the loyalty of a significant part of the working class and the trade union bureaucracy.

The NLP was formed on May Day 1989. At its foundation it included, in addition to the ex-Labour politicians and trade union bureaucrats, a layer of youth, unemployed activists, green campaigners and trade union militants. It also attracted a large number of middle class and white collar working class individuals who had left Labour in disillusionment during "Rogernomics".

Despite support from sections of the CTU (New Zealand's TUC) bureaucracy, the leadership of the NLP made no attempt to reforge the links between the party and the unions at a national level. Instead it created the "Alliance" in 1991.

The Alliance is made up of the NLP

On 12 October New Zealand workers have the chance to kick out the right-wing National party government. But the two working class parties must be forced to unite to gain office, and then forced to meet working class needs, writes Alex Newman.

plus four other parties: the Greens, the Liberals, the Democrats and Mana Motuhake, a party of the oppressed Maori population.

Each of these other parties is petit-bourgeois, not simply bourgeois, in character. That does not make their politics any better, but it explains why they were able to make a more or less permanent coalition with a "left" reformist split from Labour.

Since 1991 the Alliance has made steady progress at the polls, maintaining and expanding its parliamentary fraction, with support vacillating between the low teens and its all time high of 26% in March this year, when it polled higher than Labour.

But throughout, the NLP leadership has concentrated on building the Alliance as a new, more or less permanent, party. It has steadfastly refused to affiliate trade unions, despite the emergence of a breakaway Trade Union Federation, which left the main CTU in 1993 in response to its failure to fight the ECA.

So far the Alliance has failed to become the decisive mass opposition to National. This stems in part from the Labour's ability to reorientate itself, saving the remnants of its trade union link and the illusions of a section of working class voters.

The Alliance programme (its "12 Principles"), whilst utterly inadequate, has frightened the New Zealand bourgeoisie. It stands for the repeal of the ECA, a minimum wage, progressive taxation, the abolition of "bulk funding" of health care, the restoration of benefits and the buying back of strategic privatised assets. Whilst composed of both petit-bourgeois and reformist workers' parties, the Alliance has clearly coalesced into a left reformist workers' party—and one which has captured the allegiance of a radicalised section of workers and youth.

The Alliance has its own membership structure, independent of the parties which comprise it, and branches which are effectively the only individual membership bodies. Although the separate parties still exist they are not as important as the whole, which currently stands at a claimed membership of 25,000 (in a population of 3.5 million).

However, the creation of a party with no organic links with the unions—and with instead real links to

the urban middle class—allows Anderton room for manoeuvre if elected. The Alliance's insistence on no electoral pact with Labour unless Labour accepts the 12 Principles has to be seen for what it is: a self-defeating pre-election left posture, to prepare for a climb-down—at least on the decisive class questions—if Anderton ever finds himself back in office.

In this month's election the New Zealand working class faces a struggle on numerous fronts. There is the need to put the workers' parties into office, and to organise from below to force them to honour their pledges to the working class, and more. This task is complicated by the new electoral system—Multi-Member Parliament (MMP)—which ensures that National cannot be beaten unless Labour and the Alliance form an electoral pact.

Workers Power New Zealand/Aotearoa is the only working class organisation in New Zealand giving a clear political lead in this fight. According to the *Workers Power Election Special*:

"Clearly, we have to get rid of National, but how?"

The first task is to force the parties of the working class, Labour and Alliance, to form an unconditional electoral bloc to kick out National and thwart the plans of the NZ ruling class. Workers Power will call for a vote for Labour/Alliance and fight to mobilise the working class to force them to meet the workers' immediate needs.

"Workers should not wait for the leaders of both parties or union bureaucrats to negotiate a deal. We must fight for unity now. In every workplace, factory, industry, union and community delegates should be elected to convene mass meetings.

"Mass meetings must force the parties to unite, by selecting the strongest candidate in the 'Constituency Vote' and demanding that the Labour or Alliance rival stands down."

The paper goes on to explain how at such meetings an immediate action programme of demands on Labour/Alliance can be focused—the only way to make sure that once in office the reformist leaders do not simply return to their job-cutting, union-bashing ways.

In the parallel "List Vote", part of the complicated MMP system, WPNZ/A advocates a vote for either Labour or Alliance.

Whilst many Alliance members—who believe they have made a left wing break with Labour—will find this hard to swallow, it is the only way to kick out National.

Revolutionaries in New Zealand have to blow away workers' illusions in the NLP/Alliance. The tried and tested method is the tactic of critical electoral support. The NLP, like Labour, is essentially a reformist workers' party. We have to support both parties, as Lenin said, "like a rope supports a hanged man" ■.

From Trotskyism to Centrism: A History of the Fourth International



The collapse of the FI into Centrism

FOLLOWING ON from the Fourth International's (FI) profoundly opportunist response to the Tito-Stalin split (see WP 203), Michel Pablo, as International Secretary, developed an entirely new methodology.

He argued that the unfolding new world reality was overcoming and transforming the nature of Stalinism. Objective developments and their expression in mass movements were beginning to lead to the disappearance of Stalinism.

Pablo now came to the fore in insisting that Yugoslavia was and had been a workers' state for at least two years prior to the split with Moscow. The counter-revolutionary pressure of Moscow had been overcome by the "pressure of the masses", exercised through the revolutionary committees that the Yugoslav Communist Party had set up during the war and in its immediate aftermath.

Majority

The only opponents to this new line were the disillusioned Natalia Sedova and her ultra-left supporters in Mexico, and the majority of the British Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) led by Jock Haston, Ted Grant and Roy Tearse. However, the RCP was already in rapid decline and Haston, deeply demoralised, was to abandon the struggle. The party dissolved itself in June 1949, and its members, still at this time a majority of the Trotskyists in Britain, joined the Healy grouping ("the Club") inside the Labour Party.

By the summer of 1950 Healy had managed to expel nearly all the prominent leaders of the RCP, including Ted Grant, Roy Tearse and Tony Cliff. For the next three years Pablo had no more loyal supporter than Gerry Healy, the man who was later to become the Pope of anti-Pabloism.

The FI's revisionism was at first limited to Yugoslavia. But the methodological virus that developed there was to breed rapidly on the greater material of the Chinese revolution and the Korean War.

The victory of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party in Octo-

In the months leading up to the Fourth International's Third Congress in 1951 the leadership around Michel Pablo generalised the wrong conclusions, drawn after the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 and applied them successively to the Chinese Revolution and the Korean War. In this the final part of our series we show how by destroying or co-opting the opposition to the new line, the International Secretariat codified its new centrist method in the resolutions and reports that were unanimously approved at the Congress.

ber 1949, and the war in Korea which broke out in June 1950 made a huge impact on the FI leaders. Under Pablo's initiative, the IS pushed through a general revision of perspectives. They revised the FI's characterisation of Stalinism, of the left wing of Social Democracy, of semi-colonial bourgeois nationalism. They also abandoned the FI's key tactics and methods of party building. This marked a qualitative and decisive break with the "Old Trotskyism", namely that of Trotsky and his co-thinkers in the years 1933-48.

Leading

This line developed in the leading bodies of the International—the IS and the IEC. The November 1950 Ninth Plenum saw the birth of Pablo's "war-revolution" perspective. Pablo's draft perspectives for the Third Congress accentuated the catastrophist economic perspectives held to by the FI in 1948 and drew from them the conclusion that this was driving the USA towards a new world war in the short term.

The FI interpreted the Chinese revolution and the outbreak of the Korean War as an indication that the balance of class forces had swung against imperialism. It held out the prospect of US imperialism desperately plunging into war against the USSR, Eastern Europe and China, and creating revolutionary outbreaks throughout Europe and the semi-colonial world.

Thus the third world war would not end in "international civil war", as predicted for the second, but this time would begin with it! The two camps of this civil war were Stalinism and imperialism. Looking back to the Yugoslav experience Pablo held that this "war-revolution" would probably work a wholesale transformation on the Stalinist parties, which, under pressure from the masses, would cease to be Stalinist and evolve in a centrist direction. Where Tito had blazed a new trail, Mao was following behind. From this Pablo concluded that the FI must get as close as possible to these parties and movements and avoid the slightest sectarianism towards them.

Orientation

This implied that the FI had to fundamentally alter its orientation and party-building tactics, although this was not concretely spelled out until after the Third Congress.

This vulgar impressionistic response to the Korean War was expressed most boldly in a background document, *Where are We Going?*, which Pablo published to accompany the Third Congress drafts. In it he claims that the swings between equilibrium and disequilibrium which Trotsky had seen as fundamental to the very nature of capitalism, even in its stagnation phase, had been now replaced by a chronic and

constantly worsening decline. Moreover, he claimed that the strength of the anti-imperialist forces had proved much stronger than the FI had previously anticipated. The conclusion was clear:

"War under such conditions, in the relationship of forces such as exist internationally at present, would essentially be the revolution". (Les Congrès de la Quatrième Internationale vol 4 p34)

Pablo continued that the FI must rid itself of the pre-1939 notion that war was the result of inter-imperialist rivalry and proletarian defeats. Instead, revolution should be seen as the eventual outcome of the chaos and misery of war, and war was the last desperate throw of a collapsing imperialism. This time the response of the masses to the launching of war would be the immediate intensification of revolutionary outbreaks. Moreover, this would be the pattern of the rest of the epoch. Capitalism was, in this sense, in its final crisis.

Vulgar

The sheer vulgar nonsense of this perspective aroused serious misgivings from sections of the International Secretariat, notably from Ernest Mandel and from the leadership of the SWP(US). Mandel drafted a document called "Ten Theses" as an addition to the documents of the Ninth Plenum. The SWP drafted amendments to the Congress documents which added more orthodox formulations on the counter-revolutionary character of Stalinism, but without challenging or deleting Pablo's main perspectives and formulations.

The French majority led by Marcel Bleibtreu, and initially Pierre Frank, opposed the main line of Pablo's theses concerning the "war-revolution" conflict between the two camps and the conclusions it drew on likely revolutionary projection of the European CPs. Bleibtreu even published a blistering reply to Pablo entitled "Where is Comrade Pablo Going?"

But Bleibtreu failed to go to the roots of Pablo's errors. Indeed, on Yugoslavia and China the PCI opposition was more Pabloite than Pablo—emphasising that these events entailed a fundamental break with Stalinism, which he narrowly conceived of as subordination to the immediate wishes of the Kremlin.

But the emerging opposition to Pablo melted away. Discussions took place with Mandel for a block around his Ten Theses. But it appears that at some time in the spring Pablo was able to persuade or pressurise both Pierre Frank and Mandel to abandon their criticisms.

By the time the Third World Congress of the FI assembled in Paris on 16 August 1951 Pablo had silenced all serious opposition. The 11-day Congress was attended by 76 delegates from 26 countries. Many of the future leaders of the various strands of the "Trotskyism" of the second half of the century were present: Pablo, Mandel, Nahuel

Special 64 Page Issue

Fourth International

Complete Report:

The Third World Congress Of the Fourth International

Survey and Analysis of

The Final Crisis of World Capitalism

November-December 1951

25c

The US based journal FI endorses the Third congress

Moreno, Juan Posadas, Peng Shu Tse, Gerry Healy, Livio Maitan, Pierre Frank.

Pablo's political report to the Congress, *World Trotskyism Re-arms*, overturned the key positions of the Trotsky's theoretical and programmatic legacy.

Essential to Pablo's position was a revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism, namely, that it is invariably a counter-revolutionary force. Trotsky did not insist that Stalinism could never carry out specific progressive measures, even up to and including the overthrow of capitalist property relations. What Trotsky meant was that the Stalinists would obstruct the working class from taking political power directly into its own hands and using that power to extend and deepen revolution.

Whilst conceding that at least the Kremlin remained Stalinist, for the time being, Pablo went on to nuance this by claiming that Stalinism because of its dual role was capable of transformation into centrism:

"We have made it clear that the CPs are not exactly reformist parties and that under certain exceptional circumstances they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation, i.e. of seeing themselves obliged to undertake a struggle for power." (Fourth International vol 12 Nov-Dec 1951)

Detractors

Pablo did not, as some of his over zealous detractors were later to claim, say that Stalinism could evolve uninterruptedly into a revolutionary party:

"Can the Communist Parties transform themselves into revolutionary parties? The experience of the CPs does not permit such rash and dangerous assumptions. These parties can in certain exceptional circumstances (advanced decay of the bourgeois regime, a very powerful revolutionary movement) project a revolutionary orientation but their transformation into revolutionary parties, especially into Bolshevik parties has not been answered in the affirmative, not even in the most favourable cases known thus far (Yugoslavia and China). On the contrary."

But what he said was bad enough; that the CPs could evolve into non-Stalinist parties, indeed were starting to do so already and that the growing war-

revolution would make this a general tendency:

"They remain centrist parties subject to new retrogressions. However, the fact that under exceptional circumstances these parties can project a revolutionary orientation retains all its importance and should act as a guide in our line towards them."

Pablo and the FI thereby abandoned the view that a fully revolutionary party was indispensable to make a proletarian revolution, and that soviets—embodying proletarian democracy—were essential to a healthy workers' state.

After the Congress Pablo argued that the imminent war-revolution left no time to build Trotskyist parties, but that this was no longer a crucial problem because in the coming period a wide variety of political formations, not just the CPs, could embark on the struggle for power.

The leadership of the FI went on to systematically transform the tactic of entryism, violating the key premises of the united front tactic (no confusion of programmes), and turning entryism into a long term capitulation to Stalinism, Social Democracy and bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalism.

Pablo called this new tactic "entryism sui generis" (entryism of a special type), based on long-term entry and the hiding of the revolutionary programme.

This thoroughgoing opportunism propelled the FI along a sharp, rightward-moving, centrist course. In 1952, Pablo instructed the French section to make a deep entry into the PCF, to integrate itself into the working class movement "as it was". Any fight for principled politics against the leaderships of the parties or movements into which the Trotskyists entered was to be indefinitely postponed.

In 1951 the centrist position of the Third World Congress on Stalinism, Yugoslavia, and general perspectives (the impending "civil war" perspective) proved, beyond doubt, that a programmatic collapse of the Fourth International had taken place.

The fact that no section voted against the resolution on Yugoslavia—the cornerstone of all the errors—is a fact of enormous significance. The FI as a whole had collapsed into centrism. ■



The Cold War is inaugurated with the start of a unified West Germany. The FI, above, predicts the "final crisis"

PALESTINE: as new Intifada erupts Palestinian masses must

Forge a new leadership!



PNA policeman fights back against Israeli troops. But Arafat's militias have spent months repressing Palestinians

CONTRARY TO Israeli propaganda, Yasir Arafat is not responsible for the latest uprising in the West Bank and Gaza. But he will seek to exploit it to renew his shattered credibility among Palestinians.

Arafat staked his reputation on the success of the 1993 Oslo Accords. His famous handshake on the White House lawn with the late Israeli Prime Minister Rabin sealed an agreement that Arafat insisted was a step on the road to an independent Palestinian state.

Even under the Rabin-Peres Labour government this was a sick joke.

Arafat was given control of the impoverished Gaza strip and parts of the West Bank. The powers of his Palestine National Authority (PNA) were restricted and subject to Israeli veto.

The only social and economic basis for this "statelet" consisted of meagre UN handouts, jobs in Israel when the Zionists chose to open the border, and jobs in Arafat's bloated military apparatus — in short, a state without a social base.

Control

Israel was to retain direct police control over most territory. Jewish settlements even in the heart of PNA areas would remain under Israeli supervision. Talks on Jerusalem's future status would be put off into the future.

For this travesty of "national sovereignty" Arafat had to agree to use his PNA militia to repress those (like Hamas) who opposed the Oslo accords, recognise Israel's unconditional right to exist, and accept the fact that all Palestinians expelled from their homeland would never be allowed to return.

Arafat stuck to his side of the bargain with Zionism. He repressed all who disagreed with him. He has 30,000 armed police at his disposal. They have detained 1,200 in jail, most without trial; seven have died from torture inside prison.

Such is the disillusionment in Arafat and the PNA that an August survey in the West Bank confirmed that only 23% of the population supported the PNA and the Legislative Council. Throughout the summer there have been demonstrations outside the prisons demanding the release or trial of those inside.

With so little backing for the PNA, and with mounting support for Hamas, Arafat has relied on intensified repres-

sion. The PNA police have fired upon the crowds, killing their own people. In these conditions even the Arafat-controlled Legislative Council has begun to make criticism of the actions of the police.

Sensing his growing isolation, and faced with delay and intransigence by Israel, Arafat was forced to call a general strike on 29 August and mass protest prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque the next day. The strike was poorly observed and the PNA militia had to enforce it against widespread apathy. The mass prayers also attracted a poor turnout.

Hence the mass uprising on 25 September was neither organised by the PNA nor Arafat. Once it started, Arafat did not welcome it. On the first day the PNA police, armed with AK-47s, turned their guns on the Israeli troops, having been targeted themselves. This may have briefly repaired their reputation in the eyes of some, but the next day they reverted to their customary role.

Arafat ordered his elite Force 17 security guard to Ramallah to prevent the Palestinian youth from getting anywhere near the Israeli checkpoints; they hoarded the youth onto trucks and away from the Israeli troops. PNA police later embraced the same Israeli troops whose ranks had killed over 40 youths the day before.

Arafat fears the prospect of a new intifada as much as Israel. It would signal the start of new forms of self-organisation; arms could pass into wider hands; Hamas would inevitably be in the lead of the confrontations with Israeli security.

Arafat wants one thing only—that he be taken seriously by Netanyahu, that he be respected as "leader" and given some further token concessions, like the closure of the tunnel under al-Aqsa mosque.

Arafat must not be allowed to gain from the intifada; he must be swept aside by it. The workers and unemployed of the West Bank and Gaza must set up their own committees in the camps, towns and campuses which can take real power out of the hands of the Legislative Council, stuffed as it is with Arafat lackeys.

They must agitate among the Palestinian police to hand over their weapons and submit to the discipline of the fighters. They must liberate the prisoners from Arafat's torture cells.

Above all, they must fight politically to scrap the Oslo accords. Everything about them is a denial of Palestinian self-determination. The events since May's election prove beyond doubt that Palestine cannot be built incrementally, by stealth, alongside the Zionist state.

Labour was willing to trade a hemmed-in scrap of land for an end to the national struggle of the Palestinians.

Netanyahu's coalition of religious fanatics and Likud racists want every scrap of land for a Zionist state that expands almost daily into East Jerusalem, and widens every security corridor leading to Jewish settler villages, until the whole West Bank is one big corridor called "Greater Israel". The only role they envisage for "President" Arafat is as head of security in an Israeli-controlled Palestinian police force.

Complete

The brave Palestinian youth, children of the last intifada, must take up the fight for complete national self-determination. This cannot be achieved hand-in-hand with the Zionist state, but only at its expense. The origin and very existence of the state of Israel is steeped in Palestinian blood. It was born of exclusion and oppression of Palestinians; it thrives on robbing them of more and more land, on forcing them to work for poverty wages in the sweatshops, and on the construction sites and farms of Israel.

This state must be torn down along with all its political, legal and military apparatus of racist oppression of the Palestinians and defence of Jewish superiority. In its place must be built one unified state—a secular workers' republic of the whole of Palestine in which Arab and Jewish workers live on equal terms, where democracy for all replaces privileges for some.

This is not a fanciful hope. A majority of Israelis disagree with Netanyahu's present policy. Moreover, the new prime minister came to power to privatise industries, cut back on welfare and "modernise" the state sector of the economy. This can only mean more unemployment and loss of benefits for Jewish workers. Destroying the Zionist state can open up the prospect of freedom from the harsh assault of capitalism in Israel for both Arab and Jew. ■

AFGHANISTAN: Taliban regime: a nightmare backed by Western powers

Islamists secure dictatorship

ON 26 SEPTEMBER the Taliban militia seized Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. They now control two-thirds of the country.

Their prize was little more than a pile of rubble and a former president. After four years of fighting the capital resembles Dresden after the 1945 firestorm. Accepting what seemed to be inevitable, the Afghan government and its army had already deserted the capital. Over the last year thousands of intellectuals and professionals had fled to work in the north or in Pakistan.

The only person of note to be found was former president Najibullah, who was under UN protection. The UN were nowhere to be seen when Najibullah and his brother were taken from the compound and shot, then strung up on a platform above a traffic island outside the palace where he had once ruled.

Whilst the Taliban is a relatively new organisation, formed in 1994, it has already made a profound mark on the people of Afghanistan. Taliban means

"seeker" or "student", reflecting the origins of an organisation which recruited amongst Afghan refugee students in Islamic schools in Pakistan. Its leaders are extremely reactionary, hard-line Islamic fundamentalists.

Though it has achieved military success, the Taliban is estimated to have only 10,000 members. This is not surprising since like many other fundamentalist Islamic groups their internal organisation is extremely hierarchical and elitist. Membership is restricted to cadre, but supporters are organised to provide a mass base which, of course, has no say in the actual running of the organisation.

The Taliban are known for routine amputations and killings of anyone they suspect of being criminals. Another reactionary aspect of their ideology is their attitude to women. Like many fundamentalists they cite the Koran to justify the oppression of women. In areas under their control, they deny an education to girls over 10. Apart from

having to remain fully covered, women must stay at home and not seek work. If a woman wants to go out at all, she has to be accompanied by a male relative.

The Taliban take their "duty" towards women seriously. Any woman who is seen to be flouting their dictates is threatened and in some cases women have been sprayed with acid by these religious fanatics.

The success of the Taliban has been put down to their ability to overcome tribal rivalries, which have divided the mujahadin forces since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Although the Taliban are concentrated in the clans of the East and Southern regions of Afghanistan, they are seen as hardliners capable of imposing order across the whole of this devastated country.

The authoritarian aspect of the Taliban has won support from Pakistan, the Saudis and the USA. Pakistani intelligence agents are said to be actively working alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Saudis and the USA

have proved to be generous supporters.

The Taliban have also benefited from the opium trade. Creating conditions where the trade could flourish without disruptions by numerous bandit gangs, the Taliban in turn levy a tax on the opium growers of around 10%. The heroin trade makes around £50 million every year and the Taliban cream off £5 million. This symbiotic relationship with the drugs trade does not seem to trouble the Islamic ascetics of the Taliban militia.

The Taliban's triumph owes much to the war weariness of a country which has seen 18 years of civil war. The Islamist forces pile all the blame for the war on the would-be "modernisers" of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which prompted the invasion by the former Soviet regime in late 1979. But even prior to the invasion the Islamic forces themselves had launched a reactionary war against the Kabul regime.

This invasion led to Afghan terri-

tory becoming a theatre in the cold war, with Afghans as bit players. Najibullah and the PDPA were hated for their Soviet backers and their own Stalinist methods. Najibullah himself headed the secret police, the greatly-feared Khad, for seven years before becoming president.

The bourgeois press is fond of describing Afghanistan as a medieval museum piece; if so the west's fanatical cold war policies helped to make it so.

After years of Stalinist-influenced government and horrific war the Afghan masses are likely to have "order" at the hands of a reactionary backward-looking theocratic dictatorship. Forging a progressive, democratic, pro-working class alternative to the Taliban is desperately needed. The land reform and the creation of urban jobs that will be needed to help forge such an alternative must form part of the struggle of the workers throughout the region for a Federation of Socialist States of Central Asia. ■

FRANCE: Opposition to austerity grows

A new round of struggles

LAST NOVEMBER and December, railway and metro workers went on a three-week long strike against attacks on their retirement rights and, more generally, against the government's attacks on the joint health care and pension structure, the Sécu.

Despite overwhelming public support the transport workers were unable to beat the attack on the Sécu, and the strike wave ended in a score-draw. The working class had fought and won some of its demands, but the key aspect of the government's attack was still intact.

But the fundamental problems that obliged the Juppé government to attack the workers remain; in particular, the drive to monetary union with Germany that impelled the budget cuts. More strikes are expected for the simple reason that there are more attacks on the way.

Government cuts have continued, this time aimed at the whole of the public sector. For the first time ever there will be 7,000 job losses, most of them in the massive education sector, which employs 10% of French workers. This represents a major turn-around in government policy.

The education unions have responded by calling a one-day strike for 30 September. At the same time, the public sector unions have called another one-day strike, for 17 October. The union leaders are obviously determined to keep rank and file anger well under control, by keeping the struggles separate and stringing out the action.

The government would have to be extremely stupid to provoke the railway workers to take action again. However, not everything is within their control.

Today the government's popularity is at rock bottom.

As part of its deregulation programme, the European Commission is insisting that the government press ahead with the break-up of the railway company, the SNCF, into two bodies, one controlling the track, the other running the trains.

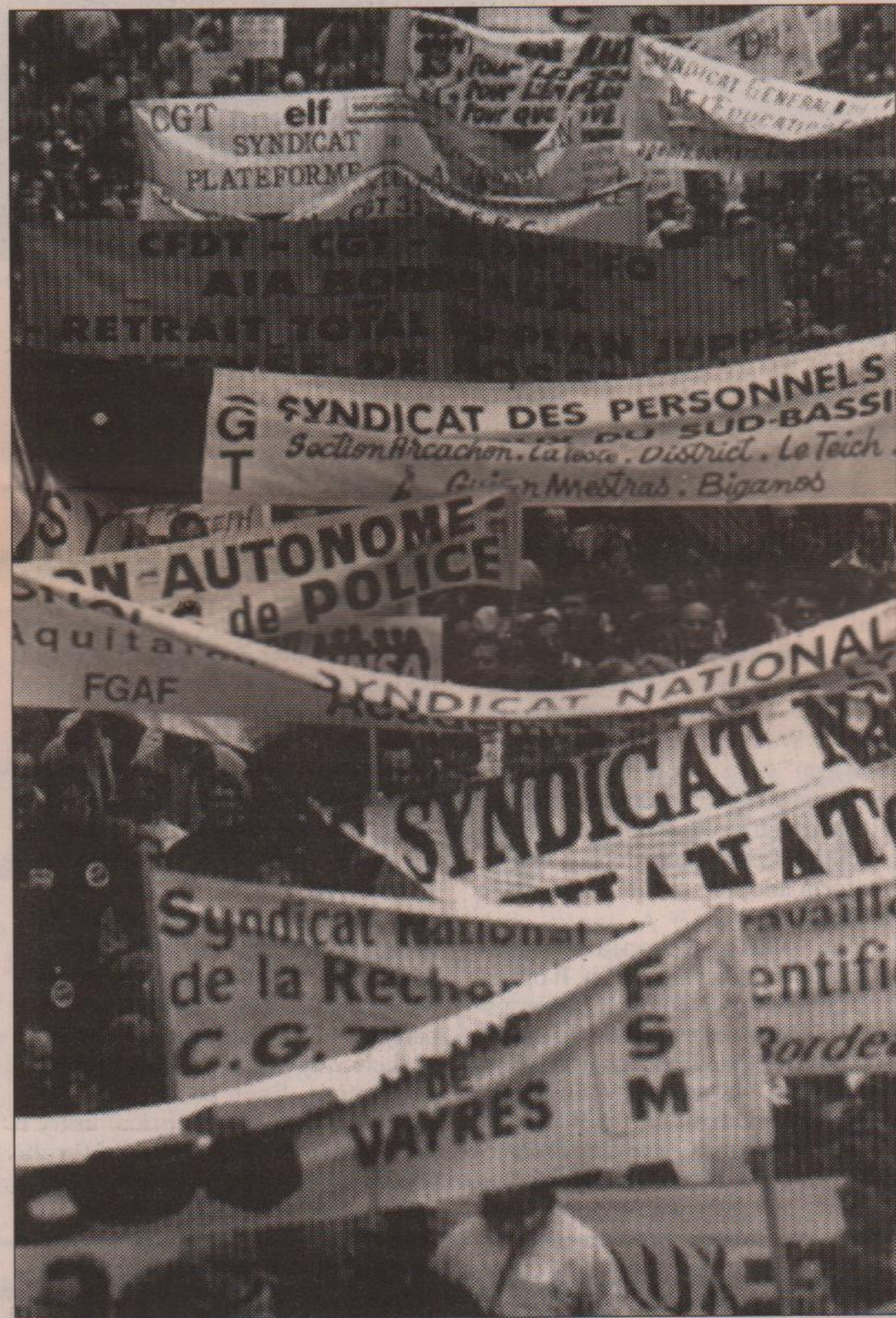
The unions have recently rejected this proposal, rightly seeing it as the first step to privatisation. They have called on the railway workers to participate in the 17 October day of action. Furthermore, in the last week of September there were dozens of local railway strikes, showing that the combativity of the railway workers remains intact.

The public sector strikes of November-December last year were widely expected to lead to renewed confidence amongst private sector workers, who had generally been absent from the strikes and demonstrations in defence of the Sécu.

In the summer there were a series of strikes over job losses, mainly in small and medium sized private companies. Particularly noteworthy were a series of occupations against closures, often led by women workers.

However, whilst these facts are all extremely significant, they do not yet suggest a strike wave on a scale similar to that of last year. Will there be such a movement, and if so, around what demands?

This time last year, millions of French workers took to the streets against Maastricht inspired austerity measures. Now the opinion polls show that 75% of French people expect there to be similar or greater strikes in the months to come. **Mathieu Roux** of Pouvoir Ouvrier looks at the reasons behind France's growing mood of discontent.



French workers and bosses have unfinished business after last year's strike wave

In many respects, the situation today is similar to that of 1995. Last year's movement was heralded in mid-October by a one-day national strike against the public-sector pay freeze imposed by the Juppé government.

But for the discontent to become generalised, it required both a generalised attack (the Sécu) and a key sector of workers determined and able to fight back (the railway workers). The general and the particular came together in the biggest strike movement since May 1968.

Today the government's popularity is at rock bottom. Juppé and Chirac's standing in the opinion polls has plummeted to the levels of November-December and the parliamentary elections are only 18 months away. Everything they have done to try and improve their standing has met with disaster.

Their attempt to curry favour with the racist sections of the electorate by attacking the illegal immigrants who were fighting to get residence papers ended in a legal fiasco and provoked a

massive anti-racist response which is still growing.

Their attempt to buy off the fascist Front National (FN) by proposing the introduction of proportional representation, which would allow the FN to get MPs, was even denounced by the government's supporters for what it was—a cynical manoeuvre.

Their proposal to reform the tax system in favour of ordinary people was met with widespread disbelief. And rightly so. The average family will be 70p a month better off, whilst the rich will be raking it in.

Finally, current legal attempts to expose the corruption at the heart of the French political system threaten to lead to the President himself. For the moment, the Minister of "Justice" has been able to stop the affair from going any further, but there is clearly a potential threat not only to Chirac, but to the whole Fifth Republic.

The rumbling crisis is underpinned by the appalling economic situation and the resulting growth of racism and of the FN.

As in Britain, that 1980s bogey-man, inflation, has largely been eliminated. But because the economy is utterly stagnant, the result has been the first signs of deflation. Consumer and business spending is so low that prices are actually starting to fall.

Unemployment is still running at 12%, whilst the position of youth continues to worsen. Eighteen per cent of people under 25 live below the poverty line, while 20% of youth do not have a job.

The misery and decay that characterise poor working class estates benefit only one political force: the Front National. The FN breeds on poverty; its racist message finds an easy echo in the minds of many of the poorest workers, and in the feverish brains of the traditional troops of fascism: shop-keepers and small businessmen.

The FN has recently lurched to the right, becoming ever-more strident in its racist and fascist message. Addressing his youth movement, Le Pen recently called on them to "prepare the revolution", to get ready to "sweep away" the current political system. At the same time he has caused an outrage by declaring that "races" are not equal and daring the government to prosecute him.

Corruption, budget cuts, racism, unemployment: Chirac and Juppé are hemmed in from all sides.

A major element of Le Pen's message, and one which may yet prove the most dangerous for the government, is his continual attacks on the corruption of all the political parties. In this, he echoes not only the perception of a large part of the public, but also a terrible reality.

It may be that the anti-government feeling, which is running at record levels, will not require any specific new attack to explode into action. Alternatively, job losses in a key private company, such as Renault or Peugeot, could lead to a major fightback against unemployment.

Another possibility is that the government will once again be obliged to attack the Sécu: last year's "reform" was supposed to reduce the deficit to £2 billion. The latest figures reveal that, because the recession is still biting, the deficit has barely shifted and is still running at £5 billion. In the context of the Maastricht "convergence criteria", such a deficit cannot continue indefinitely.

Corruption, budget cuts, racism, unemployment: Chirac and Juppé are hemmed in from all sides. The working class is showing clear signs of unrest and of a desire to pick up from where the strikes of November-December left off. The anti-racist movement is stronger than it has been for over a decade.

The economic options are getting smaller and smaller as monetary union beckons. And waiting in the wings is the FN, which regularly gets 15% of the vote and shows no sign of waning in influence. None of these factors will go away.

Whether or not we have a hot autumn, one thing is clear—it is certain to be a hot *fin de siècle*! ■

a world to win

INDONESIA

On 27 July the Indonesian army stormed the offices of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) to forestall the rise in popularity of its leader Megawati Sukarnoputri ahead of the 1998 Presidential elections.

Immediately afterwards there was a crackdown against the independent trade unions (SBSI and PPBI) and the People's Democratic Party (PRD).

The PRD was involved in a wave of strikes over the spring and summer. Most were to enforce the payment of a new minimum wage set in April 1996.

In early July the PPBI and PRD organised one of the biggest demonstrations since President Suharto came to power in 1965. In Surabaya 15,000 workers from ten factories on an industrial estate came out.

The demonstration linked pay to democratic demands for fair general elections. Slogans were raised against military involvement in the unions. The demonstrations were attacked by troops and on 8 July Dita Indah Sari, President of the PPBI and a member of the PRD, was arrested and charged with subversion. The PRD is now banned.

On 29 July Muchtar Pakpahan, President of the SBSI, was arrested and also charged with subversion.

Subversion carries the death sentence and their cases are being reviewed by the Indonesian courts in November. An international campaign has been launched by the trade unions. For information contact:

• ICTUR, UCATT House, 177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL, Tel 0171-498 4700; Fax: 498 0611

ARGENTINA

On 25 and 26 September a 36-hour General Strike paralysed most of Argentina. There were demonstrations in the capital city, Buenos Aires and riots in Cordoba, in the interior of the country. This strike followed up and built upon the successful one-day General Strike held on 8 August.

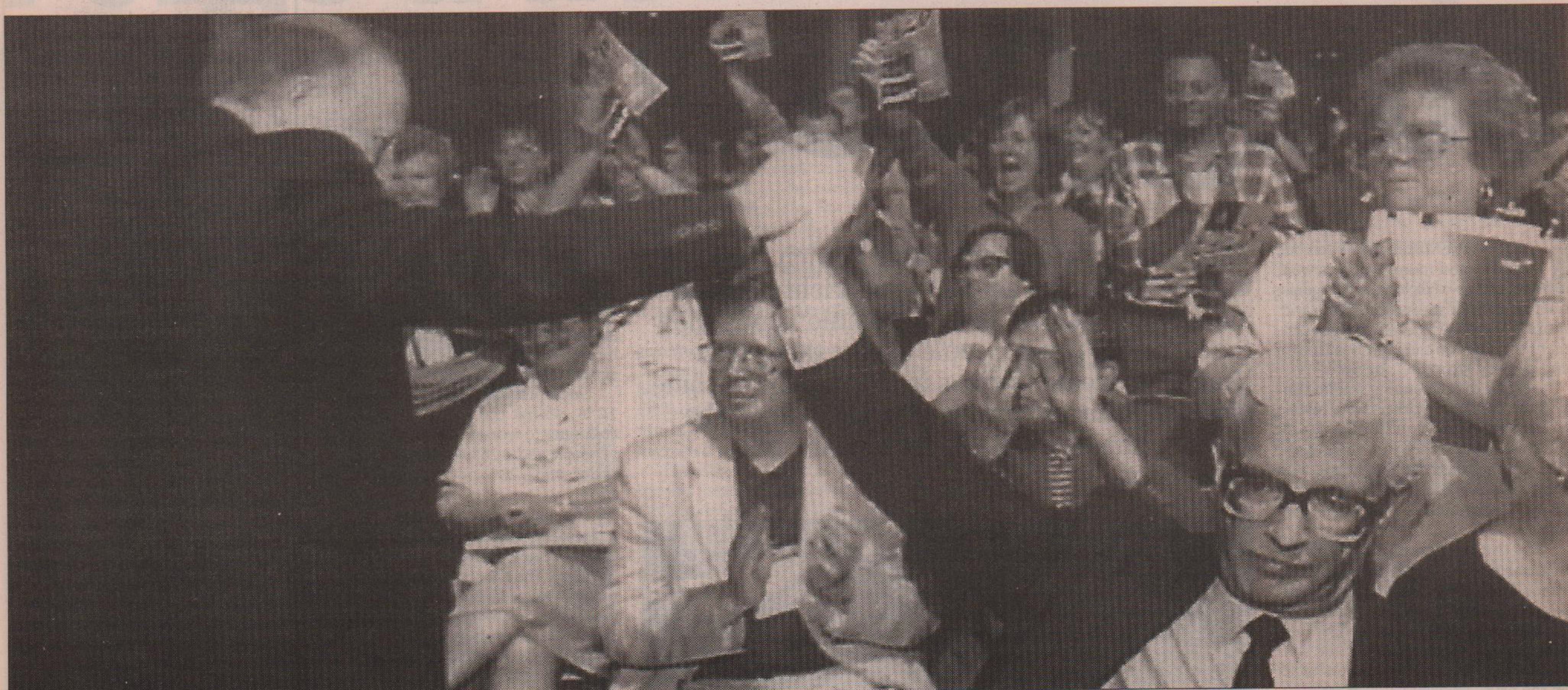
The strikes have been provoked by the growing unemployment in the country (17%), flowing from the recession which hit last year, and the intensifying austerity packages that have been introduced or announced by the Menem government. Only one thing matters to him; that the IMF targets for financial discipline are met and this can only mean savage cuts in the budgets of provincial governments, together with more labour flexibility and greater employer rights in the workplace.

But the strikes have marked a new stage in the struggle of the Argentine labour movement. On 8 August the three rival trade union federations were forced to co-ordinate their opposition for the first time since Menem came to power in 1989. In particular the strains between the largest and oldest federation, the CGT, and the Peronist Menem government are at their worst ever.

Ever since the war the ruling Peronist party and the CGT have been bound together via the state, much to the advantage of the ruling class. Incessant attacks since 1989 have now produced a situation where Menem may rupture this relationship in order to leave himself free for an all-out attack. The corrupt bureaucrats of the CGT, on the other hand, are facing unprecedented pressure from below to strike out against their traditional ally. Breaking with Peronism, when it comes, will mark a decisive advance in the organisation and class independence of Argentine workers. ■

SOCIALIST LABOUR: Stop the witch hunts

Left challenge to Scargill



Scargill's SLP holds out hand to disaffected union leaders

THE MORE Blair attacks strikers, the unions and the working class in general, the better the prospects should be for the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). There are signs that some militants are voting with their feet and joining Scargill's new party.

It is important for militants to be aware of these shifts, but equally important not to be dazzled into thinking the SLP is the answer. The real value of a party to the working class derives not from its size, influence or any other organisational factor. It is determined by what the party proposes to do, what its goals are, and how it proposes to take forward the struggle for socialism. In short, it is determined by the political programme the party advances and fights for inside the working class.

Here the SLP falls down badly. The SLP's programme, as adopted at its May conference, contains no proposals for the action of the party or the class, no guidance on how to take existing struggles forward to challenge the capitalist system as a whole. This has left many branches without guidance on the work they should be doing in support of the recent wave of strikes in the post, London Underground and the Liverpool Docks. Almost all the party's activity has so far been electoral.

Of critical importance is the fact that the programmatic statements passed at the conference are silent on how socialist change is to be effected. There is no mention of the need to break up, disarm and dissolve the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. It leaves open the possibility of attempting to use the existing state machinery in the interests of the workers—a fatal illusion which has led to bloody defeats for the working class time and again, most memorably in Chile.

Immigration

Flowing from this reformist illusion, the party failed to adopt a consistently anti-racist policy. Brian Heron of the SLP executive argued against the abolition of all immigration controls on the grounds that a future socialist government might need to keep South African reactionaries out of Britain.

Certainly we might: but that would be a different state, with very different laws and different institutions to enforce them. Heron's argument reveals the terrifying logic of reformism: if we aim to use the existing repressive institutions rather than fight to smash them, we are eventually obliged to defend and

maintain them, despite the brutal uses the capitalists make of them.

Recent developments in the party suggest that the leadership, based around Arthur Scargill and three members of a secret faction called the Fourth International Supporters' Caucus (FISC), are prepared to reach for the weapon of bureaucratic intimidation to prevent opposition to this course being freely expressed in the ranks of the party. Despite the fact that no conference of the SLP has ever voted on its constitution, a draft set of rules presented by Scargill to a pre-conference meeting is being used as if it already had the authority of the party as a whole behind it.

As the party grows, witch-hunts and exclusions are becoming more frequent. Several individuals around the country have been informed by the General Secretary Patrick Sikorski that their membership has been "voided". Astonishing as it may seem, the executive has rejected the proposal that there should be an appeals procedure. Even the Labour Party allowed those it expelled to appeal (witness the plea of the Militant editorial board to party conference in 1983).

Friction

SLP members around the country have been telling us of many branch meetings taking place in an atmosphere of extreme friction. In Manchester the branch committee simply shut down the branch rather than pursue a discussion of political differences among the members in a comradely environment. In South London the chair of the branch tried to close down a meeting after he failed to prevent a discussion on a proposal to break up the branch into smaller geographical cells; he walked out instead.

The fundamental reason for this bureaucratic approach is that the party leadership wants to silence the left-wing and revolutionary-minded elements so as not to put off the hoped for flood into the party of middle and lower ranking trade union officials. Some of these are strongly influenced by the Stalinist politics of the Morning Star, and not a few of them hate any left wing criticism of their roles in compromising local industrial disputes.

All the more reason for the left wing of the party to get organised now. Factions such as the FISC and the former Morning Star supporters are tolerated because of their uncritical attitude to

the existing leadership and programme. The left will be treated with no such indulgence. This makes the need for firm organisation all the more indispensable.

The left need a faction of their own, to propagate a common view on the way forward for the party, to fight the witch-hunt, to win democratic rights for the members, and—most important of all—to struggle to commit the party to a revolutionary socialist programme.

One left-wing formation has already emerged. According to a report in the Weekly Worker, the "Revolutionary Platform" held a conference in July. Doubtless this provided party members with a much needed opportunity for genuine discussion and debate. But the platform adopted at the meeting was far from adequate.

The platform contains some improvements on party policy. It opposes all immigration controls, for example. Rejecting the possibility of socialism being legislated through parliament, it states that "the new party must reject reformism and fight for revolution."

It calls for the safeguarding of democratic procedures within the party, and for party members who are union officials to receive no more than the average wage of the members they represent. It calls for British withdrawal from Ireland—already party policy—and supports the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination.

But the platform never goes beyond this very general level. As a statement of overall goals it is evasive and incomplete. It never defines what is meant by revolution: if its authors mean the armed dissolution of the bureaucrat-

ic-military apparatus of the state and the assumption of power by a workers' government based on workers' councils and a working class militia, then they should say so.

As a result it does not focus the fight for these organisations on the struggles of today. The struggle for elected strike committees to run industrial disputes, for committees of workers and consumers to monitor price rises and the real cost of living, the fight for organised self-defence of demonstrations and picket lines as a step towards a workers' defence guard: these are all absent. Nor does it call for the party to campaign for strikes and occupations against job losses.

Platform

In short, it is not a guide to action. Perhaps it was never intended to be. In which case the platform represents nothing more than a statement by some party members from different traditions of their very limited areas of political agreement. Even as an attempt to explore a basis for political unity it would have been more useful for the comrades to set out their differences as well as their areas of agreement.

But it is plain that the Platform is intended as something more than that—it presents itself to party members as an organised revolutionary opposition. Unfortunately, without a transitional programme that can build a bridge between the struggles of the day and the fight for power, the Revolutionary Platform will be nothing of the sort.

Of course, none of this need stop party members with widely differing views from collaborating to achieve

clearly defined goals. All comrades who oppose the witch-hunts need to unite in common action to force the NEC to back down.

All comrades who oppose immigration controls—regardless of their views on revolution or reform—need to unite to change party policy. This would be excellent. And there is a name for such a form of unity: the united front. Different tendencies can march separately but strike together.

But a revolutionary opposition needs to be more than a united front. It needs political clarity. It needs a revolutionary programme.

If the SLP is to become a real break with Old Labour, its members will need a more cogent and consistent presentation of the case for revolutionary politics. Among the amendments presented to the founding conference of the party was a statement on economic policy from a Leicester comrade which embodied important elements of the type of programme the left needs to be fighting for: it set out its goals in detail, it fought for what the working class need, not what the bosses can afford; it explained the need for direct action and did not flinch at setting out the militant methods of struggle that will be necessary if we are to win.

This method now needs to be embodied in a more substantial and all-embracing alternative programme. To all those in the SLP who read this paper, listen to our arguments, respect our record in the class struggle and our ideas: we appeal to you to fight for these ideas within the SLP. We will offer you every support in the fight for a revolutionary SLP. ■

SLP attracts union militants

THERE ARE signs that the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) is starting to grow. The Labour leadership's attack on the trade unions at the time of the TUC conference has caused widespread anger in the movement.

The hint of further anti-union laws, Blunkett's arrogant dismissal of employment rights and Stephen Byers' admission that Blair wants to break New Labour's links with the unions precipitated a flurry of applications for SLP membership. One report, in the Weekly Worker, suggests that around 200 TUC delegates joined the new party at the Congress.

Joe Marino of the Bakers' Union and Jimmy Nolan, head of the Liverpool Docks Port Shop Stewards' Committee, have both joined. This adds to the weight of the party in the unions and boosts its influence among workers in struggle.

In a recent by-election in Knowsley, Merseyside, there was a low turnout, and clearly a council by-election is a very different affair from a general election, but the SLP polled around 38% of the vote, (221 votes to Labour's 341) with the Tories winning just 16 votes!

As G. R. McColl pointed out in his article on the SLP in Trotskyist International (No. 20), the SLP is the most

important organised break from the Labour Party since the war, "a significant event in the life of the British labour movement."

His assessment that "the release of pent-up frustration among large sections of trade unionists at some stage during a Blair administration could find the SLP well-placed to grow dramatically", will be put to the test when Labour come to power. But already—in advance of the election—there are signs that sections of workers and trade unionists are fed up with the abuse heaped on them by Labour's front bench. ■

An info-revolution?

Dear comrades, Congratulations on launching your Website, "LRCI-net". It comes at time when political debate is raging amongst internet users.

The latest issue of *Wired* (October 1996), the influential, trans-atlantic magazine for new age "techies", contains the editors' "Manifesto for the Digital Society".

The *Wired* manifesto opposes the attempt by big business and governments to get their hands on the net. According to *Wired*, the net "offers a new democracy dominated neither by the vested interests of political parties nor the mob's baying howl. It can narrow the gap that separates capital and labour; it can deepen the bonds between the people and the planet."

Concretely they call for: an end to state censorship of the net; freedom of information and transparent government via the net; transparent companies and political organisations; replacing political party democracy with lower levels of representation via localities and interest groups; no state monopoly of a new "broadband" system but the freedom to use the current, telecoms-based system.

There is a lot to be supported in this: much of it mirrors Trotskyists' demands for an end to business secrecy and real representative democracy. Unfortunately, the document is marred by a liberal, "classless" and ultimately petit-bourgeois utopian method.

On the one hand, it is a cogent statement about the potential benefits of the

internet for humanity: the power that unlimited access to knowledge would unleash both in the productive forces and for political and individual liberation. On the other hand, it abstracts from the very system which has created the internet: the capitalist system based on class, exploitation and profit.

An internet free of censorship and accessible to every human being cannot be brought about by wishful thinking, nor even by appeals to "enlightened" capitalists and politicians. It can only come through the smashing of the profit system: the transfer of the commanding heights of the economy—including the telematic network—into commonly owned, state property.

To connect humanity via the net is a worthy objective. But today 2 billion people across the globe have never even made a telephone call! Until we abolish global inequality, until the third world is developed, the net-heads' dream will remain a dream.

Of course, the internet has a role to play in that struggle—just as newspapers, video and plain old soapbox speeches have a role. The immediate task is to preserve the freedom of expression the web allows. That is why we must support calls for an end to censorship. More than that—while the web is still inaccessible to the majority of individual workers—it is easily within the financial reach of small organisations.

Socialists should encourage basic class struggle organisations to go online. We should build an alternative information network from below, at the same time as demanding access as a right. It is well within the financial capability of the state to provide internet access to every home for less than the price of your TV licence. Every school student should have access, and every worker—at home and at work. All this can only empower us as socialists, trade unionists and individual human beings.

Ryan Calder,
London

The LRCI's new World Wide Web site can currently be found at: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~lrci>. It contains news, analysis and Marxist theory drawn from the press of the LRCI.



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.

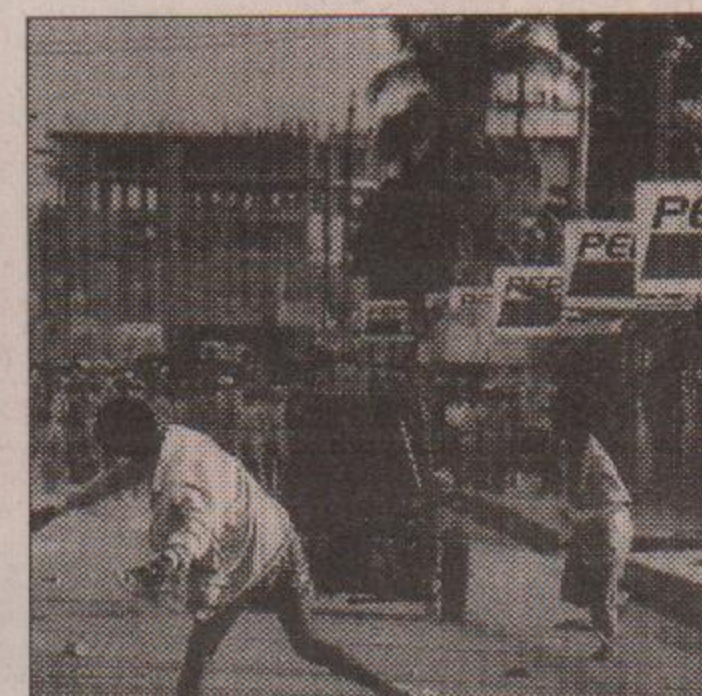


October 1917 The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed 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 the restoration of 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.

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.

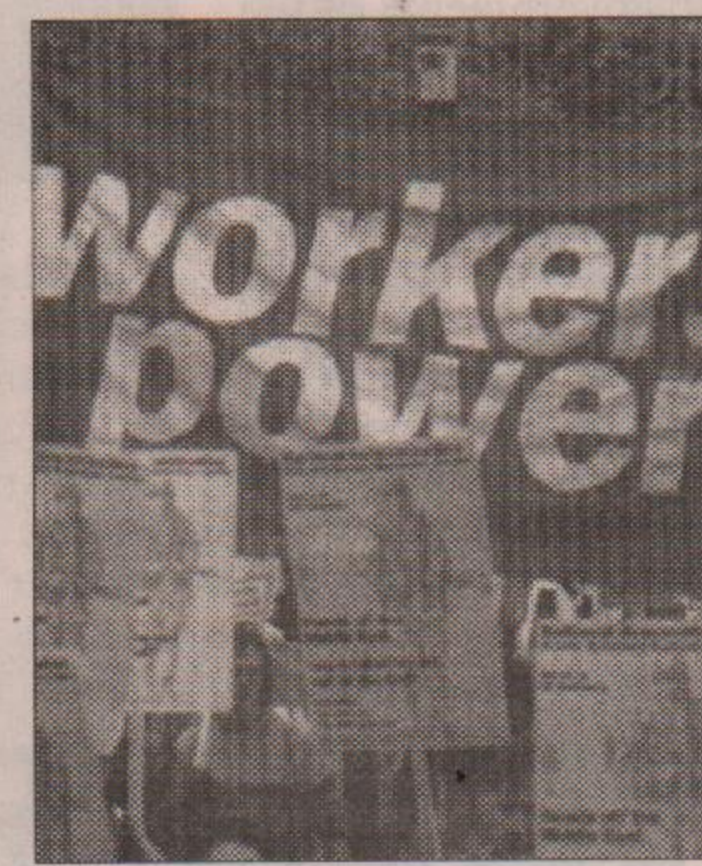


Social Oppression is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation 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 the imperialist 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.

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 International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. 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. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★

£20,000 Fighting Fund

Workers Power has launched a new Fighting Fund. We need £20,000 by July 1997. We need this to help the LRCI buy a new office that can serve as an organising centre for both Workers Power and the LRCI. We aim to buy a place big enough to use not just as a publishing centre, but as a meeting place and organising centre for our members and supporters. The fund got off to a

flying start at our July event, A World to Win, where we collected over £1,300. Since then, due to the efforts of our supporters, we have boosted the total to **£2,400**. But it is not enough. So we are urging all our readers to dig deep and help us achieve our target. Send your cheques or postal orders, payable to Workers Power, to WP Fighting Fund, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

★ **TROTSKYIST BULLETIN 9**
Plan versus Market
 An in-depth survey of the debate between Marxism and bourgeois economics. Out now. Price £1.50

OUT NOW!
 Trotskyist
 International No. 20

Price: £1.50
 £2.00 including P&P

Articles include:
 SLP: Which way forward?
 Rifondazione Comunista: Italy's new reformism
 SWP: International splits
 Argentina: Workers fight back

Cheques payable to Trotskyist International, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX



Workers Power 205

The copy deadline for next issue of Workers Power is 26 October.

WORKERS POWER

Published by the
 Workers Power Group,
 BCM Box 7750,
 London WC1N 3XX
 Telephone: 0171 357 0388
 Fax: 0171 357 0344
 E-mail: lrci@easynet.co.uk

Workers power

KURDISTAN Betrayed by Barzani...

Analysis - pages 8&9

Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 204 October 1996 ★ 50p

Palestinian youth erupt in anger

Israeli troops

out!

A NEW Palestinian intifada has begun. After months of stalling, insults and provocation from Israel, a calculated slap in the face—the opening of a tunnel under the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem—finally triggered the powder keg of anger.

Israel's murder machine reacted in the only way it knows—killing dozens of unarmed Palestinian youth. For the first time since the 1967 Six Day War, tanks have been sent into the West Bank.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, says that the dead are to blame for provoking the Zionist troops.

He is the lying author of mass murder. Israel is fully responsible for these latest crimes. The new Israeli cabinet is stuffed full of extreme right-wingers and racists.

They have all made clear that the Oslo accords are dead and that the lives of the Palestinian youth they have butchered were worthless. That is the real provocation.

- Since his election in May, Netanyahu has refused to implement the provisions of the 1993 Oslo agreement, or to honour commitments made by the previous government.

- The new cabinet has refused to withdraw Israeli troops from the Arab town of Hebron.

- New Jewish settlements are to be built in the heart of the occupied West Bank to boost their number from 140,000 today to 200,000 by the end of the century.

- Negotiations on the future status of Jerusalem have been scrapped; Arab homes and com-

munity centres have been bulldozed in East Jerusalem. More land has been stolen from Arab owners to try and ensure that Jerusalem can never become the capital of a Palestinian state.

- Netanyahu refused to even meet Arafat for three months to discuss the peace process.

- Israel has tightened the closure of the West Bank and Gaza, condemning thousands to hunger and misery.

The Palestinian youth have fought back with stones in the face of heavy machine gun fire from US-built Cobra helicopter gunships. The Palestinian police fired back only when they had come under fire.

The Clinton administration blocks all attempts in the United Nations to condemn the Zionist murderers. The British and other Europeans plead for calm and a meeting between leaders to defuse the intifada. The Arab governments of the region offered their services to get the treacherous Oslo accords back on track.

Workers throughout the world must rally to support the Palestinian youth! This new uprising of the Palestinians has already made itself felt inside the Arab towns of Israel through solidarity demonstrations.

This is the way forward. The heroic intifada of 1987-93 exhausted itself after years of



guerrilla actions had failed to dent the Zionist war machine. Its failure laid the basis for the PLO's capitulation to Israel when Arafat agreed to a meaningless Israeli supervised "statelet".

Such capitulations emboldened Netanyahu when he took

office. He insisted that Arafat repress the Islamic opposition movement Hamas and others opposed to the Oslo agreements before implementing any further withdrawal.

Even now Arafat talks of "international mediation" and urges his PNA militia to prevent

the heroic Palestinian youth from engaging the Israeli troops.

The whole of the Middle East must rise up in support of the new intifada. Workers in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and the Gulf must join the protests and force their governments to rip up their own agreements with Israel.

Throughout the world protests and pickets of Israeli embassies must make it clear that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are not alone.

- Israeli troops out of the West Bank and Gaza!
- All Israeli settlers out!

Smash the Israeli Zionist state – turn to page 11