

workers POWER

After pounding the civilians of Serbia, Blair has declared a new war on welfare and benefits

Now Bomber Blair targets Britain's poor



Now turn to page 2 for more about Labour's attacks on welfare

HEALTH

Children suffer more in 'child-friendly' Britain

"WE SHOULD ask why Britain is now below countries like Slovenia in infant mortality, and why the gap has widened between the health of rich children and poor over the last 20 years."

Dr James Appleyard, a paediatrician who has co-authored a recent British Medical Association (BMA) study of the health of infants and young children in Britain, posed these stark and revealing questions to Blair's government which, remember, was pledged to making Britain better.

The BMA report shows that the health of those under five years of age

is worse in Britain than in any other western European country. In fact, figures compare badly with poverty-stricken states in eastern Europe, with seven per cent of infants born at dangerously low birth weights. This figure is identical with that recorded for Albania!

Behind these shocking statistics lie two common factors: class and poverty. Dr Appleyard notes that "in social class five [households headed by semi and unskilled manual workers] children are four times more likely to die than class one. They are smaller at birth, shorter and have a markedly poorer diet." Kids

from poorer households are far more likely to eat diets seriously deficient in fresh fruit and vegetables.

The authors point to a mountain of evidence proving influence of these early disadvantages on health in later life, causing a range of illnesses from coronary heart disease to mental health problems.

The report debunks the myth of Britain as a "child-friendly" society – a myth that New Labour has been keen to perpetuate. Not surprisingly, the BMA does not have a prescription for relieving the plight of poor children, other than to make 38 mild recom-

mendations and call for "a radical agenda to tackle inequality". But even it criticises New Labour's cuts in lone parent benefits.

The Government is very keen on "better education" and health promotion campaigns, lecturing the masses on the good life but not furnishing them with the means to live it. New Labour refuses to do anything to narrow the yawning and ever widening gap between rich and poor in this society.

To begin to make this a country fit for children and the rest of us we need a tax regime that squeezes the super-rich

minority hard, this can finance a massive programme of state investment in public services that meet the needs of the majority.

If kids are the future, then fighting for it means:

- an immediate restoration of lone parent benefit cuts
- a swingeing wealth tax on the rich and a steeply progressive income tax
- a massive public investment programme to finance adequate childcare, health, education and housing
- the scrapping of all PFI schemes.

INSIDE

The SWP, Kosova and the Balkan war

THEORY & PRACTICE PAGES 12-14

Ten years of the LRCI

THEORY & PRACTICE PAGE 15

KURDS

Defend Ocalan

We expose imperialism's role in the arrest of Ocalan and ask where now for the PKK?

INTERNATIONAL PAGES 10 AND 11

IRELAND

Unionism's summer of crisis

Will the Unionists follow the latest peace plan or will they march to a different tune?

INTERNATIONAL PAGE 9

UNISON

Bureaucracy on the offensive

How the union leaders attacked the left at the national Unison conference

FIGHTBACK PAGE 4

IN BRIEF

More than 50,000 people took part in the Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras Parade and Festival in London at the beginning of July. There is a mood of defiance in the Lesbian and Gay community following the murderous fascist attack on the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho earlier this year. The bombing was an extreme expression of the prejudice people face everyday because of their sexuality.

● Forty-four per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual trade unionists suffer discrimination at work according to a recent survey by the TUC.

● Labour are refusing to consider outlawing discrimination and harassment.

● If the equal age of consent for all young people was to become law Labour will combine it with legislation to criminalise any one in a position of authority if they have sex with 16 and 17 year olds as a concession to the right.

● Labour have also failed to make any move to scrap the notorious Section 28 which created a climate of fear and repression in our education system.

In the face of continuing homophobia what we need is a strong political, working class movement to fight for lesbian and gay rights.

There will be a lobby of the Home Office on 21 July in protest at Jack Straw's decision to return several political refugees to the Republic of Cameroon in the near future. The refugees were arrested and detained without trial by President Paul Biya's autocratic regime because they were anti-government, pro-democracy or human rights activists. The Home Office categorise Cameroon as a "pluralist democracy". This is a pathetic excuse by the Home Office. So much for the humanitarian British government we've heard too much about recently.

Stop deportations to Cameroon! Lobby the Home Office - Wed 21 July 2pm Assemble at 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H. For further details ring Keith Pattenden 0181 533 3311 day or 0181 472 7988 eves.

Tony Benn has announced that he will be standing down as MP for Chesterfield at the next election. Benn founded the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs and has been prominent in many campaigns, both international and domestic, including the recent Committee for Peace in the Balkans. But is it right to view Tony Benn as the champion of the left in the Labour Party, or were his deals to bring "peace" to the party prior to the 1983 election to blame for the years of witch-hunting? In September's issue, *Workers Power* will examine Benn's brand of left reformism, and look at the prospects for a revival of the Labour left.

CONTENTS

Fightback	2-5
Buzzwords	6
Marxism: The Basics	7
International	8-11
Theory & Practice	12-15
Where We Stand	16

BENEFITS

Blair targets welfare

THE LATEST round of welfare "reform" was announced at the end of June. After their dismal results in the European elections you might think New Labour would be keen to "reassure their core voters" - the great majority of British working class people. Think again.

Following on from the attacks on incapacity benefit and disability living allowance the announcements tell us that New Labour has "declared war on welfare", that they believe if you claim benefit you must be "workshy" and that living on benefits is living "the good life".

Clearly the only voters these changes are designed to reassure are those who read the *Daily Mail*.

The proposed scrapping of housing benefit (HB) was one of the least publicised announcements. In an article in the *Daily Mail* that well-known friend of the socially excluded, Gordon Brown, stated that this autumn's Housing Green Paper will outline the replacement of HB with a new Housing Tax Credit and take responsibility for administering HB away from local councils.

At present, if you are a council or housing association tenant, and claiming income support, all your rent is paid by HB, but under the new proposal everyone would be expected to pay something towards their rent - basically a benefit cut for millions of the poorest people in the country. If you are on low pay you will have to make sure your employer administers your tax credit properly, which will probably result in massive underclaiming.

HB is being targeted because the cost is spiralling and currently stands at £11.2 billion a year. New Labour, of course, blame this on scrounging, lazy or fraudulent claimants and are already making it more difficult to claim by introducing endless identity and income checks. But what are the real reasons for the big HB bill?

HB costs are directly related to rents - since the Tories deregulated private sector rents they have risen dramatically. Young single people with no kids often have no other housing options

than a squalid bedsit, as they aren't eligible for most social housing. Council housing stock has been slashed since the Thatcherite "right to buy" policy was introduced and continues to be under threat from privatisation and lack of funds for local authorities to build new homes.

So more and more tenants are being forced into the private sector where it is well known that unscrupulous landlords have been busy pushing up rents and pocketing the HB. Landlords in Derbyshire, for example, charge around £55 a week for a bedsit while council rent for a three-bedroom house is around £40 a week!

What we need is more and better council housing for single people and families that would undermine the power of private landlords, combined with reintroducing regulation, massive centrally funded subsidies and "fair rents" to bring rents down.

The reform of HB is part of the general drive to centralise and "modernise" all benefits services. This spring Labour unveiled its plans for the "single gateway" for claimants which means the combining of job centres and benefits agency offices into new "One-stop" centres. There are some advantages to this as anyone will know who's had to trek back and forward between two offices in order to claim different benefits.

Labour, however, has decided to use the opportunity to invite the private sector in to run pilot centres affecting around 180,000 claimants. And we all know that running the service for profit will mean job cuts, attacks on pay, terms and conditions for staff and a worse service for claimants.

Even more insidious, it has been announced that all new claimants are to be allocated to personal advisers and that attendance at interviews where you will be offered advice on reskilling or training will be compulsory - you will be regularly pressurised to accept any low-paid job or naff training scheme or you won't get benefit!

The Child Support Agency is another

focus for major reform. This is a deeply hated Tory creation that has failed to increase the number of lone parents receiving maintenance in the eight years since it was set up and has hounded single mothers on benefit to tell them who the fathers of their children are so that state can get money out of them. This money went straight to the Treasury and mothers and children saw none of it. Now Labour says they can keep a whopping £10 a week!

New Labour also plans to simplify the procedure for assessing how much absent parents should contribute - they claim 70 per cent of fathers will end up paying less. But they have combined this with the criminalisation of absent parents who won't or can't pay - large fines or even a jail sentence can be imposed plus Labour are considering confiscating non-paying fathers' driving licences!

The past eight years have proved that forcing payments out of parents does nothing for the children involved apart from fostering bitterness and resentment. The CSA should be scrapped. Instead free childcare, a decent minimum wage, and benefits set at the same level would go a long way to solving the issue of child support.

From cradle to grave Labour's new welfare state will guarantee you a life of insecurity. Labour is also trumpeting

stakeholder pensions. The message to workers who have paid tax and national insurance all their lives is now "sorry, that's not enough". We've got to have private pensions as well, as the value of the state pension is cut to a minimum.

For pensioners, claimants, absent parents, and the low-paid these reforms are a stern warning: you are all legitimate targets in Blair's war on welfare.

Why I've declared war on welfare



PASSPORTS

Privatisation brings chaos

LABOUR MINISTERS complain of fraud and waste in the welfare state. Are they talking about themselves? These same ministers are responsible for the passport fiasco which has meant tens of thousands of pounds being paid in compensation to people who have had to cancel or rearrange holidays due to a massive backlog in the processing of new passports.

Over 53,000 applications have piled up and Jack Straw was forced to make a public apology as people queued for hours, even days, outside passport offices in a desperate bid to rescue their hard-earned summer holidays.

With children soon to break up from school the passport chaos made front page news, much to the delight of the Tories.

The fact that in large part the prob-

lem was due to the privatisation of part of the passport service was less well-publicised.

Labour's first Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in July 1997 was to award a contract to electronics multinational Siemens, worth £230 million over 10 years, for a new computerised passport production system. Siemens, we were told, would cut costs, speed up processing and increase security.

They began by cutting jobs - in the last year over 150 posts have been lost in the Liverpool office alone. But problems in the new computer systems and fewer staff meant increased delays. Before PFI in May 1998: 11 days to get a passport; post-PFI in May 1999, 41 days to get a passport!

As the applications mounted, new staff had to be found, overtime paid and

security measures relaxed. Spectacularly, Siemens has failed to achieve any of their aims - if they were a school they would have been shut down.

These problems were combined with another inept New Labour decision to introduce separate passports for children (supposedly a measure designed to stop one parent in a residency dispute being able to disappear abroad with the children, actually a means of raking in much more in extra fees) at the same time as the new technology.

Who's going to pay? Siemens' contract commits them to targets and timescales and includes penalty clauses if these aren't met but because of "commercial confidentiality" those on the receiving end of their incompetence can't be told if or when they will have to pay!

We can be sure of two things: any fine will be a drop in the ocean compared to the profits Siemens will make in the long run and whatever they pay they won't be expected to cover the cost of the compensation pay outs. While it's all hush, hush about Siemens' liability, the Passport Office is very up front when it comes to who will have to shell out for that. The compensation will come out of next year's fees - which probably means they'll put the price up when a standard 10-year passport already costs £21.

There's a small crumb of comfort in the European Union report published the same week as the passport scandal hit the news - 35 per cent of British people can't afford to go abroad on holiday, so we don't have to worry about queuing for that passport after all!

Gordon Brown insists that his "prudent" financial regime can stave off the threat of a full scale recession in Britain. However, *Keith Harvey* explains why the contradictions at the heart of the British economy are creating an increasingly divided country and could yet pull it into a deep recession

Has Brown warded off the recession?

BRITAIN IS in the middle of its lowest period of economic growth since 1992. The revised figures for GDP for the first three months of this year showed 0.0 per cent growth compared to the last three months of 1998; in short, stagnation.

Since then manufacturing has continued to decline. Output in June was down for the 15th month in a row; year-on-year industrial output has fallen 1.5 per cent.

With business and professional services reporting flat profits and output, only a buoyant consumer service sector is keeping the economy afloat, with the housing, transport, retail and wholesale sectors pulled along by domestic demand.

The key questions are: what effect is the decline in manufacturing having on jobs and incomes, what are the prospects for a further worsening of the outlook in the second half of the year and how will the economy bear up enough to keep tax receipts up, unemployment down and so keep the wheels on the New Labour bandwagon?

Following the financial crisis that hit East Asia in mid-1997, domestic output in those countries collapsed and with it their demand for imports. Britain could not hope to escape the consequences.

UK manufacturing is the weak link in the British economy. It has become less and less important as a source of jobs and profits since the late 1970s; the continued expansion of the service sector is seen as the key to the future health of UK plc. The course of the economic recovery since 1992 has done nothing to change this.

Manufacturing has enjoyed one good year since 1992 (1994). UK manufacturing has grown at less than 1 per cent a year (apart from 1994/95). The UK has ceased to be a player in many areas of industry. Investment has instead become concentrated in a few world leaders in pharmaceutical and electronics and some foreign-owned multinationals which have taken advantage of Britain as a low-wage haven for foreign investment keen to get inside the EU.

Another structural feature of the UK has been its low productivity due to poor rates of capital investment. According to a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) report published last month top British companies spent 2.5 per cent of their sales on Research and Development in 1998 compared to an average of 4.6 per cent for the world's 300 leading companies. A November 1998 report said that productivity in the UK was 26 per cent lower than the USA and 13 per cent lower than France and Germany.

In a recession global firms close plants with the least productive capacity (e.g. the North East of Britain). Hoover started short-time working. Siemens, Fujitsu and other semi-conductor manufacturers started to close their plants in response to collapse of world prices for computer chips. Last month it was the turn of thousands of BAe workers in the south of England to get their cards as another plant was closed.

In the car industry firms like BMW/Rover have responded to overcapacity and falling profits by mass redundancies and a programme of investment designed to improve the productivity of UK plants while retaining the low wage advantage UK plants have over their EU counterparts.

Job losses in the north of England and Scotland have mounted while the service sector in the south of England continued to grow, but more slowly. Employment fell in June 1999 for the sixteenth consecutive month despite new jobs being created in the lower pay end of the service sector. The TUC predict up to 230,000 sackings this year.

Firms are dumping workers to slash outlays in order to keep sales and profits. Low levels of trade union militancy, a cowardly trade union leadership and a pro-business Labour government are encouraging Britain's bosses to undertake swift sackings and closures at the first sign of pressure on their profits.

Gordon Brown finally wised up to the threat of recession last autumn; a campaign was launched to force the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England to lower interest rates in line with those of the USA.

Since then the MPC has cut rates three times and they now stand at 5 per cent. Lowering interest rates is one way to keep the value of sterling down since it is less attractive to investors in these circumstances. But the situation is made worse by UK's non-membership of the euro when the EU is the UK's biggest market.

At 5 per cent interest rates are still higher than the EU average and this sucks money in, keeping the value of sterling higher than it really merits given the underlying poor performance of the economy. The higher sterling is the more uncompetitive are UK exports. Only a buoyant domestic market in the USA, which is sucking in imports, is keeping Britain's export industries afloat.

Without the service sector performance Britain would be experiencing a significant recession.

The service sector has grown 12 per cent since 1995 compared to 1.3 per cent for manufacturing, thus hiking up overall growth rates. Investment in the sector was 25 per cent up during 1998 compared to a decline of 1 per cent for manufacturing.

But between November last year and March this year the service sector too failed, contributing to the stagnation for the economy as a whole in the first three months of this year. The fall-out from the collapse of hedge funds and the Russian debt default forced a spate of banking mergers to cut costs in a contracting market with lower profit performance.

Sackings have spread since then as a spate of "rationalisations" takes hold. Barclays is cutting 6,000 jobs this year while the insurance giant Axa has announced 2,000 redundancies. In addition retail sales fell five months in a row up to February.

From around March-April, while industry continued to decline, the ser-

vice sector has picked up, essentially as a result of the cuts in interest rates. These have given a huge boost to the housing market which in turn triggers increased demand in consumer goods on the high street. The financial sector too has recovered.

While Labour takes comfort from this respite, the reality for many workers remains grim. In particular, the most social and politically significant consequence of the course of the UK downturn since 1998 is the divergence between the north and south of England as a result of destruction of manufacturing and job losses.

The Richard Roger Urban Task force reported last month on plans to reverse the exodus from the northern cities. The emphasis has been on tax cuts for brown-field site builders, on better designed homes and the fight against crime and dirt. But the real reason for the flight from the inner city is that many urban areas have become job deserts.

Without job prospects the youth leave; the older population are stuck on benefits with houses worth 10 per cent of what they fetched ten years ago. Homes are selling for £3000 in Liverpool, Salford, Blackburn, Stoke, Middlesbrough and other northern cities as industrial jobs are axed and service sector growth becomes focused on the south-east.

What is the outlook for the second half of the year? Not even Gordon Brown predicts the UK economy will grow more than 1.5 per cent this year. Many analysts say that overall GDP for 1999 could

be nearer 0.5 per cent. But the rate of decline in manufacturing is lower now than at the start of the year.

It is likely that while unemployment will increase for some time to come, output will stabilise and improve, providing there is no further deepening of the global recession. That is why so many British economists, along with Brown, have their eyes firmly fixed on developments in the USA. A major recession there would plunge the UK itself into recession.

The current stabilisation of the economy as a whole is not going to prevent large parts of Britain being hit hard by the effects of manufacturing's decline.

Faced with this "northern recession" union bosses have opted for a begging strategy, pleading for a little extra cash to keep plants open. Such a strategy is wrong. First it is totally inadequate to deal with the scale of closures: for every Rover BMW, there are many more like Siemens. Second, the union 'negotiations' always involves workers making greater and greater sacrifices - in terms of hours and working conditions - for the bosses to carry on making a healthy profit. And finally this strategy is doomed to failure; it will take more than an over-paid architect to restore life to the northern inner cities. An alternative strategy is urgently needed. Instead of lobbying the MPC, the CBI and the multinationals, it is time for the labour movement to organise a militant campaign, including strikes and occupations, to defend and create jobs.

BRITISH BUSINESS AND EUROPE

This month sees the launch of Britain in Europe, the pro-euro business lobby. Tony Blair will be there alongside Tory pro-Europeans Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine. British Airways and Unilever and a host of chief executives of other big companies will be present too.

Since last month's European Parliament elections the coalition of anti-euro Europhobes and sceptics have had the wind in their sails, interpreting the results as a solid rejection by the UK population of any idea of abandoning sterling.

Blair and the pro-euro leaders of the Labour Party were wrong-footed. The launch of Britain in Europe is the start of the fightback as the pro-euro lobby fixes its sights on a referendum on entry some time after the next election.

The issue of Britain's adoption of the euro is the most critical economic question facing Britain's bosses during the lifetime of this parliament. The overwhelming majority of British and foreign-owned MNCs favour joining now or as soon as possible after the next election. They do most, or a sizeable chunk, of their business there and fear losing out to competition. They are right to do so.

Opposition among some British bosses remains and has been based on two solid economic facts. First, a sizeable sector of finance and multinational firms fear the EU will increasingly define itself against the rest of the world, resulting in a contraction of global trade (in favour of regional trade). This would hit the UK's more



Blair drums up support for the euro

globally dependent trade and investment.

Second, many employers are worried that the UK's low wage economy (and especially the lower contribution to welfare benefits made by UK bosses) will be changed by directives from the European Commission.

But for the majority of Britain's bosses these fears are outweighed by the realisation that there is much to lose by staying out of the single currency. During the last three years UK interest rates have been between 1 per cent and 3 per cent higher than the EU average. This is an extra cost for UK capital and would gradually disappear under the euro regime.

The eleven euroland members now have no exchange rate transaction costs which represents tens of millions of euros of savings to business. And the new euro zone enlarges the market from which you can borrow capital. UK bosses lose out, while they stay out.

Blair and Brown want to get into the euro. But not only will they have to get over the anti-euro sentiments being whipped up by the Tories, real problems remain to be resolved concerning the alignment of the UK business cycle with that of the euroland member states.

Britain's interest rate and exchange rate movements are still heavily tied to that of the USA. Engineering a devaluation of sterling (from around e1.54 to around e1.33) and a lowering of interest rates by up to 2 per cent before entry are seen as important by UK business if it is not to join at an uncompetitive disadvantage.

All of this means that the issue of Europe - and therefore the fight for an alternative workers' Europe - will be at the forefront of the political agenda in the years to come.

UNISON CONFERENCE BY ALISON HUDSON

Bureaucracy on the offensive

ROSINA FORMAN is a young housing benefit worker, suspended without pay from her workplace by Labour-led Sefton council. She received a standing ovation from delegates to Unison's sixth national delegate conference in Brighton this summer.

Rosina and 25 other Unison members were taking official industrial action, a work-to-rule over pay and regrading, when the council locked them out in May. Unison is currently balloting workers in the finance department to escalate the dispute and solidarity donations are pouring in from Unison branches on top of £5,000 from the national union.

Sefton council are threatening to sack the suspended workers and have brazenly challenged Unison to an all-out fight stating, "the financial support you are receiving from Unison and sympathisers will not last forever".

The union's General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe, told the locked out Sefton members and conference delegates: "You have our full support. You will win."

But we have been here before. Remember Bickerstaffe, posing for a photo, clenched fist and all, alongside the Hillingdon strikers? He promised the Hillingdon women support to the death. Then he turned on them, sabotaged their fight and whipped up a frenzied attack on them, stripping them of rights and, for a time, even membership of the union.

Two years into a New Labour government, it is clear that the Unison leadership is committed to avoiding any major confrontation with Blair. Disputes, such as the University College London Hospital (UCLH) strike against the effects of PFI, and the Sheffield Housing Benefits strike against privatisation, have been kept isolated and then betrayed.

Unison is the biggest union in the country. It has the potential and resources to organise a serious national fight to defend public services. But it is run by a bureaucracy desperate for scraps from New Labour's table. The leadership has failed, time and again, to defend jobs, pay and conditions. Instead, it deliberately channels the members' anger - expressed by last year's demand for a demonstration against the low level of the minimum wage - into events like

the 10 April Newcastle march.

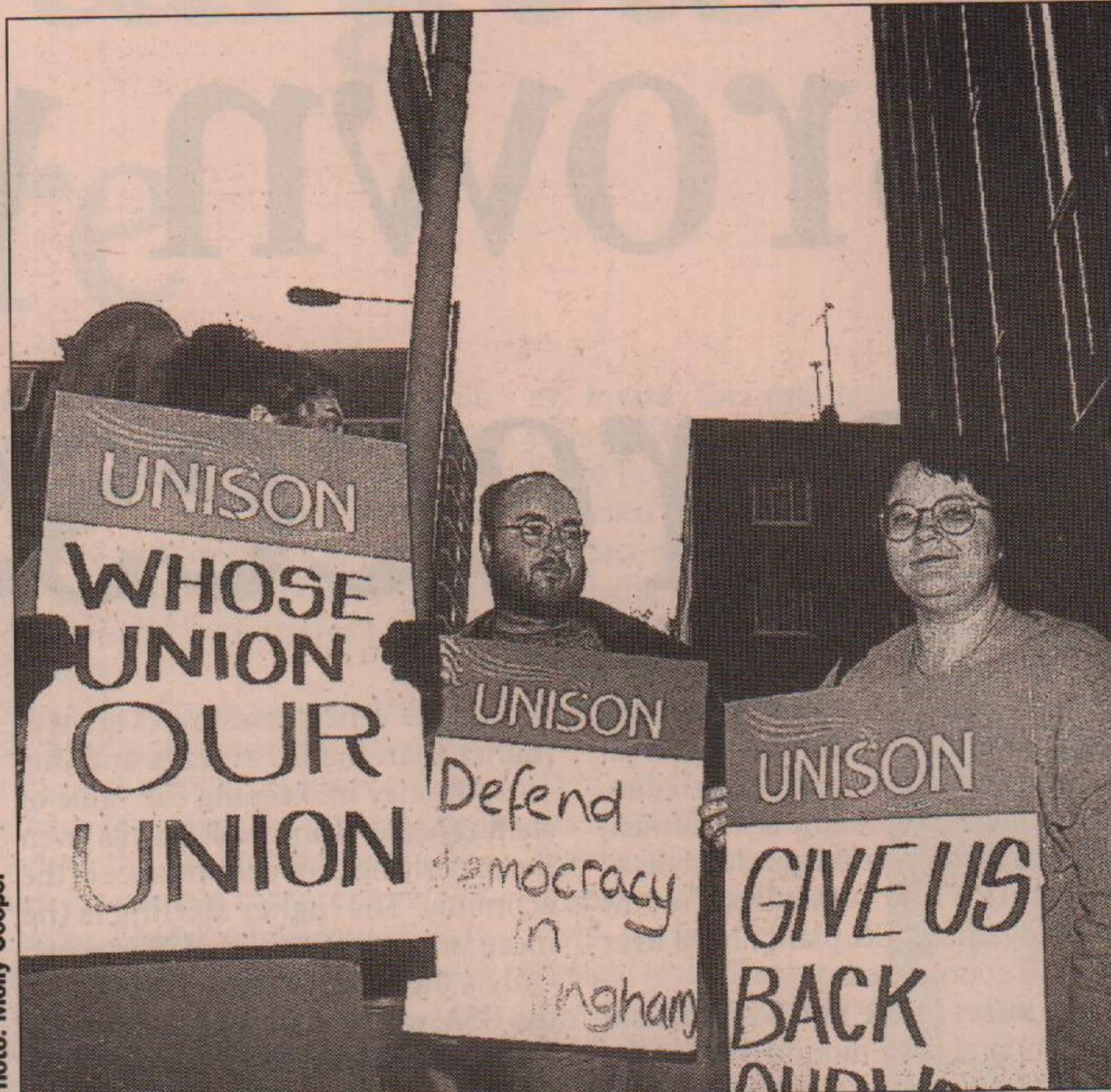
The leadership opposed the call for this demo at last year's conference. When they were defeated they tried to make it into a harmless, apolitical fun day out - no speeches, no rally and a ban on political placards. It was a "new union" style demo, deemed appropriate by the leaders for the "New Britain" under Blair. Thanks to thousands of ordinary militants the bureaucracy did not have it all their own way at Newcastle, and the demo was a spirited protest. But it showed what the leadership see as the future of the union - a sleek lobbying machine run under the tight control of the officials, with national conferences more akin to stage-managed New Labour rallies.

Disillusionment and anger at New Labour's betrayals are, however, growing in Unison. This is reflected by the various local disputes that have blown up over the last year and by the votes for motions critical of Labour policies, including the overwhelming support for the scrapping of tuition fees and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). There was also considerable support for another minimum wage demo before May Day next year.

More motions were passed than at previous conferences calling for support for branches taking industrial action to fight privatisation and other attacks - though the top table only supported these with the proviso that they were "official".

But what was missing was a serious strategy for linking the various local strikes and campaigns across Britain - over the implementation of the Single Status deal in local government, fights against PFI hospital schemes or Best Value pilots - into a nationally co-ordinated struggle to defeat central government's attacks. If branches are left isolated to fend off the worst of the attacks, public sector bosses will keep coming back with more cuts, redundancies and privatisations.

Of course, the bureaucracy don't want branches coming together to learn from each other's experiences and, worst of all, co-ordinate action. They don't want us to do anything that might jeopardise their meetings with ministers and places on government committees. They



The suspension of Birmingham branch is still in force

want to keep Unison safe for Blair, even if they are obliged to pass motions critical of him.

The clearest proof that this is the essential component of the Bickerstaffe leadership's strategy is the continuing witch-hunt of the left. Disgracefully, there was no discussion of the suspensions of Sheffield and Birmingham branches at conference. All the emergency motions in defence of the branches were ruled out of order. Angry delegates nearly overturned the ruling by the standing orders committee.

The suspensions mean that 24,000 members are left without proper representation at work or in Unison - 24,000 votes from left-leaning branches were missing from conference. Contrary to earlier reports the suspension of Birmingham remains in effect, despite a public letter from union president Alison Shepherd saying that lifting the suspension was "a matter of urgency".

The attack on Sheffield and Birmingham is aimed primarily against the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). They

were the subject of a particularly vicious and crude onslaught at the conference from the leadership. But the target of last year's witch-hunt the Campaign For a Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) was in the firing line as well.

CFDU members and branch officers from Nottingham City branch - Jean Thorpe (an NEC member), Andy Belfield and Sal Morawitz - are under investigation by the NEC due to a charge of harassment from a right-wing branch member. Jean only discovered she was being investigated when she attended an NEC meeting just before conference and found her own name on a list that was circulated to those present.

These branch officers are under attack by the Unison leadership just as the branch begins strike action against the council over threats to privatise the housing surveillance service. The tactic of disciplining activists as action commences is becoming a favourite with the Bickerstaffe crew - they used it against UCLH strike leaders as well.

Charges of harassment are being used to target activists and militants

who don't obey the leadership line. If someone says they felt harassed by you, then the assumption at a disciplinary hearing is that you are guilty. A motion passed at conference commits the NEC to drawing up proposals for rule changes to encourage the use of disciplinary action against those accused of harassment.

A whole new set of disciplinary rules was put before conference by Bickerstaffe but he failed to get the two-thirds majority required for rule changes. This was an important victory for the left. The changes proposed included expulsion with immediate effect (any appeal would be as a non-member), disciplinarys without you present, if they consider your reason for being absent isn't good enough, and taking away your right to see the investigating officers report.

Notwithstanding the success of this or that left motion at conference, the Unison bureaucracy is congealing into an anti-democratic clique, committed to preserving an alliance with Blair at the expense of defending public sector jobs, wages and services.

The bureaucracy's tenor echoed throughout a speech by Dave Prentiss, assistant general secretary. Responding to a motion criticising the NEC for failing to fight for the Hillingdon hospital workers' reinstatement, he came out with a vicious anti-left speech that would not have been out of place during the McCarthy era.

The bureaucracy is organised, they network, they discuss tactics, they have a united aim - to smash the left or any form of organised opposition in Unison. They are ruthless in their attacks on branches and militants. They are determined to work with Blair. We need to get organised nationally to stop them.

CONFERENCE AGAINST PRIVATISATION

Saturday 18 September
10am - 4pm
London, Natfhe headquarters,
Britannia Street, WC1
Open to all Unison members.
Called by Greenwich,
Bromley, Islington, Kirklees
and Knowsley branches.

Left squander opportunity to unite

The bureaucracy blocked discussion of the witch-hunt at the conference, but it was a major issue on the conference fringe. A packed meeting, sponsored by more than 50 branches and attended by more than 400 delegates and observers, heard speakers from Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and UCLH branches - those in the front line of the attacks from the bureaucracy.

The speeches were defiant and the meeting clearly wanted to fight tooth and nail against the real victimisation and harassment going on in Unison - of the militant activists involved in struggle.

This meeting offered an opportunity to start organising the rank and file into a force to take on and defeat the red-baiting leaders, democratise Unison and turn it into a militant class struggle organisation. This opportunity was squandered. The responsibility for this lies primarily with the SWP.

Both Jean Thorpe and Glen Kelly, Socialist Party members of the CFDU, called for a united campaign to fight the witch-hunt and for a new "Broad Left". Over the next few days leading members of the CFDU and the SWP met to discuss a possible "joint statement". This was to

be based on: defending branches and individuals against the witch-hunt; working together to build the branch-based conference against privatisation, initiated by the CFDU supporters and scheduled for September; and an undertaking to discuss the issue of left candidates standing against each other in NEC elections (a combined left vote could have won Glen Kelly a seat in recent elections).

Agreement on even this minimum basis proved impossible for the SWP. The SWP had hoped to use flagship disputes like UCLH and Sheffield to demonstrate they could go it alone and challenge the leaders. The defeat of these strikes - defeats that the SWP were refusing to acknowledge and learn from - did nothing to shake the organisation's stubborn belief that its strategy of a party network is, on its own, sufficient in the union.

For its part, the Socialist Party still insist that the model of unity it wants is based on a "broad left" style organisation. These organisations are geared primarily to winning elections, harnessing activists' energies in pursuit of this goal.

The limitations of such a strategy are

cruelly exposed by its "successes". CFDU candidate and Socialist Party member Roger Bannister has won national executive elections this way. But his ballot victories have nowhere been used to build a permanent, mass organisation of the rank and file which he can call on in battles against the pro-Bickerstaffe NEC majority. He may vote the right way on the NEC but he cannot translate this into concerted action either around disputes - using his position to rally unofficial support when necessary - or against the witch-hunt.

Broad lefts and rank and file movements are not the same thing. Moreover, by posing unity on the basis of a broad left the CFDU fails to put the SWP on the spot. An electoral pact was not the answer in the UCLH dispute - the mobilisation of other health workers against PFI was. A rank and file movement is the best vehicle for such a mobilisation, an offer of joint slates was no vehicle at all.

A rank and file movement would enable not only the left to get its act together - something it seriously failed to do at this year's conference - it would also appeal to the vast number of non-

aligned activists who want to fight both Bickerstaffe and the bosses.

Sefton strikers at the Well Red fringe meeting, organised by Workers Power supporters in Unison, voiced their concern at the left's failure to develop a strategy to fight the witch-hunt. Rank and file SWP members also admitted similar feelings.

With the witch-hunt in its third year, complacency is not an option - it is urgent that a democratic, united campaign is set up. Workers Power supporters argued in many conference forums for a delegate-based conference to launch a campaign, with the aim of broadening the fight for democracy into building a rank and file movement in Unison capable of taking on both New Labour's attacks and the bureaucracy.

Despite the sectarianism and confusion that exists on the Unison left we will continue to fight for this perspective because unless we organise a movement to defeat the leadership we will all suffer the consequences in terms of job losses and low pay. The working class in general will suffer from New Labour's mounting assault on public services.

Blow to left as McAvoy wins election

THE LEFT within the National Union of Teachers (NUT) suffered a serious defeat in the election for General Secretary in June. The left candidate, Christine Blower, was soundly defeated by the current Secretary Doug McAvoy. He received 39,245 votes to Blower's 22,183.

Given the major attacks facing teachers at present – performance related pay (PRP) and privatisation – there should have been a lively campaign and a high vote. But the campaign was lacklustre and the turnout just below 30%.

McAvoy took the sting out of the left's campaign at the Easter NUT conference. Sensing a mood of anger over PRP, he presented himself as the scourge of the New Labour government. The Executive put forward motions calling for boycotts and even strike action to stop PRP, making themselves look more militant than the left.

Prior to conference such had been the timidity of the established left (organised in the Socialist Teachers Alliance, the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union and the Socialist Workers Party) that their only demand had been for a one-day national strike. They were outflanked by the leadership. Conference voted unanimously for the executive motion and the left had little to say.

Even after this debacle, there was a chance that the election could have been salvaged. McAvoy launched into a campaign of red-baiting, claiming that Christine Blower was being controlled by the far left: the Socialist Workers Party and Workers Power were singled out on his election statements. Instead of confronting McAvoy with his own political supporters in the Broad (Stalinist) Left and identifying herself with the militants and activists, whether in left organisations or not, Blower denied any connections with, and distanced herself from, the left and consequently appeared to be on the defensive.

Politically, Blower did not develop any new positions. She offered no militant strategy for fighting

the government's attacks, leaving the initiative to a bureaucracy who, whatever their verbal fireworks at conferences, always block action and always stitch up rotten deals. All Blower put forward was a limited boycott of appraisal.

Workers Power has always argued that a boycott of appraisal will not be enough to stop PRP. PRP does not have to be based on appraisal. We have also argued, unlike the rest of the left, that a one-day strike will not be enough to stop PRP. We wrote in our conference bulletin:

"We should build on the action on workload, refusing to cover and taking action on class sizes and boycotting appraisal. We must not limit the campaign to lobbying the Executive to ballot us for a one-day strike. Building for extended strike action will be crucial."

It still is. We also argued at conference that Christine's campaign should be a militant one based on mass demos, alliances with parents, school students and other teachers' unions, and strike action. We argued that she needed to tackle democracy in the union; for example, proposing officials should be regularly elected and subject to recall and not paid any more than the average classroom teacher. It is obscene that McAvoy earns £85,000 as a bureaucrat while the average wage of a classroom teacher is around £20,000.

We argued that what was needed in the NUT was not an amorphous "left" coalition, primarily designed to get better results at elections, but a fighting rank and file movement – capable of rallying the members to action, building unofficial action where necessary and offering a coherent alternative to the reformist manoeuvring of McAvoy.

With such a campaign, launching a real fight against PRP and committed to transforming the union, the result of the leadership election may have been different. Workers Power supporters in the NUT will be hammering home this lesson and fighting to build a rank and file movement in the months to come.

workers POWER

BCM BOX 7750 LONDON WC1N 3XX ★ 0181 981 0602

COMMENT

A shot across Blair's bows

WHATEVER SPIN the Millbank media machine tried to put on the European parliamentary election results they marked a serious setback for the New Labour project. The doctors of deceit cannot explain away a very sorry showing for a supposedly popular Government with talk of Margaret Beckett's caravan holiday, the media's obsession with the Balkan war or an electorate confused by the introduction of proportional representation.

Across the European Union (EU) as a whole there was a revival in the electoral fortunes of the bourgeois centre-right parties, but above all there was a dramatic rise in the proportion of the electorate who abstained from voting.

For the German Christian Democratic Union the June poll marked a swift comeback from its autumn 1998 defeat, while for those European social democratic parties most closely associated with Tony Blair's "third way" project (such as chancellor Schroeder's SPD) there was abundant evidence that they had alienated their core working class electorate. More than half the potential voters in EU member states did not go to the polls, with Britain proving the most extreme case of mass abstention.

Voter turn-out in England slumped to 23 per cent – nearly 13 percentage points below the figure recorded for the 1994 Euro poll – and Labour's share of the ballot plunged to less than 29 per cent – on a par with the disastrous 1983 general election result. The generally poor performance of the Europhile Liberal Democrats, Blair's preferred long-term partners, is another source of anxiety for the arch modernisers.

William Hague's overt pandering to "Little Englandism" in the Tories' rejection of British entry into the single currency brought out his party's core supporters in many constituencies. Combined with the disturbingly high vote for the UK Independence Party, a motley collection of right-wing cranks and a few not so ex-fascists, the results showed that there is still considerable mileage in chauvinist Europhobia.

But, crucially, the Labour vote fell most sharply in traditional working class strongholds. In fact, in some constituencies it simply collapsed. In the valleys of South Wales Plaid Cymru repeated its strong showing from the previous month's elections to the Cardiff assembly, while the Scottish National Party came within 15,000 votes of challenging Labour's position as the single largest party in Scotland.

What the results definitely did not demonstrate was a groundswell of support for "socialist" candidates to the left of Labour, with the important, if partial, exception of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP). The SSP, standing on a left reformist programme, captured a credible four per cent of the popular vote across Scotland, recording much higher figures in some constituencies in and around Glasgow. In sharp contrast, the vote for the Socialist Labour Party and various socialist alliances in England was almost uniformly abysmal.

In Scotland we called for a vote for the SSP and in the East and West Midlands we urged a vote for the Alternative Labour/Socialist Alliance lists respectively. We did this, not because we have any illusions in the left-reformist or centrist politics of these lists, but because we believed that it was necessary to organise a specific protest against Blair's Balkan war at the polls. Elsewhere we called for spoilt ballots because no other left candidates were either credible (the Weekly Worker stands revealed as an utter irrelevancy, both in terms of the left and the labour movement as a whole) or principled on the question of the war (the SLP was effectively pro-ethnic cleansing).

Within the heart of the trade union bureaucracy murmurs of unease have grown much louder

It was right to try to organise this one-off electoral protest because the war should have been the decisive issue in the election. However, we have no intention of claiming that our call was decisive in prompting mass abstention!

The European election results do not signal a decisive crisis for New Labour. But both the collapse of the core vote and the level of abstention do reveal large cracks in the New Labour monolith that had so effectively dominated British politics for the preceding two years. In addition to those old Labour right-wingers like Roy Hattersley who have been sharply critical of much New Labour policy, loyal ministers like Peter Hain who was the party's co-ordinator for the Welsh elections, have been sounding the alarm.

Hain reports that party organisation has "atrophied" in much of Wales, with many activists too unhappy with both the government's policies and the arrogant behaviour of Millbank "control freaks" to be able to stomach door-to-door campaigning. Despite his subsequent denials Hain has even been associated with an appeal from more than 40 Labour MPs, published in the pages of *Tribune*, for a return to the party's "founding ideals".

From within the heart of the trade union bureaucracy murmurs of unease have also grown much louder in the immediate aftermath of the Euro-elections. TUC General Secretary John Monks, among Blair's most ardent defenders, launched a thinly veiled attack when he spoke of the party leadership treating those who had voted Labour before 1990 like "an embarrassing elderly relative" at a family function.

The first weekend of July saw Labour's carefully orchestrated National Policy Forum face an unwelcome challenge from two of the biggest unions, the T&GWU and the GMB, when they called for a review of the welfare state from "first principles". This revealed that the union bureaucracy is disgruntled by its marginalisation at New Labour's top table. At the same time, they are discreetly telling Blair that they cannot continue to placate members' disquiet indefinitely.

For revolutionaries the Euro-election outcome poses both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand the temptation must be resisted to see mass abstention as a definitive rejection by the working class of "their" Government because it has failed to deliver. On the other there clearly is discontent – foreshadowing a crucial break from the New Labour project by growing sections of the working class. The task is to ensure that this goes beyond a simple break with New Labour and leads to a rupture with reformism generally, culminating in the creation of a new workers' party based on a programme for the revolutionary transformation of both Britain and the globe.

No more delays – strike to defend the service

DELEGATES TO the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) national conference voted almost unanimously to support a motion from the FBU's national executive calling for a strike ballot in opposition to ongoing attempts by local fire authorities to undermine nationally agreed terms and conditions. A lobby of negotiations in central London, earlier this summer, attracted 2,000 firefighters from across the country in a show of strength.

To date, however, the FBU's leadership has made no move to implement the conference decision despite the talks producing no significant concessions from the bosses' side. There is still widespread support among FBU activists for General Secretary Ken Cameron, but the question many are beginning to ask is: why is he waiting?

The union leadership is determined to rely on the conference vote solely as a bargaining chip. The danger is that protracted talks may result in a deal that blunts the impact of the most serious changes demanded by local bosses, while conceding the principle of further "efficiency" savings in the service generally.

The initial settlement imposed on local fire authorities by Chancellor Gordon Brown translates into two per cent expenditure cuts each year for the next three years.

Meanwhile, a number of fire service bosses have been looking to axe more stations and jobs, with managers in the West Midlands provoking widespread local and union opposition with the threat to close the station at Sedgely.

The Devon and Cornwall

fire authority is out to slash 40 part-time and eight full-time posts triggering a local FBU lobby, but also highlighting the need for a national response.

Activists in the stations and the FBU regions need to start applying serious pressure on the national leadership through resolutions, lobbies and local meetings to act now and call a ballot with maximum resources earmarked for winning a massive "yes" vote. Such a campaign offers a chance to argue among the union's 50,000 members for the most effective form of action: an all-out and indefinite strike.

If New Labour really is looking for a showdown with the FBU as one of the remaining bastions of union strength in the public sector then they should get one – with the terms set down by the FBU rank and file.

Marxism and culture

Summer – the holidays are coming. With most of us too poor (EU official figures) to go abroad many workers may at least get the chance to take in a gallery, see a film or a live performance, read a novel or a book of poems.

How important are cultural activities – the creation and consumption of works of art – for the working class, and for humanity in general?

Revolutionary History have performed a valuable service for all socialist lovers of art and literature by publishing *Culture and Revolution in the Thought of Leon Trotsky*. The book consists of articles by Trotsky, previously unavailable in English, pieces by some of his collaborators and socialist historians discussing Trotsky's contribution.

The book covers a wide spectrum, from literature, through philosophy and painting to art theory and criticism. Alongside his 1924 book, *Literature and Revolution*, and other writings on culture and art, this new publication sheds more light on Trotsky's ideas and how they evolved in the context of the world events shaping his political life. As the editors point out:

"Of all the great figures of Marxism, there can be no doubt that none took a deeper interest in the cultural aspects of life than Leon Trotsky."

The first two parts of the book mainly comprise articles by Trotsky written before the 1917 revolution, on literature and painting. Trotsky's love of classical bourgeois literature is evident. What he emphasised about these great novels and plays was how they could illuminate the inner psychology of the classes in society through the interaction of individuals.

His study of Henrik Ibsen first of all places the playwright historically in "the peaceful, inert, set-in-one-and-the-same-ways of life of the small Norwegian towns" and among its petit-bourgeoisie whose moral hypocrisy was "suffocating like soot from a bad lamp, sticky like thick treacle, as an atmosphere penetrating every pore and pervading every relationship – family, kinship, love, friendship". Ibsen's genius is to lay this bare.

His revulsion at stultifying conformity leads him to portray his hero,

Dr Stockman, in the play *An Enemy of the People*, as an honest doctor who is forced to make a (correct) stand when a town's polluted water-system threatens its inhabitants' livelihoods:

"What is the dangerous enemy of truth and liberty? [Ibsen] asks through Dr Stockman: 'It is unanimous majority, the accursed liberal majority.' What is the most pernicious lie? It is 'the teaching that the crowd, imperfect, and ignorant beings, have the right to judge, direct and rule, as the true aristocrats of intellect.'" (p11)

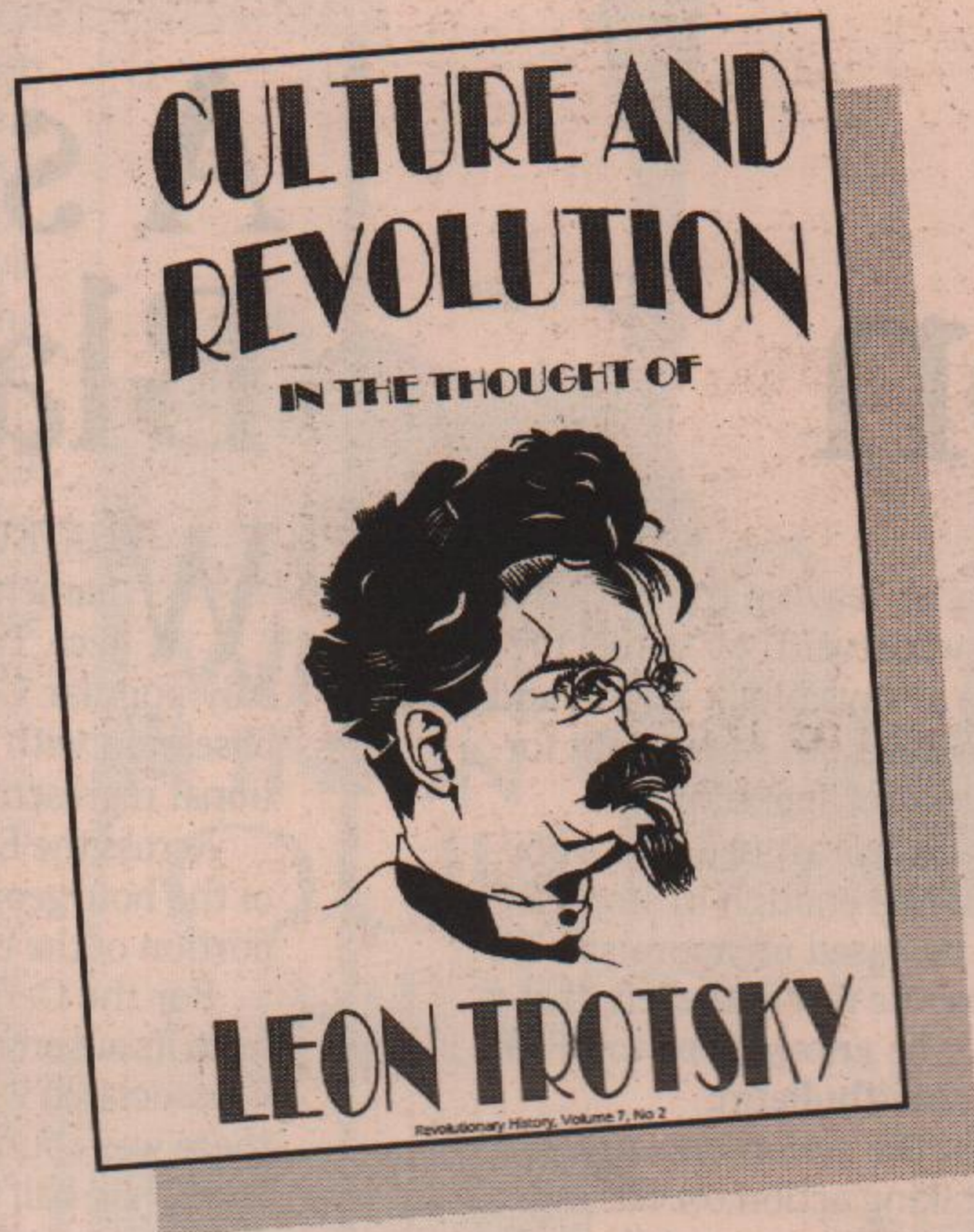
Here, both the two-faced hypocrisy of bourgeois liberalism and the hopeless elitism of the technocratic petit-bourgeois individual are depicted in a mutually destructive struggle. And here, for Trotsky, is the value of nineteenth century realism: its ability to reveal general truths about the relationships between the classes and the effects of this class struggle on the lives of individuals. In his review of Maxim

Gorky's novel, *The Three of Them*, Trotsky draws out how the three poor, downtrodden characters are representatives of sections of their class:

"Fate is strangling me ...", complains Lunev, "and it's strangling Pashka, and Yakov, and everybody." ... All the horror of the situation of these 'three' and the hundreds of thousands like them, is that they have no chance to come face to face with their mysterious enemy ... In their consciousness, the cause of their misfortune is fate, chance and an uncontrollable dark force." (p29)

But these are not just general workers and urban poor, they are Russians too, weighed down by the overbearing bureaucracy and tyranny of the Tsarist regime. The characters, at once both general and specific, illuminate the real-life experience of the reader. It is this quality that "enriches the consciousness, and that lifts and inspires thought." (p132)

Trotsky was more ambiguous when it came to early modern, nineteenth



Geraldine Drayton and Warren Gropper review *Culture and Revolution in the Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Porcupine Press, London 1999, part of the *Revolutionary History* series, £9.95)

century painting. This can be seen from the fact that two of the articles in this section are written as dialogues, for and against!

"The philistine shrugs his shoulders and says: 'This man has taken a big bucket of blue paint and smeared it over this enormous headless statue. Why on earth did he do that? Evidently to epater [shock] le bourgeois, to bowl me over!'" (p65)

This is the honest reaction of many workers on seeing modern and abstract art. And though Trotsky is being deliberately one-sided, he is clearly disappointed that modern painting (Impressionism, Secessionism, etc.) refused to depict the real life of labour, "the great field of collective human life", and hence was condemning itself to social irrelevance.

While he admired the modernity of its technique ("a new personality in new circumstances, with a new nervous system, with new eyes, a modern person") Trotsky felt that impressionism "merely repeats and turns over old motifs".

Ever the historical materialist, Trotsky puts this down to modern art's ultimate dependent relationship with wider society:

"Something larger has to come together beyond the boundaries of art, in the very bowels of our society, if art is to return from its exile, be enriched with the drama of working and struggling man, and, in turn, enrich his labour and his struggle." (p.82)

The second half of *Culture and Revolution in the Thought of Leon Trotsky* deals with Trotsky the participant, rather than the observer of artistic development. From 1917 to 1925, he took an active interest in the various artistic schools in revolutionary Russia – and beyond, as is revealed by a reply from Antonio Gramsci to Trotsky's request for information about the Italian Futurists. As a cultural critic, Trotsky is best known for his public debate with the Proletkult group, who believed the task of artists under the dictatorship of the proletariat was to construct a new, proletarian culture from scratch and in exclusive contradiction to bourgeois art.

Trotsky's dialectical response was to insist that the artistic epochs of slave societies, feudalism and the bourgeoisie were the products of hundreds of years of nurture, patronage and relatively stable class rule, producing different schools of philosophy, the visual arts, literature and so on. The workers' dictatorship, on the other hand, was a transition period towards a classless, truly human society; as such it would be marked by civil wars, social upheaval and an immediate task of the general raising of the masses' living standards.

As John Plant points out (pp111-12), in revolutionary Russia only a third of all men, and just 14 per cent of women were literate. In such circumstances, the mass production of cheap copies of classical literature and the nationalisation of museums were pre-requisites

for a new human culture. Trotsky was also mindful that this culture would take its starting point from the highest achievements of bourgeois and pre-bourgeois art.

Given Trotsky's personal tastes for realist literature and his distrust of modern painting's ability to connect with the lives of the labouring classes, this stress on the role of art in raising the cultural level of the workers and peasants led him, according to Plant, to turn a blind eye to early Soviet censorship of literature. While Plant fails to prove his point (he can only cite Trotsky's criticisms of poets who were censored in the early years of the Stalinist era) he is correct to point out that Trotsky was to shift from praise of realism to an art-for-art's-sake position.

Why this shift? In the 1930s, artistic freedom and creativity were being strangled by the totalitarian regimes, not only of Hitler but also Stalin. "Socialist Realism" in the USSR was a caricature of what a realist practice should be – i.e. a representation of the real experiences of the working class.

As a response to the bureaucratic control of cultural production, Trotsky would, from *Literature and Revolution* through to the manifesto *Towards a Free Revolutionary Art*, which he wrote with the surrealist André Breton and Diego Rivera in 1938, become more tolerant of aestheticism, claiming that art should be "judged by its own laws". As such, the party could (and should) comment on developments in the various fields of artistic endeavour, but not dictate. A letter of Trotsky's is quoted illustrating his conviction that artistic freedom was necessary for it to serve the revolution:

"A few words on Breton. I don't think we can, as a party, demand that he should make his literary review into a review of the bloc [of revolutionary artists]. He represents the surrealist school ... Any attempt on our part to subordinate artistic tendencies as such to a political interest could only compromise us in the eyes of true artists." (p144)

So if you are going to an exhibition or planning to read that big nineteenth century novel that's been gathering dust on your shelves, give this book a read first. It will get you thinking.

MEGAPHONE

■ An eyewitness account of the carnival against capitalism

After the carnival, let's build the revolution

"Evil Savages" screamed *The Sun*, "Mayhem and Anarchy in the UK" chimed in *The Express*. The "Carnival against Capitalism" called by the June 18 Coalition (J18) last month certainly hit the headlines!

Up to 6,000 protesters took to the streets of London with the aim of "stopping the City". We agitated against the various ways in which international finance capital destroys the environment and wrecks the lives of workers and peasants, danced in the streets and defended our right to be there when the police waded in to break up the party.

Revolution, the socialist youth group, organised a demo outside British Petroleum's (BP's) City headquarters in the morning to protest against its financing of death squads in Colombia. When we arrived three van loads of coppers were parked outside!

Another group were protesting against Reed Employment Agency's cynical abuse of the New Deal scheme, just down the road. Spontaneous solidarity reigned supreme on the day. We supported their picket for an hour before they came along with us to have a go at Britain's flagship oil company.

At noon thousands of young revellers descended on Liverpool Street station, which was hastily shut down. Office and building workers joined us on their breaks – many didn't leave. Weaving between dancers, musicians and the occasional naked protester, Revo members sold loads of papers, dished out leaflets and got a great response from everyone we talked to.

Soon the party was in full swing. Led by the UEL samba band, we danced our way through the City down to the LIFFE futures exchange in Cannon Street.

Here, the big protest of the day took place. J18, and the Reclaim the Streets crew at their core, strung up banners with slogans like "The Earth Is A Common Treasury" and started up a sound system. Someone had the good sense to set off a fire hydrant, producing a huge fountain to cool us down.

People unleashed their anger against the futures exchange. One guy tried to dismantle it brick by brick. Others managed to rush the security guards and get inside for a few minutes, only to be forcefully kicked out. Then the police decided to get heavy – charging the crowd, lashing out at anyone who was nearby. Two demonstrators were seriously hurt when the police surrounded the protesters with their vans.

The police deliberately provoked a riot: at no point did anyone threaten

them or the yuppies and bosses in the City. They were there to defend big business and turn a successful protest into a riot. Predictably, the press were on hand to misrepresent it.

But this has not worked. Millions across Britain (and the world, because J18 posted footage of the action on the Internet) sympathised the carnival against capitalism.

But to take the fight against this system forward we need more than carnivals like this and we need an organisation very different from the loose J18 coalition. Capitalism can only be smashed by the working class, its special product and the source of its profits. J18 don't even try to offer a way forward for this class. That is why Revolution will continue to build a socialist youth group – to fuse the militancy of 18 June with the mass action of the working class.

marxism THE BASICS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

Marxism and the national question

Jeremy Dewar explains the Marxist programme on the national question

From Ireland to Kosova in Europe, from East Timor to Quebec across the globe, people are taking up nationalist ideologies and fighting for independent nation states. Was Karl Marx wrong when he wrote in the Communist Manifesto that "the working class has no fatherland"?

The Marxist tradition has never underestimated the importance of national liberation struggles (the national question, as it is known) nor of nationalism. Marxism is rich in its analysis of, and tactics towards, the national question. Even in the epoch of socialism Marxism recognises that aspirations for national liberation will continue.

Writing more than 20 years after the Russian revolution, Leon Trotsky said of Ukrainian nationalism, "the national struggle, one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle, cannot be suspended by bare references to the future world revolution".

Trotsky's insight here, which he shared with all the great Marxists, was that the national struggle is not something separate from the class struggle, but an integral part of it.

National oppression is the systematic denial of basic democratic rights, above all the right to independence, by one national group to another. Although this oppression is exercised by the ruling class of the oppressor nation, the granting of relative, even minor, privileges to its "own" working class has the effect of weakening these workers' fighting capacity. Marx noted this in relation to Britain's oldest colony, Ireland:

"The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker because he sees in him a competitor who lowers his standard of life. Compared with the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and for this very reason he makes himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland and thus strengthens their domination over himself. [...] The International must] arouse the consciousness in the English working class that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the first condition of their own social emancipation."

This is not to say that Marx did not care about the cruel sufferings of the Irish people; he did. But he wanted to emphasise that it was in the self-interest of the British workers and the international working class to support Ireland's fight for independence. So long as British workers failed to take up the cause of Ireland – even if they were not themselves instrumental in denying Irish people their rights – they would remain ideologically chained to their "own" bosses. As Marx famously wrote, "Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains".

Further, if the Irish and British workers were to unite in their fight against capitalism, then the British workers had to show their Irish sisters and brothers that they were with them and against their British oppressors. Class unity and real proletarian internationalism could not be forged by ignoring the national question.

Marx, and his close collaborator Frederick Engels, believed that the socialist revolution would begin in those countries where capitalism was most developed and there was a strong working class – in Britain, Germany and France. They expected this to render the national question a mere episode on the road to working class power. This perspective, not their insights into nationalism, proved to be false.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a new generation of socialists had to come to terms with the fact that capitalism had developed into a world system in which a handful of robber nations controlled the world's markets at the expense of the less developed nations. To maintain their privileged position, these nations, the imperialist powers, actively held back the rounded development of the emerging nations.

Despite opening up countries to capitalist exploita-

IN BRIEF

■ **The national struggle is not separate from the class struggle; it is an integral part of it.**

■ **We have to have an answer to the national question. Class unity and real proletarian internationalism cannot be built by ignoring nationalism.**

■ **For Marxists the objective of the struggle against national oppression is to prepare the best conditions for the class struggle.**

■ **The nationalism of the oppressors is distinct from the nationalism of the oppressed. The bourgeois nationalism of an oppressed nation has a general democratic content in that it is directed against oppression.**

tion, the imperialists did everything in their power to prevent the "native" bourgeoisie from attaining the economic and political means to become rivals. In particular, imperialism denied the colonial peoples the right to their own sovereign nation-states. The new epoch of imperialism, therefore, saw the mushrooming of national liberation movements not their disappearance from the stage of history.

The Russian Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin analysed the national question most completely in two pamphlets, *Critical Remarks on the National Question* (1913) and *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914). Like Marx, Lenin took as his starting point not the ideas in the heads of those fighting for independence, but the real historical and material basis of that fight:

"Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression and the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the break-down of national barriers, the creation of international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc. [...]"

"The Marxists' national programme takes both these tendencies into account, and advocates firstly, the equality of nations and languages and the impermissibility of all privileges in this respect ... secondly, the principle of internationalism and uncompromising struggle against contamination of the proletariat by bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined kind."

Under imperialist capitalism both of these historical tendencies exist side by side. This led some Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg, while opposing discrimination and privilege, to insist that the struggle for national self-determination (i.e. independence) was both utopian and reactionary: utopian because small nations would always remain economically dependent on the big powers and any formal independence would be a sham; reactionary because separation along national lines divides the working class and promotes bourgeois nationalism.

Lenin, however, defended the slogan, "For the right of all nations to self-determination".

Who was the utopian? Lenin never denied that the demand for equal rights for all nations, including the right to form one's own nation-state, was compatible with capitalist development but he urged that:

"in opposition to the practicality of the bourgeoisie the proletarians advance their principles in the national question; they always give the bourgeoisie only conditional support."

In fact it was Luxemburg who was the utopian in this regard. National oppression strangles the development of capitalism, and, consequently, the divisions between the different classes in the oppressed nations.

Look at Kosova today: the land-owners and the capitalists, the peasants and the workers are all reduced to one mass of people whose main, in fact sole, immediate concern is to get rid of the Serbian oppressors. To demand that the Kosovar workers forget about independence and unite with Serbian workers against Milosevic and the imperialist multinationals is like demanding a different reality!

The point about the struggle against national oppression is to prepare the best conditions for the class struggle. At the moment, Kosovar workers see the Kosovar bourgeoisie as an ally against the Serbian oppressor and the Serbian worker as part of a hostile force. Abstract propaganda will not change this, only living experience will. And only the successful struggle for independence can provide that experience.

The first question an independent Kosova will have to answer is, how can future ethnic tension be avoided? Consistent democracy, with full and equal rights for the Serbian minority, and an armed people, as opposed to an unaccountable paramilitary police force, is the best

guarantee. This will drive a wedge between the workers and peasants and the nationalist warlord Thaci.

How can Kosova's smashed economy be rebuilt to satisfy the needs of the people? Workers' control of the mines and factories, peasants' control of the land and an emergency plan drawn up by the masses are the only solutions. This will drive a wedge between the workers and peasants on the one hand and the aristocratic Ibrahim Rugova and profit-hungry multinationals on the other.

How can future Balkan wars be avoided? The closest ties with the workers' movements of the surrounding states – including most importantly Serbia – with the aim of creating a voluntary federation of socialist republics, are clearly paramount. Again this will bring the workers into conflict with the nationalist demagogues.

But none of these questions can even be asked, let alone answered, until the Kosovars have won their right to self-determination.

And what of Luxemburg's second point that support for all nations' right to self-determination is reactionary since it will divide workers along national lines and strengthen bourgeois nationalism?

Arguing against this, Lenin drew a parallel with the right to divorce, a right all socialists supported. Only a complete reactionary would argue that the democratic demand for the right to divorce was the same as advocating divorce! On the other hand, to deny the right to divorce on the grounds that it might lead to separation could only lead to the imprisonment of some people in oppressive marriages.

Luxemburg was also failing to draw the vital distinction between the nationalism of the oppressors and the nationalism of the oppressed. This was most obvious in the case of Poland, which was oppressed by Tsarist Russia.

"When, in her anxiety not to 'assist' the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the right to secession in the programme of the Marxists in Russia, she is in fact assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds [Russian fascists] ... The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support."

Lenin went on to show what this meant in practice. After the October revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks immediately granted the right of all nations in the Tsarist empire the right to break away, while encouraging them not to exercise this right. Lenin and Trotsky adhered to this policy in Finland in 1918, where a bourgeois regime seized power and crushed the workers' soviets, killing 100,000 workers. Yet even this tragedy, according to the Russian revolutionaries, was a lesser evil than reasserting the years of oppressive rule by Russia over the Finnish people.

The Bolsheviks sought to accelerate the differentiation of the classes in the oppressed nations through granting them full democratic rights, and then aiding their fellow proletarians in those nations by every means possible. Such a strategy would not have been feasible if the workers of the oppressed nations remained under the yoke of Russian rule.

For Lenin and Trotsky one of the first signs of the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party was when Stalin began to abandon the right of nations to self-determination. They saw this as a fundamental threat to the revolution in Russia and beyond. Tragically they were proved to be correct. Small wonder that for revolutionaries today the national question remains a key political litmus test.

The legacy of the Bolsheviks, and of Marx and Engels, means that revolutionary socialists have an answer to the national question; one which supports the right of the oppressed, seeks to divide the workers from the bosses and creates the conditions in which the class struggle can be most effectively fought – after all, workers have a world, not a nation, to win.

BALKANS

BY KATE FOSTER

Nato's Kosovan protection racket

WHAT HAS been the outcome of the war in Kosova? The bosses' magazine, *The Economist*, euphemistically calls it a "messy peace".

Hundreds of thousands of refugees returning to homes which have been burnt to the ground; people searching for fathers and sons in mass graves, gypsies being beaten and dragged from their homes; 70,000 Serb civilians fleeing to Serbia; the numbers of dead can still only be estimated as each day reveals more bodies, more mass graves to be investigated – some say 50,000, others say 100,000.

It was a bloody war, a vicious war, a tragic war – and the peace seems likely to offer the Balkan people more of the same.

The war ended with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 on the 10 June 1999. Kosova has become a United Nations (UN) protectorate. The towns and villages of Kosova will be patrolled by 55,000 Nato troops. The Kosovar Albanians were cheering as these troops arrived, but the soldiers do not bring independence. And the killing continues. This is not just a messy peace, it is a reactionary peace.

The Security Council Resolution is deliberately vague about the future of Kosova. There is no time limit on the protectorate but everyone involved says it will last for many years. They have only to cite the experience in Bosnia where UN troops were sent in for two years in 1995 and where they remain to this day.

What will the peace mean for the people of Kosova? They have been able to return to their homes and are being promised aid to help them rebuild: £1.5 billion is being sent by the European Union alone. But there is a price to pay. The troops which oversaw the withdrawal of Serb soldiers are the same troops that will disarm the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). The early signs are that those who resist will be shot. Two ethnic Albanians were shot dead by British soldiers in the first days of July following a victory party at which they were firing into the air.



KLA fighters: soon to be disarmed by Nato

KLA leader Hashim Thaci has signed a deal with K-For to disband the KLA within 90 days. The KLA are being told to hand over their weapons with no promise of independence for Kosova, now or at any point in the future.

For other ethnic minorities in Kosova, the Nato victory has meant terror. Revenge attacks are being carried out by Kosova Albanians as Nato troops stand by. These troops claim they are there to protect everyone, but in reality all the protection they can give is an escort out of the area as a new group of refugees is created.

And what of the Serbs? Milosevic has been keen to portray the withdrawal from Kosova as a victory. He is able to point to the fact that the two clauses of the Rambouillet agreement that he refused to accept: the right of Nato troops to be stationed in Serbia and a referendum on independence for Kosova – are not included in the UN peace

deal. But the military defeat is clear to Serb soldiers and Kosovan Serb refugees. Milosevic has lost any authority over Kosova for now.

The economic consequences of the war remain to be seen. Current reports suggest that Nato's decimation of the Serb army was a figment of Jamie Shea's imagination and most of their heavy weaponry remains intact. The bombing of factories, hospitals and bridges, however, was real enough and has put a huge strain upon the already chronically weak Serb economy. Currently one-third of Yugoslavians are unemployed.

Opposition to Milosevic, however, remains weak and divided. On 22 June, the smaller opposition parties formed the Alliance for Change, but Vuk Draskovic, leader of the main opposition, the Serbian Renewal Party, refused to join. There have been demonstrations against Milosevic in towns such as Cacak where the opposition already controls

the administration and 10,000 took to the streets. However, in Belgrade, Milosevic's security police continue to hold a firm grip on power. Significantly, the Serbian Orthodox Church, with an eye to the future, has come out strongly against Milosevic. Milosevic, even with tight control over the media, may only record 20 per cent in the opinion polls, but that represents his bedrock support and is far more solid than the support his opponents can call upon.

Internationally, the peace deal will have far-reaching consequences. Not surprisingly, Nato are claiming total victory. Certainly imperialism's place in the Balkans has been confirmed and consolidated. No doubt US and European companies are lining up to see who can make a profit out of the aftermath of the war.

Aid packages, so far being denied to Serbia, will not come without strings and foreign capital will no doubt want

to dismantle what is left of the old "planned economy" of Yugoslavia.

But there are problems for imperialism. Milosevic remains in power and there seems to be little that the West can do to remove him in the short term. The war gave him the opportunity to attack those on the left who refused to support his ultra-nationalism in Kosova. The right-wing opposition supported the war and whilst they can criticise Milosevic for losing, they are as divided as ever.

Instability in Serbia is likely to continue and with Montenegro currently looking for its own independence from Yugoslavia, the fuse on the Balkan powder keg is still smouldering.

The war has had a serious impact upon relations with both Russia and China. Many pro-Western politicians in Russia such as Anatoly Chubais were shocked at the shift in public opinion caused by the war. The vast majority of Russians opposed the bombing and supported Serbia. This has led to a strengthening of the right wing in the Russian parliament. It has also undermined those too closely identified with the West and economic reforms. Thus, the momentum to create a stable capitalist economy in Russia has been severely weakened.

Relations between the imperialist powers have also been damaged by the war. The divisions were clearly visible within a few weeks of the bombing campaign beginning. The cost of the war was high. The US estimates it spent \$4 billion on the bombing campaign and is already demanding that the EU should take responsibility for funding reconstruction.

What is the future for Kosova? Are the victims of Milosevic's pogroms doomed to see their country taken over by foreign corporations and a small local elite of exploiters? Certainly that is a very real danger but, in the dislocation and uncertainty of the aftermath of war, it is not an inevitability.

A clear break with imperialism is necessary. The lessons of Bosnia must be learnt quickly. A UN protectorate brings you only a protection racket. "Give us your factories and your labour and we will protect you, if you don't – we'll shoot you". But neither should workers put their trust in the KLA or the bourgeois nationalists of the Democratic League of Kosova who are already falling over themselves to win favour with the imperialist forces (see box). KLA fighters and workers in Kosova should refuse to disarm. There is undoubtedly a need for armed force to keep the peace, but not for a foreign one. An armed workers' militia should be formed.

The investigation of war crimes, plans for reconstruction, aid to the dispossessed and protection of all citizens' rights require a new public administration, but this should be under the control of the Kosovars themselves. Councils of workers' and peasants' deputies should be elected. Against Nato or UN attempts to impose a tame civil administration, workers should demand and organise a constituent assembly.

Already, KLA leaders are moving in to establish themselves in government posts. These people are not elected and are not accountable to anyone. They will use these positions to ensure that the state is controlled by the bosses, not the Kosovan workers and peasants.

Rebuilding will require a massive programme of public works. This must be organised under workers' control. Aid money from the West and the money being held by the LDK should be allocated according to democratically decided priorities. Land should be given over to the peasants.

While Kosova is under the "protection" of Nato, there will be no peace in Kosova and across the Balkans. Only a revolutionary solution – culminating in a voluntary socialist federation of the Balkans – can bring lasting peace and protection from imperialism to the workers of the region.

HOURS AFTER the Serb Army left Kosova, the leader of the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA), Hashim Thaci, signed an agreement with the commanders of K-For to disband the KLA within 90 days. No commitment to independence for Kosova was on the table. The KLA had been allowed no role in the negotiations for peace.

The betrayal of the national aspirations of the ethnic Albanian Kosovars was swift and decisive. For anyone who believed that the bourgeois nationalist leaders of the KLA would bring independence for Kosova, it is a clear lesson.

Under the terms of the agreement, the KLA agreed to an immediate ceasefire, to no more check points, no mining and to hand over "prohibited" weapons within 30 days. K-For have made it clear that they will impose the agreement by force. Ironically, the commander of K-For told the press that the Kosovars had to understand that he would not allow any guns on the streets, and there he was surrounded by his own heavily armed troops waving their guns about.

During the war, when ethnic Albanians were being driven from their homes and the KLA was the only force on the ground to protect them from ethnic cleansing, it was correct for revolutionary socialists to critically support the KLA. But that support was tied to their role in the war, not to the politics which lie behind the KLA. Now that the war is over, the role of the KLA has changed. It is now working alongside Nato to impose a reactionary peace settlement. We do not support this settlement and we do not support any parties that subscribe to it. The central task now is to split the KLA's mass base from the leadership and win it to a revolutionary socialist programme.

The KLA leaders are happy to work with Nato. They believe that they are in a strong position to form the new political leadership

of the Nato protectorate. Thaci has set up a provisional government in Pristina. This is a direct challenge to the authority of the government in exile led by Bujar Bokoshi in Bonn. This "Government of the Republic of Kosova" is dominated by the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) led by Ibrahim Rugova. The LDK were the largest political force representing the Kosovar Albanians prior to the war. The KLA leadership realise that they have to rapidly establish a political organisation capable of challenging the LDK.

The KLA will also have to fight to win the confidence of the west. Prior to the war the KLA were suspected of having links with drug trafficking. Rugova's passive resistance to Serb aggression was preferable to the guerrilla tactics of the KLA. The west also disliked the KLA's links with the "socialist" led administration in Albania. The LDK, on the other hand, are supported by the right-wing former Albanian leader, Sali Berisha.

In their struggle for power, the KLA have the advantage of their record during the war and the fact that they are actually in Kosova now. Early reports are that KLA leaders are taking off their uniforms and reappearing the next day in suits in government or council offices.

Of course, it is likely that some KLA members will resist disarming. No one is sure of the exact number of fighters involved in the KLA. But what is clear is that the make-up of the KLA has changed radically during the war.

It is estimated that the KLA has 10,000 organised troops and 30,000 irregulars. Political opposition to the disarmament and the disbanding of the KLA could emerge to challenge the Thaci leadership from these ranks. The masses of Kosova should foment such opposition by demanding that the KLA fighters put their arms at the disposal of a workers' and poor peasant militia, not hand

Last rights for the Orange bloc?

BLAIR'S EARLY July "take it or leave it" ultimatum on the Northern Ireland Assembly is a wedge designed to split Protestant Unionism.

For more than a century, Unionism's strength lay in its consolidation of a cross-class alliance between landowners, big capitalists, small businessmen and farmers, and the majority of the Protestant working class. The organised expression of this alliance was the Orange Order.

Religious bigotry was the ideological glue that held it together but its material base was relative privilege. Big capital, in textiles and shipbuilding had access to the British market, as did the landowners. The "middle class" had privileged access to the professions, state employment and control over local government. Protestant workers were assured of better job security and living conditions than their Catholic neighbours.

Since Ireland's partition in 1921, these privileges have been guaranteed by Protestant control of the militarised police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), backed when necessary by the British army. Both the RUC and army have colluded with Orange paramilitaries in enforcing a reign of terror against the nationalist community.

But times change. The evolution of British imperialist capitalism left Northern Ireland behind decades ago. As the material sources of privilege dried up, the different classes within the Unionist bloc were affected in different ways.

Even in the 1960s, some of the bigger capitalists were beginning to accept the need for more "normal" relations with the 26-country Irish republic. With the rise of the largely nationalist civil rights movement and then the opening of the IRA's war against British control both these bosses and key figures within the British state itself realised that the political structure of Northern Ireland was an obstacle to capitalist economic development.

However, neither Unionism nor the British state could afford to be seen to be beaten by the IRA, especially in the context of the huge class struggles in Britain itself in the 1970s and early 1980s.

As a result, although political Unionism did indeed split along class lines in the 1970s, the "Protestant bloc" as a whole retained its ascendant position.

That ascendancy has been guaranteed at every stage of the current peace process, including in the Good Friday agreement. But pig-headed Unionism still fears that any concession to the nationalists threatens them. That is why they continue to block any meaningful role for the republican movement in a new administration.

For its part the republican movement has already shown willing to surrender the achievement of its once key goal – a united Ireland. Although the IRA's campaign of guerrilla warfare was able to tie down and harass even the most powerful units of the British Army and to cause massive economic damage in both Ireland and on the British mainland, it was unable to force a British withdrawal.

Sinn Fein and the IRA's leadership gradually realised this in the early 1990s. This recognition coincided with growing British impatience at the costs, both

would mean the acceptance, by Unionism, that they would have to share power. Their undemocratic political veto over the right of all of Ireland to unity was to be maintained by this agreement. This veto is crucial to the maintenance of the Protestant ascendancy. Despite this the Unionists felt that too much was being conceded to the nationalists. That is why Blair, frustrated by the Unionists' failure to realise that they had effectively beaten the IRA and quelled nationalist insurgency after many years of war, has cited "Loyalist intransigence" as the "obstacle to peace".

The terms of the "Joint Statement" by the British and Irish governments make it clear that Sinn Fein and, most probably, the IRA Army Council have already agreed to the "decommissioning" of their arms by May of next year.

The report on decommissioning from the international panel headed by Canadian General John de Chaste-

The Good Friday Agreement does not overcome religious divisions and sectarianism, it reinforces them.

economic and political, of the Irish War. The Downing Street Declaration of 1993, signed by the British and Irish governments, signalled an important change of direction which found an immediate reflection in the Provisionals' first cease-fire.

However, the accident of Major's slender parliamentary majority and consequent reliance on the Unionist bloc at Westminster led to the collapse of this initiative. The Canary Wharf bomb successfully reminded the British state that there was a price to be paid for peace, and that price was the undermining, at least partially, of the Protestant ascendancy. In practical terms this meant not only the creation of a new "Northern Ireland Assembly" but an executive in which the nationalist community would be represented and which would have the power to reform the state machine including, crucially, the RUC.

Last year's Good Friday Agreement defined the constitutional changes which would establish devolved government in Northern Ireland. It was a victory for the British state in that its signing required the IRA's de facto acceptance of defeat. Its implementation

lain, had been due for publication before the final round of talks, but its actual appearance was delayed twice until after their conclusion. It specified that agreement had already been reached on acceptable methods of decommissioning. This translated into either "information leading to the discovery of arms" or "destruction of arms by the paramilitary group concerned with verification provided by the Commission."

The de Chastelain report also acknowledged that Sinn Fein's statement of 1 July promised that decommissioning could begin and that the Commission expected this to be endorsed by the IRA and other armed groups.

Although Unionist leaders continued to present the arms issue as the major obstacle to their agreement to the proposals of the London and Dublin governments, beyond that there is the question whether or not power is to be "devolved" to a new Executive, including Sinn Fein members, on 18 July.

If it is, then it will be the new executive which receives and implements the proposals for reform of the RUC which are contained in the still unpublished "Patten Report", authored by the former Tory party chair and the last Governor of Hong Kong.

The 2 July "Joint Statement" (see box) emphasises that the entire Northern Ireland system of government, including both the Assembly and the new Executive, will be closed down if either decommissioning or devolution do not proceed as proposed. In other words, the Unionist leadership has been told, "Either sign up to the agreement, turn against your own intransigent supporters and play a role in reforming the state and the RUC, or Westminster will do it without you".

The signs thus far are mixed from the mainstream Unionist camp. In a BBC interview the Assembly's first minister David Trimble branded the key component of the Joint Statement as

"unfair", claiming that it would "punish the innocent" for the failure of the paramilitaries to decommission. Such rhetoric is rich but predictable hypocrisy from a man who only three years ago was more than willing to do business with Billy Wright, the murderous Loyalist psychopath, eventually gunned down by INLA inmates at the Maze prison. What remains unclear at this stage is whether Trimble intends to challenge Tony Blair to a test of will or, alternatively, is just out to pacify "refuseniks" within his own party.

No doubt both socialist revolutionaries and Irish Republicans would take some pleasure in seeing the Orange bigots get their come-uppance. But this would not be any kind of progressive outcome to the Irish War. The Good Friday Agreement does not overcome religious divisions and sectarianism, it reinforces them. The Assembly is elected on a confessional basis and the "two sides" will be as entrenched as ever.

Already this year there have been over 100 pipe bomb and arson attacks on Catholic homes, especially on "mixed estates". These attacks are not random, but are part of a calculated attempt by Loyalists to terrorise nationalists and to destabilise the so-called "peace process". Because of their commitment to that process, the Provisionals have barely responded to these attacks. They may not have formally decommissioned their guns but they have taken them out of active service.

While the Orange Order has apparently backed down from a full-scale confrontation over the banned march at Drumcree, the season of triumphalist marches is far from over and the Parades

Commission is no defence. There are certain to be more attacks on nationalist houses, schools and on Catholic churches. Nationalist communities need to organise their own defence, demanding that Sinn Fein and the Provisionals put their weapons and their know-how at the disposal of elected councils of action.

Rather than relying on the British state to make the Orange bigots back down, Sinn Fein should organise mass mobilisations and demonstrations on the scale of the civil rights marches of the early 1970s or the later H-block campaigns that stretched into the early 1980s.

The Loyalist monolith is weaker now than it has been in generations, and the opportunity should be taken to break its back once and for all. But that would only be the first step on the real way forward in Ireland. Beyond the Orange Order there are still the forces of the British state maintaining the division of Ireland as a whole.

- No surrender of arms, for mass self-defence of the nationalist communities!
- For the immediate withdrawal of British troops and the disbandment of the RUC!
- No to an Assembly divided on religious grounds and powerless cross-border bodies – yes to self-determination for Ireland as a whole and a democratic 32-county constituent assembly with full sovereign powers!
- No to any Loyalist veto over democratic reform, yes to their civil rights and even autonomy in a 32-county workers' republic!

The balance of forces within Unionism

THE EUROPEAN Assembly elections in June give some indication of the relative strengths of the three main parties of Unionism. The turn-out of nearly 50 per cent – more than twice that in Britain – shows that the election was seen by many as a referendum on the Good Friday Agreement.

The Ulster Unionists, led by David Trimble, polled 120,000 votes against Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists who won over 180,000. This shows very clearly that the forces opposed to any concessions, typically the lower middle class and the more backward workers, still constitute a numerical majority of Protestants. This is a mass base for organised bigotry and loyalist terror that is regularly mobilised to terrorise the nationalist community.

Moreover, many within Trimble's party, probably a majority in its leadership, are also opposed to the inclusion of Sinn Fein in government. Ken Maginnis, the party's "security spokesman", presented himself as a

representative of this layer when he rejected Blair's proposals out of hand as soon as they were published on 2 July.

Leading Unionist Party member, Jeffrey Donaldson, has been an outspoken leader of the original opposition to ratification of the Good Friday Agreement.

The smaller Progressive Unionist Party, led by David Ervine and representing working class Loyalism and, particularly its paramilitaries, gained some 20,000 votes for their position of accepting reforms within Northern Ireland provided the border itself is guaranteed. They place less emphasis on decommissioning of arms since they still hold their own arsenals.

Nonetheless, voting figures are only a crude indication of the real balance of political forces. It is the ability to mobilise, above all on the streets, that will largely determine the outcome of the conflicts within Unionism over the summer months.

THE JOINT STATEMENT

The main points of the statement issued by Blair and Ahern, The Way Forward, are:

1. An inclusive Executive exercising devolved powers; decommissioning of all paramilitary arms by May 2000; decommissioning to be carried out in a manner determined by the International Commission (the de Chastelain Commission).
2. Ministers to be nominated on 15 July.
3. Power to be devolved on 18 July. De Chastelain Commission to confirm a "start to decommissioning".
4. Commission to specify when "actual decommissioning" is to begin.
5. The "fail-safe" clause: if there is any failure on decommissioning or devolution, the institutions set up by the Good Friday Agreement will be suspended, "automatically and immediately".

TURKEY

Free Ocalan, oppose the death sentence

ON 29 JUNE, Abdullah Ocalan, chair of the "Kurdish Workers' Party" (PKK) was sentenced to death in a trial which made a mockery of even the most basic elements of bourgeois law.

The eventual sentence was already clear when the process started. Ocalan was found guilty of thousands of murders by a state which has waged war against the Kurdish people for almost a century.

Indeed, it was on another 29 June, 1925, when Sheikh Said and 40 leaders of a 1925 Kurdish uprising were hanged in Diyarbakir. In this uprising alone, around 15,000 Kurds had been killed and 200 villages destroyed.

From the creation of the Turkish Republic onwards, the Kurdish people were denied any form of official recognition. The Kurds were labelled "mountain Turks", the Kurdish language was banned in schools and offices. Even to call oneself a Kurd in public was a legal offence, let alone any mention of the oppression of Kurds.

All this shows the hypocrisy of those who blame the PKK for "creating" the repression of the Kurdish people or at least of provoking the Turkish authorities by their armed struggle. The systematic repression of the Kurds is much older than the PKK and will not disappear, whatever the fate of the PKK under the current regime.

Given the deep inner political and economic crisis of the Turkish state, the chauvinism towards the Kurdish people is one, perhaps the only, issue which

unites the otherwise deeply divided ruling class and middle classes and their parties. It is the issue by which they can rally reactionary mass support and bind the Turkish workers and peasants to bourgeois or petit-bourgeois reactionary forces.

Therefore, the issue of the Kurdish right to self-determination is also of vital importance in breaking the Turkish workers from their rulers.

Ocalan has been tried not as an individual, but as a symbol for the Kurdish struggle. The working class in Turkey and in all the European countries must come out in open support for the Kurdish people, against the death sentence and for Ocalan's release.

This is especially so, since all the European regimes have supported the Turkish state in this struggle, both politically and militarily.

The German Social Democrats and New Labour leaders in government have taken the same reactionary anti-Kurdish positions as their conservative fore-runners. In Germany, for example, while they present themselves as "concerned" about Kurdish legal standards, they maintain the ban on the PKK and other Kurdish organisations and publications, restricting the political rights of exiles and immigrants by "normal" immigration laws.

Hundreds of Kurds, particularly in Germany are on trial at the moment because of their actions when Ocalan was kidnapped and they are threatened with sentences of up to 10 years

and deportation. By contrast, the guards from the Israeli embassy in Berlin, who shot four Kurdish activists in February, are free.

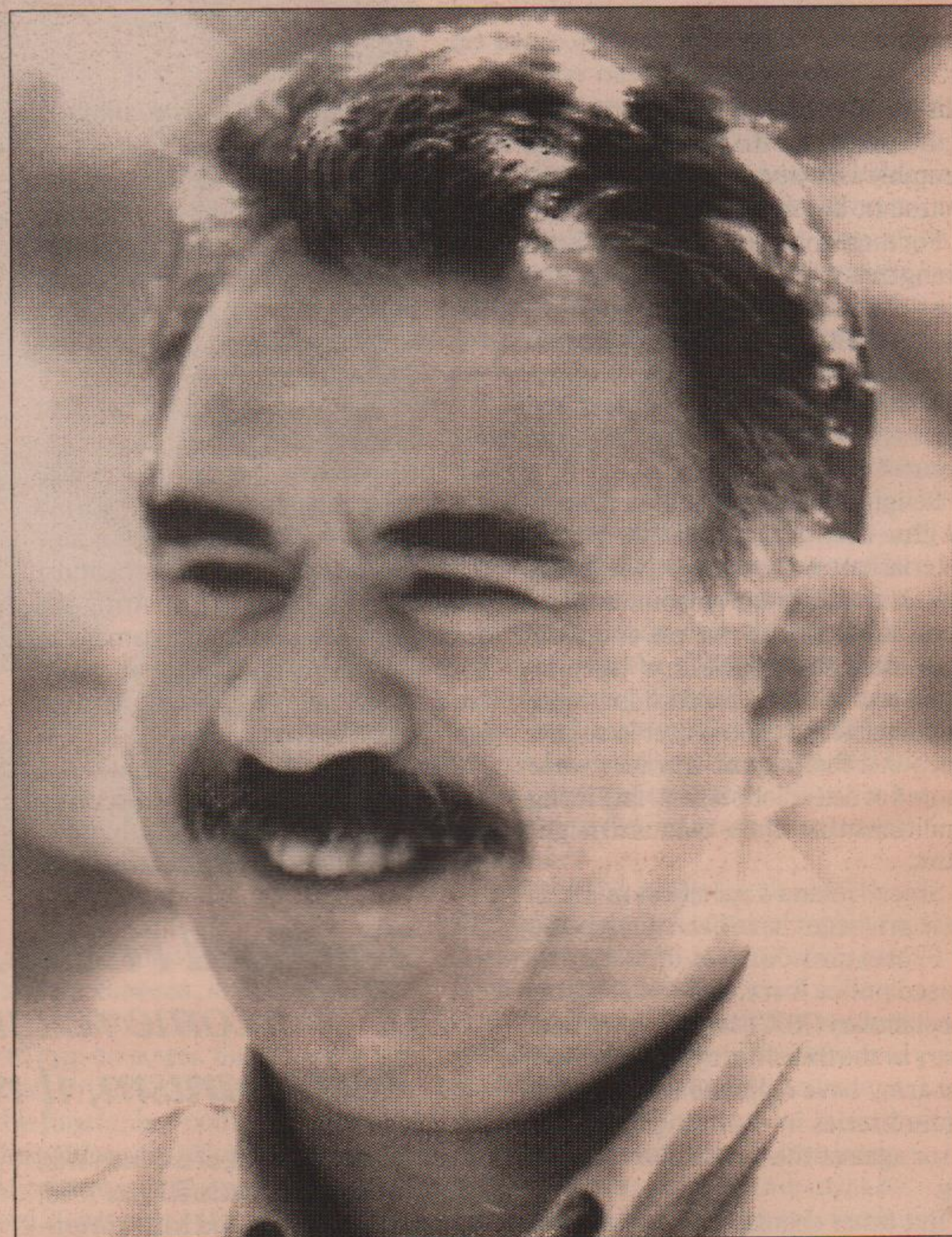
The trade union bureaucrats, like IG Metall leader Klaus Zwickel, appeal to both sides (the PKK and the Turkish state) not to use any violence and thereby equate the oppressed and the oppressor.

Despite these shameful, pro-imperialist positions taken by the official leaders of the workers' movement, there is no way around appealing to and winning over the rank and file workers in Turkey and in the European Union.

A massive campaign is needed with demonstrations, pickets, solidarity strikes and actions to prevent military aid to Turkey.

We must centre such a campaign around the following slogans:

- Immediate and unconditional release of Ocalan and all other Kurdish prisoners of war!
- Asylum for Ocalan and all other prisoners in the EU in the country of their choice!
- Lift the bans against the PKK and all other Kurdish organisations!
- Right to asylum for all Kurds fleeing the repression!
- No deportations!
- Block military support and arms sales to Turkey!
- For workers' sanctions against Turkey!
- All Nato troops out of Turkey!
- Down with Nato!



Ocalan faces execution after show trial

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Condoms and Cardinal Sin

TWO HIGH profile women spoke out recently for the right to birth control in the developing world.

Ex-Spice Girl turned UN goodwill ambassador, Geri Halliwell provoked a furious reaction from the Catholic Church when she visited the Philippines to promote the use of contraception for the UN Population Fund. Condemning the pop star as "blasphemous" for dressing as a nun in her most recent video, leading cleric Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, told teenagers to ignore her "western" message, denounced condoms as "evil" and "fit for animals" and declared that "family planning amounts to killing babies".

The UN had specifically targeted the Philippines for Halliwell's pro-choice message that "everyone deserves control over their life and that means control over their fertility and protection against disease and unwanted pregnancies". The country's population is growing by 2.3 per cent a year, one of the highest rates in the region.

President Joseph Estrada is publicly opposed to birth control and the limited attempts of the previous administration under President Ramos to introduce family planning failed miserably. Meanwhile, 50 million people live below the poverty line in the Philippines and HIV infection is a massive problem.

Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, also upset the Catholic Church. She condemned the Vatican's strategy in the UN of blocking with right-wing Catholic governments and Muslim countries as an "unholy alliance" against attempts to promote wider access to contraception and measures to improve the reproductive health of the developing world. "My Church is playing a deeply obstructive role where, if it had its way, a million people would get the HIV virus, there would be more unwanted pregnancies, more and more illegal abortions, more and more mothers dying as a result of illegal abortions."

There are many horrific statistics to choose from: 7,000 people everyday become infected with HIV and of girls aged 15-19 the biggest cause of death is complications in pregnancy and in childbirth.

Short and Halliwell were right to criticise the Catholic church's continuing opposition to reproductive rights for women, but they have chosen a relatively easy target. The question of reproductive rights – access to contraception, abortion, sex education – in many parts of the world is linked to widespread poverty, under-development and exploitation.

While religious repression and big-

otry have a lot to answer for, the likes of Short, and the government she represents, also have to take some blame. They may come out with a load of moral rhetoric on access to condoms and abortion, but they can't hide their complicity with semi-colonial poverty and misery.

Short has been a high-profile critic of the campaign to cancel all third world debt – preferring to chain poor countries to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank, guaranteeing the right of multinationals and imperialist governments to super-exploit their workers and strip them of their natural resources forever.

The debt servicing and structural adjustment programmes imposed by the IMF have forced massive cuts in health spending in developing countries – a 50 per cent fall in the 1980s according to UNICEF.

In Zambia the leading cause of death for children is malaria followed by other preventable conditions such as diarrhoea. UNICEF also highlighted a 35 per cent drop in education spending between 1980 and 1995 – during the same period the number of girls attending school dropped by 7 per cent worldwide. In sub-Saharan Africa 51 per cent of women are illiterate.

In parts of Africa, where export-dri-

ven economies have meant a massive growth in male workers leaving their families for work in the cities or seasonal work in other regions and there has been a consequent big rise in prostitution – the cost of a condom can add up to 50 per cent more to the price of a visit to a prostitute.

Ninety-four per cent of people who are HIV positive live in the third world, but their countries have only six per cent of global AIDS health care spending and seven per cent of the global AIDS prevention budget.

Multinational drug companies are making super profits out of the latest triple therapy medications in the west. Such treatments never reach the poverty-stricken masses in Africa, Asia or Latin America. AIDS sufferers there die early, pass the infection onto their babies because of their poor general health and whole families are devastated by the cost of caring for them and the loss of wage earners or agricultural labourers.

Short's hypocrisy is even clearer when you consider the record of the imperialist nations on birth control and a woman's right to choose. The British government still refuses to give out contraceptives in schools to address the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in western Europe. The French government unashamedly promotes eco-

nomical and social policies that favour married couples and large families. In the US in 1997 the Federal government spent \$850 million on a campaign to promote abstinence on the basis that "sexual activity outside of marriage is likely to have harmful and psychological effects".

President Clinton himself, that great exponent of sexual restraint, enthusiastically endorsed the campaign. Programmes supporting teenage mothers are under attack because they supposedly send the message that it's okay for schoolgirls to have sex. But no lectures from Clare Short for Blair or Clinton – she saves that for the countries of the semi-colonial world whilst watching their countries being bled dry by debt servicing.

Geri Halliwell was right when she talked of the importance of women having control over their own fertility. But in order to take control women need to be educated, healthy, economically independent of men and organised to fight their oppression. So Geri, next time you make a speech, tell them what we really, really want:

- Cancel the debts!
- Free abortion on demand for all!
- For full and free access to contraception, advice and high quality health care!

After Ocalan's trial: where now for the PKK?

THE SEIZURE of Abdullah Ocalan came as a tremendous shock to Kurdish people all over the world. The humiliating abduction of the PKK leader from the Greek embassy in Kenya and his depiction in the international media as some kind of monster were a calculated blow to the Kurdish national struggle.

It was a blow that would have been impossible without the active support of the imperialist powers for the Turkish regime. The European Union (EU), for example, repeatedly refused to grant asylum to Ocalan and both the CIA and Israel's Mossad were involved in the actual kidnapping.

But Ocalan's troubles, which began with his expulsion from Syria by President Assad at the beginning of the year and mounted as he sought refuge in Moscow, Athens and then Rome, were not only a result of imperialist pressures. Like the betrayal by Assad, they had their origins in the political strategy of the PKK itself. In 1998, this had suffered a strategic defeat in both military and diplomatic terms.

It had become clear that the PKK was not only unable to defeat the Turkish military in South East Anatolia, but that it was now threatened with a decisive military defeat once deprived of its hinterlands in Syria and Northern Iraq.

The conclusion the PKK leadership drew from this was that it had to relinquish the struggle for Kurdish independence and offer a peace deal based on Kurdish autonomy within the Turkish state. This was coupled with an appeal to the "international community", by which they meant primarily the west European imperialist powers whom the PKK believed to be more "pro-Kurdish" and "democratic" than the US.

This bourgeois strategy has been even more bluntly expressed in Ocalan's speeches to the military court. According to him, "one has to say that the PKK must end its mistakes" (the armed struggle) and recognise that the "greatness" of the Turkish state "is a reality which has to be respected by the Kurds as well." (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26 June)

He even went so far as to present himself as a mediator between the peoples, offering a great future to the Turkish bourgeois state in its attempts to become a major regional power:

"A democratic solution will not only maintain the unity of the country and the powers of the republic, but strengthen it. The democratic unity of the republic is the best guarantee against any kind of separatism. When the most difficult problem in the history of the republic is solved, Turkey will gain tremendously as the hegemonic power in the region out of the strength which results from internal peace." (*Tageszeitung*, Berlin, 3 June)

Although one part of the Kurdish community and its militants saw such statements as a clever tactic calculated to divide the enemies of the Kurdish people, others were shocked. Many have tried to explain away such statements as the result of drugs and manipulation by the Turkish military, while some see it as a sudden break by Ocalan, who has betrayed the programme and goals of the past.

Whatever their responses, most of these critics are agreed that the political foundation of the PKK in the late 1970s and its 15-year long armed struggle were and remain the essence of a revolutionary political project to liberate the Kurdish people.

Sadly, that view is wrong. The recent



Demonstrators demand Ocalan's release during Cologne Eurosummit

capitulations by Ocalan, far from being a break from the political strategy of the PKK are a direct result of that strategy.

When the PKK was founded in the late 1970s, it was based on a Stalinist programme in which the "first stage" of the Kurdish revolution was to be the creation of a democratic republic. The Kurdish people would be liberated by a "broad national front of workers, peasants, intellectuals and patriots from other classes and strata" (programme of the PKK, 1977).

The main fighting force would be the peasantry, since both the Kurdish bourgeoisie and the working class were weak and their "patriotism" in doubt. The PKK stood for an almost classical model of the Maoist "people's war" as the means to achieve its aims. They would begin with attacks on the repressive (occupying) state forces, pass through a stage of "strategic equilibrium" and eventually surround and take the cities from the countryside.

While the PKK called itself a workers' party and claimed to be based on a "Marxist-Leninist" ideology, it never was a workers' party or organisation, but a petit bourgeois nationalist and anti-imperialist movement, with a social base made up of large sections of the peasantry and a part of the Kurdish intelligentsia.

Of course there have been, and there still are, workers in or around the PKK; but they have always been limited either to an auxiliary role (donating money) or been recruited to leave their factories and join the main struggle, the guerrilla war for national liberation.

Its Stalinist ideology did not contradict this, but rather served as a "Marxist-Leninist" backing for the PKK's position that the state created by the Kurdish revolution had to be a bourgeois state. It accepted not only that this would be based on the capitalist mode of production, but that a principal task of the "national front" would have to be the creation of a strong, independent Kurdish capital. Consequently, although

all classes had to be "drawn into" a government of the national front, its programme would have to be acceptable to the "patriotic bourgeoisie".

From its very beginning, the PKK programme confined expropriation of capital or land only to the "comprador" classes. Given the economically backward character of Kurdish society, and the cross-class character of the movement against the Turkish state, the PKK concluded that it had to be led by a one-party leadership (i.e. the PKK leadership) which would balance the interests of different classes.

According to the PKK, this would secure the leadership of the working class, but in reality this was always a con-

gle which could have generalised the struggles and firmly linked them to the strike movement in the Turkish cities. It did so on the grounds that the Kurds were a backward people who were not ripe for democratic forms, but needed to be led by an elite, the PKK.

Moreover, for the PKK, the national democratic character of the revolution meant that it was not necessary to mobilise and organise internationally within the working class movement. The party never made any serious attempts to organise the Kurdish workers in the Turkish and West European cities, where the majority of the Kurdish proletariat actually lived, into the class struggles of those countries.

On the contrary, its international politics have always been directed away from the mass of the working class. For the PKK, three major (potential) international allies

existed: firstly, the Stalinist bureaucracies, secondly the Arab nationalist regimes and parties (like Assad and the PLO) and, thirdly, the left wing of west European imperialism, the social democratic parties and governments, the trade union bureaucracies, the Greens and, sometimes, the liberals.

In the period up to the early 1990s, the PKK firmly stood for the creation of an independent Kurdish state and denounced all talk of any solution short of this as pro-imperialist and a betrayal of the Kurdish people. However, by the mid 1990s, the PKK leadership began to realise that it would never reach the last stage of the "people's war", that the Turkish state, backed by imperialist support, was too strong to be defeated militarily by a guerrilla army whose bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist allies were weakening or had already collapsed.

In this period, the PKK renounced the struggle for an independent Kurdish state, and started a series of "peace programmes" and offers for a truce.

Given the collapse of Stalinism and the weakening of Arab nationalism, west European imperialism played an increas-

ingly prominent role, as an international observer and guarantor, in the "peace plans" and what the PKK referred to as, "interesting proposals for a solution of the Kurdish question by Abdullah Ocalan".

At first sight, this looks curious, since relations between the PKK and the social democratic and trade union bureaucracies had worsened throughout the 1990s. But, like all programmes, the programme of the PKK also has an inner logic. Just as in the national struggle it believed that all "democrats and people of good will" should join together in a popular front, so, internationally, it concluded that all democratic nations should unite against the plots of the main enemies: the US, Turkey and Israel.

In line with this view, the PKK stated in a public declaration of 2 February 1999, after Ocalan had left Moscow:

"The Kurdish question, the most burning problem of the Middle East and Europe, is to be resolved by the direct collaboration of the USA, Turkey and Israel in the total destruction of the Kurdish people. Our chairman Abdullah Ocalan came to Europe, to remind the European countries to play their role." (*Kurdistan Report*, 10.2.1999)

Unfortunately, they did play their role, but not as he had expected! Just as the PKK's strategy for the liberation of the Kurdish people had to lead to the subordination of the workers and peasants to the interests of the bourgeois forces (and indeed to the weakening of the struggle for self-determination), it also led to the binding of the fate of the Kurdish struggle to the goodwill of European imperialism.

And since, unlike the PLO or the ANC, no imperialist power has any need for the PKK to pacify the region or to increase its sphere of influence – this strategy could only have led to another political tragedy for the Kurds and the PKK, the arrest of Ocalan and the death sentence against him.

Clearly, revolutionaries and the working class world-wide have to oppose this sentence and to fight for the release of Ocalan. The Turkish regime and its international backers have no right to sit in judgement over the Kurdish liberation struggle and its political organisations.

That is the reason why we also oppose the PKK slogan for an international trial of Ocalan or an international conference to settle the Kurdish question. This could only mean allowing west European and US imperialism to follow the path of the Oslo agreements in Kurdistan. Such a conference might perhaps weaken the Turkish regime, but only at the expense of strengthening one or the other imperialist power. In any event, it would be a betrayal of the democratic and national rights of the Kurdish people.

Therefore, we call on all Kurdish militants in or outside the PKK, to combine critical support for the PKK and the Kurdish people against both the Turkish state and imperialism with a deep going re-examination and critique of the political strategy of the PKK.

The heroism of the Kurdish workers and peasants deserves a proletarian-revolutionary leadership which does not bind it to the national and international bourgeoisie. It deserves a leadership which fights for the proletarian revolution in Turkey and Kurdistan as part of a United Socialist States of the Middle East, guided by the strategy of permanent revolution.

The PKK's strategy for liberation led to the binding of the fate of the Kurdish struggle to the goodwill of European imperialism

Economism and the

During Nato's Balkan war the Socialist Workers Party displayed admirable energy exposing the hypocrisy of Bomber Blair and Cruise Missile Clinton and their "humanitarian" bombing of Serbia. But the effectiveness of their propaganda, argues *Dave Stockton*, was largely undermined by the fact that they turned their backs on the plight of the Kosovar Albanians.

THROUGHOUT THE course of Nato's war on Serbia the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) systematically downplayed and even denied the existence of another war – one which predated the Nato bombing, and which actually intensified during it. This was doubly stupid since, in the minds of the great majority of workers and progressive people generally it was Nato's only excuse. What was this war?

It was the war of Milosevic and the Serbian police, army and fascist militias in Kosova to hang on to the province and to cleanse it of most, if not all, of its ethnic Albanian population. It was the war that most people – including SWP members – could see on their TV screens night after night.

Instead of tackling this question head on the SWP decided to deny the reality of the ethnic cleansing, and who was carrying it out, for fear that to admit its reality would concede the case for the Nato bombing campaign. In doing this the SWP demonstrated that they were opportunists afraid of their own deepest instincts.

The recognition that Milosevic was a genocidal butcher does not mean calling in Nato. No more than knowledge of the existence of the Holocaust meant that socialists had to support the Allies in the Second World War.

Milosevic's war of ethnic cleansing did mean that socialists should have done all they could to support and aid the victims of oppression to fight back themselves. An internationalist campaign to build solidarity with the Kosovars' own struggle would have provided a concrete alternative to the countless workers who instinctively sided with them but wrongly believed that Nato was acting on their behalf.

The SWP's refusal to take up the defence of the Kosovars and demand that the Serb forces get out of the province was the prime reason why both it, and the anti-war movement it dominated, proved unable to persuade any real mass forces to take to the streets. Despite the horrific bombing of Serbia and the wholesale destruction of its economy the British anti-war movement, which almost alone in Europe refused to defend the Kosovars openly, remained pitifully small. While they may not be able to bring themselves to publicly admit it, the SWP leaders know this to be true when they saw the large halls they had booked for their rallies filled with empty seats instead of anti-war activists.

The SWP has been telling its members and periphery that this was mainly due to a media blackout on opposition to the war. After all, opinion polls showed one-third of the population was against the war. But the motives of a "silent minority" remain unknown. Were they an elemental hatred of war and imperialism or a parochial indifference to far-away places of which we know nothing and care less?

What is clear is that these people were not just waiting for the call to come out onto the streets. And, in any case, was a media blackout either unexpected or a new phenomenon? Since when has the media declared open day for those who don't support "our boys" when they are going into action?

In reality the media showed as much of the destruction in Serbia as you would expect – pretty regular coverage from John Simpson in Belgrade. Indeed Blair, Cook and Robertson went so far as to suggest that the BBC's senior establishment reporter had "got Beirut syndrome" and was making propaganda for Milosevic!

The problem wasn't the media. It is that the attempted genocide being waged by Milosevic's thugs in Kosova was all too real. This was why two-thirds of the population supported what they (wrongly) thought was a relatively selfless use of British forces to stop it. Instead of tackling this question head on *Socialist Worker* set out to provide Milosevic with a whole string of ridiculous alibis.

By attacking the straw man exaggerations of Cook and Robertson (the standard comparisons with the holocaust and Hitler) *Socialist Worker* got itself into a shameful "genocide denial" mode. It wasn't the Holocaust because there were no extermination camps, the trains

went to the border! Milosevic not only wasn't a fascist (true) but he was only like Norman Tebbit ("On yer bike, Kosovars?"). These sort of killings were "only too common" in that part of the world, it was only tit for tat, the KLA were "nationalists" just like Milosevic.

In order to prove this *Socialist Worker* had to give detailed coverage of every individual atrocity reportedly committed by Kosovars against Serbs to prove that they are all as bad as one another. Fair enough, you might think, until you realise that *Socialist Worker* didn't do the same for the Albanians. It tries to suggest that most of their problems were caused by Nato. Indeed, it was only massacres of Albanians by Nato that warranted specific reporting. Why?

It will be interesting to see whether they apply this method to the Kurds and the PKK – the latter as everyone knows have used terror against their own opponents within the Kurdish movement. This fact alone does not forfeit them or the Kurds the right to be defended against their national oppressors. Exactly the same is the case in Northern Ireland. The fact that atrocities are committed by both sides in a conflict does not mean (except to a hopeless pacifist) that we cannot tell who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor. It just means we cannot go by the latest individual atrocity, but by historical and political facts and by the scale and systematic character of acts of terror.

Socialist Worker, and in particular the articles of Charlie Kimber, aped the Stalinist *Morning Star* in denying the undeniable. On 3 July *Socialist Worker* tells us that:

"The scale of the killing of the Serbs by ethnic Albanians is at about the level of the killing of Albanians by Serb forces which allegedly prompted Nato's bombing raids . . . There were killings before but they were on a relatively small scale, similar to those which, disgracefully, go on every day in regimes throughout the world."

Apart from the bald assertion – not backed by a single fact, figure or source – a typical sleight of hand is at work. Even if it were true (a) one ethnic cleansing comes after the other, i.e. was provoked by it and (b) in the intervening time at least 10 times that number have been killed and three-quarters of the entire ethnic Albanian population have been driven from their homes, seen them destroyed, had their families torn apart and endured the misery of being shunted around hell-hole refugee camps.

Socialists, of course, condemn all killings of innocent civilians but to use it to suggest a rough equivalence of blame is monstrous. Yet this is exactly the lesson *Socialist Worker* wants us to draw:

"Those who were the ethnic cleansers invariably became the cleansed the next time around". (26 June 1999)

For the *Morning Star* and its long-time fellow travellers like Tony Benn and Alice Mahon this sort of argument is second nature. It accounts for why thinking workers – despite their respect for them for supporting workers in struggle – regard Stalinists and their hangers on as willing dupes on such matters. After all, for decades such people ignored Stalinism's brutality and repression, from the Great Purges of the 1930s to the crushing of Solidarnosc in the 1980s.

BUT FOR the SWP to take up the *Morning Star*'s method is curious to say the least; what is the reasoning behind it? This is succinctly expressed by Chris Harman in the July/August *Socialist Review*. He tells us:

"The left has to reach back to the traditions of 1914, rather than just to the traditions of the struggle against the Vietnam War. We have to remember who our main enemy is . . . This means that of course you are against the oppression by the other side. We don't support the Serbian government, which has taken its population into a war to defend its right to control a population who don't want to live under it. It is a crime against humanity which you couldn't defend. At the same time we also have to understand that the power which wanted to crush the Serbian

government is a much greater evil."

This is a cynical attempt to throw sand in the eyes of SWP members with pseudo-Marxist erudition. The tactics of revolutionaries in the First World War can no more be read directly onto the present situation than can those of the Vietnam War. The First World War was a general war between imperialist powers.

LENIN'S POSITION was that in such circumstances to side with one's own imperialist bloc against the other, on the pretext that the other had violated this or that small nation's independence, was ridiculous. So Austria and Germany had invaded, respectively, Serbia and Belgium. Lenin did not try for one minute to deny or minimise the fact that these were acts of national oppression. Indeed, he claimed that all other things being equal both nations would have the inalienable right to defend themselves with the support of socialists.

But what was at issue was whether British, French and Russian socialists could support the war efforts of their countries for this reason. Lenin said no. Britain and Russia, who claimed they were fighting to restore the independence of Belgium and Serbia, themselves forcibly held in subjection far more nations than either Austria or Germany. The same method held for the German and Austrian socialists. They had no business supporting their rulers despite the fact that these rulers stigmatised the Tsar and the British Empire for oppressing small nations and, in the case of Germany, gave material assistance to the developing Irish national revolution.

The imperialist powers were simply warring over who should oppress and exploit the small nations of the world. Lenin's view remained that outside of the context of a conflict between imperialist powers – which had subordinated all such events to manoeuvres between the two camps – one would of course defend a small country against occupation and despoliation by a large one. Moreover, as part of the struggle against the imperialist war itself the revolts of subject peoples against both alliances had to be supported.

Chris Harman's misleading suggestion that self-determination of nations is some how put into cold storage when imperialist powers become involved is a complete falsification of Lenin. It is much closer to the position of a number of Russian and German revolutionaries whom Lenin called "Imperialist Economists" – Yuri Pyatakov, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin and their inspiration Rosa Luxemburg.

The old Russian Economists of 1898-1902 had argued that democratic struggles, i.e. political struggles within the capitalist state, were no business of the proletariat. Its job was to wage a struggle against the bosses and exploitation. This false method refused to challenge capitalism as a system and ignored all the forms of political oppression by the state which capitalism gave rise to.

The people Lenin called Imperialist Economists likewise dismissed a central political struggle – against national oppression – in favour of a supposedly direct struggle for socialism which imperialism made possible. They argued that the triumph of imperialism had made national struggles into a reactionary utopia: under imperialism it was impossible to win real independence and under socialism it would not be needed. National self-determination inevitably played into the hands of one imperialism or another. So the answer was internationalism, class unity, the socialist revolution. Simple!

But, said Lenin, this ignores the reality of national oppression. As long as the world is divided into oppressor and oppressed nation states, imperialist powers, colonies and semi-colonies the workers in the former states who fail to oppose their own state's oppression and exploitation collude with it and "will never themselves be free". The workers in the oppressed nation, seeing this collusion, will be confirmed in the view that what matters above all is nation and not class.

Lenin stressed that the revolt of the oppressed

war in the Balkans

against their oppressors, even though it is "only" a democratic struggle, is nevertheless a revolutionary one. One which, in the imperialist epoch is an objectively necessary element of the struggle against the "highest stage of capitalism" and which can and must become one subjectively too. Lenin was the first to realise that the struggles of oppressed nations against their oppressors could be an enormous auxiliary to the international working class in the struggle for socialism.

This remains as true today as it was then. Modern imperialism – whatever its formal enshrining of the right to self determination in the UN Charter – has a more sacred principle, "the inviolability of borders" which it is currently upholding in Kosova by denying the Kosovars the right to secede!

Chris Harman is aware that Lenin actually supported national struggles in the First World War. He is also aware too that the International Socialists supported Vietnam against the USA, despite the fact that Vietnam received large-scale logistical support from "Russian Imperialism" (sic). He is also aware of the support the SWP gave to the Afghan Mujahideen against the Russian-backed Afghan government of Najibullah from 1978 onwards, despite the latter's massive funding and arming by the CIA. We could add Tito's arming and logistical support by the British in the Second World War. Or the United States support for first Chiang Kai Shek, and then Mao and Ho Chi Minh in their wars with Japan.

So how does Chris Harman find a template that will include all the good guys who were supported by one or another imperialism, but cut off the bad guys, the KLA? Watch carefully ladies and gentlemen and you may see how it's done:

"Imperialist wars almost invariably involve great powers trying to use for their own ends national movements directed against their opponents. In some cases this amounts simply to providing a few weapons to movements which retain their own independence and follow their own goals – as with the attempts of the Kaiser's Germany to help the Irish uprising in 1916 or the help the Vietnamese struggle received from Russia and China in the late 1960s.

But in other cases, the once independent national movements have become mere playthings of imperialist powers. This was true, for instance, of the Slovak and Croatian governments established by Germany from 1939-45, or of the Polish government set up in German occupied Warsaw during the First World War. For socialists to support national movements that have acquiesced in such a role would be to help strengthen imperialism." (*Socialist Review* May 1999)

A few weapons – is that it? The KLA was given a lot fewer weapons from the imperialists than Ho or Chiang or Mao or Tito or Stalin for that matter. Then there is the question of "retaining their independence and maintaining their own goals".

But *Socialist Worker* is not so sure that the KLA is a "mere plaything of the imperialist powers", wisely, for no other serious commentator thinks it is solely on the basis of a few friendly exchanges between Madeleine Allbright and Hasim Thaci or the tactical convergence of throwing the Serb army out of Kosova. Once this has been achieved, divergence is not only possible but very probable.

Socialist Worker quotes the *Observer* as saying "the separatist army has emerged as the most dangerous wild card in the peace process". And it quotes the *Independent's* Robert Fisk as saying, "the KLA will refuse to be demilitarised. In a few months time – at most a year – Nato's enemy will be the KLA who will then be raging against the West for abandoning their hopes for an independence."

We will see – imperialism has a lot of men and a lot of money to coerce and corrupt the KLA leaders. But what is absolutely clear is that for the past three months, and indeed for the entire short lifetime of the KLA (until the war started it was a "terrorist organisation" according to the US), in no sense was it a plaything of Nato. It was born out of frustration at the Dayton Accords between impe-

For the entire short lifetime of the KLA (until the war started it was a "terrorist organisation" according to the US), in no sense was it a plaything of Nato. It was born out of frustration at the Dayton Accords between imperialism and Milosevic because those accords offered nothing to Kosova



Anti-war protest, Trafalgar Square, London: British anti-war movement avoided the issue of the oppression of the Kosovars by Serbia

rialism and Milosevic because those accords offered nothing to Kosova.

The KLA now has mass roots in the Kosovar community. It alone defended them in Kosova during the attempted genocide. Nato, on the other hand, still recognises Serbia's historic right to rule Kosova and might well withdraw once the going gets tough. Nato refuses the Kosovars an independent state, their own "special bodies of armed men" (beyond a lightly armed domestic police force). That means that the Kosovars remain vulnerable to another Serbian invasion.

This can only be prevented firstly by the Kosovars being armed themselves, by gaining their state independence ("though after this may come federation" – Karl Marx) and secondly by either a democratic revolution in Serbia that renounces all designs on Kosova (a real utopia!) or by a socialist revolution that recognises Kosovar independence but proposes a federation of the Balkans. The socialist federation of the Balkans is not, as the SWP seems to think, an alternative to the right to secede, to independence, but can only be established after this right has been granted. Otherwise, it would not be a voluntary federation of equal states.

CHRIS HARMAN has "armed" the SWP with a travesty of the Marxist analysis of war and the national question. He starts from the idea "imperialist war", then reduces it to one type of imperialist war (inter-imperialist wars) that suck in subordinates and exploit the national struggles of small peoples. From this he concludes socialists cannot support such national struggles. Then he argues the war in Kosova was simply an imperialist war; the Kosovars have called in the imperialists, therefore they have subordinated their (maybe) just national grievance to imperialism's greater evil.

This wooden piece of dogmatism and chop logic really will not wash. What we face is an ongoing national liberation struggle by an oppressed people against an oppressor. The Albanian Kosovars are an historically oppressed people; in 1912

they were forcibly included in Serbia despite being a majority in Kosova. In 1918 they were forcibly included in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – on both occasions with horrific massacres and ethnic cleansing.

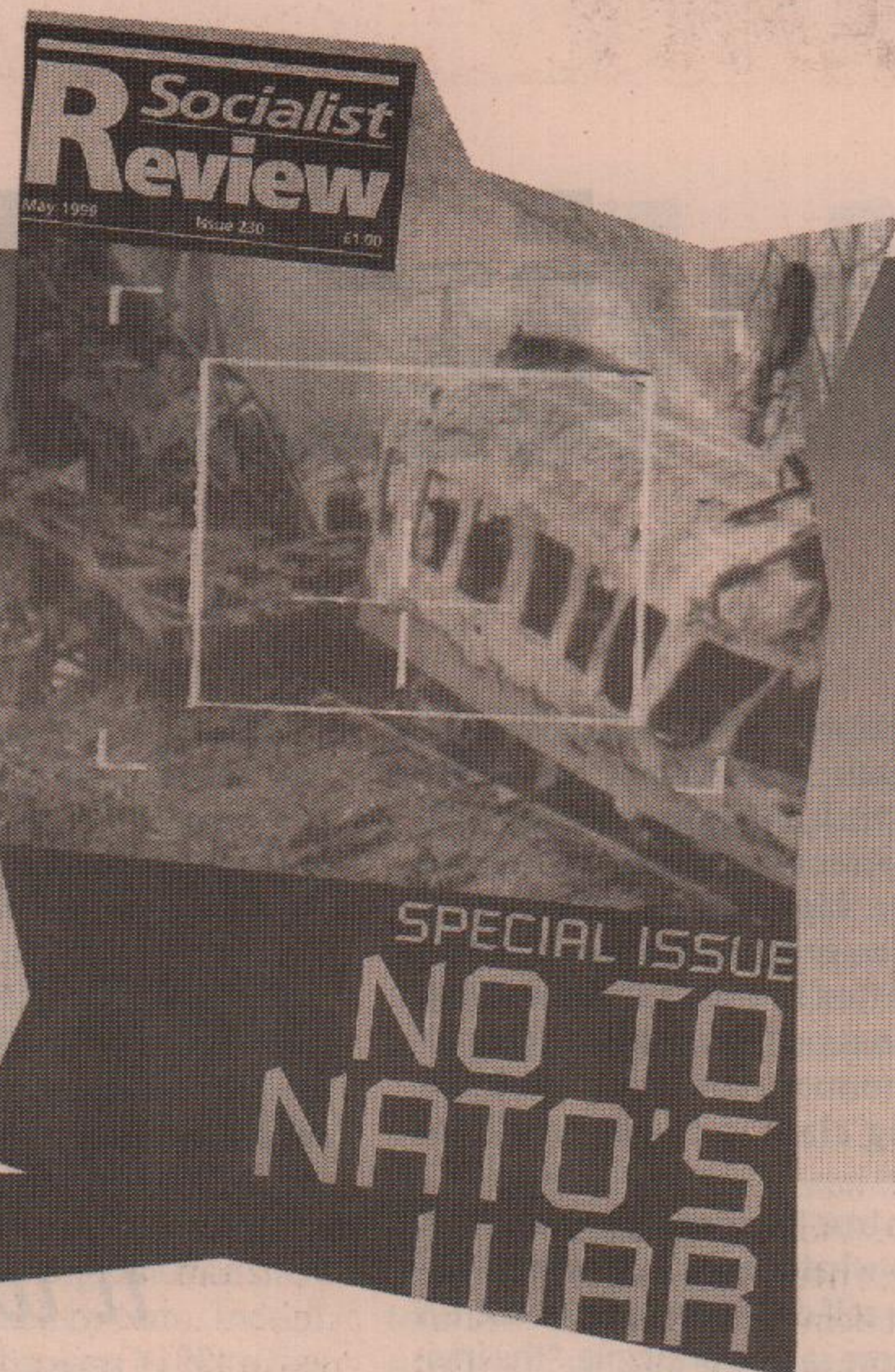
From 1918-1940 their very existence was denied, their language was forbidden in all spheres of government and politics, in the law courts and schools. Tens of thousands of them were forcibly deported to Turkey, their lands confiscated and given to Serb settlers. In 1945 they were again included in "Socialist Yugoslavia" against their wishes, breaking the YCP's formal promise of self-determination including the right to secede. Until the late 1960s they were incorporated into the Serbian republic with no autonomy under the notorious Great Serbian chauvinist secret police chief, Rankovic.

In the early 1970s they received a limited measure of autonomy but not the right to a separate republic of the Yugoslav Federation, let alone the right to secede if they so wished. Milosevic reversed all this in 1989-90. Thereafter ethnic Albanian school teachers, doctors and miners, were dismissed en masse and replaced with Serbs – from Serbia proper.

By 1995 a settlement of 26,000 Serbs from Bosnia and the Krajina was undertaken. For SWP comrades who do not know all this read *Kosovo: A Short History* by Noel Malcolm. Anyone who does will have no doubt but that the Kosovars' history throughout the twentieth century has been that of an oppressed people – very like the Kurds.

The fact that their political leaders have, in temporarily advantageous conditions, (1916, 1942-3 and July 1999) encouraged the taking of revenge on their oppressors does not alter this fact. Someone who quotes such "revenge killings" as decisive evidence that "they are all as bad as one another" is simply refusing to consider national oppression seriously. They are an Imperialist Economist in Lenin's words.

Over the last 10 years the oppression of the Kosovars has increased enormously. Interior ministry police and militias of the local Serb popu-



Socialist Review and the Morning Star: Different traditions but as one with their denial of the ethnic cleansing of Kosovars

lation, especially the settlers, began brutal repression against the ethnic Albanian villagers. In these conditions the mass passive resistance, led by Rugova, began to give way to limited guerrilla struggle. The KLA was born.

In 1998 ethnic cleansing of whole areas began in earnest and tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees began to flow into Albania, Macedonia and to western Europe. This was all before Nato had said a word or revved up a single plane. Until the autumn of last year the imperialist powers refused to raise or defend the general democratic rights of the Kosovars, let alone their right to self-determination.

All of these facts are testified to by countless NGOs and human rights organisations, in two Amnesty International special reports. They were not the product of war propaganda though they became its subject. To this has been added the expulsion from the country of 800,000 people, the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands, the systematic mass murder and torture of many thousands and the wholesale destruction of upwards of 60 per cent of the villages of

the Kosovar population.

All of this has passed almost without comment by *Socialist Worker*. Indeed, since the Nato occupation of Kosovo *Socialist Worker* has devoted itself to logging the atrocities committed – against the Serbs. Of course, it is absolutely right to do so. We do not support a single revenge killing of a single innocent Serb civilian. But why was a qualitatively greater scale of killing and expulsion – one clearly planned and executed by a state and its forces and not by angry and suffering victims – constantly ignored by the SWP?

In short, the SWP is clearly more sympathetic to the Serbs' national suffering than to that of Milosevic's victims – this was true with the Bosnian Muslims and now with the Albanian Kosovars. Given the differential scale of the suffering and the fact that the Serbian suffering was in all cases (Slavonia, Krajina and now Kosovo) a direct result of Milosevic's failure to successfully oppress another national or ethnic community this "equality" between the oppressed and oppressor nation is no equal-

ity at all. The SWP is siding with the oppressor and refusing to struggle alongside the oppressed.

This attitude had nothing whatsoever in common with either Bolshevism or Trotskyism or the politics of its founders. Both Lenin and Trotsky adopted the position that in the imperialist epoch the working class had to distinguish between oppressed and oppressor nations, aiding the former in their struggles.

The SWP has never understood this elementary position.

What is the origin of the SWP's differential hostility to the national struggle of the Albanian Kosovars. The answer lies in the SWP's own deep-rooted economism – in its chronic inability to relate political struggles to the more underdeveloped and indeed only embryonic form of the class struggle – the trade union form.

This leaves the SWP pleading for workers' unity in the abstract but having no political answers to struggles, like the national struggle, which cannot be solved by simple trade union forms of action – strikes, pickets and so on. But

politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Using the simpleton's approach to politics – the enemy of my enemy is my friend – the SWP only asks the question, who is imperialism opposed to here and now.

With this method the SWP deduces that the Serbian state, if not exactly a heroic anti-imperialist one, cannot be as bad as all that. The converse question, who is on the side of imperialism, the KLA, allows the SWP to refuse to support the Kosovars' struggle for independence. Maybe it could happen at some time in the future but in any case a Socialist Federation of the Balkans would be much better idea.

As if the continued oppression of any people within the Balkans will not block the road to any sort of Federation unless the socialists militantly and consistently support the right to independence for all the Balkan peoples. Thus the SWP, and the entire International Socialist Organisation which it leads, ends up colluding in national oppression. A bad case of Imperialist Economism. Or perhaps we should adapt Engels' phrase: it is the "anti-imperialism of fools".

French left sow illusions in the United Nations

IN FRANCE the main forces that could have organised a mass movement against the Nato war, in particular the French Communist Party (PCF) but also the two main French Trotskyist organisations, *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO) and the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (LCR), refused to do anything to mobilise workers and youth, primarily because of their pre-occupation with the Euro-elections.

There are four PCF ministers in the French government led by Socialist Prime Minister Jospin. As such the PCF bore a direct responsibility for French imperialism's role in the war. Jospin gave them a clear choice: put up or shut up. They shut up.

Also the PCF leadership's tactic in the elections was to sponsor a list where half the candidates were not party members. As it turned out, many of these actually supported the war. Mobilising vigorously against the war would have torn the PCF's list apart.

This striking cowardice confirmed that the PCF has abandoned all pretence of defending a class position, in favour of participating in running capitalist society.

This created an ideal opportunity for LO and the LCR to try and mobilise against the war on their own. All the more so given that they were standing on a joint slate in the European elections, with the possibility of getting close to the PCF's score. At a time when some of the organised oppositions within the PCF were openly calling on members not to vote for the PCF-sponsored list (which they called "the NATO list"), LO-LCR should have gone on the offensive.

By clearly attacking the PCF's position on the war and campaigning for workers and youth to oppose the war, they could have pushed the question of the war into the forefront of the election campaign.

LO-LCR refused to do that. Despite openly attacking the PS-PCF-Green government for its anti-working class policies, despite making clear their opposition to the war in every speech or media appearance, they refused to take the next logical step and put their

position on the war at the heart of their campaign, and in particular to organise protests against the war.

This was a major mistake. Our comrades of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* argued for a vote for the LO-LCR list as a way of rallying French workers to oppose the government, and in particular as a way of expressing their opposition to the war. LO-LCR should have transformed their list into a campaign against the war. But preoccupied by their own vision of the elections, they refused to do this. The result was catastrophic for French workers and youth, deprived of any organised voice during the war.

The LO-LCR list, although picking up five Euro-MPs, did far less well than expected. The PCF continued its inexorable and fatal decline to slump to 6.8% of the vote, but even in these favourable circumstances LO-LCR were unable to come within electoral striking distance of them, barely scraping past the 5% threshold.

This episode shows the whole problem with the politics of LO and the LCR – centrism. They have a number of positions that we would agree with. For example, on the question of the war, they opposed Nato's bombardments and Milosevic's ethnic cleansing and called for the self-determination of the Kosovars. But they were not prepared to translate that into practical politics.

Worse was to come from the LCR.

During the war, the LCR's Fourth International turned to the United Nations, dominated by imperialism, for a solution to the conflict. At the beginning of April, Catharine Samary, eighth on the LO-LCR list, and the Fourth International's leading expert on ex-Yugoslavia, argued that:

"A multinational force under the control of the UN must guarantee and control the application of such an agreement on the ground: it is a question of really defending the Kosovars and would have a far greater legitimacy in Yugoslavia and on the international arena than the NATO bombardments. Furthermore, the

UN must deal with the whole question of the Balkans with the aim of stabilising the region." (*Rouge* 8.4.99)

In other words, despite its paper support for the arming of the Kosovars, in the "real" world the LCR and its Fourth International were calling for UN intervention. But who controls the UN? The major capitalist powers. Despite its pretence at being some kind of "world parliament", the UN is a mouthpiece for the interests of imperialism. Rather than putting forward a revolutionary perspective of workers' mobilisation, the "Fourth International" put its faith in the armed might of the major capitalist powers!

A month later, Hubert Sandor, a leading member of the Fourth International, clarified the position by emphasising the role of Russia:

"... neither the UN nor the KLA nor a combination of the two are able to protect the Kosovars [...] there is no 'good' solution [...] In the current disastrous situation, a massive and immediate international presence on the ground is the only way of ensuring the return of the Kosovars and their protection. In the conditions of war, this massive and immediate international presence on the ground must be military. The UN or the OSCE (but not Nato, which is politically disqualified) must give an explicit mandate to troops (from a range of countries including Russia) based in Kosovo or on its borders to intervene, if necessary by force of arms (and there will be no need of cruise missiles or heavy bombers), to liquidate any violation of the agreements that end the war."

In other words, the FI wanted a multi-national force, with the participation of the Russians and under UN control, to drive the Serbs from Kosovo and impose "peace". Not much "revolutionary communism" there. Not one word about the workers and peasants acting to defend themselves or the need for workers' action to enable the two communities live in peace in Kosovo.

In short, the LCR advanced a betrayal of the Kosovars under the auspices of the UN as its answer to their oppression. That is a betrayal of Trotskyism.

Ten years of the LRCI

Fifteen years ago four organisations formed the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) with the goal of creating a new democratic centralist international organisation. This goal was finally realised in 1989, 10 years ago this month. *Dave Stockton* tells the story of how our international tendency was built.

AFTER FIVE years of extensive discussions a decision was taken by the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) to found a democratic centralist international tendency. Initially the MRCI comprised of four groups: Workers Power, Britain; the Irish Workers Group; the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, West Germany; and Pouvoir Ouvrier, France.

Ten years ago, at a congress in Coventry, six organisations founded the League for Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). The two organisations, additional to those which founded the MRCI, were Poder Obrero de Peru and the Gruppe Arbeiterstandpunkt. This meeting debated, amended and finally adopted a common programme – *The Trotskyist Manifesto* and elected the bodies for a functioning democratic centralist tendency.

The First Congress took place in the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre and around the time of the first Polish “free elections”. In September Solidarity entered the first non-“communist” headed government since 1945. From November to December the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed like a pack of cards. Clearly one of the decisive turning points of the twentieth century had opened, similar in magnitude to 1914-18 and 1945-48. What would its character be – revolutionary or counter-revolutionary? What sort of extended period, what re-ordering of the world would it lead to?

The LRCI insisted that the years 1989-91 held the potential for political revolution. Unlike the Stalinophile sects we did not regard the expulsion from power of the Stalinist bureaucrats as, per se, the end of the degenerate workers’ states, as an accomplished counter-revolution. But neither did we fail to see the danger, or to appreciate the terrible absence of a revolutionary leadership and the consequent illusions in bourgeois democracy and market relations.

We neither sank into despairing passivity, faced with the downfall of Stalinism, nor were we surprised at the defeats without a serious fight suffered by the workers of Eastern Europe over the next three years. Instead we set to work to understand and to intervene in Russia and Eastern Europe.

In this period LRCI comrades visited Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and Russia. But we were only able to concentrate our resources in then East Germany. Here we established a permanent presence in East Berlin and sold huge numbers of bulletins in the period from the collapse of the wall, through the last DDR elections, to unification in the summer of 1990. The result of united work by Austrian, West German and British comrades was the creation of first an East German section and then its fusion with the Gruppe Arbeitermacht.

In the August of 1991 the revolutionary situation in the Soviet Union came to a head. The coup launched by Yanaev, Pugo and co rapidly collapsed in the face of mass resistance led by Boris Yeltsin. The LRCI immediately took the position of supporting this resistance, two LRCI members were actually in Moscow at the time – but equally opposed Yeltsin’s counter-coup which launched the process of social counter-revolution.

Taking this position led to a serious and prolonged political struggle both within the LRCI and with two of its sympathising organisations the Communist Left of New Zealand and the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (RTT, USA).

The RTT – which had not decided to join the League – simultaneously denounced the League’s position as centrist and asked to join in order to fight this centrism. The LRCI wisely declined this offer. We did, however, invite to the congress the

Communist Left of New Zealand, who were also critical of our position on the Yanaev coup. It soon became clear that within the League the Peruvian and Bolivian sections (the Bolivian sympathisers joined the LRCI prior to its second congress in 1991), under the leadership of José Villa, had taken a sectarian Stalinophile attitude to the Yeltsin-led resistance to the Yanaev coup.

The Second Congress of the League – held in Birmingham in December-January 1991-92 – was undoubtedly a congress of crisis. At the root of this crisis lay sharp disagreements between the two Latin American sections and the sections in Europe over the events in Russia. They, together with the representatives of the CLNZ, renamed Workers Power, sought to persuade the League to admit the RTT and thus maximise the Stalinophile forces within the organisation. The congress voted this proposal down, though when at the end of the congress the WPNZ delegates announced that they wished to join the LRCI a New Zealand section was recognised.

But superimposed on the disputes over Russia was the fact that the delegates from the Peruvian and Bolivian sections, particularly José Villa, were discontented with the functioning of the League, and sought, largely by organisational measures, to magnify their influence within it. This was possible because the first congress of the LRCI created a system of deliberate over-representation of the smaller sections both in terms of votes at congresses and representation on the International Executive Committee (IEC). The reason for this was to increase the political influence of these sections, their experience and the contributions of their leaderships and to diminish that of the British section, which made up nearly three quarters of the entire membership of the LRCI at this time.

At the second congress this over-representation was further increased with the aim of bringing the political differences within the IEC. The sectarian and Stalinophile tendencies represented by Villa were consequently given larger representation on the IEC – from both the Bolivian and Peruvian sections – than was warranted by the level of support that they had in the LRCI as a whole.

Was this wise? Perhaps not in terms of formal democracy for it condemned the LRCI to three years of ceaseless internal struggle. But our approach was to seek to integrate the sections in Latin America into the functioning of the League. We thus put four comrades onto the IEC and invited comrade Villa to become a full-timer and member of the International Secretariat (IS) for a full year before the next congress. In addition members of the international leadership and the sections visited Peru and Bolivia.

But as a whole the second congress was undoubtedly a failure. All the substantive political documents tabled for discussion (Theses on Party Building, International Perspectives, etc.) were either postponed or did not reach a vote. The only concrete results were a document on the tasks for building the League and the election of a new IEC. The subsequent IEC meetings of the League thus had to address a whole series of programmatic and tactical questions over the following three years.

Firstly, the LRCI had to deal with the related questions of perspectives (the character of the new period which resulted from the world historic events of 1989-91), the theoretical analysis of the restoration process clearly underway in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China and of the changes on programme necessary to deal with this.

In February 1992 we produced an Action Programme for the CIS (former USSR) states which was a combined one – including elements of the

anti-bureaucratic revolution and the tasks of opposing and reversing capitalist restoration (i.e. of political and social revolution). We were beginning to recognise that the new situation in the degenerate workers’ states (their transformation into what we designated moribund workers’ states) posed the need for a new programme. Over the next three years we debated and adopted resolutions on the nature of restoration and published a series of articles in *Trotskyist International*. But our work on this was not purely theoretical.

From late 1991 to early 1993 a comrade from the Austrian section was resident in Moscow. Several comrades from the Austrian, French, British and German sections visited Moscow too. Six issues of a small journal in Russian, *Rabochay Vlast*, were produced and sold in large numbers. Discussions with the Russian left – anarchist and “Trotskyist” – took place. We were able to witness at first hand the terrible effects of the neo-liberal shock therapy on the workers and pensioners of Russia but also the political paralysis of the working class and the reactionary bloc of the hard-line Stalinist and fascist elements. In December 1992 a school was held in Moscow on the politics and programme of the LRCI. Unfortunately, we did not win any co-thinkers.

In the years 1992-94, the period of the growing restoration of capitalism in the USSR and eastern Europe, the LRCI carried on with its programmatic work adopting theses on the early stages of party building (July 1992), democratic demands in the political revolution (January 1993) and on the united front (January 1994). In the same period we brought to a successful conclusion a discussion with a group of comrades in the Swedish section of the USFI. In the summer of 1994 these comrades, after a faction struggle in the USFI, joined the LRCI.

At the Third Congress of the LRCI, held near Vienna in July 1994, we faced once again the Stalinophile positions of the Bolivian and Peruvian sections and the majority of the New Zealand section on the events of 1991, and rejected them by a massive majority. The congress represented a step forward for the League, in that we had clearly surmounted many political, organisational and technical problems which stand in the way of a living democratic centralism. But it also revealed a fault line in the organisation between Trotskyism and Stalinophilia. Congress had rejected the politics of Villa, but that was not the end of the story.

The period following the Third Congress saw splits and losses of members in Austria – where the majority of the builders of the section’s youth organisation were lost. One year later saw the loss of the Bolivian section (the Peruvian section had collapsed before this), an unpolitical walkout by the demoralised José Villa and half the New Zealand section. These were serious, if not unexpected, losses to be compounded over the next three years by the resignation or retirement of a number of older comrades.

These losses were in part offset by the remarkable growth of our French section, recruiting young comrades and becoming the second strongest section, and by the foundation of the Australian section and its growth. At the same time we entered into an organised series of discussions with an important leftward-moving Trotskyist organisation in Argentina, the PTS (which with its other Latin American co-thinkers formed the Trotskyist Fraction).

But how do we explain the serious losses in this period? Certainly, in the case of Villa and the leader of the New Zealand section there were long term differences of method – broadly summed up as a sectarian Stalinophilia which we had been unable to break them from. With the young Aus-

trian comrades there was a distinct passive propagandist method that sought refuge and justification in a pessimistic perspective. But for many of these comrades and for others who had no political differences, there was undoubtedly the long-term demoralising effect of the defeats suffered by the working class.

What the Third Congress characterised as a counter-revolutionary phase (1990-91 onwards) was clear enough in the degenerate workers’ states, in the shift to the right of the entire world labour movement including the centrist “Trotskyists”, and the pitifully low level of the class struggle in many countries where it had been high in the 1970s and 1980s. In an important sense these were objectively “dog days”, to use Cannon’s expression.

It was these problems that our Fourth Congress in summer 1997, set out to overcome. We looked at the temporary revival of militant class struggle in Europe in 1995-96 in Italy, France and Germany. We welcomed to the congress three representatives of the PTS-FT, though we were unable to agree to a their proposed draft joint statement calling for an open Liaison Committee. We also welcomed to the congress three delegates of the Marxist Left of Sweden who were to go on to fuse with our Swedish section in late 1998. We drew from an analysis of the world situation the conclusion that the counter-revolutionary phase was coming to an end, marked also by the election of social democratic governments across Europe.

After considerable debate the Congress also adopted a perspective of turning to youth and building in the three largest European sections, France, Britain and Austria, organisationally autonomous youth organisations – all with publications called *Revolution*.

Our work since this congress has centred on this youth work – including a highly successful international youth camp in France, international contingents on the Euromarches in Amsterdam in 1997 and in Cologne this year. Less successful have been the discussions with the PTS, and in France with two groupings on the fringes of Lutte Ouvrière.

Our fifth congress next year will have to draw a balance sheet of all this work and develop new tactics for growth. But one thing is certain. Democratic centralism works! It is the only way to develop a rounded programme and an internationalist cadre. International “discussion forums” and “post-restantes” that are going nowhere will play no role in creating the basis for the new Revolutionary Communist International that the working class must build in the twenty first Century.

The LRCI has passed the test of the end of the century’s historic turning point. It has a programme adapted to the new period of wars and revolutions that lies ahead. We will, in the coming decade, win hundreds of young fighters to our banner. Nor do we abandon the perspective of fusing with organisations which have followed a similar course to our own.

We have advanced and developed our programme and theory, expanded our range of publications and grown as an international tendency, all during a period when left papers and groups closed down and open season on ditching Trotskyism was declared by many centrists. We accumulated a cadre increasingly steered in internationalism as a day-to-day practice and not just as a pious sentiment. And, albeit in a very small way, we began to make our mark – as an identifiable international tendency – inside the international workers’ movement.

The ten years’ work of the LRCI represents a basis for real advance, an achievement of which every LRCI member can be proud.

WHERE WE STAND

CAPITALISM is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

THE TRADE UNIONS must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

OCTOBER 1917: The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

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.

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!

As Labour MPs vote to implement the Immigration and Asylum Bill, we say

Smash this racist law

NEW LABOUR'S racist Immigration and Asylum Bill went to its third reading in the Commons by a majority vote of 310 to 41. The most draconian piece of anti-immigrant legislation since the Second World War now looks set to be in force by November 1999.

A widely predicted Commons revolt by Labour backbenchers never materialised. Only seven Labour MPs voted against the bill after Home Secretary Jack Straw conceded a few token amendments in a piece of legislation with 138 separate clauses, 14 schedules and 50 separate rule-making powers.

After allowing only one Kosovar refugee into Britain during the first month of Nato's bombing of the former Yugoslavia, an embarrassed Labour government relented and staged several airlifts of refugees from the camps. On 15 June, Jack Straw announced that the airlifts would cease from the following week, but that some 10,000 Kosovar refugees who had arrived before the start of the Nato offensive would receive "exceptional leave to remain" in the UK for 12 months.

During this year they will be entitled to claim the full range of basic social welfare benefits. Many of them will no doubt continue to enjoy the "privilege" of living in disused inner London schools (see box).

Meanwhile, the committee hearings around the Immigration and Asylum Bill revealed that there had been no real change in New Labour's stance towards asylum seekers. The Government is absolutely determined to send out a clear message: "refugees are not welcome here".

Mike O'Brien, the minister charged with steering the legislation through the Commons, told fellow MPs that, "our obligations under the [1951] Geneva Convention do not require us to facilitate the arrival of asylum seekers". This is the same O'Brien who declared last autumn in his justification of the deportation of Kosovars that "there is no distinct nationality of Kosovan, those claiming to be Kosovan are usually to be found among nationals of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."

Much of the criticism in the Com-

mons committee focused on the proposed regime of "support-in-kind", a system where asylum seekers are denied cash and have no choice whatsoever as to where they stay while awaiting a ruling on their applications for refugee status. O'Brien casually explained that items such as wedding rings would probably enter into determining the eligibility criteria for any state support.

In a 9 June statement to the media Jack Straw boasted about the government's wide consultation process around the legislation before proudly announcing that it recognised "the concerns that have been expressed about the need for increased flexibility in relation to [asylum-seeking] families with children." This recognition translated into a 40 per cent increase in the weekly cash allowance for each adult and child to the princely sum of £10!

But at the same time, "there will be a consequent reduction in the provision of vouchers" for food and other essentials. This "concession" persuaded around 80 Labour MPs, who had threatened to defy the Government, to fall into line or absent themselves at the time of the June vote.

The bill's essential thrust remains: to stigmatise and ghettoise all asylum seekers. The passage and implementation of the legislation will mean that asylum applicants will be barred from access to either community health or social services support, whether for children, the elderly or people with mental health problems.

This new restriction will apply not only to asylum seekers but to anyone subject to immigration control. Non-EU nationals who do not have permanent residence in the UK will no longer be entitled to call on such services as meals-on-wheels, day centres, occupational therapy or residential care.

A leading immigration lawyer described the bill as "profoundly destructive of civil liberties, hugely increasing surveillance, monitoring and compulsion, removing safeguards, destroying dignity and damaging rights to privacy, to family and private life in the name of deterrence." Above all, however, the bill is racist, yet only one Labour MP (John McDonnell) branded it such in

the June debate.

For all its anti-racist rhetoric in the wake of the publication of the Macpherson report and its supposed concern with human rights amid the bombardment of the Balkans, the government is thoroughly committed to enforcing a punitive and degrading regime of internal immigration controls that panders to the populist racism that the editors of rags such as the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* stoke up.

Opposition to this bill has been weak and fragmented, focused on especially vile clauses rather than the racist premise of the legislation itself. To date there has been only one national demonstration against the proposals and

that took place in February.

In the weeks and months ahead anti-racist campaigners and refugee campaign organisations urgently need to forge links with committed activists in Unison and other unions that have adopted policies opposing the bill as a whole. The aim must be to translate paper resolutions into action:

- a national demonstration against Straw's racist law
- maximum non-co-operation, including industrial action, by Unison and PTC members
- force the repeal of the 1996 Act - restore the right to claim benefits to all asylum seekers
- scrap all immigration controls.

LIFE AS A REFUGEE IN LONDON

Labour-controlled Camden Council provides a basic level of support to some 600 unaccompanied adult asylum seekers and 300 families under the National Assistance Act (1948) and Children Act (1989). The local authority took responsibility for the provision of housing and food vouchers under an October 1996 High Court ruling in the wake of the Tories' last piece of racist immigration legislation.

Most of these clients live in cramped, sometimes infested bed and breakfast hotels, hostels run by private contractors or annexe-type accommodation in other boroughs. New single claimants will almost invariably be shipped outside of London to Derby, Liverpool or even mid-Wales.

But there are other asylum seekers in Camden whose claims predate summer 1996 who still await either initial judgements or rulings on their appeals. In response to an acute shortage of bed and breakfast accommodation in autumn 1998, Camden officials reopened a recently closed secondary school on an emergency basis to house port of entry asylum seekers who were not entitled to support from the Council's Social Services Department.

The school was only supposed to be in use until the end of 1998. The average length of stay was due to be no more than three weeks. Nearly a year later the school continues to house asylum seekers, with more than 100 residents on any given day. The average length of stay now exceeds 11 weeks, with one family having spent 28 weeks in the school.

The Council says that it has so far spent £160,000 on upgrading living conditions, but an inspection by Unison health and safety officers identified serious concerns, and Camden's own environmental health officers have indicated that they would have intervened far sooner if they had known that the school would still be functioning as accommodation in the summer of 1999.

This is an extreme, but not unique, example of the reality that awaits refugees in Blair's Britain.

FEEDBACK

Contact us on 0181 981 0602

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Mail to: Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Tel: 0181 981 0602
Fax: 0181 981 0475
Email: paper@workerspower.com

Print: Newsfax International
Production: Workers Power (labour donated)

ISSN 0263-1121

FUND DRIVE

Workers Power is helping REVOLUTION organise its international summer camp in July. The camp will bring together young people from all over Europe to discuss important issues of the day. However transport, buying food and renting accommodation costs money. Send cheques (payable to Workers Power) to the address left...now.

SUBSCRIBE

Please send Workers Power direct to my door each month. I enclose:

- £9.00 UK
- £12.00 Europe
- £18.00 Rest of the world

Name: _____
Address: _____

Postcode: _____

JOIN US!

- I would like to join the Workers Power group
- Please send more details about Workers Power

Name: _____
Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel no: _____