

Workers power

INSIDE

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- Irish Workers' Group on the crisis in Ireland
- Fighting racism and fascism

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STALINISM COLLAPSES

For workers' revolution

"AS SOON as we sat down I realised something was strange with Pavlov's condition. He was drunk. He leaned forward on one elbow and looked around the table and said: 'Well, chaps, what should we do now?'"

That is how the chairman of the Soviet central bank described the Soviet prime minister during the cabinet meeting which launched the 19 August coup.

Nothing could better demonstrate the utter bankruptcy of the Stalinist bureaucrats who have run the USSR since the 1920s.

Dictatorship

But we are not witnessing the death of communism. The events in the Soviet Union mark the death of a Stalinist dictatorship which was erected over the corpses of millions of real communists and working class fighters.

The Stalinist system is dying, and the majority of its former rulers are leaping like rats from its rotting hulk. The rule of the bureaucrats, established in the 1920s, long ago strangled the only force that could have made the Soviet economy work to meet the needs of millions. Only workers' democracy could make the centrally planned and collectively owned economy work. Without that democracy the Stalinist system was doomed to stagnation, doomed to collapse back

into capitalism.

In the aftermath of the failed coup power has fallen into the hands of the section of former bureaucrats who openly want to put the USSR on the fast track to capitalism. Yeltsin and his followers idolise Major, Bush and Helmut Kohl. They are hailed in the west as the "democratic" opposition to Stalinist tyranny.

They are no more "democratic" than the coup-makers were "socialist". Yeltsin in Russia and the pro-capitalist bureaucrats of the rest of the USSR's republics are solidifying their control over the state machine, which once repressed the workers in the name of socialism, in order to use it for their own project of a sharp and painful introduction of the capitalist market.

Brink

And they will need it. The Soviet economy stands on the brink of collapse, threatening mass starvation and unemployment. No matter how disorganised the Soviet workers are at the moment, they will not starve in silence.

Yeltsin's seizure of power, depicted as a second "revolu-



tion" in the western media, is nothing more than a pro-capitalist counter-coup. With the Stalinist system in its death throes and the working class disorganised, Yeltsin has "found the crown lying in the gutter".

This opens up an enormous opportunity for capitalism. If imperialism should prove to have developed a sufficient unity of purpose and economic strength to assemble an aid package on the scale of the Marshall Plan after 1945 it has the chance of defeating any workers' resistance to the re-introduction of the market. The most developed parts

of the Stalinist system will be incorporated into the European and Japanese economies, while the rest, the vast majority, will be relegated to third world status, facing poverty, backwardness and hunger.

Inglorious

No one should mourn Stalinism's inglorious death. It was a system doomed in the historic short term. Not even a successful and bloody coup could have saved it in the long run.

But no one should be jumping for joy at the rise to power of a Thatcherite, Russian chauvinist who is even now consolidating the apparatus of his rule, issuing decrees, ordering political bans and grooming the secret police for the task of smoothing the path to capitalism in Russia.

The crisis which has gripped the USSR, which exploded into the tragi-comic coup attempt in August, has not gone away. It will present further opportunities for the workers and youth to settle accounts with both the Stalinist bureaucrats and Thatcher-lovers who are the leading force in Yeltsin's movement.

But, as our eyewitness account (page 9) shows, the

anti-Stalinist socialist opposition remains weak and disorganised.

The vital task for anybody still prepared to call themselves a Marxist, socialist, or communist in the face of the ideological onslaught of the bosses' press, is to carry on the real socialist fight against both capitalism and Stalinism.

This means defending what is left of the social gains ushered in by the October Revolution 1917 and standing by the legacy of Lenin and Trotsky's revolution. At the same time it means being the most resolute fighters for the real democratic rights of the masses, even where the masses have illusions in the form of the parliamentary "democracy" used to con us in the west into endorsing the rule of the profiteers.

Tradition

Above all it means rebuilding the socialist tradition, east and west, the tradition that is not ashamed to call itself revolutionary communist, because it has opposed the Stalinist travesty of communism for over sixty years. It means building a revolutionary working class party in the USSR.

That is what the Trotskyists of Workers Power are fighting for, along with our comrades in the LRCI. Join us. ■

Build a Trotskyist party!

JOHAN MAJOR'S Citizens' Charter is a blatant piece of electioneering designed to win back the Tories' middle class supporters. Taxpayers are footing an £8 million bill for the launch of this election propaganda!

Behind the razzmatazz there is a serious threat to public services and to workers' organisations. The Charter is a cynical attempt to pit working class and middle class consumers against the workers who provide public services. It is part of the Tories' strategy of cutting public services, undermining the resistance of the public sector unions and boosting the private sector.

The Citizens' Charter White Paper covers the public sector and the privatised utilities. Under the banner of "individual rights", it will encourage consumers to blame the workers within services for the deficiencies of those services. The decision-making top managers and the government which keeps the services starved of funds will be taken out of the firing line.

Scapegoat

For instance, the compulsory use of name-tags will encourage the consumer to identify the grossly inadequate service provided by British Rail with the individual ticket inspector. The inspector will become the scapegoat for the years of Tory (and Labour) cuts which have left British Rail the most underfunded railway in Europe.

The Tories want to win over "public opinion" to supporting cost cutting measures and privatisation. They aim to do this by making services "accountable"—publishing exam results, hospital waiting lists and other such "performance" details.

The only solutions available will be those approved by the Tories—cutting workers' wages, conditions and jobs and speeding up the process of privatisation, as in the case of British Rail, or the further introduction of "market forces" in areas

Major's Charter



BY JEREMY DEWAR

such as health and education.

When hospitals have to publish waiting times for operations and appointments the pressure will be on them, if they are not to lose income, to "buy in" services from different hospitals. Because other NHS hospitals will be squeezed the services bought in will increasingly come from the private sector or from Trust hospitals.

The NHS will be undermined through this creeping growth of the private and Trust sector. Every corner will be cut in ancillary care. Compulsory competitive tendering

is to be introduced into more areas of the health service such as distribution.

Education authorities will be obliged to publish the exam and test results and absentee levels of all schools. Naturally these will show that middle class schools with plenty of resources produce the best results! Under the Tory maxim of "to him who hath", this will mean more pupils and resources go to those schools, particularly the centrally funded "grant maintained"

schools. Less well provided for schools will be under even greater pressure to make cuts in staff and resources. A spiral of decline will be set in motion.

Similar league tables for local government services are designed to force councils to turn to the cowboy refuse collection and cleaning firms who cut corners and undercut union wage rates. The Charter will further undermine local democracy.

Those who find themselves at the bottom of the league table will be legally denied the right to pro-

vide certain services, even if they were elected on a no-cuts manifesto. Central government will take on those services against the voters' wishes.

Council tenants will be able to apply directly to central government to get their estate taken out of council control and into a Housing Action Trust. Given the rise in racist attacks on some estates, this "right" could well be used to circumvent anti-racist policies in housing. In any event it will strike a further blow to council house provision and means the threat of homelessness will loom large for yet more working class families.

Profits

The privatised utilities (gas, water, telecommunications and electricity) are left virtually untouched. Having handed over these services to their big business friends the Tories are determined to ensure that they do not face the same restrictions planned for what's left of the public sector. The right to make obscene profits and pay their top executives six figure wages is to be protected. The right of a Labour council to offer some meagre element of equal opportunity to the oppressed sections of society is to be hounded out of existence. That is Citizen Major's list of priorities.

We are not against opening up to workers' inspection all the hidden operations of public services. Of course it is in the interests of workers to know when a hip replacement operation can take place and how much it really costs. We need to know all details of expenditure so that adequate resources can be provided and so that services can be rationally planned to meet society's needs.

This can never be achieved by some arbitrary consumers' "right to know". Under capitalism this right will always be subordinated to the bosses' right to extract maximum profit. Working class consumers must fight for the right not just to know what resources are available, but also to redistribute all of society's resources in a democratic plan designed to fulfil their needs.

This can only be achieved in an alliance with the workers who provide those services because they are the ones with first hand knowledge of how years of underfunding have undermined the public sector and where resources are needed. The Tories intend to prevent such an alliance being formed. Part of the Charter allows consumers to take the unions to court for taking illegal industrial action which affects the provision of services!

Performance

The Charter also explicitly calls for the breaking up of public sector national pay bargaining and the linking of pay to performance via increased bonuses at the expense of basic pay rates and jobs. The Charter will not only set workers against each other as consumers versus providers of services but also, through the bonus system, against each other within the services.

Labour and their TUC backers have only minor quibbles with the Tories. Labour's record in opposition and in local government shows they will continue the attack on services. Our alternative must be built through action and by workers in the services explaining the real situation and appealing to fellow workers to join them. All services and jobs, conditions and wage levels must be defended and extended. All privatisations on the rail, London buses and in local government must be fought through strike action. We must resist the Tory vandals and the Charter which legitimises their vandalism. ■

Free Sara Thornton

SARA THORNTON ended her twenty day hunger strike at the request of her daughter. Now she remains in jail, serving a mandatory life sentence for murder. She killed her violent and alcoholic husband.

Her courageous stand in prison has highlighted the unjust and inhuman way that the British state metes out punishment to women who are driven to violence against those men, often husbands, sometimes fathers, who systematically and cruelly abuse them.

Sara was protesting against the refusal by the state to have her murder conviction changed to manslaughter while only two days after her appeal was rejected Joseph McGrail was charged with manslaughter, and then freed for kicking to death his "nagging", alcoholic common-law wife.

Victim

Clearly Sara herself is the victim of two crimes: the continued abuse against her by her husband, and the life sentence given to her for refusing to submit to and tolerate his cruelty. She should be freed immediately.

Another case, currently under appeal, is that of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who set fire to her home with the husband who battered and abused her, emotionally and sexually, still in it.

These cases illustrate how the law treats men and women differently—dismissing the experiences of women who have been subjected

BY LYNNE BUCHANAN

to abuse. Nor are these cases isolated incidents—according to the Criminal Prosecution Service around fifteen women a year kill their male partners, and five times that many men kill their female partners.

Whilst almost half of these women get convicted of murders, only 25% of men do so. Men frequently get off with light sentences pleading "provocation". They plead that they killed in a blind rage. Women usually get the worst of such confrontations and it is not surprising that the majority of women who are driven to kill their husbands do so in a "premeditated" fashion. To do otherwise would mean that they would risk being killed or battered themselves.

Sara Thornton is not arguing that her's was the right way of dealing with domestic violence and oppression. Nor is our demand to free her an advocacy of murder as the means to end domestic violence. But given the lack of defence for women and their grossly subordinate position in the home we must defend women like her.

Her case is a graphic example of many less sensational cases of (quite literally) "everyday" domestic violence against women.

It is estimated that 20% of families suffer some degree of violence and 25% of all violent incidents reported to the police are domestic. Many more cases go unreported either through fear or because of women's previous unsatisfactory dealings with police. Approximately 60% of female murder victims were killed

by their husbands or male lovers and 70% of wives who petition for divorce have suffered "serious brutality". In some semi-colonial countries battery accounts for 70-80% of all reported cases.

What then is the cause of this appalling level of violence against women?

Oppression

It is not due to the inherent nature of men as many radical feminists like to argue. It is rooted in the material conditions of the family in class society and the integral part the family plays in women's oppression.

Capitalism makes the family the centre of women's lives so that labour power can be reproduced and nurtured at minimum cost. Women are unpaid domestic labourers. If the bosses had to provide the services that women currently provide for free—cooking, shopping, cleaning, the raising of children etc—then this would clearly mean a large chunk out of their profits. This is why capitalism requires women's oppression and their entrapment in the home.

The family is also the means by which capitalism transmits its reactionary ideology to the working class—teaching youth to be obedient to adults, women to be subordinate to, and the property of, men.

The miserable reality of family life for millions is in complete contradiction to the idealistic myths expounded by the ruling class. The frustrations of everyday life are fre-

quently taken out on those most vulnerable—young people and women.

Tory policies are making it increasingly difficult for women and their children suffering from violence to escape. The depletion of council housing stocks makes it virtually impossible to get rehoused and women are often told to go home as they have made themselves "intentionally homeless". Women's refuges provide a temporary respite for a minority of women but they have been cut back from 400 in 1979 to under 200 now.

The other major factor forcing women to stay is economic dependency—a woman looking after dependants and a home may have little or no money of her own. Changes in social security law have replaced emergency grants with "Community Care Grants" to which there is no automatic entitlement and which are governed by each local office deciding its own priorities on the basis of a now fixed budget. In practice this means that women are lucky to get a loan—making them already heavily in debt before they even start to set up a new home.

Punished

Sara Thornton has been punished because, in her own words, "I'm not a pathetic figure of a woman . . . because I take responsibility for my life, because I dare to fight".

Sara's case highlights not only a need for changes in the law but how much we need a movement to fight back—a fighting, working class women's movement that can link up women in the workplaces and the communities, fight for women's rights in the labour movement, build support for women's self-defence and ultimately to bring women into the struggle for socialism. ■

KINNOCK'S RULE in the Labour Party is taking a heavy toll on the party's individual membership. Despite setting a recruitment target of one million, despite an expensive advertising campaign and despite making credit card entry into the party possible, there are now reported to be only 330,000 members.

This decline, in a pre-election period, has severely depleted the old campaigning base of the Labour Party. Up and down the country, members who have played an active role in the constituency left of the 1970s and 1980s are discontented and disoriented by Kinnock's right wing politics and by his hostility to any activities that smack of "socialism".

Many members are dropping out altogether and a significant minority tearing up their party cards in disgust. Hundreds of socialists are suspended from the party following the Walton by-election and are facing expulsion once Kinnock's kangaroo-court, the NCC, clears the backlog of cases awaiting hearing. In Liverpool alone six wards are suspended.

The most dramatic example of rank and file disaffection has been the establishment of the Liverpool Independent Labour Party, which claims 13 councillors and 500 members. It is even aiming to challenge Labour at the general election. It is made up of former party members and Broad Left supporters appalled at the record of the right wing Labour council in Liverpool.

Kinnock's right wing policies on the Poll Tax, the war and the Tory union laws—and the brazen crawling of the front bench to the City institutions—may meet with the approval of the bosses and even with sections of the electorate. But they have hardly proved attractive to new layers of youth and rank and file activists. This suits Kinnock down to the ground.

The leadership's opposition to any form of mass campaigning has prevented the party's active base from being replenished, and with individual membership being organised through Walworth Road, the link has been weakened between individual members and the Constituency parties, the traditional base of the left. Many ward meetings are inquorate. The patent bureaucratism of the Kinnock clique has understandably led many longstanding members to despair of any possibility of either changing the party or getting the party to change society.

Exodus

The exodus of left wingers from the Labour Party is large enough to force *Militant* to acknowledge it. Their belief that workers would flood into the party is being contradicted by events. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has scented the possibility of winning large numbers of former Labour activists and has issued an open letter encouraging them to leave and construct a "socialist alternative".

After correctly refusing to back down in the face of the leadership and putting forward Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election, *Militant* (30 August) now feels that it has burnt its fingers. It is opposing the formation of the Liverpool Independent Labour Party. Tony Mulhearn, Chair of the Liverpool Broad Left, has denounced the project as "a recipe for division". The reason for *Militant* opposing what many would have justifiably regarded as the logical consequence of their position in Walton is, the paper says, that the party, "will still be transformed in the years to come as workers move to reclaim it from the grip of the right who temporarily have the party in their grasp".

So, although membership is in de-

Fight Kinnock's witch hunt!

THIS MONTH at the Socialists for Labour conference in Sheffield on 7 September and the forthcoming National Meeting of the Campaign against the Witch-Hunt in Manchester on 21 September, the Labour left has the chance to rally resistance to Kinnock. If the right programme and tactics are adopted at these meetings then a force could be organised to openly take on Kinnock at the Party Conference which begins on 29 September.

The extreme sensitivity of the leadership to the needs of British capital is matched only by the savagery of its assault on socialists within the party. Terry Fields, the MP for Liverpool Broadgreen has faced a vile campaign from Walworth Road even as the courts

made an example of him by locking him up for Poll Tax non-payment. In Coventry, Dave Nellist is also under attack. The local Labour movement rallied to his support and will make an attack on him very difficult for Kinnock to win.

At every turn the Kinnock clique is posing the question to the left point blank: accept our violations of inner party democracy or face expulsion. The former course means abandoning effective socialist politics, and looking on helplessly as

ever more individuals resign in despair. Far better to organise defiance in the face of the expulsions the leaders will order. Far better an intransigent fight for the interests of the working class, outside the party if necessary. ■

Move this resolution and support it at the coming conferences:

1. This conference opposes:
 - a) the current wave of investigations, suspensions and expulsions by the party leadership of hundreds of socialists, mainly charged with supporting or campaigning for Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election.
 - b) the refusal of the party leadership to recognise candidates democratically selected by local parties and the imposition by Walworth Road of so-called "official" candidates.
2. This conference resolves:
 - a) To fight for wards and CLPs to defy any instruction to withdraw selected candidates, and to campaign for

the election of the democratically elected candidate against "official" candidates where necessary.

- b) To fight for wards and CLPs to continue to treat expelled comrades as members and afford them full rights of membership even in the face of threats of disaffiliation or expulsion.
- c) To call for and build a democratic delegate-based conference open to all those party members and organisations prepared to fight Kinnock to the end, all those socialists who have been expelled from the party and all those currently prevented through suspensions from participating in the life of the party, including the Liverpool Independent Labour Party, with the aim of organising the left to fight Kinnock inside and outside the party.

Labour left in crisis



Build a revolutionary tendency!

SWP, being outside the Labour Party became a point of principle in the 1970s and 1980s. Marxists do not reject any tactic that takes the class struggle forward, and clearly, intervening in a party based on the mass organisations of the working class can take the struggle forward in certain circumstances.

The real point of principle for revolutionaries is that when you do work in the Labour Party you do so on a revolutionary basis. The SWP do not know how to do this and end up fearful that the contamination of their members, unprotected by a real revolutionary programme, with reformist ideas would lead them into becoming reformists. And this explains their current mistakes.

Tactic

The SWP have at no stage advanced a strategy for the left to fight Kinnock—apart from leaving his party. Whilst *Workers Power* has long fought for the Labour left to adopt the tactic eventually used at Walton, and unlike *Militant* has not flinched from the consequences, the SWP were silent until presented with the accomplished fact.

Now they have circulated an Open

Letter calling on all those disgusted with Kinnock to build an unspecified "socialist alternative—outside the Labour Party". The only defining feature of this "alternative" is that it would be organisationally independent of Labour. The "genuine democratic socialism" to which the letter refers could mean anything from a Bennite reformist utopia to a Leninist proletarian dictatorship.

Vague

Whilst *Militant's* opportunism towards Labour ("stay in at all costs and avoid building a separate party") has led them to sectarian conclusions (denouncing Liverpool Independent Labour Party as splitters), the SWP's sectarianism ("leave at all costs") has led them to opportunist conclusions (advocating an alternative on a deliberately vague political basis).

Left wing party activists need neither to cling to Labour forever nor to abandon it one by one. They should fight to try and inflict as much damage on the right wing leaders as is possible. Many workers will say to us that if we do wage such a fight we will damage Labour's chances of winning the next election. Our answer to this

is that if the price of "unity" is sitting back and allowing Kinnock to prepare an anti-working class government that is pledged to attacking our wages, our union rights, our services and our jobs then it is not worth paying.

We need to struggle collectively against Kinnock, defying the discipline of the party when, as is increasingly the case, the bureaucrats give us no alternative other than to renounce our principles.

In recognising the necessity of an organisational break with Labour, we should at the same time reject the notion of founding yet another reformist party.

Workers Power calls on all those individuals and local party organisations revolted by the betrayals of the leadership to join with us in the fight for a conference of all members prepared to carry the struggle against Kinnock through to the end—a democratic conference able to decide on a programme and tactics for a new tendency, truly representative of the working class.

This will mean committing such a tendency to consistently revolutionary politics, and to the construction of a fighting party that can put those politics into practice, independent of Labour. ■

A warning to the left

NOBODY CAN accuse us of being alarmist about the rise of fascism after the events in South London on 24 August when the fascist British National Party (BNP) staged a successful counter mobilisation to an anti-racist march.

The march against racist attacks in the borough of Southwark was led by the Southwark Black Communities Consortium (SBCC). But the march was badly built for.

The black nationalist leadership of the SBCC, which is linked to the National Black Caucus (NBC), simply called a march and organised a route through the Bermondsey area. This is a predominantly white part of the borough where the fascists have been active on the estates.

Challenging the racists on their own turf is vital. But it demands a lot of work. It means trying to win over workers in the communities where the fascists are active. It means trying to weaken the fascists' base through systematic campaigning, up to and including, confronting their activities with the necessary force.

None of this preparation was done. Worse, the SBCC and NBC act as self-appointed leaders of the black community, believing that when they issue a call the communities will respond. The bitter truth is that the bulk of Southwark's black community refused to respond to the call. The march was small, about 300 to 400 strong at its peak.

Advantage

The BNP in contrast was able to take advantage of its preparatory work. The hard core of about 150 to 200 fascists on the counter-demonstration were able to rally hundreds of whites, including many local youth. With superior numbers they were able to harass and attack the anti-racist demonstration, forcing the anti-racists to retreat.

No wonder deputy führer John Edmunds hailed the BNP's action as a big success. It was. After years of suffering reverses and splits this was an important victory for the fascists. It comes after their election campaign in the borough and it signals an increase in their involvement in the South London area.

Many of the local white youth will swallow the fascists' filthy racist scapegoating message and be impressed by their willingness to forcefully take the streets for the simple reason that neither the labour council, nor the labour movement, have one thing to offset the unemployment, bad housing and the lack of facilities in the area. The Labour council and labour movement are allowing the area to become a breeding ground for the fascists amongst the white youth.

The threat posed by the fascists is clear for anyone with eyes to see. Yet the Militant chose to ignore the whole episode. The SWP, who had a handful of their local members present, admit it was "a minor victory" for the fascists. It was minor, they tell us, because most of the people in Bermondsey aren't really racist. If we go in and simply link the issue of racism "into a whole host of other attacks on working class families, like the poll tax for example" then all will be well because "black and white will unite and fight".

Alternative

The alternative the SWP offer is an Open Letter that deplores the politics and activities of the BNP. Well and good, but waving an open letter at the well organised fascist squad that attacked the anti-racist march is not going to achieve a great deal.

The fascists have to be systematically organised against, they have to be physically confronted, their ideas have to be challenged, they have to be isolated and driven off the estates. It is an urgent priority that the campaign in the labour move-

BNP victory

ment to win it to such a perspective.

Yet this is precisely what the SWP will not do. Because they are fixed to the ludicrous perspective that fascism is not a threat and racism is on the wane, they actually oppose the building of a workers' united front to smash fascism.

How else are we to interpret their refusal to participate in the Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) campaign in Southwark against the BNP? How else are we to interpret their refusal at Thamesmead in May to directly confront the BNP march? The SWP's daft perspective is leading it either into abstentionism or into downplaying the problem and not allocating any forces to anti-fascist activity.

Passivity

And this passivity by the left, and the labour movement at large, is encouraging the fascists—who are attacking paper sellers, carrying out firebombings and breaking up meetings with increasing regularity.

But the answer coming from SBCC and the NBC is no alternative to the SWP. In the face of increased racist attacks—there were 42 reported attacks in Southwark in the first six months of this year, compared to 58 in the whole of 1990 (though of course the reported attacks are only the tip of the iceberg)—the SBCC/NBC are offering a mixture of paternalist reformism and black separatism.

Lee Jasper, a spokesperson for both the SBCC and NBC, said the BNP's rampage had given "a true indication of the scale of the problem in Bermondsey". His response is to collaborate with the job and service cutting council and the perpetrators of racist harassment, the police:

"I am now willing to work extremely hard with the police and the local authority to make sure black families are not living in fear."

This is a disastrous response to the growth of the fascists. The police and sections of the local council have suggested a ban on future anti-racist marches in the area. The Southwark police have a well deserved racist reputation. Council leader Sally Keeble drew up an anti-fascist charter as an alternative to direct action. To turn to these elements is to turn away from the only actor that can defeat the fascists.

Collaboration

Jasper combines this perspective of collaboration with a black separatist solution to housing and employment problems. He attacks what he calls "a great experiment of integrationism" and argues:

"The only way to combat [racism] is to have support provision run by and organised by the black people, like the Jewish people have."

Not only is such separate economic development a utopia under capitalism, it is reactionary. We need revolutionary integrationism, not separatism. We must not make the mistake of turning our backs on the white working class areas of the deprived inner cities, leaving them prey to the fascists. We must force the labour movement to take the fight against racism and fascism into those areas.

The failure to do this before the march in Bermondsey handed the fascists a victory. The belief that it is now too late, that we have to abandon the white working class because they are all irredeemably racist would be a criminal betrayal which would immeasurably strengthen the fascists.

Despite their victory on 24 August the fascists should be wary of celebrating too much. Anti-Fascist Action is committed to the perspective

of forcing the labour movement to take the fight to the fascists. It is committed to mobilising the working class, black and white, to direct action against the fascists. It has a good record of inflicting damage to the fascists' morale whenever they march or meet. In Southwark AFA will step up its fight against fascism. It is high time that the other organisations of the left and labour movement joined it in this struggle. ■

Fascism is a serious threat in parts of the country. Yet, the major organisations of the British left—the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Militant—refuse to face up to this fact. Mark Harrison explains the significance of the British National Party's attack on an anti-racist march and looks at the wrong responses to it that are prevalent on the left.



It will take more than an "Open Letter" to drive these scum off our streets!

Southwark

How to fight the fascists

IN THE month before the BNP's success in attacking the 24 August march they stood a candidate in the Brunswick ward by-election in Southwark. This was part of their planned expansion into the South East London area.

The BNP had already built a base to work from in Thamesmead where the racist murder of two black youth prompted them to move in and peddle their "Rights for Whites" poison. In the by-election the BNP got 132 votes compared with 775 for Labour and 135 for the Tories. In other words, the BNP, starting from scratch, came within four votes of beating the Tories into fourth place.

Workers Power and AFA, to which we are affiliated, recognised the danger of the BNP's campaign and argued for a broad labour movement campaign to counter it. At the beginning of July AFA set in motion a leafletting campaign on the estates in the ward. We met with a good response, especially from black youth, who were keen to help us confront the fascists and to keep us informed about their movements in the area.

We recognised early on that it was important to draw in forces beyond AFA to help counter the BNP. On 2 July a letter was circulated to the left and the labour movement convening a meeting to "set up an organising committee to co-ordinate activities against the BNP in the coming weeks". This action was correct. Not only did it demonstrate AFA's non-sectarian commitment to carrying out anti-fascist work, it was also an important means of mobilising the local labour movement.

At the meeting itself there were representatives of Workers Power, Red Action, the Direct Action Movement (all AFA affiliates), *Socialist Organiser*, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and of a number of local trade unions and Labour Parties. Plans were set in motion for a number of workplace meetings, further leaf-letting and a labour movement rally on the main estate in the ward.

Supporters of *Socialist Organiser*, to their credit, honoured the agreements made at this meeting and helped to build the rally which was called under the title "Say no to Fascism".

But the SWP, CPGB and the rest of the left in Southwark opted out of the united front. The SWP in particular displayed a thoroughly sectarian attitude, calling their own march on the estate on the day of the election. Their infantile behaviour was rewarded when only twenty people—all their own members—responded to their call.

AFA, on the other hand, together with Southwark Nalgo, organised a 100-strong rally on the estate. This was followed up by an AFA public meeting on the Monday preceding the election which over 150 people attended. Out of this meeting a mobilisation for the election night was organised and around 200 people demonstrated outside the Town Hall as the count was made and the result announced. Only a massive police presence, including riot police and plainclothes detectives, protected the fascists from the anger of the demonstrators.

As a result of this campaign AFA grew from a small group of individuals into a local campaign with affiliations from two local trades councils and a number of individual trade union branches. Its activist base was swelled, and on the ill-fated 24 August march AFA had one of the largest contingents.

The lessons of all this are clear. AFA remains the most determined and militant anti-fascist organisation around. It is doing excellent work in confronting the fascists physically and politically and in combating the passivity and complacency of the left, especially the SWP. But it has also adopted a non-sectarian approach which will be vital in future struggles. It strives to build not only itself, but a fighting alliance of broader labour movement forces around specific action goals. As the original letter to build the campaign explained:

"It is impossible for AFA to mount a campaign against the BNP in Southwark single-handed. For the BNP to be stopped requires the mobilisation of the widest possible forces of the working class both in the trade unions and on the estates."

In the weeks and months ahead AFA is organising a carnival, a rally on the anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street and a national demonstration through the East End. Workers Power will use each of these events both to build AFA as a campaign and to appeal to the broader forces of the left and the labour movement to join with it in a workers' united front against fascism so that the rising threat of the BNP and the NF can be stamped out. ■

Telford

Police racism behind shooting

DURING AUGUST two cases involving the police made headline news. In one case Sussex police arrested five armed white men after they blasted a sub-postmaster and his baby son, wounding them both. In the siege that ensued police negotiators were able to persuade the gunmen to surrender—standard police procedure.

In the other case a suspected black gunman, 24 year-old Ian Gordon, was shot dead by police marksmen in Telford, Shropshire. He was later found to be carrying an unloaded air pistol without a firing mechanism. But no standard police negotiating procedure was used.

The police made no attempt to try to talk Ian into giving himself up, and worse, they did not allow anyone else to try, despite repeated and frantic requests from onlookers. Yet it was later revealed that the police knew of Ian's mental condition, and had concluded themselves that he was harmless. His mother recalled the station duty officer's words the last time they were at the local station: "Ian should not be here, can't you find a doctor for him, he's a nice guy".

You don't need a philosophy degree to understand the difference between these two cases. Ian was black. He was considered fair game by the racist police.

Outraged

The black community in Telford has been justifiably outraged at the brutal gunning down of Ian. Their anger has been intensified by the police's response to their attempts to protest against Ian's murder. Large numbers of police with riot vans moved into the black community and placed it under siege.

Police harassment of black communities is nothing new. Racism is rampant in the force. And when a black community fights back, as happened in Telford, then the victims of systematic harassment are denounced in the press as violent and rampaging hooligans.

The police in Telford, like other areas, work with certain assumptions and attitudes about race. As the recent tribunal case brought by PC Surinder Singh against the Nottingham force revealed, officers routinely refer to black colleagues as "nigger", "coon" and "spook". This contempt is magnified when it is extended to the wider black community. It is translated into action in the form of routine brutality and harassment.

Speaking at an International Police Exhibition and Conference last year, Alan Eastwood, chair of

Ian Gordon, a 24 year old black man, was shot dead by the police. This was no accident. It was the product of police racism, as Laura Wilkins explains.

the Police Federation, admitted:

"Perhaps some of our members do go about things in the wrong way. Some are arrogant and overbearing. Canteen culture may be contributing to a macho image. We have to pay attention to casual racism and sexism inside the service."

Bragging

There's no perhaps about it! And it isn't simply the result of canteen bragging. These racist assumptions inform policing tactics. The police are an instrument for the oppression of black people. And black people are at the sharp end of the police force's general repressive role in society.

Within every major city police force the propaganda machines have for years been relentlessly spewing out misleading statistics aimed at convincing the public that blacks are disproportionately involved in crime. This propaganda

is used to justify the saturation policing of black areas, it is deliberately designed to legitimise the policing methods that led to the shootings of Ian Gordon, Cherry Groce and Cynthia Jarrett, and to the battering of countless black people arrested and incarcerated by the police.

Only weeks before the Telford shooting a protest against police harassment was being organised amongst Telford's black community. The Home Office's own studies show that Afro-Caribbeans are "the most frequently and repeatedly stopped, they are most often searched and they were the most dissatisfied with how they were treated".

In the widely believed police stereotype of the black person as criminal, being black becomes synonymous with being an illegal immigrant; walking in the street tantamount to being a suspicious person; gathering in large groups becomes a threat to public order. It was completely consistent, there-

fore, that the police and the media tried to portray Ian as a dangerous drug-crazed tearaway, a mad gunman terrorising Telford, before he was gunned down by police marksmen.

The predictable call from the government, the police and the media is for more police resources and the mounting of a useless one-man enquiry. Clive Atkinson from the Merseyside force was hastily drafted in to smooth things over. He has already made it clear that he does not expect to be recommending any action against the officers involved.

Nottingham

Race attacks on the rise

IN RECENT months the Forest Fields and Hyson Green districts of Nottingham have seen a dramatic rise in racist attacks and fascist activity.

The local mosque has been vandalised and daubed with racist graffiti and the scum have even excreted inside the building! In the surrounding streets, gangs of bottle-throwing youths have terrorised people in their homes, in one instance kicking a door in and smashing windows.

Even a four-year old child was shown no mercy and was viciously punched to the ground. Later the child's dad had his car vandalised and covered with racist graffiti.

Requests for police protection have been ignored. When the racist boys and girls in blue have responded it has frequently been the victim that has been arrested!

This blatant police racism and increasing forays by organised fascists into the area (NF stickers and leaflets now abound) led to a community public meeting where 200 local residents declared "Enough is enough!" A demonstration was organised to make it clear to the racists and fascists that they would not be tolerated in Forest Fields.

The march on the 18 August, or-

This declaration of business as usual has angered the black community in Telford. Frustrated by the attempted cover-up, Ian's mother announced after the initial inquest hearing that she "won't hold a funeral until someone is charged with his death".

The reality is that any form of state investigation will be a complete sham. There can be no reliance on the state either to investigate its own crimes or defend black and working class communities. Calls to democratise the police, or giving them racial awareness training miss the point. Their job is to protect capitalist society. And that job includes subjecting the black community to racist oppression.

In response to Ian's murder by the police we must fight for a democratically elected labour movement and black community inquiry to discover the murderer. In response to police harassment, racist attacks and the violent actions of organised fascists we fight for black self-defence, supported by the labour movement, and for workers' self-defence squads. ■

ganised by the Forest Fields Anti-Racist Action Group (FFARAG), was supported by between 400 and 500 people with Nottingham Trades Council, Guy's Hospital unions, NALGO and CPSA all represented. Other banners included local muslim organisations, the black people's action group and a local lesbian and gay group.

The march was militant and noisy with the slogans "Police solution, no solution" and "Kick the racists out" taking prominence.

FFARAG see the demonstration as the beginning of building effective united front action of the community and labour movement against the racist and fascist threat.

With the British National Party (BNP) targeting the East Midlands and the National Front (NF) Flag group singling out Nottingham to peddle their racist filth, it is vital that FFARAG builds to ensure they never return to the streets of Nottingham.

The NF recently mobilised 15 paper sellers with ten goons in support in the city centre. Whilst that sale was thwarted by Socialist Worker sellers and other anti-racists who were able to rally a crowd to outnumber the fascists, they were nevertheless allowed to leave and have subsequently vowed to return.

It is relevant to note that the SWP, despite being urged by FFARAG not to, decided to hold their own march in Forest Fields prior to the main march. Needless to say, this sectarian and divisive (not to say foolhardy) stunt attracted no-one from the community or labour movement. This sort of posturing weakened efforts to build the main march. It is of a piece with the SWP's stupid refusal to engage in united front activity against fascism.

FFARAG have called a meeting in direct response to the NF threat on 5 September 7.30 pm in the Friends' Meeting House. At that meeting plans to mobilise the local labour movement to meet the fascists' threat with direct action and to build black self-defence against the racist attacks must be top of the agenda.

Anti-Fascist Action march

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION (AFA) is planning to hold a national march against racist attacks in the East End of London in November. The march is seen as an important part of our campaign against the rising level of fascist activity and racist attacks in the area.

London Anti-Fascist Action is a non-sectarian campaign against fascism, organised on democratic grounds. Our class-based approach sees fascism as a danger to all workers, and we believe that the fascists should be confronted ideologically and physically. Clearly this requires a wide variety of activities.

It is for this reason that we have called the march, to be held on 10 November. We hope to attract support from as many organisations and individuals as possible in order to turn this into a peaceful show of

strength which will help drive the fascists out of the East End.

We invite national organisations to attend the organising committee for the march on a delegate basis (two delegates per affiliated organisation). Other organisations (local trade union branches, community groups, women's groups etc) are invited to affiliate and send one delegate.

The AFA affiliation fee is £25 for national organisations; £10 for local organisations. Individuals are also invited to sponsor the march (minimum donation £5).

For details of the organising committee of the march write to AFA, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX. Send donations/affiliation fees etc, to same address and make cheques payable to Anti-Fascist Action.



Telford's black community on the march against police racism

John Harris/IFL

FFARAG meets every Monday at 7.30 pm at the Forest Fields Community Centre, Sturton Street, Nottingham

THE BOSSES world-wide are celebrating "the death of communism". Their servants inside the workers' movement, the bureaucratic labour and trade union leaders, are hammering home the message that the market rules and we should forget about planning the economy.

The majority of the world's so-called communist parties are hastily joining in this chorus. They abandoning not only what remain of the gains of the October 1917 Revolution, but any defence of that historic event at all.

It is hardly surprising that many workers, socialist militants and idealistic young people are taken in by all of these arguments. They are told that Leninism "inevitably" led to Stalinism, that the dictatorship of the proletariat led directly to the dictatorship of the party and that Marxism is an evil creed that has now got its just deserts.

The bosses want to drive a lesson home to the workers of the world—don't try it! Don't think that there is an alternative to us. Sit back and learn to live with capitalism.

This ideological onslaught is based on a big lie: that Stalinist rule was "communism". No, Stalinist rule was a monstrous distortion of communism. It blocked the path to real communism and it dragged the banner of real communism through the mud. It was the rule of a privileged and parasitic bureaucracy over the working class. The Stalinist bureaucracy was the gravedigger of the October Revolution, not its legitimate heir. It has collapsed. Good. It deserved to be destroyed a thousand times over.

It is not socialism or real communism that is dead, it is Stalinism—the political programme and bureaucratic dictatorship constructed by Joseph Stalin and his henchmen in the 1920s. They usurped the political power of the working class, a power based on democratic workers' councils, which was inaugurated by October 1917. They betrayed the cause of the international working class and strangled the transition to socialism.

Yet since the very moment of Stalin's bureaucratic triumph a working class socialist alternative has existed—the revolutionary Marxist ideas and programme of Leon Trotsky.

Trotsky, Stalin's main opponent, was a true Bolshevik, a fighter for workers' democracy and real communism. His books were banned in Stalin's USSR. He was a leader of the 1917 Revolution, yet every photograph of that revolution in which he appeared was doctored to remove his face. He was written out of history. No statues of him existed to be pulled down.

Tradition

Trotskyism is the only political tradition which stands for revolution against Stalinism whilst defending the legacy of October 1917. As the Stalinists and the Labour left retreat in ideological disarray, Trotskyism is the only political current which maintains that workers can run their own lives and plan society to meet their needs.

The October Revolution of 1917 took place in a country and a world ravaged by imperialist war. By 1917 disillusion with the war was growing, especially in Russia. Alongside modern industry the countryside laboured under the burden of feudal relations and the corrupt Tsarist autocracy denied the people any shred of democracy. By February 1917 the burdens of war became intolerable for the workers, soldiers and peasants. They toppled the Tsar and installed a provisional government led, eventually, by Kerensky.

Today you can hear followers of Yeltsin and other democratic

The October 1917 Revolution in Russia opened the window on a free and just future for humanity. It was betrayed by Stalin and his bureaucracy in the 1920s.

Lesley Day explains the significance of these events and the struggle of Leon Trotsky against the betrayal of October.



We stand for Trotsky and October!

oppositionists arguing that they want a return to the sort of government established after the February Revolution. What these fans of Kerensky forget is that his government continued to send Russian workers and peasants to the slaughter in the trenches, machine-gunned the workers and repressed their organisations. Kerensky was a fledgling dictator who proved powerless in the face of the mass of the working class.

The Bolshevik Party continued its campaign against the war and for the establishment of real workers' power and democracy. They based themselves on the workers' own organisations—the workers' and soldiers' committees and the soviets—real democratic councils, not the bureaucratic shells that they became under Stalin. By October, the party was able to mobilise the working class and its armed militia in the cities as well as the majority of the peasants, to oust the decrepit provisional government and establish the power of the workers' councils.

The power and privileges of the old ruling class were swept away. Housing was shared out. Equality for women was enshrined in law. The army was democratised. Land was given to the peasants. Workers took action against their corrupt and brutal managers. By 1919, in the face of armed intervention by the imperialists and civil war, the majority of capitalists had been expropriated.

But the very backwardness of Russia that had contributed to the revolutionary movement was now a huge problem facing the working class and its party. The Bolsheviks always saw the fate of their revolution as tied indissolubly to that of the world revolution. In the ABC of

Communism they wrote:

"The communist movement can be successful only as a world revolution. If the state of affairs arose in which one country was ruled by the working class, while in others . . . the working class remained submissive to capital, in the end the great robber states would crush the workers' state of the first country."

This is precisely what the imperialists tried to do. They sent fourteen armies into the workers' state, but the heroism of the workers and peasants organised in the Red Army defeated them. In the end the revolution was overthrown from within, not from outside.

After Lenin's death the bureaucracy, which had grown up in the backward and isolated Russian economy, grew stronger. A group arose around party secretary, Joseph Stalin, which based its rise to power on the interests of the bureaucracy.

Terror

The Stalin clique succeeded, through manoeuvre and terror, in destroying Trotsky's Left Opposition. Stalin replaced the programme of spreading the revolution abroad with that of "socialism in one country". The bureaucracy would "defend" the USSR not through revolution but through making peace with the capitalist world. So in Stalin's hands the Communist International became a tool for preventing revolutions rather than leading them.

Stalin implemented a hideous caricature of the socialist economic programme, collectivising agriculture at gunpoint, instituting the Five Year Plans which ruthlessly subordinated workers' living standards to the building up of heavy

industry.

Trotsky organised the main opposition to the growth of Stalin's dictatorship and to his anti-working class programme; first within the Soviet Union and then from exile. He kept alive the Bolshevik fight against Stalinism right up to the moment that one of Stalin's agents murdered him in 1940.

Trotsky called for a return to internationalism, and an abandonment of "Socialism in one Country". Where Stalin's advice to Communist parties was based on the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy, Trotsky argued for the interests of the international proletariat.

He outlined ways for the beleaguered workers' state to survive until help came from elsewhere. A programme of industrialisation should go hand in hand with the revival and rebuilding of workers' democracy in the class and in the party, he argued.

Stalin had replaced democratic centralism with bureaucratic centralism, he instituted a regime of terror, not only against the working class but also against the ranks of the bureaucracy itself.

Many Old Bolsheviks who opposed Stalin met their deaths in the prison camps even while the leaders of capitalist "democracy" like Churchill and Roosevelt were heaping praise on their Soviet ally, Uncle Joe, during the Second World War.

In exile Trotsky devoted his time to rescuing the revolutionary heart of Marxism, to renewing a programme for the world working class to overthrow capitalism and to building a new party to achieve this—the Fourth International. A central part of his work was analysing the nature of the Soviet Union and developing a programme

for ousting the bureaucracy.

Trotsky argued that bureaucratic rule was not the inevitable outcome of Bolshevism. He analysed its material roots, showing how the backwardness, poverty and isolation of the workers state had encouraged its growth:

"[The bureaucracy] in its very essence is the planter and protector of inequality. It arose in the beginning as the bourgeois organ of a workers' state. In establishing and defending the advantages of a minority, it of course draws off the cream for its own use . . . thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function and become an independent factor and the source of great danger for the whole social organism."

Trotsky predicted that this "great danger to the whole social organism" would, if not removed, lead to the collapse of the workers' state itself. Unlike a ruling class, which is an integral part of a system of economic relations, "the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers' state".

This parasite, with all its corruption, with its inability to run the planned economy in a rational way, had to be overthrown. Trotsky described this as political revolution. The property forms—nationalised industry, the absence of a capitalist owning class, a planned economy—would remain. But Stalinist rule would be replaced by working class power:

"It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy".

Today we can see the truth of Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy. This vast parasite has weighed down the whole society and condemned the planned economy to stagnation. After years of rule by terror, it is crumbling before our eyes. Trotsky predicted this. His timing was wrong, but his essential analysis of the illegitimate bureaucracy was 100% right.

Expression

As he wrote a year before his death, the bureaucracy was an expression of the degeneration of the workers' state and, "degeneration must inescapably end at a certain stage in downfall". But if the USSR and its workers are to escape the catastrophe of becoming a vast semi-colony for world imperialism then not only Trotsky's analysis but his programme are needed.

The cretinous and bloodstained Stalinist dictatorship had nothing to do with the politics of Karl Marx, whose grave in Highgate Cemetery has become the focus for a thousand gloating articles and news items. Marxism guided the workers' revolution which made the fore-runners of Bush and Major tremble in their boots. It guided the heroic tens of thousands who died in the freezing camps of Stalin's Russia for resisting bureaucratic power.

In the hands of Trotskyists Marxism remains the only guide to the emancipation of humanity from hunger and misery. Unlike the Stalinists and their sympathisers in the labour movement we will not slink away from the stage of history.

Armed with the Trotskyist programme and record of struggle our movement plunges headlong into the tumultuous struggles ahead in the USSR and Eastern Europe—proud of the fact that not once, ever, did it make its peace with the Stalinist butchers! ■

AS TANKS rolled onto the streets of Moscow the response of the "tankies" within the British labour movement was predictable. Eric Trevett, leader of the New Communist Party (NCP), welcomed the coup. In a letter to the *Morning Star* he declared:

"In the Soviet Union the emergence of a leadership dedicated to communist values deserves our full solidarity and support. Nor should we waver in giving this in the face of some social unrest."

There wasn't enough time for the NCP to waver. But its response demonstrated that this outfit once again lived up to its reputation for uncritically supporting every act of barbarism Stalinism commits against the working class. East Germany 1953, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968 and Moscow 1991, for sixty hours at least, were all actions taken against the workers in the interests of "socialism".

Sadly for Trevett his loyalty oath to Yanayev and Pugo was published on the very day that these great "Bolsheviks" were either busy committing suicide or getting drunk while awaiting arrest. Meanwhile Trevett fatefully pronounced that, with Gorbachev's overthrow, "the morale of genuine communists and progressives throughout the world has risen."

What Trevett and the NCP's morale must be like in the aftermath of the coup is anybody's guess!

It is easy to poke fun at the pathetic remnants of hard line Stalinism in Britain. But the position of the NCP is an illustration of the futility of relying on Stalinism to save the post-capitalist property relations in the USSR. And, in a less bloodthirsty form, this is a position shared by forces on the left far more diverse than the dinosaurs of the NCP.

The *Morning Star*, paper of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), greeted the coup more in sorrow than in anger. It spelled out the dangers of national fragmentation and the growing economic crisis in the USSR and spelled out its answer—democratisation plus market socialist reforms. Blandly, and without a word of condemnation, the *Morning Star* editorial of 20 August commented:

"The takeover by Vice President Yanayev and the other members of the State Emergency Committee, and the repressive measures they have announced, are incompatible with this process of democratisation."

Problem

The *Morning Star's* opposition to the coup revolved around the argument: "The end does not justify the means".

The problem is, having accepted the ends as just they were at a loss to identify any other means to achieve them. If you accept the Stalinist argument that the Soviet Union has to be held together at all costs, and that, as the *Morning Star* argued, the "drift to anarchy that has become so evident" has to be stopped, then there is little point in relying on a programme of democratisation and controlled *perestroika*. For the simple reason that it was the Soviet bureaucracy's own attempt to reform its system—through democratisation and market reforms—which produced the "anarchy" and fragmentation that so angers the *Morning Star*.

At the root of the present situation are the very contradictions of the Stalinist system which the *Morning Star* slavishly supported for so long. The Stalinist bureaucracy cannot save the bureaucratically planned economy by military might, and they cannot turn it into a healthily functioning organism through *perestroika*. This indisputable fact explains the political impasse which produced the coup.

Sensing this, but unable to understand it, the CPB reverts to a fantasy world. Their answer is for the CPSU to

THE COUP'S LEFT SUPPORTERS

While the Soviet masses gave the coup-makers no support sections of the left in Britain rushed into print to voice their heartfelt thanks to Pugo and his gang. The supporters of the coup were not just the old style Stalinists either. Paul Morris shows why the arguments in support of the coup are a criminal betrayal of the working class.

Their song is over



"unite", and to "involve the working class and the mass of the population in the reform process". The Soviet CP should have been prepared to "contest openly views which were in fact hostile to socialism" says the *Morning Star*.

The objective character of Stalinism makes it impossible for any one of these desires to be fulfilled. The CPSU could not unite because the bureaucracy it represented had no perspective to unite around, no coherent answer to the crisis beyond failed reforms and failed coups.

It could not involve the masses in the "controlled market reform" scenario because the masses have their own ideas and interests. Much as Yanayev and Pugo appealed to the masses for support with populist measures, and much as the masses loathed Gorbachev, sixty years of Stalinist repression and corruption has left the mass of workers utterly cynical about the CPSU.

As for the Gorbachev leadership's "unwillingness" to put the case for socialism against the outright restorationists, what other alternative did they have? It was the most far seeing elements of the central repressive apparatus and planning mechanisms who initiated *perestroika*, those who could see with their own eyes the failure of bureaucratic planning.

Those like Yeltsin and Shevardnadze, who today stand in the forefront of the restorationist movement, have been convinced by bitter experience as powerful bureaucrats that their system has no future.

The gutlessness and inefficiency of the coup-mongers was the central theme of the *Leninist's* coverage of events. Billed as (deep breath) the Central Organ of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the *Leninist* claims to be an anti-Stalinist paper.

The *Leninist* calls for political revolution in the USSR and even cited the coup as an "opportunity to make political revolution".

Closer examination reveals that the *Leninist's* anti-Stalinism amounts to criticising the coup-bunglers for their inefficiency in smashing Yeltsin. The "revolutionary opportunity" the *Leninist* refers to was apparently the opportunity to mobilise the masses... against their own democratic rights.

"Democracy is either revolutionary or reactionary" the *Leninist* informs us. Since Yeltsin is a restorationist and he has utilised the democratic reforms granted by *glasnost* to build his power base, those reforms must be reactionary democracy.

So the *Leninist* castigates the Emergency Committee for its inadequate suppression of that democracy.

"Disobeying the first law of the military art, the *putschists* were half-hearted, acted with complete lack of decisiveness and thus fatally gave away the initiative." (24.8.91)

Doomed

Unlike the NCP and the CPB the *Leninist* recognises the fact that the bureaucracy has no answers, indeed that it is a doomed caste:

"As a section of society that faces social extinction it was fitting that its coup was as desperate as it was pathetic."

It is all the more stupid and ironic therefore that the *Leninist* threw its lot in with the coup makers. For despite their criticisms after the event of the bungling and half-hearted nature of the crack-down, the *Leninist's* statement of 19 August gives clear critical support to the coup.

"For communists, for all genuine partisans of the working class anything that, even momentarily, stays the hand of counter-revolution is good!

"It gives us room for manoeuvre, room for independent action. That is why the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB refuses to join the 'official communist' rumps, Kinnockites and Trotskyites in the bourgeois orchestrated chorus attacking the State Emergency Committee." (19.8.91)

And in their paper they have the nerve to describe this course of action as an "independent" working class strategy for the Soviet crisis.

There is a clear contradiction in the *Leninist's* position. The coup proved "momentary" in the extreme, and by demonstrating the weakness of the bureaucratic hard-liners precipitated Yeltsin's rise, the outlawing of the CP and the secession of the republics. Even by the *Leninist's* warped standards this could hardly be considered "good".

However the whole argument is based on a monumental refusal to face up to the truth about the coup. It was not designed to "stay the hand of counter-revolution" in the sense of stopping the restoration of capitalism. The declaration of Emergency assured the imperialists:

"Developing the mixed character of the national economy we will support private enterprise, granting it the necessary opportunities for developing production and the sphere of services."

Nor could the success of the coup provide a breathing space for revolutionary communists, "room for manoeuvre, room for independent action".

A coup, in case our "Leninists" haven't checked the manual of military arts that they recommended to Pugo and Yanayev, involves the armed suppression of elementary democratic rights. In the USSR it involved the banning of strikes, demonstrations and political parties, a state of emergency and a curfew.

What room for independent action is there in such a situation? None, except for those prepared to defy the coup-makers on the streets.

The *Leninist* castigates the coup because "the State Emergency Committee relied on the army and the KGB, not the masses". How could it rely on the masses when its objective was to curtail their democratic rights and deny their desire for national independence? The coup-makers went out of their way to stir up mass support, doling out wage rises and price freezes. Yanayev himself told journalists:

"I very much count on the fact that we won't be commanders without an army because the people demand that elementary order in the country be established."

Yet popular mass support failed to materialise.

Predictably the misnamed International Communist League (Spartacists) has added its voice to those moaning that if only the coup had mobilised the masses, everything would have been alright.

The Spartacists, claiming allegiance to Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism, should know even better than the *Leninist* that the bureaucracy cannot defend the gains of October. Yet the hallmark of their politics is the strategic call on the bureaucrats to do just that. Having lost faith in the capacity of the working class to act for itself a

long time ago, the Spartacists have no perspective for human progress other than reliance on the actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

That is why predictably they call at one and the same time for workers to be "critical of the coup—which wouldn't stop Yeltsin and was therefore doomed to failure" and for workers' participation in the coup itself. They advised Yanayev after the event:

"As the crowd of yuppies, students and assorted Russian nationalists, including fascists and priests, gathered at the start of the coup outside the Russian parliament, Yeltsin's 'White House', a call on Moscow workers to clean out this counter-revolutionary rabble was in order. Yet the coup plotters not only did not organise the workers, they called on them to stay at work and at home." (*Workers Vanguard* 30.8.91)

So, given that situation what should revolutionaries have done? Astonishingly in their pages of coverage the Spartacists evade this question.

There would be little point in arguing with the confused proclamations of these self-deluding rumps of Stalinism and Stalinophile "Trotskyists", were it not for the fact that a soft and sentimental form of Stalinism has widespread influence in the British labour movement.

There are scores of former activists, even ex-Trotskyists, retiring from political life embittered and cursing the workers of the Stalinist states for their failure to wake up to the dangers of restoration.

Progressive

There are those with no sympathy for Pugo and company who nevertheless saw the USSR as a vital point of support for progressive movements like the PLO and the ANC, or for countries like Cuba and Vietnam which defeated US imperialism in Stalinist led civil wars.

Likewise there are many whose gut reaction on seeing the coup wipe \$15 billion from the world's stock markets must have been "good!"

To all of them the fact must be hammered home: Stalinism was the agent of capitalism within the workers' states, the agent of the bosses within the workers' movement. It could never guarantee the post-capitalist property relations of the USSR because it was inherently dysfunctional to them. No matter what the socially counter-revolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme, no matter how many spivs and racketeers joined the barricades to defend the Russian parliament, it would be revolutionary suicide to back the coup-mongers and support the crushing of democratic rights. It would be a betrayal of the working class.

Because the only force capable of defending state property, the only consistent ally of anti-imperialist struggles, the only real and permanent threat to the world's stock exchanges, is the working class. And it cannot act when its strikes and demonstrations are banned, when it is subject to curfews, censorship and political bans. It is far better that the fledgling workers' organisations of the USSR learn to swim against the stream of bureaucratic restorationism than be huddled in the "breathing space" of the prison cell. ■

Revolution and c

THE FAILURE of the State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) to carry out its coup of 19-20 August marks a turning point similar in magnitude to the 1989-90 events in Eastern Europe. Launched by the conservative core of the *nomenklatura* to halt the "malicious mockery of all the institutions of the state" the SCSE's ignominious collapse has only served to propel their arch enemies into a dominant situation within the fragments of the state.

The coup itself turned an eighteen month pre-revolutionary crisis into a revolutionary situation in which the ruling Stalinists lost control over their armed forces and could no longer deploy them to defend their power.

The working class failed to seize the initiative and overthrow the dictatorship with its own organisation and armed power and rescue the post-capitalist property relations from their deathly grip. Within the present dual power the working class can still open up the road to the political revolution on condition that it finds a political leadership willing and able to do this.

In the early weeks after the failed coup the working class of the USSR faces a dual task. On the one hand, it must complete the destruction of the dictatorship of the Stalinist caste by its own hand; on the other, it must turn its fire on the Yeltsinite regime that will conserve as much of the old dictatorship and political apparatus

as will be needed to suppress the workers in the months and years ahead as they push towards capitalism.

Ever since the 1990 elections to municipal and city soviets and the presidential elections in the republics there has been a situation of growing dual power: on the one side, the conservative faction of the old *nomenklatura*, and on the other, a coalition of the forces of bourgeois restoration, republican independence and the workers and petit bourgeoisie. The former hoped by their actions on 19 August to defend their privileges on the basis of post capitalist property relations and sought political legitimacy in the Supreme Soviet.

Control

Yet their real power base lay in the central economic control agencies (banking, planning industrial ministries etc), the central agencies of repression (KGB, MVD and the SAF) and the central administrative and social co-ordination apparatus (the all-Union federal administration, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the remains of the old trade unions).

Those for whom the SCSE spoke were all pragmatically opposed to Gorbachev's "market socialist" reforms whenever they threatened them. On the other hand, they had no

Revolutionary Marxists should have stood in the front ranks of those fighting to smash the 19 August coup. At the same time there could be no political support for Yeltsin. With Yeltsin's seizure of power workers face the dual task of ensuring the most radical smashing of bureaucratic power, alongside an immediate struggle against Yeltsin and his plan for capitalist restoration. Below, and on page 10, we print the LRCI International Secretariat's statement on the tasks of Soviet workers during and after the Soviet coup

alternative programme of reform to his. Thus their only real proposals were to dilute and slow down Gorbachev's various plans, so as to preserve their own institutions and to carry out what reforms this left in an authoritarian or dictatorial fashion.

By contrast, the coalition of the forces opposed to this conservative faction were heterogeneous: proto-exploiters keen to enlarge the scope of their wealth, workers determined to defend the democratic freedoms gained during the preceding years.

This coalition, gathered around the Moscow parliament, hoisted Yeltsin to power. Its origins lie in two different camps. First, in the democratic and nationalist oppositions, rooted in the intelligentsia that pre-existed Gorbachev in the underground "dissident" movement. Secondly, a whole segment of the Gorbachevite faction of the bureaucracy itself.

The former layer of oppositionists, in the period between the Prague Spring and Jaruselski coup in Poland, lost almost all belief in reforming

"really existing socialism" and were oriented to western democracy and a market economy as ideals. The latter—the ex-Gorbachevites—became disillusioned with Gorbachev's utopian project of "market socialism", outraged by their leader's vacillations and compromises with the conservatives and attracted into the service of imperialism as the restorers of capitalism in the USSR.

Abandoned

What does the Yeltsin-headed coalition of forces politically represent? Yeltsin, Shevardnadze, and indeed the whole military and political entourage of the Russian President, represent a faction of the bureaucracy that has abandoned the defence of its caste privileges and their source—a degenerate workers' state—in favour of becoming key members of a new bourgeois ruling class.

When the SCSE made its faltering grab for power they were not opposed by the elemental and inchoate forces

of the masses, undifferentiated by class, formless in their opposition. On the contrary, they were confronted with real apparatuses and administrations, bolstered by "democratic mandates" and even possessing rudimentary armed forces. Moreover, utilising *glasnost* to the full these administrators had eroded the homogeneity of the all-Union administrative and military apparatus and effected cold splits at a number of levels.

The result is now clear to see. What in Eastern and Central Europe took weeks of mass protest and months of wrestling with the *nomenklatura* to achieve, has been realised in days in the aftermath of the failed coup. The tempo of purgation of the *nomenklatura* is extremely rapid. Some 80% of the army high command at the level of general or above is being displaced.

The KGB has effectively been purged of its leadership and ruling collegium, robbed of its 230,000 armed forces and subordinated to the regular army. The Soviet Union cabinet of ministers has been sacked and replacements largely chosen by the Yeltsinite camp. The conservatives headed by Kryuchkov, Pugo and Yazov have been displaced from all leading positions and their followers marginalised as a faction within the shattered and reeling bureaucracy.

Fierce

The "conservative faction" is under fierce attack from the Yeltsinites and even from Gorbachev. But it still has redoubts and pockets of resistance. It still has large numbers of deputies in the Supreme and republican soviets. In Azerbaijan and some Central Asian republics it still holds power. There the duality of power has a territorial aspect. Unless they are removed in the next months they could launch a limited counter-attack as the restorationists themselves hit a crisis provoked by resistance to their programme.

In terms of the balance of forces within the USSR at present the situation is analogous to the first Solidarnosc government headed by Masowiecki but co-habiting with President Jaruselski. In short, there is now a restorationist government in office, in a very strong position because of the coup but still without undivided power over the state apparatus.

The regime is headed by an unstable partnership of Yeltsin and Gorbachev. The latter has now only a shadow of his former power. He has finally abandoned his attempts to cling to the remnants of "market socialism". He is a firm supporter of a restorationist programme. But his bottom line is a defence of the centralised federal state. This obliges him to rely on the rump of the bureaucracy of the central state apparatus against the confederalists of the republics and the, as yet, undecided Yeltsin. Its inertia gives him what shrinking room he has for Bonapartist

The CPSU and the working class

THE CPSU was the chief mechanism for preserving the Stalinist political dictatorship. Through its 5,000 regional offices, its factory cells, its political officers in the KGB and army and through its regulatory intervention into the economy the CPSU was the focal point of bureaucratic rule. But faced with the state of emergency the CPSU crumbled. The reasons lie in the previous two years of internal disintegration of the homogeneity of the party.

At a CPSU conference in July 1989 Gorbachev signalled that dissent and proto-factions would not be outlawed. The foundation of the Democratic Platform in January 1990 openly contravened the ban on factions and attracted 100,000 party members; the main planks of programme were to destroy the bureaucratic centralism of the CPSU and replace them with horizontal links and to displace Marxism-Leninism as the ideology of the party. The emergence of the Democratic Platform served to encourage a multiplicity of tendencies within the CPSU.

The July 1990 28th Congress of the CPSU witnessed bitter debate between the factions, the resignation of Yeltsin and the open rebellion of many in the CPSU. The party was being paralysed and subject to defection of entire republican parties, as when the Baltic CPs split. During the course the 1991

the paralysis increased as the CPSU retreated more and more from the running of the economy and splits and defections mounted right up to the eve of the coup, as with Shevardnadze and Yakovlev. On the eve of the coup the CPSU was an increasingly demoralised entity.

If the military and secret police bases of the conservative faction of the bureaucracy crumbled without a serious fight the role, or rather the lack of a role, of the CPSU was truly miserable. The conspirators could make no use of it. Its Central Committee meekly succumbed after the event, but even parts of its press were banned by the decree of the State of Emergency. It tried to gather itself together on Gorbachev's return to Moscow.

For this reason the party has become, with the KGB, the principle target of the Yeltsinite offensive. Gorbachev tried for two days to shield it. He tried to stick to his perspective of a congress at the end of the year to reform the party, giving it a social democratic programme and purging it of hard liners.

But all this was too little and too late. In Moscow and other cities its buildings were seized and sealed, its newspapers suspended and the activities of its cells in the army, and even the KGB banned. Gorbachev was humiliatingly

obliged to resign from the party altogether and call for it to dissolve itself. Finally the Supreme Soviet, with a huge "conservative" majority has been obliged to suspend all the operations of the party. The party was the glue that bound the different elements of the bureaucracy together. With its dissolution the bureaucracy will have to face its final end with no coherent centralised leadership.

Revolutionaries share the workers' hatred for all the real and symbolic representatives of their oppression. We support the closing down of the palatial CPSU offices, private shops and sanatoria, the rooting out of the KGB officers. But we put no trust in Yeltsin or the leadership of the main soviets in the chief towns and cities to carry out the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship.

We seek at every point to involve the masses independently in the process of the destruction of the CPSU dictatorship. We do so because the masses alone have every interest in the most thoroughgoing eradication of their privileges and power. It is the forces of restoration, the forces of "law and order" and "stability" who will seek to keep the destruction of the apparatus of repression within limits.

Yeltsin and Bakhtin will seek to keep the loyal elements of the KGB and seek to turn it into the secret service that can police the

working class in the coming years; it will not seek to open up the secrets of the Lubjanka jail to workers' inspection, and thereby show how far into the Yeltsin camp go the crimes of the Stalinist dictators before they converted to the dogma of the market. The workers must control the process of destruction of the Stalinists through to the end and not let Yeltsin preserve what is useful to him. In parts of the state apparatus (and even in whole republics) the tasks of the political revolution against the bureaucracy still exist and the working class must come to the head of this struggle with its own class organisations.

But the working class gives no support to the bureaucratic banning of the CPSU. All that we ask is that the privileges of the CPSU are brought to an end, that all their members in the factories lose their offices and are put back on the shop or office floor.

Their press, their money, their offices must be put at the disposal of the working class organisations that have been bled dry over the years, so that a democratic and lively political culture springs up to replace the monolithism of Stalinism. The forces of restoration must not be allowed to expropriate the property and wealth of the CPSU for its own bourgeois design while bureaucratically banning all activities of the party. ■

Counter-revolution



Gorbachev has only a shadow of his former power

independence and manoeuvre.

The measures to deprive the Stalinists of all the levers of economic and political power are an essential stage, a prerequisite to turn to the next stage—the task of rapidly dismantling the instruments of central planning. We can expect the planning ministries, the central bank, the state farm sector to all be purged in the coming months. This process will decide whether Gorbachev retains any use for the restorationists.

Yeltsin rose to power by spearheading the drive of all the republics to free themselves of the control of the central bureaucratic stranglehold of the Kremlin, the Lubijanka and Gosplan. When these powers are safely shattered then it is likely that Yeltsin and Co will turn back towards a federal project, incorporating those other republics which are valuable and manageable.

Given the exceptionally high level of economic interdependence and division between all the republics of the USSR then the erection of national barriers will send the already slumping economy into a complete tail-spin. This would minimise the possibility of stability in the process of capitalist restoration. Already there are clear signs of this change of line in his threat to raise border questions with seceding republics.

Can and will Gorbachev continue to play a role in the process of restoration? Imperialism at least for the moment thinks it is cost effective to keep him there in a team with Yeltsin. He is a guarantee against "conservative" revival and his support will speed

the self-dissolution of the party and the purge of the KGB and the army.

In military strategic terms he can help safeguard the nuclear arsenal from falling into the wrong hands. In the international arena he can supervise the surrenders to imperialism in the Middle East, South Africa, in Indo-China and in the Caribbean.

The foreign ministry and the task of relations with imperialism remain within Gorbachev's grasp for the moment. Internally the role he has set himself is to preserve a federal union with a central government which has some measure of authority in matters of defence, monetary, fiscal and banking policy and which can relate as a unitary power on the world stage.

Restraint

Some, if not all, these objectives are pleasing to imperialism which does not want to see a Yugoslav catastrophe on a grand scale, with borders being forcibly redrawn. In addition there are some signs that after the first flush of Yeltsinmania Washington, London and Bonn would prefer a Yeltsin under some restraint.

Yeltsin himself may have continued use for his old rival or at least for his policies. Gorbachev, deprived of his social base within the CPSU, and restored to only a shadow of his former Bonapartist power, represents for the rump of the bureaucracy their best hope to preserve what ever they can of their privileges and power but now brutally made aware that the best it can hope for is to share power, even as a junior partner with the

Yeltsin led forces.

Major questions are posed by these events. Was the perspective of political revolution an unreal, a utopian perspective? Was the resistance to the conservative coup in itself counter-revolutionary? Would a successful bureaucratic clamp-down have given the working class a breathing space? The answer to all of these questions is no!

In what sense could it be said that SCSE "defended the planned property relations"? Only in this: that it resisted their abolition to the extent that they were the "host" off which it was parasitic. However, this massive social parasite was the principle cause of the sickness unto death of the bureaucratic centrally planned economy, of the consequent disillusion of the masses in it.

Through their totalitarian dictatorship the Stalinists were also an absolute bloc on the self-activity and self-consciousness of the proletariat and its ability to crystallise a new vanguard, which alone could have not merely preserved but renewed the "gains of October". The full scale of this parasitism is only now likely to be revealed, but reports that after the coup the party's business manager was trying to send £500 billion worth of assets out of the USSR indicates that we are not dealing with minor perks, but with a vast collective and individual plunder of the social product of the workers' state.

No wonder these people never could and never did put themselves at the head of the working class resistance to restoration.■

"Soviet left is isolated"

Many aspects of the coup and its aftermath are still shrouded in mystery and rumour. The following is an extract from LRCI supporter **Lawrence Hart's** eyewitness account of events in Moscow

MOSCOW, 30 AUGUST: Having seen the tanks in action in the streets of Moscow, having talked to many participants during and after last week's events, it is hard to call this coup a coup or the so-called revolution a revolution.

The coup consisted mainly in declarations and resolutions broadcast on the TV and radio. Most of the tanks had no ammunition and the troops themselves had no orders to attack any demonstration or to open fire at all. The only definite anti-constitutional act was the so-called arrest of Gorbachev and even that has a rather strange and uncertain character.

Journalists who visited Gorbachev's *dacha* could find nobody outside his immediate entourage who had ever seen any of the troops, tanks or ships said to have imprisoned the President. There are many other contradictions and inconsistencies in the story of the forcible imprisonment of Gorbachev in the Crimea. It would be no surprise if it in fact transpired that he collaborated with the *putschists*, at least on the first day of the coup.

At the same time the "heroic struggle of the masses of Moscow" to defend the Russian parliament is largely a myth. Firstly, the few thousand people who manned the barricades outside the parliament were not, for the most part, the most audacious workers and students of Moscow.

Rather they were in the majority small businessmen, speculators and owners of co-operatives, the traditional base of the "Democratic Russia" demonstrations, plus a few hundred young enthusiasts. While there have been reports of strike action and mass mobilisations in other parts of the USSR, in Moscow at least the working class played little part in the resistance to the coup.

Paralysis

A small section of the barricade fighters were anarchists and activists from the small left wing groups. But the barricades themselves in no way stopped or broke the coup. In fact the coup failed because it paralysed itself. The Emergency Committee's inner paralysis, and maybe the hidden role of Gorbachev, allowed Yeltsin to seize control over more and more KGB units.

Only after the arrest of the Emergency Committee was the myth of the mass resistance of the heroic Muscovites and Russians manufactured by the media.

Yanayev obviously wanted to wait until the Supreme Soviet could make the State of Emergency constitutional. Pugo on the other hand seems to have favoured immediate military action and was desperately trying to launch it.

Many people in Moscow feel that the changes are not as cataclysmic

as the media presents them. Even the ban on the CPSU only brings to an end a development that started a year ago. The party had already ceased to be the heart and head of the bureaucracy. Large sections of the *nomenklatura* shifted their allegiance, during this period, to the Yeltsin camp.

The bureaucracy still retains its power but now it is the Yeltsinites who dominate the *nomenklatura*. The most fundamental change is the Russification of the bureaucracy, the replacement of Soviet and Stalinist symbols by Russian nationalist ones and the break up of the Soviet Union. Russian and especially Great Russian chauvinism is not strong at the moment, but actions in the newly independent republics against the Russian minorities could quickly inflame it.

Isolated

The Soviet left is extremely isolated at the moment. The biggest organisation remains the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (CAF) but it has suffered several splits over the last year and comprises some 200 activists in the whole of the USSR. Twenty of them were at the "White House" barricades.

On 19 August the CAF, Boris Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party and the Green Party signed a common resolution against the coup which also criticised Yeltsin. Their leaflets, pasted on the walls, were immediately ripped down by the Yeltsinites. This indicates the tensions within the anti-coup camp and the anti-democratic character of many of Yeltsin's supporters.

The Socialist Party had some forty members in Moscow and was also represented at the barricades. Their main aim at the present is to participate in mass activities and to participate in the building of a new Labour Party in the USSR, a project supported by some trade unions.

The "Trotskyist" forces in Moscow exist in the form of some Morenoite (LIT) supporters within the Socialist Party, the Committee for Workers Democracy, (a group linked to the Militant Tendency) and the Socialist Workers Union of Moscow (SWUM). The latter has announced its intention to join the "Workers International" organised by the British WRP (*Workers Press*). During the coup the SWUM issued two leaflets, one at the "White House" barricade and one outside some factories after the coup. Whilst they were generally principled, on one important issue they were not. Both the leaflets and in later discussion these comrades themselves, under the influence of the WRP, refused to carry any slogans or any positions in defence of planning against Yeltsin, and against the prevailing consciousness of the working class.■

WHAT TO FIGHT FOR: TURN TO PAGE 10

Only political revolution can stop capitalist restoration!

A prolonged pre-revolutionary situation has gripped the USSR at least since 1988. Despite the accumulated discredit that Stalinism's brutal repression of the proletariat, and its parasitism and mismanagement of the planned economy, brought to the very idea of a workers' state it would have been possible to struggle within the new strike committees and the trade unions for class independence and for a workers' government with a programme of a democratically drawn up emergency plan as a solution to the economic crisis.

As long as the bureaucracy survives with any remaining hold on power and as long as there exist the decisive elements of the "gains of October" our programme must remain that of political revolution. We cannot abandon it because of the low level of class consciousness of the masses.

The loss of the gains of October would be a historic defeat for the world working class. It would strengthen imperialism against all its enemies politically, economically and militarily. The Soviet bureaucracy for its own counter-revolutionary reasons gave material aid to the other workers' states, to semi-colonial countries and to Stalinist or petit bourgeois nationalist movements against imperialism.

These workers' states and semi-colonies will now be prostrate before imperialism. Already reactionary pro-imperialist regional peace treaties are in discussion in South Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. If the Soviet Union collapses then the crises of the Cuban, Vietnamese, Cambodian and North Korean regimes will be brought forward.

Collapse

Though it may take longer the fate of the Chinese workers' state is also called into question. The collapse of the Stalinist parties worldwide is politically no loss but in the context of a rightward moving social democracy and the acute crisis of revolutionary leadership, it will further undermine the elementary class identification of the world's labour movements.

In the short term the bourgeoisie and its agents will use the collapse to proclaim the utopianism of the socialist project and Marxism itself. Thus the struggle for political revolution was not an optional extra, to be posed only if the masses were already sympathetic to it. It was an objective necessity to avoid a strategic defeat for the Soviet and the world working class.

The seeming disinterest of the Soviet masses in the social gains they have inherited from 1917 is primarily and principally the result of the Stalinist dictatorship. No continuation of the dictatorship could conceivably aid revolutionaries in their central task of clearing the consciousness of the proletarian vanguard through democratic debate and active involvement in struggle so that they discover who their real allies and their real enemies are.

No bloc with the Stalinist clamp-down could have done anything but

put a river of blood between revolutionaries and the working masses and oppressed nationalities. Thus we had to stand with, and indeed take the front ranks in, the fight to stop the coup. But at the same time revolutionaries have to oppose Yeltsin's seizure and consolidation of power.

The fact that the first fruit of this present crisis is the installation of a counter-revolutionary government with mass support and considerable democratic illusions means that bringing the masses to oppose Yeltsin will not be swift or easy. Yeltsin is intent on resolving the instability of the post-coup revolutionary situation into a definitive victory for counter-revolution.

Draconian

He wishes to resolve the remaining duality of power with the remaining bureaucracy and create a regime with "democratic credentials", possibly by plebiscitary means, possibly by means of parliamentary elections. Such a regime would have a mandate to use the harshest police and military means to enforce its draconian economic measures to clear out all the bodies still stuffed with CPSU members.

The Soviet workers must seek to open a real duality of power between its own class organisations and both Yeltsin and Gorbachev, or for that matter the likes of Landsbergis and Gamsakhurdia. None of these people seek to bring democracy to the workers, collective farmers or the urban intelligentsia.

Once installed in power and seeking to crystallise a new class of exploiters even full and consistent bourgeois democratic rights for the masses will become intolerable. Yeltsin's eagerness to ban parties and newspapers, Gamsakhurdia's repression of all nationalist opposition to himself indicates just what these democrats are made of.

The working class must launch an immediate struggle to defend its own democratic rights. But these democratic rights must not stop short—as they do in all capitalist countries—at the gate of the factory, the office, the school or the hospital. These institutions were not built by capital but by the intelligence and the sweat of three generations of Soviet workers. They must not be handed over to assorted foreign banks and multinationals, Soviet "mafiosi" and speculators let alone to Yeltsinite ex-bureaucrats.

Independent

The struggle for workers' democracy must mean the organisations of the proletariat fighting for their independent class economic interests in the face of the economic crisis and against Yeltsin's project of the rapid restoration of capitalism. Secondly, the working class must, in the course of such struggles, reforge its own organisations, politically and organisationally independent of the state structures of the USSR, the republican governments and the corrupting clutches of the AFL-CIO the TUC or the DGB, and countless assorted imperialist labour agencies.



The USSR is threatened with a descent into national conflict and semi-colonial servitude. Only the workers can stop it!

The tasks of the Soviet workers are:

- to complete for themselves the most radical and thorough smashing of bureaucratic power while resisting the consolidation of power by the restorationists.

- For workers' action to drive out the party and KGB spies in the workplace, to abolish all party privileges, putting party property under the control of the factory committees.

- For workers' inspection of all CPSU property and files and the nationalisation of all assets accumulated by it at the expense of the workers' state. The handing over of all private sanatoria, party *dachas*, or independent workers' organisations and factory committees.

- Public trials by workers' juries alone of the plotters and organisers of the attempted clamp-down. At the same time we must oppose any witch-hunt of the CPSU rank and file members by the new authorities. No mass sackings of party members against whom no charges of anti-working class actions can be proved. Abolish the death penalty. No bans on political parties including the CPSU except for fascist parties like Pamyat

- An immediate end to Gorbachev's restrictions on strikes. Demand that Yeltsin and the so-called democrats who dominate the republican and city soviets repeal all restrictions on the right to strike to demonstrate to assemble.

- For workers' control of the mass media and against all state censorship whether by the Stalinist bureaucrats or the Yeltsinites.

- The workers of the USSR need no new Tsars, Stalins or capitalist dictators either. Down with Bonapartism in all its forms! Build and arm independent workers' organisations, fight for workers'/soldiers' control of the factories/army. Abolish all the special powers of the Soviet and republican presidencies. Abolish all special armed forces in every republic.

- End Gorbachev and Yeltsin's

capitulations and concessions to world imperialism. Continue and increase aid without strings to all states and movements in conflict with imperialism and its agents. Military and economic support for Cuba and Vietnam and the other bureaucratically degenerate workers' states. Support for any struggles by their workers to oust their bureaucrats including aid for a political revolution in China.

- Defend the remains of the gains of the October Revolution; defend state ownership of all large scale enterprises by putting them under workers' management; smaller economic units and those in the production and distribution of consumer goods that wish to should be transformed into worker co-operatives. All collective farms should be transformed into genuine democratic co-operatives. Drive the parasitic party bureaucrats out of the collective farm system. Transform the fake co-operatives formed in the Gorbachev period into genuine democratic bodies of producers and consumers. Expropriate the racketeers. Resist privatisation.

- Defend free and universal provision of housing, education, creches and care for the elderly and disabled under the control of the users and local workers' representatives; massively improve the quality of these services out of the expropriated wealth of the party and bureaucratic apparatus.

- Defend free abortion on demand; massively expand the availability of contraception; defend women's jobs; no forced return to the home as a result of the market.

- An emergency plan to stop the impending economic catastrophe. Immediate election of committees in every factory, office, shop, and collective farm and on the railways and in the haulage enterprises to draw up inventories of produce in all state, private and party storage. For town, city and regional councils of delegates from these committees to issue bind-

ing orders. The drawing up of an emergency plan for the winter at every level and its co-ordination by a union wide council of workers' and collective farmers' delegates. Only the workers and farmers can ensure that a speedy and equal distribution of food, fuel and clothing takes place.

- For an armed workers' and collective farmers' militia to enforce the emergency plan against the bureaucrats, the mafia, and all horders and speculators. Only such a militia can defend national minorities against pogromists, fascists and those who wish to make facts by changing borders against the will of their populations.

- For the immediate right to secession of all republics wishing to do so. Force the central government to recognise all "seceded" states and withdraw all SAF troops at once. Disband the special forces throughout the Union. For the right of self-determination of all oppressed nationalities within each of the republics, including autonomy or separation. For independent workers' council states in all the seceding republics.

- At the same time workers and their organisations throughout the USSR should render fraternal aid to workers in any state resisting privatisations and the attacks of the nationalist and restorationist governments. For workers' council states in every republic. For a voluntary federation of such states.

- Down with the undemocratic command planning of the bureaucrats in Gosplan, in the ministries, in the foreign trade bodies and in the state bank, including a thoroughgoing purge of the corrupt authoritarian and inefficient bureaucrats.

- No to the dissolution of the central planning bodies in favour of the economic institutions of the market and the capitalist state. Close the stock exchanges. For workers' inspection and control, and the transformation and restructuring of Gosplan into organs of democratic workers' planning.

- The creation in every town and city of councils of delegates elected in the workplaces and instantly recallable to co-ordinate both emergency economic planning and to organise the struggle against the attacks on all economic and social gains of the workers and collective farmers.

- As long as these gains survive the strategic task facing the working class remains the proletarian political revolution. For the creation of a democratic workers' state as an instrument of socialist construction and the international revolution against capitalism and imperialism.

With the restorationists now in power in many republics and in the central institutions a fierce revolutionary struggle will be needed to carry this out.

Essential as workers' councils and truly independent and democratic trade unions are to this struggle they cannot win without a centralised organisation of the best worker cadres from every struggle, of the most self-sacrificing intellectuals who reject capitalist exploitation and world imperialism.

This can be nothing else than a revolutionary workers' party, an anti-bureaucratic and anti-capitalist combat force based on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

YUGOSLAVIA

Nationalist bloodbath looms

THERE IS nothing progressive about the nationalism fuelling the virtual civil war in Eastern Croatia. Villages where Croats and Serbs have lived together for decades are now forcibly divided.

Some are in the control of Serbian "terrorists" backed by the Federal Army, others occupied by the Croatian militias. Communities and even families are pitched into a war from which they have little to gain. Tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee the area.

The actions of the Serbian fighters are part of a concerted attempt by the Serbian dominated Yugoslav Federation to deny Croatia the right to secede. In the recent phase of fighting these militias have gone well beyond any legitimate struggle to defend majority Serb areas and have begun to attack and to occupy Croatian towns such as Osijek.

The Serbian militias are backed not only by the Serbian army but now also by Federal Army troops. Their intervention, including the bombardment of towns and villages from the air and from ships on the Danube, confirms the worst fears of the Croats. They see Serbia trying to use the conflict to expand its borders, with the support of the armed forces of the Federation. It is this Serbian domination of the Federation which led to widespread support in Croatia for last year's declaration of independence.

But it is not just the Serbian side which is motivated by reactionary nationalism. The bourgeois democratic government of Croatia, led by President Tudjman, has promoted Croatian chauvinist sentiment.

The Croatian republic, having expressed its desire for independence, has every right to defend itself against Greater Serbian aggression. But the government has mobilised militias not simply for the legitimate defence of Croatian independence. They are fighting to deny rights of separation, or even autonomy, to the Serbs who form the majority of the population in twelve out of Croatia's 102 local districts.

The result is a bloody mess, which neither Stalinism nor European imperialism has the solution to.

The economic crisis of Yugosla-

The threat of full scale civil war in Yugoslavia increases by the day. Clare Heath analyses the causes of a conflict that grows bloodier with every EC brokered "ceasefire"

via, itself the result of decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, saw stagnation and growing inequalities. The bureaucracy offered no way forward other than increasing market forces with subordination and growing debt to the imperialists. Such economic instability necessarily produced insecurities which nationalists on both sides could then exploit.

In Serbia the rise of Milosevic was based initially on the oppression of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. More recently, Serbian nationalism has deepened amongst Serbs living in other republics, such as Croatia. These groups of Serbs were rightly fearful for their rights in an independent Croatian state. The bloody history of the Croatian fascist Ustase government's pogrom of Serbs in the Second World War has been used to increase these fears amongst people who have in reality been living side by side with Croats since the end of the war.

Milosevic is desperately trying to maintain the Yugoslav Federation and is utilising the Serbs living inside the borders of Croatia to try and obstruct the declaration of Croatian independence. Initially last year these majority Serbian regions declared that they did not want to be part of an independent Croatia but would remain in the Yugoslav Federation.

The Serbian government backed this claim whilst the Croatians re-

jected it. The latter saw it as a manoeuvre by the Serbs to re-draw the boundaries of the republics and deny them territory, a view supported by the recent intervention

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of the Federal army on the side of the Serbians.

The Serbian minority in Croatia have a legitimate grievance, and must be guaranteed the right to

autonomy or separation. But Milosevic has used their legitimate struggle to launch a military assault against Croatia.

The imperialists of the European Community (EC) and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) have looked on in horror at the developing civil war, and have come forward with a number of peace plans. But they are not intervening to put right the legitimate grievances which underlie the conflict. That is clearly revealed by their reluctance to recognise the two seceding republics (Croatia and Slovenia) despite the overwhelming democratic mandate which they had for independence.

The EC intervention has two purposes. They want political stability and they want to see the completion of the process of capitalist restoration throughout the whole of Yugoslavia, not just Croatia and Slovenia.

The imperialists would prefer not to face the results of the break up of Yugoslavia into a mess of tiny fighting states, which would necessarily promote national struggles of related minority peoples in Austria, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria. But their attempted peace missions have so far failed. Temporary ceasefires have not held and Milosevic is so far refusing to accept the conditions which the EC is trying to place on a ceasefire, which include the maintenance of existing borders.

But, having failed to persuade the Croatians and Slovenians to maintain the Federation, the EC is threatening to side with Croatia against the danger of Greater Serbian expansion. The EC has warned it will use economic sanctions

against the Federation and Serbia if they fail to recognise the EC peace plan. But it is now unclear whether any ceasefire agreed between Croatia and the Federation, even one agreed by Serbia, could hold.

The descent into chauvinist savagery, the result of the abject failure of Stalinism in Yugoslavia, has its own logic. The troops backing the Serbs, including those conducting air assaults on Croatian towns, are not necessarily going to accept any agreement.

The leader of the Federal presidency, Stipe Mesic, has said that the army is out of control and "is acting autonomously". Whilst the Federal leaders are bound to deny responsibility for the unconstitutional aggressive acts of the army, it does appear likely that the wave of Serbian nationalism is now so strong that Federal army units have become uncontrollable.

There have been demonstrations across Yugoslavia by women opposed to the conflict in which their sons are being used as cannon fodder in a stupid and divisive war. The aspirations of these women for peace are progressive, and show the possibility of building unity between the people of all the nationalities to resist the use of Federal or Republican troops in offensive attacks to expand territory.

But the question of defending national rights means that not all combat should be condemned. The Croatian Republic has every right to defend itself militarily against Serbian or Federal aggression. Equally the Serbs in Croatia who have been denied the right to separation have the right to defend themselves from the Croatian attacks which have occurred in recent months.

The prospects for a just settlement in Yugoslavia are very small. The present political leaders of the republics are worsening the situation with their chauvinist campaigns and their moves towards restoration of capitalism. The EC intervention, including the use of sanctions against Serbia, will only hasten the restoration of capitalism and the subordination of the entire area to imperialist exploitation.

The legitimate rights of the nationalities and the defence of the working class from the ravages of capitalism can only be achieved if chauvinism and restorationism are both rejected by the workers and farmers of Yugoslavia.

In the immediate period the working class internationalist position can only be maintained by fighting for workers' militias which are multi-national and which defend communities from pogroms, and forced movement. They must be based on the recognition of the rights of all nationalities to self-determination, opposed to the oppression of any nationality by another, and linked to workers' organisations committed to resisting the restoration of capitalism.

Such workers' militias and councils are the only progressive way out of the current conflict. They must be built on an utter hostility to national chauvinism whilst recognising the rights of nationalities to self-determination. ■



Serbian fighters under fire from Croats

MIDDLE EAST TALKS

Peace in our time?

Israeli President Yitzak Shamir's intransigence over negotiations is legendary. A popular joke in Israel has Shamir meeting James Baker off the plane, "How do you do" says Baker. "I do not do" replies Shamir. Nevertheless it has taken Baker only five official visits since March to secure Israeli agreement to a fully fledged Middle East peace conference.

Set for October, the peace conference has been Washington's principal foreign policy goal in the post-Gulf War period. The three main factors which led to Baker's diplomatic triumph have been Palestinian nationalism's crisis of direction, the spinelessness of the Arab bourgeoisie and, crucially, Israel's dependence on US funds.

With the conference timed to precede the 1992 Israeli and US election campaigns US imperialism has rarely had a better opportunity to negotiate a reactionary settlement in its own interests.

Baker's initial moves foundered when Israel's obdurate Prime Minister rejected US proposals that the conference should take place with United Nations (UN) involvement. This was despite assurances that the UN would play a "non-speaking role" and that Israel had the right to veto Palestinian representatives.

U-turn

But concessions from neighbouring Arab states and economic pressure from the USA combined to provoke a sudden U-turn in Israeli policy. On 4 August the Israeli cabinet voted by 16 to 3 to accept the US proposals, subject to further limitations.

Many observers were surprised at President Assad of Syria's renunciation of his "rejectionist" past, when he accepted Washington's proposals. But his cynical about turn was no surprise to the genuine allies of Palestinian liberation.

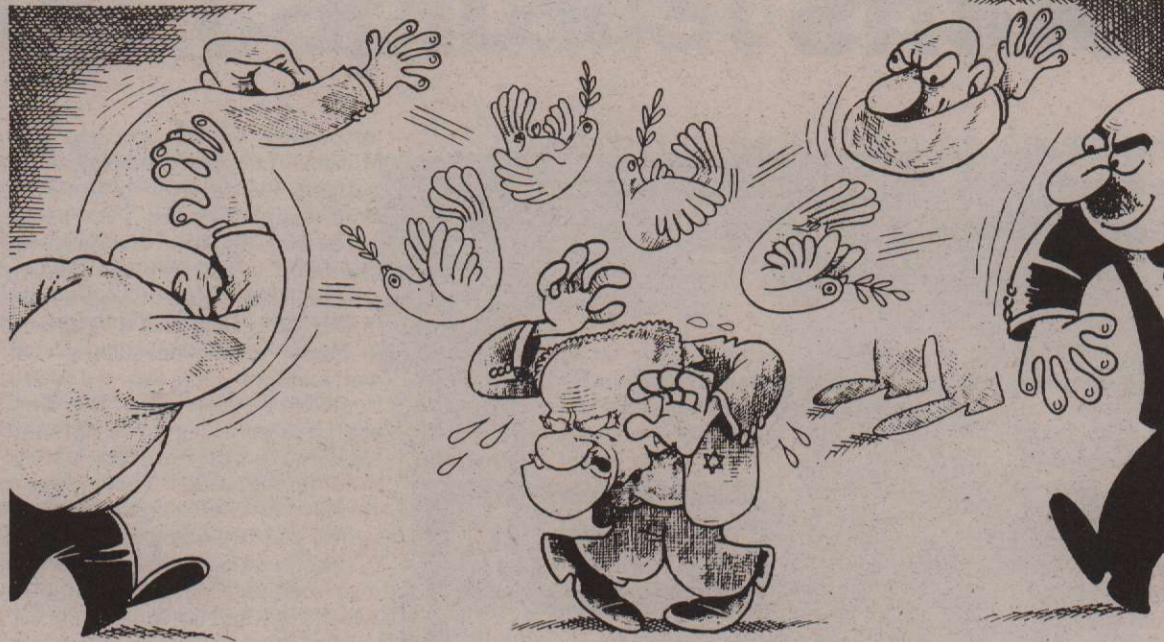
Under Assad, Syria has attained real hegemony over Lebanon, much to the relief of imperialism, marginalising the Palestinians and Shia militias. With his former Soviet allies facing a little local difficulty of their own, Assad is shrewd enough to realise to whom he should be offering his services.

His arch regional rival, Saddam Hussein, is not exactly flavour of the month in Washington. He clearly hopes that support for the USA in peace as well as war will win him the currently vacant position of US-sponsored Arab gendarme in the region.

Pressure

But the compliance of the Arab ruling class alone would never have been enough to bring the Zionist state to the negotiating table. Behind the scenes real economic pressure is being brought to bear by the USA.

Israel is planning a formal request to the USA in September for a \$10 billion loan guarantee, to ensure access to world capital markets, and to a potential \$20-30 billion in loans over the next five years. It needs these, in addition to their annual \$3 billion routine aid from the USA, to finance the private and state investment in infrastructure needed to provide homes and jobs for the vast numbers of Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel from the USSR.



Yitzak Shamir embraces peace

Three hundred thousand arrived in the 18 months up to the end of June this year, and numbers are expected to rise to one million by the end of 1994. This, together with the 14,500 Ethiopian Jews who arrived over a three day period earlier this year, would represent a 20% growth in Israel's population.

Bush made it clear in June that the USA was expecting a little something in return: a freeze on the Zionists' current building programme on the West Bank and Gaza, the biggest in the history of their colonisation of the occupied territories and one of the key obstacles to a negotiated settlement.

In late June, Finance Minister Yitzak Modai attempted a blatant negotiating ploy, claiming that he had drawn up "contingency plans" in the event that US assistance was not forthcoming. But the Zionist state's inability to cope without this boost is clear.

Even with the anticipated loans, the cost of education and social provision for the new immigrants has required an increase in VAT, a sur-

charge on income tax and additional funds from the diaspora. The Israeli cabinet is divided as the finance ministry fights it out with the military over funds allocated in this year's budget.

Already there have been reported clashes between Russian and Ethiopian Jews over existing housing. Soviet immigrants recently demonstrated in indignation at their lack of jobs and inadequate accommodation. The "land of milk and honey" currently boasts 10% unemployment (160,000), which includes 40% of the Soviet influx since January 1990. The Bank of Israel, not previously noted for its anti-Zionist propaganda, estimates 225,000 unemployed by the end of the year rising eventually to 400,000.

In short, Israel could not hold itself together without the aid, and the USA knows it. It would mean severe austerity, social and political instability and strife between Jews of different national origin. It would mean the progressive dissolution of the marginal but very real privileges that divide Jewish workers from their Arab brothers and

BY RICHARD BRENNER

sisters, and bind them to their Zionist masters.

That explains Shamir's about turn. He agreed to the main thrust of the US proposal, adding further restrictions on Palestinian representation. They cannot be PLO members, citizens of Jerusalem or from communities beyond Israel and the occupied territories. They will have to remain a subordinate component of the Jordanian delegation.

As if to emphasise that this should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness, the cabinet authorised a further West Bank settlement only days after accepting Baker's plan.

Is a regional settlement now possible?

Despite Shamir's legendary intransigence, other leading politicians in his arch-conservative Likud party are better disposed towards the imperialist peace process. Foreign Minister David Levy has stated his willingness to talk to any Pales-

actions at every turn. From the fanatics of Moledet to the "Zionist Left" of Mapam, Shinui and the Citizens' Rights Movement, they are all unable consistently to oppose discrimination in entry and citizenship rights because all refuse to accept an end to the constitutionally established Jewish character of the state.

The most "left" Zionist formations can only go so far as to recognise Palestinian rights to a state alongside Israel, thus preserving Jewish privilege in land allocation, employment and housing.

Only expropriation of private property, a democratic plan of industrial and agricultural production and a state that is genuinely secular in character can guarantee real democracy and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

If the Israeli Jewish left is to take its place in the fight for lasting peace this must by definition involve a radical rupture with Zionism in all its forms and a turn to a revolutionary proletarian and internationalist strategy.

The Palestinians' right to self-determination is incompatible with the very existence of a specifically Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists confirm this through their actions at every turn.

tinian, "even if he danced on the roof when the Scuds fell". The mayors of Herzliyah and Tel Aviv have called for talks with the PLO and have not excluded a separate Palestinian state.

The virulently racist parties of the Zionist far right have been muted in their response so far. Three of these parties, Tzomet, Tehiya and Moledet, have a place in the cabinet, and their seven deputies are crucial to the survival of the governmental coalition. Both the Tehiya and Moledet ministers refused to resign from the cabinet in protest at Shamir's U-turn, and Tzomet actually voted for acceptance.

Meanwhile, Labour have been thoroughly embarrassed by Shamir's unexpected theft of their political clothes. Both of the traditional rivals for party leadership, Peres and Rabin, support some form of compromise on the land question and participation in peace talks.

The Palestinians' right to self-determination is incompatible with the very existence of a specifically Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists confirm this through their

Palestinian masses allow themselves to be duped by their present misleaders.

The Palestinian movement is in disarray. The PLO, self-proclaimed "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", is reeling from its military defeat at the hands of the Lebanese army and has lost its precious respectability in US and European liberal circles. Now it is deeply divided over participation in the Baker talks.

Remaining obstacles have been played down by the PLO's Bassam Abu Sharif, whilst the mayor of Bethlehem, closely linked to the movement, has supported the call. Meanwhile the Unified Command of the Palestinian Intifada, whose youthful leaders co-ordinate the revolt in the occupied territories and meet out basic class justice to collaborators, have firmly opposed the talks. So has the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of George Habash.

The Palestine National Council, sovereign body of the PLO, is due to meet in September for the first time since 1988, when it distinguished itself in imperialism's eyes with a monumental act of treachery in recognising the right of the Zionist state to exist.

There are two possibilities facing the PLO. It could call for a boycott of the conference. But this would mean recognising that its entire policy of concessions to imperialism has failed. The alternative would be to support the initiative. But this could have serious consequences for the unity of the PLO, and for its ability to retain its mass base in the face of competition from Islamic militants.

Affront

The Islamic radicals oppose any recognition of Israel and any negotiations. Unlike all strands of Palestinian nationalism, their religious ideology sees Zionist colonisation not principally as an affront to national self-determination, but as an act of usurpation of Islamic land which the mere elapse of time can never cure. Islam provides an idealist framework within which immediate political and economic expediency must be subordinated to loftier goals.

In the context of Fatah's paralysis, and the discrediting of Stalinism, Islamic militancy can extend its roots among the petit bourgeoisie, youth and lumpen-proletariat of the occupied territories and the camps. The Islamic movement Hamas has issued a joint statement with the PFLP condemning the talks and stating that Palestinian negotiator Faisal Husseini has no right to speak for the Palestinians. The petit bourgeois terrorists of Islamic Jihad have threatened to kill him.

Whether or not imperialism persuades the Zionists to endorse the reactionary settlement, the writing is on the wall for Palestinian nationalism as a political strategy. History is proving, unfortunately the hard way, that the Palestinian bourgeoisie is too weak to fight for self-determination through a territorially united, capitalist nation state.

To avert an imperialist settlement that will set back still further the liberation of Palestine, and to prevent the loss of a whole generation of heroic and determined Palestinian fighters to the Islamic reactionaries, an internationalist workers' party must be built.

This party must have a perspective of permanent revolution: bringing the working class to the head of the struggle against Zionism and imperialism, fighting for a workers' republic in Palestine and for a federation of workers' republics in the Middle East. ■

Reformists woo the centre

The Irish Workers Group, after three years of publishing *Class Struggle* as a propaganda paper, have decided to go back, for the next period, to producing a series of *Class Struggle* journals/pamphlets. The purpose is to undertake new propaganda tasks in Ireland which cannot be carried through with the available resources while continuing to publish their paper. During this period *Workers Power* will expand our coverage of current Irish events and carry political statements from the IWG.

MARY ROBINSON'S election as President of Ireland, nominated by Labour and the Workers Party last autumn, was touted as the greatest gain in a decade for the Irish left. But she remains, as we argued during her campaign, powerless even to express support for the kind of social reforms which she had previously defended as a constitutional lawyer.

As titular head of state she does as she is told by Haughey's government. When he refused her permission to accept a BBC invitation

to give the annual Dimpleby Lecture, she could say and do nothing in protest! And on a whole series of crucial developments in the area of sexuality and women's rights she has had to shut up and put up!

Robinson's "victory" has even been used by the reformist leaders to justify a scramble to abandon all explicit references to socialism in their programmes in the name of appealing to the "broader" constituency of "all the people". At its conference at Easter, leader Dick Spring presented the Labour Party with a new constitution which abandons all reference to Connolly's Workers' Republic as an aim of the party. It previously removed the same reference at the urging of the Catholic hierarchy in 1930, only to see it reinstated by the left in 1969!

Gone too is its traditional emblem of Irish labour, the Sary Plough. Spring had no difficulty in selling his new constitution to the party majority despite refusing them any right whatever to put down amendments! He knew he had nothing to fear from the "Labour left" who had previously allowed him to see off the Militant Tendency without a fight.

De Rossa, leader of the Workers Party, openly competing with Labour's attempt to "move to the centre", was not quite so successful in putting over his new constitution at a party conference on 5 May. He made the mistake of allowing democratic debate and amendments, trying to dispel the legacy of the party's Stalinist internal regime, which had been publicly blasted in a revolt by party ideologues after the collapse of the East German state last year.

Recalcitrant Belfast delegates who had nothing but their left rhetoric to offer to the Belfast masses, would not allow De Rossa to remove references to the centrality of the class struggle or the need for a "revolutionary democratic socialist party"! The party did agree, however, to abandon the aim of nationalising the big banks! They even assented to the idea of a joint "defence" apparatus within the EC!

De Rossa personally attempted, though in vain, to remove the adjective "secular" from the "democratic socialist republic", which remains the aim of the party. The entire rationale for this new opportunism by the leadership was not that they are not secular or against the class struggle, but that such terms would only alienate the broad constituency to whom they must now appeal!

On 27 June Labour got 10.6% of the vote in the local elections (14.5% in Dublin) and the Workers Party 3.7% (8.7% in Dublin). Though claimed as the dawning of class politics by these parties, the sum total of "left" votes including independents is still 5% less than the total vote won by Labour alone in 1969 on a left reformist programme. The local elections saw the Militant Tendency gain one council seat in Dublin for Joe Higgins who had been expelled from Labour's ruling council and the party. His campaign did not stress the fight for labour movement democracy against Spring but focused almost entirely on his role in local community politics. Militant has been forced almost entirely out of the party and halved in size as a result. ■

Economic crisis hits jobs and wages

THE DUBLIN Government of Charles Haughey is threatened with the worst economic crisis in thirty years. The optimism on which the bosses and union bureaucrats built their joint "Programme for Economic Progress" in March has now given way to deep gloom over the highest ever recorded level of unemployment.

At 22% of the workforce, unemployment has grown to 271,000—20% more than last year, and double the level of ten years ago. These figures coincide with the five year census which revealed the highest rate of emigration since the Great Famine, reducing a 3% net growth in population to a 3% drop in the state's population. Britain was the primary destination for these mostly young migrants, until the recession bit deep and this year started adding them instead to Haughey's domestic dole queues.

At the same time government borrowing has gone 20% over target and GNP growth estimates have come down from 2.25% to 0.5% for the year. National debt stands at 110% of GNP in a country where most industrial exports are generated by foreign capital largely exempt from taxes on its profits. The revenue to repay borrowing increasingly eats into wage packets, which have grown by only 18% over four years, barely equivalent to inflation.

And to cap it all, the EC in the coming year will slash the agricultural price supports which have shaped the whole of Irish agriculture for almost twenty years. There was little sympathy among workers for the

farmers' plight when, at the beginning of June, large cargo ships were anchored in Cork harbour as a permanent overflow store for butter bought by the EC. But the Irish bourgeoisie shivers at the prospects for its strongest indigenous sector as the USA forces the EC towards dismantling its Common Agricultural Policy.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is prostrate. It foisted on the workers its new three-year national wage-restraint package, and new legal shackles on strikes, with lying promises of job creation and economic development. Now it is faced with its "social partner" threatening to cancel wage rises payable to public sector workers next year, and in several sectors already refusing to pay the minimum increases due this year. A new round of cuts in public spending is being prepared, at the expense of already crumbling health and local services, allied to the privatisation of as many state companies as possible.

Under the present social contract the union leaders openly ditched their traditional defence of the nationalised sector and sold out rank and file resistance to privatisation. The giant Irish Life Assurance Company has been sold off. Bus services and the Telecom are being prepared for sale. Even state control of the Electricity Supply Board is under review. Recently the Irish Sugar Company was privatised, with the loss of many jobs, while William Attley, the £60,000 a year head of the largest union, SIPTU, stayed on as a member of its privatised

Board!

In contrast to Britain such a wholesale liquidation of state assets, in a small dependent open economy with a continuing revenue crisis, will mean even deeper disaster for the Irish bourgeoisie in the medium term unless there is a major general upturn in capitalism.

The spectacle of widespread and growing poverty throughout the South has generated convulsions of hand-wringing and concern among the clergy and the media, and desperate rhetoric from the union leaders. A broad alliance of opposition parties and union leaders is calling for a "national forum" on unemployment which would supposedly lay out all the facts, enlist the support of all sections, and come up with "solutions". But no amount of "sacrifices" screwed out of those with jobs could make any real difference to the desperate plight of the unemployed, the poor and the class as a whole.

Only a militant movement of the rank and file, determined to break the class collaboration of Attley and his parasitic caste, could even begin to champion the needs of the mass of unemployed.

Their fight must be to force the state to create useful schemes of employment at full wage rates for all. A starting point for such militant resistance may present itself shortly as new cuts are announced and Haughey attempts to take back the wage "increases" promised under the very deal which had been designed to tie the hands of the working class. ■

Reaction targets sexual rights

AS MUCH as unemployment, the availability of condoms has dominated the Irish media for months. Mary Robinson's victory was cited in both government and opposition parties as proof of the need to move to more liberal attitudes towards women. The Fine Gael Opposition put on the pressure by calling for a re-examination of the ban on divorce and restrictions on contraception.

At the same time a successful prosecution was taken against the sale of condoms in an unlicensed shop. In response, the tiny Progressive Democrat party on which the government coalition depends, forced Haughey to announce that condoms would be made

widely available to anyone over sixteen.

Observers of Fianna Fáil rubbed their eyes in amazement, but the leopard had not changed its spots, and by July the conservative majority in Fianna Fáil and the mobilised Catholic hierarchy, helped Haughey off the hook, silencing even their "liberal" coalition partners. The net result is that the availability of condoms is now at the discretion of the conservative-dominated local health boards and will vary across the eight regions—but condoms for under-17s or in vending machines remain illegal throughout the country! Meanwhile AIDS spreads unabated.

A parallel reactionary débâcle is under way in Belfast where there has been a huge increase in pregnancies among young single women. Attempts to set up a Brooks sexual counselling service for young people is being opposed by a joint mobilisation of Paisleyites, the SDLP, Catholic and Presbyterian clergy!

The mobilisation of working class youth and women is a crucial task for socialists confronting the continuing reactionary obstacles of a society which bans divorce, still criminalises male homosexuality despite the European Court ruling of two years ago, and restricts access to life-protecting

condoms.

One issue which has been taken up by women and students has been the right to information and counselling about abortion. Non-directive counselling is outlawed. Both of the campaigns which took up this issue in 1984 and 1989 ended up being demobilised by centrists, feminists and labour lefts and diverted into European legal bodies. On 16 May the European Court of Human Rights gave a preliminary opinion, after three years, that Irish women should have the right to counselling on the option of abortion.

The dice rolled the other way for the case of the students who led the struggle to defy the ban on

abortion information in 1989. On 11 June the European Court of Justice gave a preliminary opinion against their claim that Irish women had the right to services across national boundaries under the Single European Act, including access to information about abortion. But the Advocate General argued that national interpretations of "moral and philosophical interests" had to be allowed. The issue could not be reduced to availability of commercial services across borders! He obviously had not heard that an Irish court had just convicted a woman in Ireland for not paying fees demanded for an abortion by a UK clinic earlier this year! After the latest ruling

SPUC declared its intention to hound the student leaders of the 1989 campaign for £30,000 in costs awarded. Sadly, the collapse of that fighting campaign has meant little or no ability to mobilise against these outrageous demands, or even to raise the money.

The tide must be turned by urgently bringing together, on an open democratic basis, all forces committed to defence of democratic rights for women and youth, to hammer out an action programme and goals of struggle. ■

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Dave Hughes

1948-1991

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International has lost one of its finest fighters. The working class movement has lost one of its most dedicated and energetic members. Dave Hughes, a founder member of Workers Power and the LRCI, died on 13 August 1991, aged 43.

Dave was a revolutionary for almost a quarter of a century. He joined the International Socialists (IS—now the SWP) in 1968 while studying at Keele University. Many of the radicals of that period quickly made their peace with capitalism. Dave became convinced that everything that was evil, oppressive and mean could only be overcome through working class revolution.

In the early 1970s he moved to Birmingham where the IS put his energy and remarkable agitational talents to good use. He became a key organiser, helping to recruit and train an influx of car and engineering workers whose militancy had led to them breaking from the bureaucratic policies and practices of both the Labour and Communist parties.

But Dave's keen understanding of Marxism, his gradual rediscovery of the authentic ideas of Leon Trotsky and his fervent desire to take the working class forward from militant trade union struggle to conscious socialist action all brought him into political conflict with the leadership of the IS.

After the bombing of Aldershot barracks in 1972, IS dropped their unconditional support for the IRA. This spurred Dave and a number of other comrades to form the Left Faction within IS. Had they not shown both insight and courage, there would be no LRCI today. The Left Faction, which Dave led, was the direct forerunner of our organisation.

The Left Faction challenged IS's errors on Ireland, women and work in the unions, but they also grasped the methodological roots of these mistakes and the which separated IS from Trotsky's tradition. The IS leadership would not put up with this kind of criticism and the Left Faction was expelled in 1975. Following a brief period of fusion in the short-lived International Communist League, Dave pulled together a group of supporters to refound Workers Power as an independent organisation in 1976.

The subsequent history of Workers Power, and later the development of the LRCI, are Dave's history. Our very existence, our growth and our firm commitment to the revolutionary class struggle are monuments to his work.

Dave's contributions to Workers Power and the LRCI would fill a book. In the late 1970s Dave wrote the key documents and articles that guided Workers Power towards consistent revolutionary thought and action. Together with his closest friend and co-thinker, Dave Stocking, Dave wrote a series of articles which laid the foundation stones for our re-elaboration of the revolu-



Dave speaking at a meeting to mark the centennial of Marx's death, 13 March 1983

tionary programme that culminated in *The Trotskyist Manifesto* (1989).

A lecturer in History at Leicester Polytechnic, Dave could both speak and read Russian. Using his intimate knowledge of the USSR he re-examined the history of the Bolshevik Party to equip us with an understanding of the relationship of programme and party.

Dave was the founding editor of *Workers Power* newspaper (1978), writing under the name John Hunt. He wrote much of our major work on the USSR, *The Degenerated Revolution* (1983). In the second half of the 1980s, his concentration on the USSR increased. Month in, month out, he charted

the rise and significance of Gorbachev and his policies. Even while he was ill he read Russian language papers, maintained contacts with the USSR and passed on his information and his insights into the death agony of Stalinism.

Like all great revolutionaries, Dave was a man of action. He knew that Marxist theory was barren unless it was rooted in the living experience of the class struggle. Strikes, from the smallest to the largest, were always an inspiration to him. Every leaflet and bulletin he wrote embodied the experience of the workers he talked to, fused with a Marxist understanding of the key steps on the road to victory.

He was Workers Power's industrial organiser whilst the group built bases in London Transport, in the rail industry, in Ford, in the Health Service and in local government and education. Trade union activist comrades always knew that when they faced a problem—be it mundane and routine, or be it a major question of strike strategy—Dave could be guaranteed to offer sound advice on how to go forward.

The British miners' strike of 1984-85 brought out his best qualities. He flung himself into the strike, enabling Workers Power to produce a fortnightly newspaper for much of the period and to win a large audience in the ranks of the NUM. Dave's whole being was infused with an unshakable commitment to the strike. His work won him the love and admiration of miners in Keresley, Leicester, South Wales, Kent and Yorkshire.

Working intensively with these militants, Dave helped us draw them together in regular meetings to discuss both the strike and the politics of Workers Power. He played a leading role in organising the miners who came together in 1985 at a 150 strong conference to form the National Rank and File Miners' Movement. Workers Power had entered the miners' strike without a single contact in the pits, but entered the rank and file conference with a team of miners from several coalfields committed to our politics and organisation.

Dave's work in the miners' strike typified his revolutionary vitality. Everybody who ever met Dave knows that he was an exceptional man. His energy, enthusiasm and love of comrades were outstanding. He always had time to listen and talk, to laugh and joke, to discuss and console. His human qualities will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

That a man who had so much to give has died so young is a tragedy. In paying tribute to Dave Hughes—a revolutionary, an internationalist, a working class fighter and a great man—we seek consolation for the terrible sense of loss that we all feel by remembering the contribution he made to all of our lives, the work he undertook to build Workers Power and the LRCI, the dedication he felt towards the working class and its struggles.

Dave's hatred of exploitation and oppression never wavered. His will to build a revolutionary party carried him through months of illness. He would never give up. Only death could rob the working class of this fighter and rid the bosses of this relentless enemy. But death cannot erase the memory of what Dave stood for. We will see to that. Like him, we will never give up. That is our tribute to a comrade we loved and respected.

We send our most sincere condolences to Kate—Dave's comrade and companion, to Dave's family and to all his friends and comrades around the world. He will be sorely missed.

COMRADES FROM all over the world have been in touch with Workers Power and with Kate, to convey their grief and sadness at the death of our comrade Dave Hughes.

Our comrades in Peru sent a message recalling Dave's role as a teacher and leader in the early days of the LRCI. Within the Peruvian trade union movement the comrades are publishing details of Dave's life as a revolutionary fighter. A commemoration meeting is to be held in Lima.

Comrades from the Irish Workers Group were present at Dave's funeral and will attend the scheduled memorial meeting in London. They remember well Dave's role in helping their group establish

itself, first as an opposition within the Cliffite Socialist Workers' Movement and later as an independent organisation.

The comrades from the USA, the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency, a group with which the LRCI has fraternal relations, conveyed their commiserations to us. The comrades recalled how important their discussions with Dave were about the events in Poland—a key issue on which they broke from the Bolshevik Tendency and towards the LRCI.

All of the sections of the LRCI have sent their condolences to Kate and to Workers Power, some of which are printed here, and all will be redoubling their efforts to build

the League in the stormy months and years ahead. This is the sort of commemoration that is the best tribute to Dave's life work as a revolutionary.

Apart from the LRCI we have been contacted by others on the left and one of the letters we received, from the RKL, we print on this page, and we thank the comrades deeply for their warm and comradely message.

We thank the friends and contacts of Dave's, like those who faxed us from Moscow on the day of his funeral and amidst the momentous struggle going on around them, who did not share Dave's views, but who respected him and were prepared to risk a great deal to help us in our struggle.

From Poder Obrero (Bolivia) To the friends and comrades of Dave Hughes,

We would like to extend our deepest sympathies for the tragic death of Dave Hughes, an exemplary friend and comrade.

Dave has left a vacuum very difficult to fill. Nevertheless, we commit ourselves to following his lead in the task of building better days for humanity

From the Revolutionär Kommunistische Liga
Dear LRCI comrades,

We were deeply shocked by the news of the death of Comrade Dave Hughes. We remember Dave very well—his serious attitude to politics and to political discussion, never hiding differences but always maintaining solidarity. In particular our older comrades like to remember fine evenings when we walked through London, when Dave showed us where Marx lived, worked and drank his beer. Many hard days of political discussions would end with interesting and amus-

ing discussions with Dave. These were good times.

When differences with Workers Power sharpened and the Austrian IKL split we lost direct contact with Dave. But our experience of Dave and our estimation of Workers Power mean we say in mourning: Revolutionary Trotskyism has lost one of its most important comrades!

With sympathy,
RKL, Vienna 18 August 1991

Dear comrade Kate, Dear comrades of Workers Power,

News of the death of our esteemed comrade Dave struck us heavily and without warning. Although we had known of his serious, protracted illness, each of us had counted on his recovery and his return to political work.

All the more deeply then have we, and above all those comrades who knew him personally, been shaken by the news of his passing. In Dave we have lost not only an outstanding fighter, but also a good friend; a revolutionary who inspired us and served as a model for us all, not only

through his devotion to the cause of the proletariat, but also through his human warmth, his heart-felt sincerity and his wit.

We wish to convey to you, comrade Kate, to our British comrades, and to all his relatives and friends, our deepest sympathy at Dave's tragic death.

In deep sadness, With communist greetings, Gruppe Arbeitmacht

Dear Kate,
Dear Workers Power,

We received the sad news of Dave's death. He was a good teacher and a friend to all of us. In this moment of sadness and tragedy we want you to know that in this other corner of the planet there are people who are with you. The seeds that Dave sowed in our consciousness will yield good fruit. At the moment we are commemorating the 51st anniversary of the death of Leon Trotsky and now we will also commemorate one of his great disciples. All our comrades share in your sadness.

Your comrades in Peru

MEMORIAL MEETING

3.00-5.00pm
Sunday 15th September
Large Lecture Theatre
Polytechnic of Central London
155 New Cavendish Street
Admission £1
Nearest tubes: Goadge St,
Warren St, Oxford Circus

DAVE HUGHES MEMORIAL FUND

Dave's death creates a big gap in the LRCI: Russian and East European work. Through this fund we hope to finance one or more comrades to learn to read and speak Russian and send comrades to the USSR. At this important turning point in the history of the Soviet Union it is also vital that we accelerate the translation of the LRCI's material into Russian and extend the search for committed socialists prepared to organise around it. To all our readers who have gained insight from Workers Power's coverage of the terminal crisis of Stalinism and are keen to see Trotskyism take root in the USSR we urge you give generously.

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

- Peace in the Middle East?
- Fighting Labour's witch-hunt
- The Citizen's Charter

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Labour's phoney war

THE NEW model Labour Party has still not captured the imagination of the responsible middle classes despite its leaders best efforts. Labour's policy statements emerge, vapid and bland, from the London headquarters on Walworth Road. They do little to inspire potential voters.

Well prepared press conferences and carefully vetted television appearances by Labour's new batch of publicity conscious spokespeople simply make the party look indistinguishable from the Tories. As the *Guardian* put it "the Opposition's economic message may not yet be distinctive enough for floating voters".

Above all else its leaders aim to prove its solid respectability to Britain's bosses. By its fiscal conservatism, and guarantees that spending increases will only match what the economy will allow, Labour wish to show they are at last fit for government.

Gordon Brown, the Trade and Industry spokesman, John Smith, the Shadow Chancellor, and Neil Kinnock are to tour the country to drive home Labour's message to the chambers of commerce, alarmed by the lengthening recession. A Labour Party spokesman said: "The Government's record is a mixture of complacency, incompetence, and downright irresponsibility towards the economy".

The Labour Party wishes to make it clear, socialism now consists of a 1% cut in interest rates, the redeployment of council house sale receipts to building programmes, and the reallocation of education and training resources.

Labour strategists are, however, worried that this package fails to distinguish them adequately from the Majorites. So, they have orchestrated a "summer offensive" on the Tories. It hasn't done much to damage the

Tories. But it has shown how right wing Labour's campaigning, as well as its programme, has become.

All of the targets were chosen to demonstrate Labour's fidelity to the institutions of British capitalism. They, not the Tories, will be able to avoid scandals like the collapse of BCCI, Jim Callaghan's favourite bank. Labour policies would ensure that there will never again be an IRA escapee from Brixton Prison. State security will be tighter under Labour. Their fear of being associated with any "radical" reforms means they are the party that would not dream of taxing the Queen!

The criticism levelled at the Tories is not that their policies are rotten anti-working class ones, merely that they have become a bunch of incompetent bunglers. Labour will be the government of administrative competence.

The only departure from this type of attack on the Tories is their exposure of the government's "Big Lies". The rapid rise of unemployment towards three million and the impending privatisation of the NHS are two examples where Labour is prepared to blame Tory policy and expose Tory lies.

But they expose these lies whilst accepting the central planks of the Conservatives' approach: the shackling of the unions and the reduction of public spending to what "sound finance" will allow, and no re-nationalisation of the industries and services privatised. Workers will not flock to the cry "Stop the cuts—as resources allow!"

Socialists must have an altogether different strategy—one of all-out war on any concessions to the bosses. Now is not the time to abandon the Labour Party to Kinnock and his friends. Socialists must fight every inch of the way to mobilise party members and workers in general to

organise now to force Labour to commit itself to the repeal of the anti-union laws, to a named cash sum to meet underfunding in the public services, to a programme of re-nationalisation, to amnesty for Poll-Tax non-payers.

Fighting to force Labour to meet working class needs is part and parcel of the fight against Kinnock's witch-hunt, and part of the necessary preparation of the working class to resist the attacks that will be made on it by any future Labour government.

This struggle must be waged inside the Labour Party so as to weaken Kinnock's rule. It must be conducted outside the party as well, so that in every struggle that pits workers against the bosses, workers who are looking to a Labour government are mobilised to pressure it into meeting their real and immediate needs. ■

Students under attack

STUDENTS STARTING courses this autumn will face crowded lectures, less tutorial help from lecturers, poor accommodation—and all on ever diminishing grants.

Grants for students in higher education are frozen for the second year running. Only students from the most wealthy backgrounds can now avoid running into severe debt. Last year, the majority of students steered clear of the government's loan scheme, running up overdrafts instead. But the financial squeeze will be more intense this year.

On top of the frozen grants come the cuts in social security entitlement. In particular, no housing benefit in the vacations means yet more dependence on parents for younger students. For many older ones, particularly working class students, the benefit cuts are the last straw in forcing them to drop out.

Despite these problems more students than ever have applied to polytechnics and universities, feeling the pressure of competition for decent jobs when mass unemployment blights every region.

The government is failing to meet the demand and failing to properly finance the increases in numbers that have been made. In particular, the polytechnic sector, desperate for expansion and extra cash, has increased its intake. But the extra cash thereby gained doesn't match the real needs of the expanded courses.

The inevitable result is a fall in the standard of teaching and of resources. Meanwhile staff are under pressure to allow sub-standard courses to run. The scandal at Swansea, where after a long campaign the university has agreed that one money spinning MA was inadequate, is just the tip of the iceberg.

If students in higher education are in for a difficult time things are likely to get even worse in the further education sector, always the poor relation.

Government plans, due to be made law in the next parliamentary session, will mean that colleges go out of local education authority control. The result for many colleges and courses—particularly in the area of adult education—will be cuts and closures.

School leavers seeking training places are no better off. An estimated 50,000 will be without the "guaranteed" training place promised by the Tories.

The Tories must not get away with this massive attack on education and youth. Students and staff must organise now against the cuts. It is no use waiting for Labour, who have refused to commit themselves to providing a living grant and who support many of the Tories' proposals for further education.

The leadership of the NUS and of the lecturers' unions, NATFHE and the AUT, want more of the same public relations campaigns. The Tories can ride these out. What we need is direct action for a living grant and quality education. FE teachers and students should join the Save Adult and Further Education Campaign to fight the Tories' proposals.

In higher education students must organise at course and departmental level to demand proper provisions and adequate teaching. You cannot study properly if you are living out of a suitcase and on the breadline. We need action committees at college and national level to lead the fightback. If the union leadership will not fight, rank and file students must seize the initiative. ■



Labour's winning team?

Labour left in crisis — turn to page 3