

Workers power

FASCIST TERROR IN GERMANY



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INSIDE

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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DON'T WAIT FOR LABOUR

Fight to save the NHS!



THE TORIES are on the run over the NHS. That is the view of the political pundits. Viewed from the bottom of the NHS waiting list or a hard pressed hospital ward it is difficult to be complacent.

Even as William Waldegrave dithered over scrapping tax relief for pensioners' private care the Tories were pushing through another 99 NHS opt-outs.

And a top NHS trust representative outlined to bosses how the opt-out hospitals will scrap national pay deals for health workers and tear up their existing contracts.

Tory plans for health are simple. Year after year they will push through waves of new NHS trusts until only a tiny number of specialist units are left under the direct control of the Department of Health.

Then the market will be in full control. According to Tory theory market forces work like a "hidden

hand", pushing resources to where they are needed, ironing out discrepancies in the cost and standard of care. In reality the "hidden hand" is slowly squeezing the life out of the NHS, ruining the health care of millions of people.

"Trusts don't equal privatisation" say the Tories, because they don't make profits and they are owned on behalf of the government by their governing bodies.

But you don't have to look very far to see what the Tories have in mind for the NHS. When they privatised half the Post Office they first split it into separate, public owned companies. They legalised competition and encouraged private capitalists to

move in to the post and telecom industries. Then they sold off the most profitable parts.

With the health service they don't need to encourage private capitalists. From the very start the NHS was designed to co-exist with a queue-jumping private health care system. Private hospitals, pay beds and insurance schemes netted the capitalists and consultants £812 million in 1990.

Barrier

By dividing the NHS into little state-owned companies and making them balance their books, the Tories have tom down the barrier between a public service and private profiteers. Health authorities can buy care in private hospitals in their area, lining the pockets of the profit sharks even more. At the same time the NHS Trusts are freed to balance their books by plunging into the lucrative private market.

Peter Townsend, former chairman of leading private health firm Bioplan, predicted that by 1997 most private care will be done by NHS hospitals. He urged NHS Trust managers to "focus on the potential revenues they are seeing in the independent sector"—revenues in excess of £60,000 per bed per year.

And every one of these pay beds, every hour of health workers' time to service them, will mean less resources for those who cannot pay.

As far as the effect on patient care is concerned this is just the thin end of the wedge. To balance their books NHS trusts have already started to charge for "extra" services. Fertility treatment for childless couples, ante natal classes for pregnant women, incontinence pads for the elderly, surgical aids for arthritis sufferers have all been charged for by the new trust hospitals.

The myth that "money will follow the patient" is being exploded day by day as the money runs out.

Kettering Health Authority was on the point of telling doctors to stop referring patients to other areas where they would get better treatment—because the money set aside for it has gone.

Waldegrave intervened to stop this being announced, but in practice it will happen all the same.

The Tory opt-out scheme is designed to create a two tier health system. It is creeping privatisation, where the effects of the profit system are unleashed on health care well in advance of full scale privatisation.

They won't let us vote on their opt-out schemes. Unofficial ballots of local communities and NHS workers have returned majorities against the Trusts of between 60% and 90%. So much for "popular capitalism".

Disrupt

Labour promises to scrap the Trusts. But in the meantime the Labour and trade union leaders will go out of their way to ensure that there are no active campaigns, no strikes or occupations to disrupt their respectable parliamentary opposition to NHS privatisation.

Workers and patients who rely on the NHS can't afford to wait for Labour. An immediate campaign of direct action to stop the new wave of Trusts and defend beds, services, pay and conditions in the existing Trusts is the best way to put the Tories well and truly on the run—and to put the pressure on Kinnock to restore all cuts and reverse all privatisations, if and when he gets to 10 Downing Street. ■

EDUCATION

A right, not a privilege!

"Thatcherism maybe forgotten or forbidden in most parts of Whitehall but in the Department of Education it flourishes as never before". (The Economist 26 October 1991)

JOHAN MAJOR, the man who refuses to disclose information about his own exam results, has decided that he knows best when it comes to exams for everyone else.

He has announced his support for another shake up in the exam system. Speaking at a meeting of the right wing think tank, the Centre for Policy Research, he claimed low standards in schools were the result of progressive education theories. He declared his opposition to coursework and support for traditional exams. This change is going to affect both GCSEs and the regular ongoing exams in school which are part of the National Curriculum.

Major also declared his intention to bring in a new GCSE exam for brighter pupils—effectively reintroducing the old CSE-GCE divide which allocated working class youth their place in life at the age of 14.

The Department of Education has willingly taken up Major's views and come up with some radical reforms. As part of these reforms they have announced that they will severely cut the extent to which coursework can be assessed as part of GCSE exams. Coursework exams involve the students' work being assessed continuously over the two years of a GCSE exam course. They are not judged simply on a written paper taken at the end of the course.

The Tories' sudden opposition to coursework may seem strange given that it is very much part of the new GCSE examination system which Thatcherite guru Sir Keith Joseph was responsible for imposing. But when GCSEs were being finalised the Tories had their hands full taking on the teachers' unions, removing existing bargaining procedures, undermining the right to strike and enforcing new contracts on all teachers. Now they have inflicted a series of defeats on the teachers they feel confident to take on what they see as the rest of the "liberal educational establishment".

At the two key educational advisory bodies, the School Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC) and the National Curriculum Council (NCC), new heads have been appointed—both former members of Thatcher's policy unit. These will be charged with changing the emphasis towards more exams. Why are the Tories so keen on this?

For the ruling class education has always had a clear purpose—to serve the bosses. Their aim for education is to train working class children as future docile workers. They want schools to prepare students to fit the needs of the labour market. They want working class students to be trained to accept their lot and not to question society as it is, or their role in it.

They need students clearly labelled so that employers can be sure that most of their workers have only the necessary training to do routine unskilled work and a few have enough to do more technical and skilled work. In order to do this, and to restrict entrance into higher education, they need a way of testing.

And, of course, for all this, they want to pay as little as possible.

Coursework as a means of testing is a Tory target for two reasons. On the most basic level it is an expensive form of testing.

The second reason the Tories want to get rid of coursework is because it encourages students to take a more active part in their own learning. Exams encourage an emphasis on memory, rote learning and regurgitating what was taught. Exams favour those who can think and write at speed and under pressure.

Coursework encourages students to think for themselves and explore their own ideas. This is what the Tories don't want and the reason why we should support coursework being part of the examination process.

THE TORY "reforms" in higher education really came home to roost as the new student year got under way.

The freezing of grants, as part of the campaign to drive students to take out loans, has put students on the poverty line. The grant of just £2,265 a year represents a fall in real terms of nearly a quarter since the early 1980s. Not content with this the Tories have abolished students' rights to claim virtually all social security benefits, including housing benefit. The results have been a rise in student poverty not seen since state grants were introduced. In some areas soup kitchens have even been set up.

In line with the Tories' "enterprise culture", employment agen-

cies have discovered a new pool of exploitable, cheap, part-time labour to work as cleaners, bar staff and porters. The were always unstinting in their praise of the American system of "working your way through college", while at the same time ensuring that their own sons and daughters glided through on loads of dosh.

One result of this is that polytechnic and university statistics reveal a growing drop-out rate amongst students. A recent report published by the Citizens' Advice Bureau notes that among the groups hardest hit are:

- working class students who have parents on low incomes
- mature students who are fully independent and who have their own financial commitments, such

as single parents.

The Tories point to the "success" of the polytechnics where market-driven enrolment—the more students you cram in the more money you get—has resulted in a 22% increase in students. But the new corporate polytechnics have only been supplied with a 10% increase in funds. The result is a dramatic deterioration in the quality of courses.

Students are finding themselves in lecture theatres with literally hundreds of others. Such is the chaos that many students starting in September have found their first lecture or tutorial date is in late November!

College accommodation is inadequate to meet demand, throwing students onto the mercy of private landlords or forcing them to sleep on floors or squat. Libraries are overwhelmed and on top of it all cuts are still being introduced in some areas not considered profitable.

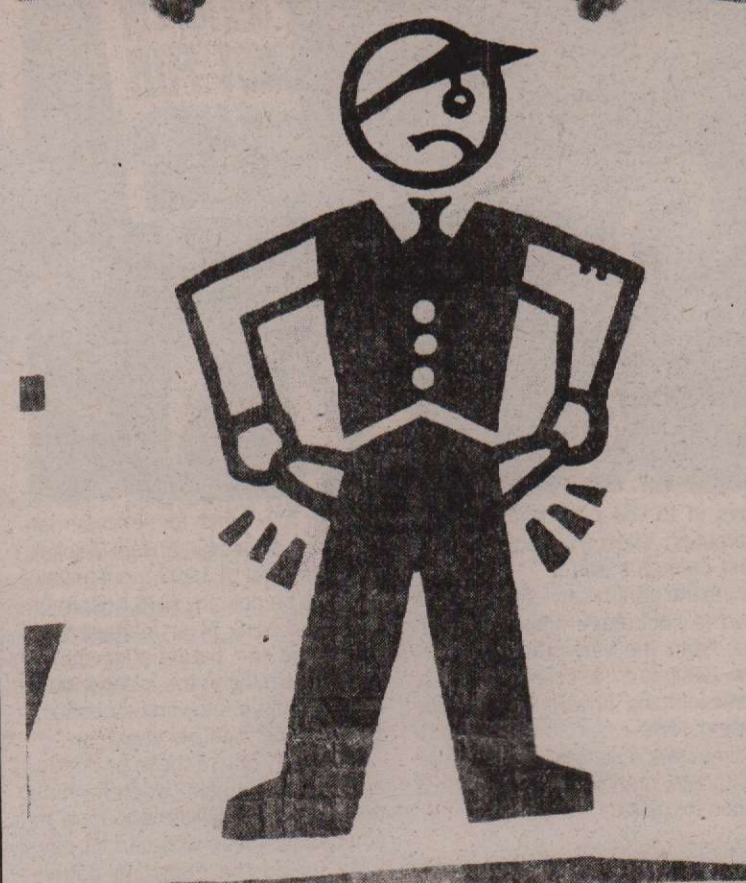
The response of the leadership of the National Union of Students has been pathetic. In the face of rising anger at the situation the NUS leadership has done nothing. It has been left to individual NUS areas like Manchester and London to organise demonstrations and protests against student poverty.

Individual colleges like Middlesex Poly have struck and occupied against the cuts. Others like Lancaster and Essex University have staged rent strikes. Some others have organised canteen boycotts over price increases. But all these actions have been uncoordinated at a national level.

NUS should be linking up and developing these struggles into a national campaign of strikes, occupations and demonstrations. It should be building links, at rank and file level and nationally, with other unions in the colleges, like manual workers facing privatisation and cut-backs and lecturers facing overcrowded lecture theatres and attacks on their own conditions of work.

They should demand that Labour immediately commits itself to reversing all these Tory measures, providing a massive increase of funds for educational facilities. The level of a living grant should be decided by committees of students, workers and teachers.

But students cannot wait for the NUS leadership to act, or for the return of a Labour government. They must fight to build such a movement now out of the ongoing struggles. Only militant action will provide the basis both for transforming NUS and defeating the Tory attacks. ■



Students demand benefits and a living grant

We are not in favour of using exams for restricting access to higher education, or simply as a means of stratifying the workforce. Some form of testing, however, can be a useful tool for students and teachers to check progress and assess the needs of individual students.

Coursework is one of the most accurate ways of testing. It is by no means the only one but, if used cor-

rectly, it can have enormous benefits.

It has been argued that despite the potential advantages, coursework examinations do not help working class students. It is easy to see that working class children, without access to resources such as libraries and computers, can be put at a disadvantage by coursework. But these same problems confront us

with any form of examination under capitalism.

It is also the case that teachers frequently come under pressure to carry out the extra work involved in coursework-based examinations in their own free time and with no extra pay. But rather than getting rid of coursework we should be fighting for the proper funding of state education. Teachers need to recognise

THE TORIES are determined to do as much damage to working class access to education as possible in the last months of this government. Further education (FE) is taking a battering.

They plan to take FE out of the control of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), give colleges corporate status and put them under Further Education Funding Councils. They also plan to increase even further the bosses' representation on college governing bodies.

The plans are a threat to the interests of both workers and students in FE and adult education. Courses without a "vocational outcome" will not attract funding. Adult education is not guaranteed a future at all. Despite an announcement by Kenneth Clarke, intended to "reassure" protesters that adult courses were safe, the truth is that he has simply passed the buck to the LEAs without guaranteeing them any funding to continue the service. Furthermore, dividing the adult service from FE will make planning impossible and will increase the divide between vocational and non-vocational training.

National bargaining is explicitly threatened. If the Tories are successful, FE teachers and other workers will find themselves in a "plant bargaining" situation. Each college governing body, competing for funded courses and students, will attempt to drive down wages and conditions to make itself more "efficient" than the college down the road.

FE colleges are already having to compete for pitifully small funds from the Technical Education Councils (TECs), funds which are released on a drip-feed basis. The TECs respond to industry's, not student's, needs. Thus one of the latest wheezes is Saturday college—employers, you see, don't have to pay for time off for their workers! College governors are pushing for the return of the six day week for FE teachers. In Birmingham FE teachers are organising a boycott to stop this development.

Nationally the leadership of the FE teachers' union NATFHE is making a poor show of opposition to the Tory plans. Despite a conference resolution calling for outright opposition and a campaign to include industrial action, they have tried to "seek improvements" in the government's package. A recent National Council meeting committed the Executive to calling a day of action.

But if action is to be successful, teachers, students, other trade unionists and community groups must be mobilised at meetings at every college. These must be combined in a national campaign committed to strike action and other action against the Tory plans. This campaign will be discussed at a national conference called by the Save Adult and Further Education Campaign on 23 November. Trade union branches should affiliate and send delegates. ■

SAFE Conference

Saturday 23 November 1991
Birmingham Council Chamber

Details from:
BTUC, Milk Street,
Birmingham B5 5TS

that fighting these changes in GCSE are part of a wider struggle against Tory plans for education.

We should be fighting for more resources in state schools, smaller classes and more time for teachers for marking. In this way we can defend the advantages of coursework as part of a fight for equal access and working class control of education. ■

"MAGGIE OUT!" was the common chant on workers' demonstrations during the 1980s. But when she fell it was not primarily the result of workers' resistance. It was at the hands of her own party, and over questions of strategy facing the bosses.

Europe, the economy and local taxation were the three main issues which produced divisions in the Tory ranks. Only the Poll Tax was a problem resulting from working class resistance to the Tory programme.

Thatcher's resistance to economic integration in Europe was proving increasingly dysfunctional for a ruling class whose economic interests are firmly linked to the European economy. In particular Thatcher's resistance to entering the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) had two bad effects on their prospects. In the medium term it threatened to put the bosses at a disadvantage to their European counterparts. In the short term it meant that the Tories relied solely on interest rates as a way of combating inflation.

Massive interest rate rises, combined with the onset of a recession, managed to wipe out thousands of businesses and threaten the house owning yuppies of the 1980s with the spectre of financial ruin, undermining a key component of the Tories' electoral base.

Review

Finally, the Poll Tax also contributed to the Tories' plummeting popularity. But it was not until the February Ribble by-election defeat that Major became convinced of the need to scrap the Poll Tax. At the time of Thatcher's overthrow the Poll Tax was simply put "under review".

In many ways the last eleven months reveal the Major administration to be an alliance between former Thatcher supporters and those, like Heseltine, who genuinely fought for a different way of robbing and fooling the working class.

The bedrock of this alliance is the defence of the main Thatcher achievement: a defeated working class and a serious roll-back of the major social gains granted to the working class in the post-war period. This is a goal dictated by the interests of the bosses. And their chosen method of defending what they have been given in the last twelve years is to keep the Tories in power.

The goal of staying in power led to the abandonment of a number of policies which the Tories' middle class and working class supporters hated. The Poll Tax was scrapped, child benefit cuts were stopped (though not restored), entry into ERM allowed the Tories to unhook interest rates from exchange rates and gradually ease the pain of mortgage payments.

Petty

On the other hand, as their electoral fortunes waned the Tories proved they are still capable of pulling petty right wing policies out of the bag to win votes: league tables for school exams, criminalising squatters, compulsory work schemes for the long term jobless, etc.

Behind all of these short term policy chops and changes the fact remains that the Tories have not adequately resolved the main questions which led to Thatcher's downfall.

Even as it takes its first steps out of the depths of the recession the British economy's structural weaknesses stand exposed—lack of an adequate transport infrastructure,

John Major has announced that there would be no general election in 1991. In doing this he has effectively opened Britain's pre-election period! Everything that happens in the coming months will have a bearing on the election. And the pre-electioneering will affect the mood and struggles of the working class. **Paul Morris** looks at the shape of the class struggle and the tasks facing the working class.

The class struggle and the election

under-investment by a ruling class which can always make a fast buck through speculation, massive structural unemployment, lack of training and labour mobility. All of these have their most damaging effects on the working class which has to endure the crowded, dangerous road and rail system, the dole queue, non-existent training opportunities, cramped and expensive homes. But they also affect the bosses' profits, particularly as they now have to compete within a more unified European economy.

In addition the problem of high wage costs remains for the bosses. It may not seem like it if you are a low paid worker, still less if you have lost your job, but throughout the Thatcher decade the Tories systematically refused to confront the working class on the question of wages.

Workers

They certainly held back wages for many public sector workers. But individual employers mounted no co-ordinated offensive against the pay of those in the private sector. Indeed labour shortages caused by the economic problems outlined above worked in the opposite direction at the height of the boom. Attacking wages is a must for the Tories if they win a fourth term.

Europe itself is a question which still has the potential to blow up in the Tories' faces. As the Tory conference showed, this is still the party of chauvinist "Little Englanders" at its grass roots. But the needs of profit demand that Britain does not lag too far behind the rest of the European imperialists in European integration.

This contradiction will make next month's Maastricht conference a painful experience for the Tories. Even if Major and Hurd achieve all of the aims in their damage limitation plan it will anger some Tories. If they fail they will be faced with the choice of either precipitating a crisis within the EC by stalling the move towards monetary union and political federalism, or of signing a document which will provoke a rebellion in the Tory ranks.

Despite the problems facing the Tories it is clear that the bosses do not want a Labour government. Kinnock has turned Labour into a pale pink Tory party, thoroughly committed to maintaining the gains the bosses made under Thatcher. But he has been rewarded only with toleration, not sympathy.

The bosses are frightened of one thing only about Labour—it is a party still linked to and funded by the trade union bureaucracy, subject to the pressure of organised workers and the object of the illu-



Kinnock shows his teeth!

Photo: John Harris

sions of broad masses of working class people. This is what distinguishes it as a party, not only from the Tories and Liberals, but also the left-talking SNP. Labour's politics are and always have been thoroughly pro-capitalist. But its structure, as a pro-capitalist workers' party, means that the bosses' first choice of government is one led by Major.

Nevertheless the bosses breathed an enormous sigh of relief as Kinnock completed the eradication of the left wing gains. Because, as the opinion polls show, whilst they may not choose a Labour government there are circumstances where they have no choice but to live with one.

Labour has begun to score parliamentary victories, such as getting Waldegrave to crack down on opted out hospitals charging for services. This, far more than all the hackneyed "statesmanship" and the red rose lapel badges, has produced a pro-Labour mood amongst class conscious workers.

At the same time Labour is going out of its way to guarantee that there is no way that it will go beyond the limits the bosses themselves set. Labour relies for its support on the justified anger of millions over the NHS waiting lists, privatisation and cuts—but it refuses to promise a single penny

to restore spending on the NHS. The same is true in local government and education.

On the central question of the unions Labour, ably assisted by the trade union leaders, is committed to keeping all the legal shackles on workers' action and solidarity introduced by Thatcher.

Not only have the bureaucrats promised to grin and bear the retention of the anti-union laws, they are going out of their way to ensure class peace prevails in the run up to the election. Every potential strike or struggle is sabotaged by their bureaucratic machinery. Every right wing Labour policy and election candidate is endorsed by the union block vote.

In this situation many of the best organised and most active fighters in the workers' movement are sick to the back teeth with Kinnock and his party.

Many Labour activists are dropping out of politics. Among many who wrongly believed they were transforming Labour into a socialist party in the early 1980s there is a mood of "what's the point?"

The SWP's Open Letter calling for a new left party is a symptom of this. Many of those signing it are the victims of the defeats and the crisis of leadership suffered by the workers' movement in the 1980s. But for most it is an expression of

disgust at Kinnock rather than the intention to do something about it.

We do need a new left wing party—but one that fights for clear revolutionary politics and is composed of the most dedicated fighters for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. History shows that anything short of that gets smashed in the stormy seas of the class struggle.

A new revolutionary party is needed to organise the vanguard—the most committed fighters. But in turn the vanguard needs tactics aimed at the whole working class.

Once the attention of the working class becomes focused on the election of a Labour government, simply urging people to ignore Labour will not win anyone to a revolutionary perspective. We have to focus the illusions and aspirations of millions of workers into activity and into clear demands on Labour that it act in the interest of the working class. Labour's election programme is not our programme: it is a watered down recipe for carrying on the Thatcher "revolution" in British politics.

But we can start calling Labour to account by turning everything in its programme that is left deliberately vague into concrete demands, rallying workers to an active fight for everything that is progressive about that programme and for a fight against everything which constitutes an attack on our rights and living standards.

Demand

Whenever Labour criticises Tory underfunding workers have to demand the full restoration of cuts. If Labour won't name a figure the workers themselves have to organise to work it out and fight for it.

Labour has promised a legal minimum wage, but at a pitifully low level and far into the future of a Labour term of office. Low paid workers must organise to demand Labour sets it at the average wage, linked to inflation. They must organise to demand its immediate introduction, and the nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control, of any firm that claims it must close because it can't afford to pay a living wage.

Workers at every hospital which has tried to resist cuts and the effects of opting out have received a short sharp lesson in the reality of Labour and trade union politics. Any independent action, any strike action or active protest is smothered by local and national bureaucrats. The neutered and passive campaign becomes just another spoke in the wheel of Labour's election campaign.

This may be fine for winning an election. But for health workers it means unemployment and attacks on pay—for patients it means charges and longer waiting lists.

To every group of workers faced with the latest round of Tory attacks we say: don't wait for Labour. It is by no means certain that Labour can win, and if it does it is promising nothing. Defend yourselves with action now.

This approach could lay the basis for a fightback. It could make sure that the first months of a Labour government are not a honeymoon but a real revival of the workers' movement. Fighting this way can turn the Labour election campaign from a nightmare for socialists into a real opportunity to organise the fight against whoever writes the Queen's speech one year from now. ■

Build the new union!

A NEW union was born in Brighton last month. On 3 October, the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) declared its intention to transform itself from an unofficial, rank and file pressure group into an industrial union, the Offshore Workers' Union, for all workers in the British sector of the North Sea offshore oil and gas industry.

The new union should be given the full support of every trade union militant and socialist in Britain. Every offshore worker should join it now.

The OILC cite the decision in Brighton on 3 October by a hastily assembled CSEU sub-committee to finally establish a confederation of offshore unions, which specifically excluded the OILC, as the trigger for their momentous decision to set up the new union. The OILC was correct in its estimation that such a confederation would not win real bargaining rights against the ruthless anti-union bosses of the multinational oil companies.

The OILC's "rebirth" is an indictment of the utter failure of the seven existing unions claiming members offshore. They have organised a mere 6,000 (an optimistic estimate) of the nearly 36,000 strong labour force. And this is more than 25 years after the industry first emerged.

Along with its potential partner, the scab-herding EETPU, and the GMB, the AEU was party, this summer, to a shabby "hook-up" agreement with the Offshore Contractors' Council (OCC). The deal, which the OILC rightly labelled as a sell out, covered only 2,000 workers. And these workers were only covered until a platform begins actual production.

This effectively concedes to the bosses the power to derecognise any union presence whenever it wants. In addition, the contract marks an open abandonment by the union bureaucrats of the offshore workers victimised in the wake of last summer's industrial action. Hundreds of strikers remain out of work and are now on a bosses' blacklist designed to keep militants out of the industry.

AEU top brass such as Tom Maclean and Jimmy Airlie have allowed OCC chief David Odling to get away with the claim that there is no blacklist. Airlie, the veteran Scottish Stalinist, has been especially scathing in his attacks on the OILC as "scabs" and "pariahs". Maclean has made unsubstantiated claims about financial irregularities in a bid to smear the new union. And the AEU leadership as a whole has been red-baiting the OILC's twelve member Standing Committee for months.

These attacks reveal that the time servers are frightened that the OILC can succeed where they have failed. It is the job of every class conscious worker to help make these fears a reality by building the new union. The refusal to support the union, by the likes of the *Morning Star* Stalinists and the Socialist Workers Party is a contemptible capitulation to the union bureaucrats.

The case for building the new union, as opposed simply to organising workers through the existing

BY G R McCOLL

unions, is straightforward. Offshore workers need an organisation to represent them against some of the most vicious bosses in the world. The best form of organisation is one that unites them—an industrial union.

With the vast majority of the workforce unorganised arguments about "splitting" the existing unions simply do not apply. The oil industry is relatively new. The field is open to build an industrial union, to organise the unorganised, amongst the majority of the workforce.

But despite our 100% support for the new union it is necessary to recognise and correct the mistakes made in the past by the OILC. These mistakes mean that the OILC is starting out from a weaker position than it needed to.

In its earlier role as a critical recruiting agent for the existing unions the OILC initiated the most extensive strike action yet seen off-

shore, involving far more men and women than actually belonged to the unions. Both in 1989 and again last summer, however, the OILC failed to confront the union leaderships and drew back from a fight to the finish with the bosses.

There were big obstacles in the way of a sustained unofficial strike across a geographically isolated workforce with little tradition of organised militancy. But last year's decision to pass control of the dispute back to the existing union leaderships in exchange for the promise of a ballot on official strike action was a serious error. The ballot, which would have required the co-operation of the bosses to satisfy the Tories' anti-union laws has, of course, never taken place. So the present fight to launch a single industrial union begins against a background of recent defeat.

Nevertheless the experience

since the July 1988 *Piper Alpha* disaster suggests that the OILC has the ability to organise and mobilise the mass of non-union workers offshore at the same time as commanding a large degree of commitment among a minority of current trade unionists. The internal democracy of the OILC and the strongly anti-bureaucratic propaganda in the pages of *Blowout*, the OILC's monthly paper, point to the tremendous progressive potential lodged within the Offshore Workers' Union.

To realise this potential and succeed in its stated goal of unionising the industry the OILC's membership must draw on the lessons of the recent past. If there is to be a viable industrial union it must base itself on a programme of class struggle.

This means that a renewed wave of industrial action cannot be seen as "a last resort" but as an absolute necessity if the OILC is to extract union recognition from the multinational oil bosses. The new union cannot allow itself to be bound by "the same legal constraints as others" but must be prepared to defy the Tories' anti-union laws and the inevitable court injunctions which would follow renewed occupations of offshore installations.

The underlying bargaining power of offshore workers remains strong in an industry which has been immune from the worst of the reces-

sion. More importantly, the new offshore union can and must forge substantial links with onshore trade unionists, as well as with their brothers and sisters in the Norwegian oil union, itself born as a breakaway in 1976. They have pledged support for the OILC in its new form, a promise which must be translated into action.

Those offshore workers already in the existing unions should hold dual membership for as long as possible, though they'll face the prospect of bureaucratic expulsion in many instances. They should use the time available to press home the case for the new union amongst fellow onshore members of their unions and help build a challenge to these leaders at a time when the AEU and EETPU bureaucrats have stitched up a cynical deal to create a new right wing super union.

The OILC can probably achieve its target of 3,000 members in its first year of existence but to ensure its future and to avoid the imminent danger of another *Piper Alpha* it must soon embark on a course of militant action.

There is no other way to achieve union recognition and effective workers' control over offshore health and safety. And such achievements would be the most fitting tribute to the 167 killed in July 1988 by Occidental's profit-driven contempt for workers' lives. ■

OILC - THE OFFSHORE WORKERS' UNION:

Criterion Buildings, 52 Guild Street
Aberdeen AB1 2NB

anti-fascist action

March against racist attacks!

ANTI-FASCIST Action (AFA) has hit the headlines over the last couple of months. Following the successful Carnival in September, when 10,000 demonstrated their opposition to racist attacks, AFA organised a dayschool and rally to discuss strategies to fight fascism. One hundred and fifty people attended.

AFA's most recent success was a picket, on 20 October, of the fascist paper sale in London's Brick Lane—a mainly Asian area. The fascists of the British National Party (BNP) had a national meeting the day before and, along with the National Front, mustered about 150 for their sale behind the protective ranks of the police. AFA's picket mobilised over 300 and attracted good support from local Asian youth. As the fascists waved swastikas and Union Jacks their racist filth was drowned out with chants of "Get the fascists off our streets", "Not rights for whites, but rights for all" and "We are everywhere".

Richard Edmonds, the BNP's number two and well known for his racist outbursts to TV and press, found out the truth of this last slogan as he left the scene. He had the chance to ponder the outcome of the day's proceedings from a bed in a nearby casualty ward.

Now AFA is building for the 10 November demonstration in East London against racist attacks. This national march will be the culmination of months of work by AFA, ranging from the pickets and the carnival through to extensive anti-fascist propaganda work on the working class estates in the area.

Already the march is attracting widespread support. As well as AFA itself trade union branches and stewards committees, students unions and anti-racist/anti-fascist campaigns from all over the country are organising delegations to the march. It will be one of the biggest displays of opposition to the fascists—in the area they regard as their heartland—for many years. We urge all our readers to support it. ■

IT WOULD be good to think that AFA's initiative would command the support of every organisation that claims to be against fascism. In the light of the sectarianism of the major left groups in Britain it is, sadly, a vain hope. *Militant* have not given the march their support and studiously avoid participating in AFA's activities. *Socialist Outlook*, claim that they support the building of a "broader campaign" as an alternative to AFA.

Their rationale for this is bizarre. In their 26 October issue they acknowledge that AFA is "probably the largest anti-fascist organisation at the moment". But they appear to attack AFA's commitment to implementing "No platform for fascists". They write that AFA's application of "no platform" has:

"... tended to include sticks, boots and fists... AFA describes itself as a united front organisation but in reality operates like a political party."

Hence the need for a broader organisation.

What are *Socialist Outlook* getting at? Are they against implementing "no platform" by means of physically confronting the fascists? If they are then they have nothing in common with the policies for fighting fascism that Trotsky advocated in the 1930s and that revolutionaries have used ever since.

And how is AFA a political party? AFA is made up of very disparate elements. Are *Socialist Outlook* really so naive to believe that Workers Power—a Trotskyist organisation—and the anarcho-syndicalist comrades of the Direct Action Movement are willing to be in the same party? Ask representatives of either organisation and you will get a clear answer—no! But we can agree to joint action against the fascists. And that is what AFA is about.

What *Socialist Outlook* are really

saying is that they are worried that AFA's commitment to "No platform" will mean that the pacifists and reformists that they hob-nob with, and tried to ally with during the Gulf War, will be put off from joining AFA. They are not prepared to support the activities of AFA—leafleting, pickets, marches, meetings, carnivals—despite calling for these activities themselves. They are not prepared to help build AFA into a broader campaign and prefer to sit on their hands until such a broader campaign comes into existence. What bankruptcy.

Even worse is the attitude of the SWP. It has managed to report the Brick Lane picket and the planned march in November without once referring to the existence of AFA. From their paper you would believe that 300 anti-fascists spontaneously decided to converge on Brick Lane one Sunday morning!

The SWP is still trying to fill its members heads with the lie that AFA is a "squadist" organisation which ignores mobilising the wider working class forces needed to combat fascism. The whole point of AFA's programme of carnivals, political meetings and well organised pickets of

Brick Lane is to mobilise that support. The squadism charge is an excuse for the SWP's consistent refusal in practice to implement the no platform tactic.

Members of the SWP have been prepared to support AFA. But it is clear that the SWP leaders want to keep their distance, probably with a plan to set up a rival anti-racist or anti-fascist front organisation, as they did in the 1970s with the ANL.

This is a sectarian refusal to build a workers' united front against fascism. It puts the narrow interests of the SWP leaders above the need for a joint struggle against the fascists. Those members of the SWP unhappy with this approach must call their leaders to account and demand that they affiliate to AFA and help build a mass workers' united front.

The demonstration on 10 November will be the best answer to the sectarian antics of these so called revolutionary groups. It will show the potential that exists for a working class campaign against fascism. And it will show just how serious AFA has been in building that campaign.

Affiliate to AFA, an anti-racist, anti-fascist organisation! ■

National demonstration against racist attacks

Assemble 1.00 pm Sunday 10 November
Aldgate East Tube, Whitechapel High Street,
London E1

anti-fascist action BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

"ALL MY life, all my strength were given in the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the liberation of mankind... We have had reformist government. Now we need the democratic socialist revolution."

It must be rare indeed for a leading Labour Party member and an MP for 27 years to write such an epitaph to his own political career! By the end of his life Eric Heffer was thoroughly dismayed at the direction that Neil Kinnock's Labour Party was taking. He used his last months of illness to write about his own vision of socialism and to attack those he believed were busy betraying that vision.

This readable and very honest autobiography does, however, reveal the dilemma at the heart of Eric Heffer's socialism. It illustrates how his strength, and that of others like him, was dissipated in the quagmire of reformist politics.

The early chapters of the book, which take us to his election as an MP in 1964 provide an interesting commentary on working class and left wing politics at a rank and file level. They trace his early socialist influences during the Spanish Civil War and the 1930s hunger marches in Britain. Convinced of the need to fight capitalism and disgusted by the Labour Party, Heffer joined the Communist Party (CP) in 1939.

The next ten years, until his expulsion, saw Heffer struggle to come to terms with that organisation's lack of internal democracy, its blind obedience to Stalin and the various zig-zags of its popular front politics. In 1945, for instance, he supported the return of a Labour government, whereas the CP's line was in favour of a national government with "progressive" Tories.

During this same period Heffer was an active trade unionist and, especially after moving to Liverpool, a militant rank and file leader. He organised unionisation campaigns on the construction sites, he led strikes and fought against victimisation, including his own. He

Reformist to the end

Ian Hall reviews
Never a Yes Man: The life and politics of an adopted Liverpudlian
Eric Heffer's autobiography.

came into contact with a generation of workers who tirelessly discussed wide ranging political problems, as well as their more immediate concerns such as bonus rates and safety standards.

Heffer's evident commitment to working class struggles often brought him into conflict with the CP, which had shifted its position on the 1945 Labour government to one of uncritical support, calling for a maximisation of output to resolve the economic crisis Labour was facing. Heffer was eventually expelled from the party because he openly criticised the party's lack of support for striking sailors jailed for their trade union activities. Because he had the temerity to be open to other party members about his criticisms he was charged with organising factions and deemed to be objectively anti-working class!

Though Heffer claimed to have no illusions in the Labour Party he joined soon after and formed various alliances with "the left". For a time he left the Labour Party again to unite with what he describes as various "disaffected Marxist groups" to form the Socialist Workers' Federation with a mostly working class membership of about 500.



Heffer giving Gaitskell a piece of his mind

But this folded after three years in 1957.

Unfortunately, Heffer does not go into precise detail about the politics of this grouping, nor does he give any analysis of its failure. Instead, he concluded that it was wrong in principle for socialists to be outside of the Labour Party:

"I could not see any other way to

advance socialist ideas except through the Labour Party."

In the Walton by-election *Militant* claimed that their decision to stand against Labour would have won Heffer's approval. There is nothing in either his political track record from the late 1950s through to his death, nor anything in his memoirs to justify this claim. Heffer repeatedly stressed the need for socialists to stay inside the Labour Party. He peddled the fatal illusion that the party could be used as an instrument for socialist advance. He denounced parties and organisations that were not in the Labour Party as not being really working class.

Recalling his split from the CP and entry into Labour Heffer says, "re-joining the Labour Party meant involvement again in a genuine workers' party." And in his perspectives for the future he argues:

"Some argue that the time has come to set up a new Socialist Party. This may at some time be necessary but not for as long as the trade unions remain affiliated to the Labour Party and give it its working class base. The argument for a new party is, to some extent sterile. It looks for a short cut and there are no short cuts."

So, Heffer ended his life urging loyalty to the reformist party. And that loyalty meant that he, along with the rest of the left, always ended up as an apologist for the reactionary politics of the dominant right wing leadership.

What Heffer failed to realise is that whether you are in or out of the Labour Party is not the key question. It is a tactical problem, relating to particular historical periods. But the aim of being in the Labour Party, if you are a small organisation, must always be to work towards breaking reformist workers from their leaders and building a revolutionary party. The fundamental principle is how to develop a revolutionary programme that acts both as a guide to action in everyday struggles and as the instrument that can achieve a mass break from reformism.

Heffer never had this perspective. His aim was to win the Labour Party to a left reformist perspective of peacefully transforming capitalism. Of the Labour Party's 1964 election manifesto he writes:

"Much of it was mere words, but it contained the concept of a national plan and, to us, that meant democratic socialist planning."

This attitude typified Heffer's political activity after his election to Parliament. As an MP he sought to defend the "socialist elements" of various manifestos and parts of the Labour Party constitution such as Clause IV, Part 4 against the Labour right.

The second half of the book concentrates on this forlorn struggle. It is often sketchy and anecdotal, no doubt reflecting Heffer's awareness of his terminal illness as he set out to write the book. It certainly, reveals how far and how quickly various Labour worthies shifted to the right as soon as they sniffed high office. But in his obvious disgust at such tendencies, Heffer misses the point.

For instance, he quotes the then premier Harold Wilson's remark on the 1966 seamen's strike that, "this is a strike against the state, against the community". Heffer saw this as a "very stupid thing to have said". But it is only stupid from Heffer's one-sided view of the Labour Party as "the party the working class created". What he persistently failed to see was that it is also the party which in office defends capitalism, the bosses' and private property and wealth. It is a pro-capitalist party.

To his credit Heffer was never tempted to follow the same path as the Wilsons, Callaghans and Kinnocks of this world, but he never really broke from them either. Though he fought for many policies which socialists could support including full rights to strike and picket, state funded public works and Britain out of NATO, he never consistently and openly said what needed to be said; namely, that the Labour Party never was, nor could it be transformed into a real socialist party. What was and is still required is a fundamentally new kind of party with a revolutionary programme.

Throughout his autobiography Heffer argues against this idea. Worse, he turns socialism from a scientific concept, rooted in the social reality of capitalism and the class struggle into an expression of religion. Heffer became a Christian as a result of a spiritual experience. At the end of his life he started to argue that Christianity was the only basis for socialism. And as death loomed daily nearer he wrote:

"For me, in these last months, my socialism and Christianity have become even more intertwined. In working for a classless society without poverty for the many on the one hand and riches for the few on the other, I have worked for God's kingdom here on earth."

And, instead of basing his thoughts on Marx he quotes extensively from St Ambrose and St Gregory. Maybe some of this mysticism arose from his own feelings as death approached. But much of it, like Benn's ramblings about Christ, reveals the muddled view of socialism that characterises the Labour left. Bereft of independent ideas, lacking any coherent theory of their own and permanently seeking solace from the right wing leaders who rule the party and betray the workers, Heffer and the left reformists are reduced to taking, and dealing in, the opium of the masses. The working class do not need Labour's broad church, or any other one if they are to achieve Heffer's hoped for goal—"the liberation of mankind" ■

Forging the legal shackles

Jeremy Dewar reviews
The Permanent Revolution? Conservative law and the trade unions
by John McIlroy,
Spokesman, £9.95

IF THERE is one area in which Thatcher can claim to have achieved a real "revolution" it is in employment legislation.

John McIlroy, a regular contributor to *Socialist Organiser*, has written a serious book looking back on the details and effects of the Tories' successive rounds of anti-union laws. Well researched, clearly written and illustrated with tables and diagrams, this book is a must for active trade unionists.

McIlroy combines an account of the anti-union laws from 1980 through to the 1990 Employment Act with a lively account of the major disputes of the 1980s. He has done this from a refreshingly partisan viewpoint that reminds readers of the callous injustices of the 1980s.

Thatcher was elected to office in 1979 on a "free market—strong state" ticket with the aim of weakening the unions and providing state armoury to management to reinforce their control in the workplace. The discipline of market forces would do the rest.

The Tories put in train a series of piecemeal legislative attacks aimed at preventing the kind of generalisa-

tion that brought down Heath's Industrial Relations Act. They also made sure that it was individual employers, not the government, that triggered the actual use of the laws, thus shielding the Tories themselves from the direct wrath of the unions involved.

In this way the Tories aimed to give the bosses and the courts the ability to legally constrain effective militant trade unionism. The 1980 Act targeted secondary picketing, which had proved so vital in the 1978 lorry drivers strike. Later solidarity action was attacked. Strikes without official ballots were made illegal. The closed shop was gradually eroded and a scabs' charter introduced. All of this was achieved carefully, one step at a time.

In describing the set-piece confrontations which made the laws stick the book is at its strongest. Eddie Shah's and later P&O's vindictive use of sequestration laws to the point of bankrupting the unions, the dock owners' use of injunctions against the right to strike in any circumstances, London Underground's injunction against the calling of a ballot and the mass arrests and exclusion orders against the Wapping pickets, contrasting with the abandonment of actions against the police; are all cited by McIlroy as clear examples of the way the laws have been used on behalf of the bosses. He reveals the class nature of the whole state apparatus, lined

up against strikers.

McIlroy exposes the spinelessness of the union bureaucrats' response. He details how the Tories called their bluff over the "Wembley principles" and how the Tories successfully exploited growing divisions within the bureaucracy by sectionalising their attacks. He shows how the bureaucrats themselves were won over to pre-strike ballots, seeing them as a weapon against rank and file militants. This sorry tale of retreat has culminated in the conversion of the TUC and the Labour Party to key elements of the anti-union laws.

McIlroy claims that a generalised fightback may have been possible in the 1980-82 period but is not on the cards now. All we can do is intervene to make the best of Labour's proposals for a new legal framework. This is because the ranks of the unions would not respond to a call for a general strike to repeal the laws.

A general strike to smash the anti-union laws may not be feasible right now. But the building of a rank and file movement and the organised defiance of the laws by workers in struggle is. And by fighting for these aims, not trying to get Labour to give us "better" anti-union laws, we can rebuild the militant spirit of the working class so that one day the general strike to smash all anti-union laws will be back on the immediate agenda. ■

HEMSWORTH

Kinnock vetoes NUM candidate

NEIL KINNOCK vetoed the selection of Ken Capstick as the parliamentary candidate for the Hemsforth by-election. Even in the context of the current witch-hunt against *Militant* supporters this is a staggering attack on the left in the party and on the rights of local parties to have any say in the selection of candidates.

Ken Capstick, an NUM nominee, the vice-chairman of the Yorkshire NUM and a long serving Labour member was not found guilty of any charges whatsoever by Kinnock's panel of National Executive Committee (NEC) thought police.

Moreover he was also nominated by the FBU, ASLEF, NACODs and five out of the constituency's ten branches. By any standards he was the popular choice in the local party.

Yet the NEC refused to shortlist Ken Capstick! Defending this undemocratic decision a party spokeswoman told *Tribune*:

"We had a very strong shortlist and we selected the best for the job. As far as we're concerned that's that."

The "best for the job" being David Enright, who was deselected as MEP for Leeds West and whose qualification is that he was the EC's delegate to Guinea-Bissau, where he worked as a business consultant.

In other words he is one of those vapid, right wing specimens so beloved of Neil Kinnock in his endless quest for respectability.

Underlying this latest affront to ordinary party members there is a more important issue. Ken Capstick is a supporter of Arthur Scargill. The NUM is pledged to oppose Labour's retention of the anti-union laws. It is the union that Kinnock holds responsible for Labour's defeat in 1987. He condemned the heroic miners' strike as "a wasted year". The NUM is a reminder of the class struggle and of the influence of that struggle, through the trade unions, on the Labour Party itself.

As such the decision to refuse to allow Ken Capstick to stand goes beyond the formal terms of Kinnock's current witch-hunt. It is a warning that Labour will now not tolerate the selection of candidates—even though they are Labour supporters down to their socks—who also stand for militant trade unionism.

What is needed is a determined effort to fight Kinnock. In the first place the Hemsforth party, with NUM backing, should have stood Capstick in the coming by-election. That didn't happen. But if Enright is not deselected by the time of the general election, then the local party and the NUM should stand Capstick against him.

They should use a campaign around this issue to link up with other initiatives developing against the Kinnock dictatorship—the cam-



Hattersley chaired the panel that blocked Capstick

Photo: John Harris

paign in support of Nellist and Fields, the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement called in Birkenhead (where Frank Fields was imposed against the selected candidate, Paul Davies) for mid-November, as well as the various campaigns against the witch-hunt.

If such a determined fightback is not launched now then the labour movement will be in a far weaker state to resist Kinnock's inevitable attacks should he win the next election. Fighting now, even though the right wing will say that we are damaging the party's electoral chances, is the best way to serve the working class. ■

MANCHESTER Slander!

A DISTURBING incident at a recent meeting of Fallowfield Ward Labour Party in Manchester illustrates just how brazen the right wing have become in displaying their contempt for party democracy. Following Kinnock's lead of clamping down on any left wingers, a whole clutch of petty place-seekers and careerists are resorting to the methods of thuggery, slander and abuse against any dissent in the party.

On 14 October, Fallowfield Ward was holding a discussion on the issue of education. When one member present pointed out that Manchester's Labour council has been cutting further education provision and had closed the local All Saints college, Councillor Ruby Khan began to shout and to behave in such a disruptive manner that the chair threatened to shut down the meeting unless she observed its discipline.

Bill Jefferies, a ward member who supports the politics of *Workers Power*, then pointed out that no matter how much individual councillors might resent such criticism, the working class people of Moss Side, who have been deprived of their Alexandra Park Nursery, and the wider community, who had lost the use of All Saints College, resented the cuts far more.

Devoid of political defences, Councillor Khan then joined with other councillors in repeatedly disrupting the meeting, forcing Comrade Jefferies to stop speaking. In an appalling display of intolerance and intimidation, Councillor Khan then went so far as to spit at Comrade Jefferies. She only denied this much later, at first maintaining that she had not spat at Bill but "in his direction".

Worse was to come. Obviously aware of the potential consequences of her behaviour, Councillor Khan then tried to erect a smokescreen by accusing Bill Jefferies of racism. Her justification of this ludicrous and insulting charge was that he had dared to criticise the council for attacking local workers, black and white. If criticising a black councillor for supporting cuts is racist, then criticising Margaret Thatcher for attacking the working class for eleven years is obviously sexist!

This slander won't wash. As Comrade Jefferies has pointed out in a written response to Khan's smear, he was criticising not only her but two other councillors, both of whom are white men. One of those councillors has since tried to dissociate himself from Khan's disgraceful actions. On leaving the meeting two black comrades said to Bill that he had obviously not been racist.

On Sunday 20 October the Executive Committee of the ward agreed. It voted unanimously to reject all charges of racism and every one of Ruby Khan's specific allegations. Nonetheless, Khan is now taking this matter to the constituency party. But at the ward meeting an officer from the constituency party seemed more interested in preventing Bill Jefferies from selling *Workers Power*, which is not a proscribed publication, than in calling Khan to account.

The Manchester right wing will be stooping to a new low if they try to use this incident to victimise *Workers Power* supporters or drive them out of the party. But no amount of bullying, lies or slander will prevent our supporters from intransigently exposing careerists who put their own self-interest above those of working people and of plain truth. ■

Correction

IT WAS brought to our attention that a passage in the article on Yugoslavia in *Workers Power* 147 which referred to the Croats, "right to resist the Serbian backed attempt to keep them in the federation by force" could have been interpreted as arguing support for Croatia. This was not the intention of the article.

The civil war in Yugoslavia at present does not have the character of justified national defence on either side. It is a reactionary annexationist war where both sides are resorting to pogroms, forced expulsions of population and the seizure of territory to which they have no right in terms of the wishes of its inhabitants. We support self-defence by all the national minority communities under attack in Serbia, Croatia and indeed in all the Yugoslav republics, including the Croatian population of Dubrovnik against the Serbian backed siege. But we also give critical support to the anti-war movement, calling on the workers to intervene with mass class action to put a stop to the nationalist warmongers. ■

Dear Clare

CLARE SHORT faces a reselection struggle in her Ladywood constituency, Birmingham. The right wing EETPU has packed the party with delegates and they are determined to select Sardul Marwa, a right wing former city councillor.

That the scab EETPU are allowed to have delegates at all inside the Labour Party is a scandal. That the packing of meetings by these delegates is a piece of chicanery is not in doubt. They should be expelled by the local party.

But none of this should lead a single left winger in the party to consider voting for Clare Short as their parliamentary candidate. If it comes to a straight vote between her and Marwa, the left should abstain. Clare Short is not the lesser evil.

Far from it. Short is now one of Kinnock's key witch-hunters. Using her ill deserved reputation as a left-won largely because of her misguided and objectively reactionary campaign against pornography—she has drummed up support in the party for driving *Militant* out. She was on the panel that disgracefully suspended Nellist and Fields from holding office. She is an enemy of the left who is publicly denouncing "Trotskyist" infiltration at every available opportunity.

She deserves no support whatsoever. And if anyone in the constituency dares to plead "unity of the left" against the EETPU manoeuvre, let Short prove her commitment to unity by disavowing her part in getting Nellist and Fields suspended and ending her role as a witch-hunter of the left. ■



MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, suspended by Kinnock's clique for Poll Tax non-payment and supporting the *Militant* newspaper. Their decision to stand in the general election regardless of Kinnock's dictat is to be vigorously supported. To back their campaign write to:
Terry Fields MP: c/o Fiona Winders, 16 Elm Vale, Fairfield, Liverpool L6 0NX
Dave Nellist MP: c/o Dave Hofman, PO Box 102, Coventry CV1 2TJ

Photo: John Harris

LABOUR IN POWER 1974-79

Doing the bosses

MARCH 1 1974. A general election makes Labour the biggest party in the House of Commons, but gives it no overall majority. The miners are on strike. The country is in a state of chaos following the Tories' imposition of a three day working week. Top generals talk openly about the prospect of a military coup to counter the threat of "anarchy". After three days without a government Britain gets a minority Labour administration with Harold Wilson as prime minister.

In 1974 thousands of workers expected Labour to take at least the first steps towards socialism. The leader of the TGWU, Jack Jones, talked of the arrival of a "new Jerusalem". The working class had just fought and won some of the most momentous battles since the 1920s. Labour's manifesto, the most left wing ever, pledged "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth, in favour of working people and their families".

In the five years that followed these dramatic events the Labour government systematically betrayed its working class supporters. Under Wilson (1974-76) and Callaghan (1976-79) the government, working closely with the leaders of the trade unions, demobilised the militant working class and began the attacks on living standards, public services and trade union rights that Thatcher continued into the 1980s.

Ted Heath's Tory government had tried to control inflation and restore the competitiveness of British industry by imposing statutory wage controls on the unions. He backed up his policy with the anti-union laws enshrined in the Industrial Relations Act. Spearheaded by the miners in 1972, and again in 1974, section after section of workers smashed through the legal wage restraints. In a parallel development the dockers, backed up by a mass strike movement in other industries, took on and defeated the Tories' anti-union laws.

Undertaking

Labour, astonishing as it may seem to many people today, rhetorically backed the workers and gave a firm undertaking that they would repeal the anti-union laws and not resort to statutory wage controls. The TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee worked out a "social contract" that would exist between the unions and a Labour government. It was enshrined in the 1973 *Statement on Economic Policy and the Cost of Living*. It was fleshed out by Wilson and became the cornerstone of his strategy to win the second 1974 election.

Wilson wrote:

"The Social Contract is no mere piece of paper agreement approved by politicians and trade unions. It is not concerned even primarily with wages. It covers the whole range of national policies... Labour describes the firm and detailed commitments which will be fulfilled in the field of social policy, in the fairer sharing of the nation's wealth, in the determination to restore and sustain full employment. The unions in response confirm how they will seek to exercise the newly restored right of free collective bargaining."

With Labour riding high in the polls and an election looming many workers are looking hopefully towards the end of a Tory era. Labour under Kinnock is promising very little to the working class. The defeats suffered by the unions over the last ten years have dampened militancy and lowered working class expectations of what a Labour government will achieve. Yet, even when Labour is under pressure from a mobilised working class it acts on behalf of the bosses to defuse that pressure and attack the working class. This is the lesson of the 1974-79 Labour government, as Mark Harrison explains.

Not only did this appear to be a fair arrangement but Labour seemed to be ready to fulfil their side of the bargain. The miners had already been given a big pay rise and in November 1974 average rises for all workers were 25% up on the previous year. Pensions were raised. The Industrial Relations Act was scrapped. The Tory Housing Finance Act, which had led to massive rent rises, was repealed. New rights for trade unionists were made law.

Concessions

These gains, however, were not gifts from a benevolent Harold Wilson. They were concessions granted by a Labour government which had come to power following a workers' offensive which had virtually driven the Tories from office. Wilson was a shrewd enough politician to know that he had no alternative. He was buying time for his government in order to prepare a counter-attack against the working class. In the summer of 1975 that counter-attack was launched.

Inflation surged upwards in 1975. Britain's economy was particularly badly hit during the world recession of that time. And as inflation hit the 20% plus mark (the Retail Price Index was up by over 30%) international capital delivered its verdict on Wilson's concessions to the workers. A sterling crisis engulfed the British economy. The pound fell to two thirds of its former value and a massive balance of payments deficit threatened to shatter British industry. Unemployment doubled within the year, reaching 1,129,000 by the end of 1975.

Labour was faced with a clear choice. Either it could solve this crisis by pressing forward against the international capitalists, or it could turn against its working class supporters and force them to bear the costs of capitalism's endemic ills.

Despite the muted protests of the lefts, like Benn and Heffer, the choice was never in doubt. Labour, as a bosses' party, set about saving the bosses' skins.

Labour's Manifesto had promised the British electorate the right to decide whether Britain should stay in the EEC. Knowing this was a key issue for the Labour left and those under Stalinist influence who campaigned to get Britain out, Wilson and Callaghan set about using the proposed referendum as a weapon against the left. Reversing his previous position, Wilson led the majority of the cabinet in

recommending a yes vote. When the referendum result showed a two to one majority for staying in the Common Market the left, which had campaigned vigorously for a no vote, was demoralised. Wilson moved quickly. Benn, as the Minister for Industry, had been the bosses' bogeyman, the personification of the threat of state intervention and nationalisation and at the same time the figurehead and hope for the left. Wilson summarily removed him from his post and shunted him into the Department of Energy. He then turned his attention to the unions and wages.

The Social Contract, "which was not concerned even primarily with wages" soon became the centre piece of wage restraint. Wilson turned to two of the major "left" trade union leaders of the time to sell this policy to the members. Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the then AUEW, who had gained their left reputations in the struggles against the Tories, duly obliged the Labour leaders. Jones declared:

"The social contract does not mean control of wages, but it does mean a realistic approach to which we in the trade union movement are already responding, and so are the government."

By July 1975 Phase One of the pay policy was in place, brokered by the "left" Michael Foot at the Department of Employment. While this deal was sold as voluntary and as a short term package (Wilson called it "giving a year for Britain")

Labour had entered office boasting about its special relationship with the unions that could put an end to the "chaos" of the Heath era. It left office at war with the members of those very same unions.

it set the seal on Labour policy for the remainder of the government's life.

It was followed in 1976 with a 4.5% limit. In 1977 the TUC refused to agree a formal deal, but they gave tacit support to Labour's 10% limit. Only in 1978 and 1979 were the union bureaucrats unable to maintain this wage cutting social contract. The "so called winter of discontent" in 1978-79 saw a massive strike wave involving millions of workers, which smashed the 5% limit and destroyed the government.

The effects of the social contract were immediate. During the first two stages, approved by the TUC, militancy was dramatically under-



Above: The new Labour cabinet, March 1974. Below: Ford workers march in London.

mined and wages fell. The Economist estimated that real wages were cut by 7%. The actual gap between average rises and inflation was 8%.

The bosses were jubilant. Labour had achieved what Heath could only have dreamt of—a working class forced by its own leaders to tolerate a massive reduction in living standards. When the National Union of Seamen threatened a strike to get a bigger increase in 1976 the TUC simply announced that it would expel them.

Even in 1977 when no formal deal was struck with the TUC Jones, Scanlon and other leaders ensured that every attempt by workers to break through the pay norm was sabotaged. As the TUC General Council put it:

"The approach of securing very large increases in order to make up

splitters and wreckers.

The result of this sabotage was that when Labour imposed its own 10% norm without union agreement it was allowed to stick. Millions of workers were policed by their leaders into accepting a deal that the TUC Congress had voted to reject. Falling into line, the NUM leadership under the right wing Joe Gormley abandoned their 90% pay claim and, in defiance of a national ballot result, accepted a pit by pit incentive scheme (negotiated with Tony Benn). This was to have disastrously divisive consequences during the 1984-85 strike.

Potential

Worse was to follow later in the year when the firefighters launched a strike against the phase three limit. This eight week national strike had the potential to smash Labour's wage cutting social contract. Yet the TUC voted not to support it because, "the government is not likely to be deflected from its present course of action". Left to fight alone the firefighters were defeated by a Labour government that used troops extensively to scab on the strike. Phase Three won through—courtesy of the TUC.

This victory gave Callaghan and Healey confidence. Despite now having to rule in a coalition with the Liberals, they soldiered on with phase four. Turning his back on the votes of both the TUC congress and the Labour Party conference against a 5% limit for 1978-79, Callaghan refused to call an election and announced that his pay policy would be made to stick in the private sector through sanctions against any company that broke it.

Rank and file resentment exploded, and the best efforts of the union bureaucracy to curb it came to nought. Workers had done a lot more than give a year for Britain.

ground lost over the past three years would be self-defeating."

Skilled workers had been hit particularly hard by the fixed pay norms. This led to a revolt in the spring of 1977. At British Leyland toolroom workers struck for eight weeks. At Heathrow, Fords and in British Steel other skilled workers followed suit. A conference of 1,700 stewards, largely from engineering, voted against the third phase of the social contract. In each case the union leaders acted decisively—against the rank and file. Scanlon and Jones personally intervened on the side of Leyland management against the toolroom strikers. The Heathrow engineers were stigmatised by their officials as

dirty work



on, October 1978

They had endured three years of pay restraint. And their reward was to see unemployment rise to well above the one million mark, the real value of benefits eroded by continuing high inflation, and a productivity drive by the bosses that meant people were working faster and harder for less and less money.

The trade union rights workers had supposedly won from Labour were trampled upon by strikebreaking troops. Or, as happened in the union recognition dispute at Grunwick's, these rights were physically denied by the picket busting Special Patrol Group squads—sent in on the authorisation of a Labour-controlled Home Office.

Labour had entered office boasting about its special relationship with the unions that could put an end to the "chaos" of the Heath era. It left office at war with the members of those very same unions. During the "winter of discontent" of 1978-79 troops were used again, volunteer scabs were recruited in the NHS, the civil contingencies committee organised a scabbing operation against lorry drivers, and Labour ministers made a point of publicly crossing civil servants' picket lines after Callaghan had called for mass scabbing.

Alienated

None of this saved Labour when the election came. It had alienated large sectors of its working class support while the bosses were completely behind Thatcher's new programme of open attacks on trade union organisation. But Labour had already performed an important service for the capitalists in the trade union sphere, "softening up" the working class' organisational and fighting abilities ahead of Thatcher's onslaught.

The lesson of the social contract is clear for everyone looking to



Kinno's promised National Economic Assessment today. Under this "voluntary" scheme the unions will once again be drawn into negotiating wage cuts if Labour is elected.

After years of Tory misrule there may be many workers who will say, "well even if they do attack our wages at least Labour will save our public services". Once again the experience of the Wilson/Callaghan government should serve as a warning. The social contract was supposed to ensure that resources were directed to health, education and public service provision. The opposite happened.

As early as the November 1974 budget Denis Healey, Labour's Chancellor of the Exchequer was talking in monetarist terms. Far from honouring the pledges of the social contract Healey said of the public services that he aimed:

"... to limit the rise in their expenditure to what is absolutely inescapable."

By the end of 1975, with the pound plummeting, he began to

Prisoners of the right

TODAY'S LABOUR left is in a terrible state. Having retreated from a final showdown with the right in 1982, it has been systematically browbeaten, marginalised, silenced or witch-hunted over the past decade.

Would the left in the Labour Party or its representatives in Parliament even in its weakened state be able to stand up for the interests of the workers against the Kinno's leaders in Parliament? The lessons from the 1970s when the left was much stronger are instructive. Then it controlled a number of Labour policy committees, and in Tony Benn it had a figurehead within the Cabinet itself.

Yet in the face of the Wilson/Callaghan attacks on the working class the Labour left, primarily grouped around *Tribune* in those days, mounted no effective resistance to the government—either in Parliament or outside. The cowardice of the left became apparent after the referendum on the Common Market. It was common knowledge that Wilson would move Benn from the Department of Industry if there was a big yes vote. Jack Jones, the left leader of the TGWU, greeted the rumours with a warning:

"Any move of Mr Benn away from the Secretaryship of Industry, and I think I can speak for the TUC, would be a grave affront to the trade union movement. It is vital if we are to

maintain a degree of industrial unity that he stays where he is."

A few days later Wilson moved him to the Energy Department, and nobody in the trade union movement lifted a finger against this "grave affront". Worse, Benn decided to stay inside the Cabinet, a move that effectively tied his hands and identified him with the wage, service and job-cutting policies of the government—every one of which he loyally voted for in parliament over the next four years.

Eric Heffer was sacked from his junior minister's job by Harold Wilson for failing to adhere to the agreement not to speak in the House of Commons against the Common Market before the referendum. Even so he and the other *Tribune* MPs stayed loyal to the government on the grounds that keeping it in office was preferable to voting down its anti-working class policies. This loyalty was put to the test on a number of occasions, even in the context of the Lib-Lab pact when much of the government's time was spent on putting together flimsy majorities for every one of its policies.

The left should have been in a position of strength given the narrow government majority. Had they declared in advance that they would vote against all the anti-working class measures being put forward by the government, even if it meant the government would fall, they would have placed the responsibility fairly and squarely on Wilson and Callaghan. Which do you prefer; your anti-working class policies or continuing in office?

Instead the left allowed themselves to be treated as lobby fodder, even as Labour sent in troops against the firefighters. And in the "winter of discontent", when the issue was for or against Callaghan's 5% pay policy, the most the left could muster by way of opposition was five of them abstaining.

By doing this the five, led by Dennis Skinner did put the government's very existence on the line. A confidence vote was called. Instead of spreading a revolt against Callaghan and openly identifying with the workers in dispute with the government, the five fell back into line. *Tribune* commented:

"When the vote of confidence came—the five quite rightly came back into the fold and voted to keep the Labour government in power." (22.12.78)

It was Benn himself who epitomised the loyalty of the left to the right wing leaders and their real powerlessness in the face of these leaders. By putting the preservation of the government above all other considerations they inevitably, albeit

an imperialist country, conditional upon the government allowing IMF inspectors in to examine the government's books and oversee the implementation of cuts totalling £3,000 million. Hospital wards closed, schools went without basic teaching materials, social services were dramatically hit. The "social wage", Labour's pride and joy, was savaged by a Labour government at the behest of international capitalism.

It was staggering. A Labour government was sacrificing every one of its election pledges and putting itself willingly at the mercy of the international finance capitalists of the IMF in order to help stabilise British capitalism. As Healey himself put it in the face of the flight from sterling in the international

money markets: "The government must live with the judgements of that market, whether they like it or not."

Today Labour's John Smith and Neil Kinno say that they will defend the NHS and education. But they add that they won't spend anything that the economy cannot afford. This is exactly the same rationale that Healey used for some of the most savage cuts of the post-war period. The economy—the judgements of the market that Kinno and Smith worship—cannot afford a decent health service. That is why the Tories attack the NHS. Labour will do exactly the same, despite their pledges, because for them the needs of the "economy", of capitalism, always come before the needs of working class people. ■

Most graphically he did it in the "winter of discontent" when, as Energy Minister, he came up against the threat of a tanker drivers' strike. Having authorised the use of troops to break the strike Benn reassured himself by saying, "I am doing it in a way that is friendly to labour". Comments like these pepper his diaries of the period. He goes on:

"There is a part of me that tells me that I am being sucked into this terrible military operation. I know I have to protect emergency supplies, but there is no doubt I am compromised up to the hilt by remaining in this awful government."

But, remain he did. And not only that, he remained loyal to the end. A later diary entry records a conversation he has with Callaghan, who asked him if he really wanted to be in the Cabinet. Benn replies:

"Of course, and if I left the Cabinet I would be voting for it in the House, and if Labour were defeated in the House I would be trying to get a Callaghan Government re-elected. Of course I want to be in the Cabinet."

This interchange exposes the fundamental problem of left reformism. It is tied to the belief that advance can only come through a Labour Government. Therefore it is prepared to tolerate the dominant right wing of the Labour Party up to and including sacrificing the interests of the working class. Indeed, again and again, especially in periods of crisis, when the question is posed, "either a real strategy to fight capitalism or work within the system and make the workers pay for the crisis", the Labour left's lack of a real strategy causes them to collapse before the right wing.

This fatal weakness of left reformism meant that it failed the working class in 1974 to 1979. It will fail the working class again if it ever regains any ground in the Labour Party. Its job is not to bring about socialism—even by parliamentary means. Its job is to remind the right wing of what the working class are pushing for and then act as a buffer between the workers and the right wing. It is doomed to an existence on the sidelines. It is not, nor ever can be, a force for revolutionary social change. Only a revolutionary party that has a clear strategy for the destruction of capitalism, one that has no fear of taking on and breaking with the Labour and trade union traitors, can achieve this. ■

LATIN AMERICA 1492



IN THE early morning of 12 October 1492 a sailor called Rodrigo saw moonlight being reflected off a beach on the horizon. Rodrigo's shouts of "Land!" were to reverberate around the globe. The New World had been "discovered" by Christopher Columbus' small fleet of Spanish ships.

Rodrigo however would never receive the "pension for life" promised by the Spanish monarchs to the first person to see land. The leader of the expedition, Columbus, quickly claimed that he had seen a light the night before and therefore he was entitled to the reward! The New World had had its first experience of the methods of the old. Fraud was quickly followed by force, pillage, conquest, mass murder, torture and religious bigotry. That was how the "civilised" Europeans stamped their authority on the peoples of what came to be called "the Americas".

Columbus, the son of a weaver from the important trading port of Genoa, had planned his voyage for many years. He had an audacious plan—to sail directly westwards across the Atlantic believing that this route would hit China, Japan or India. He bumped into another continent "in the way", America, and ensured his lasting fame.

It was no accident that it was the Spain of 1492 which sponsored this adventure into an area of the world unknown by Europeans. The expansion of the Turkish empire into the Eastern Mediterranean and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had disrupted the traditional trading routes to India and the Far East. Prices rose dramatically in the important luxury trade in spices, silks etc. European traders, merchant capitalists, looked for a new route to India.

Techniques

Improvements in shipbuilding and sailing techniques, in the compass and in navigational methods made the search for a sea route a practical proposition. Portugal and Spain, both with Atlantic seaboard, led the way in this search.

By the 1480s the Portuguese were already committed to finding a way to India around the coast of Africa and by 1486 had rounded the Cape and set up bases for trade and slaving along the west coast of Africa. The Portuguese therefore turned down Columbus' plan and it was Portugal's rival, Spain, which became his sponsor.

Spain had recently been united under the "Catholic Monarchs", Ferdinand King of Aragon, and Isabella, Queen of Castile. They were involved in a war to drive out the Moors who had occupied most

of Spain for hundreds of years. It was in 1492 that the last bastion of this Muslim kingdom, Granada, fell to the Spanish forces. Columbus was there, waiting with the Spanish court for the final surrender, in the knowledge that the victory would also ensure the victory of his plans.

The Spain of 1492 was one of the most dynamic and expansionist countries in Europe. Ferdinand and Isabella had used the "war of liberation" to increase the power of the monarchy over the previously independent and fractious nobility. Their increasingly absolutist power was signalled in their newly won control of the Church in Spain and the establishment of the Inquisition as an organ of state policy and terror.

The Spanish monarchs' ambitions after 1492 extended beyond the shores of Spain. Their sponsorship of Columbus was part of a policy which was to dramatically encourage and develop merchant capital and its commercial empire abroad over the next century. Columbus extracted extremely favourable terms from the monarchs including 10% of everything brought back not just for his own lifetime but for all his succeeding generations! The expedition set out from Seville in July 1492 in three small ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*, with the costs guaranteed by Genoese bankers.

October saw the start of a year of celebrations leading up to the 500th Anniversary of the "discovery" of the Americas. Few anniversaries have produced such controversy or so many different assessments. For the rulers of the USA, more certain than ever of their world political pre-eminence, the anniversary of Columbus' voyage merits massive celebrations. The Spanish bourgeoisie, newly integrated into Europe and aiming to become European imperialism's chief representative in Latin America, is likewise celebrating the anniversary with massive exhibitions and festivals. In Latin America and the Caribbean the response is predictably less enthusiastic. Five hundred years after the arrival of the Europeans millions still live in dire of poverty. Torture, brutality, "disappearances" and arbitrary imprisonment are commonplace even under the new "democratic regimes". The indigenous people of Latin America still suffer racism and discrimination. In such circumstances it is little wonder that the workers and peasants, and even the Latin American bosses who have embraced Uncle Sam, find it difficult to get excited about the anniversary. For the workers and peasants of Latin America, and for socialists everywhere, an understanding of the impact of the Spanish conquest is not just a question of establishing "historical truth", important as this is. A scientific understanding of the exploitation and oppression inflicted on Latin America over the centuries is vital to developing a strategy for ending it.



Capitalism's conquistadores

The Spanish monarchs' ambitions after 1492 extended beyond the shores of Spain. Their sponsorship of Columbus was part of a policy which was to dramatically encourage and develop merchant capital and its commercial empire abroad over the next century. Columbus extracted extremely favourable terms from the monarchs including 10% of everything brought back not just for his own lifetime but for all his succeeding generations! The expedition set out from Seville in July 1492 in three small ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*, with the costs guaranteed by Genoese bankers.

The reality turned out to be very different. When Columbus landed he quickly reported back on the peaceful natives, the Arawaks, he found there: "I saw a kind of peninsula with six huts. It could be made into an island (fort) in two days, though I feel no need to do this, for these people are totally unskilled in arms, as your majesty will learn from seven whom I have captured and taken aboard, to learn our language and take to Spain. But should your Majesty command it, all the inhabitants could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves on the island. With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."

Columbus, still believing he was sailing around the coast of Asia, pushed on to find the fabled civilisation and gold. Finally the *Santa Maria* was wrecked off a major island named Hispaniola (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Having been aided ashore by the natives, who also laboured to save the stores, Columbus expressed surprise in his log: "Not a lace point was stolen!" Columbus, having opened up the New World, set about exploiting it. A series of further voyages visited Cuba, Trinidad, Central America and Jamaica but Hispaniola was to bear the full brunt of his "discovery". This island and others had to provide evidence of the "fabulous wealth" that Columbus had promised his royal and merchant backers. In fact the gold in these islands was a rarity but nevertheless the Spaniards adopted an ingenious system for extracting the maximum from the Arawaks. Every three months every native had to produce a hawk's bell full of gold dust, chiefs ten times this amount. In return they were given

Above; Natives who failed to provide their quota of gold dust to the Spaniards were executed by having their hands cut off.

Right; South American natives and the arrival of Amerigo Vespucci's boats depicted in two 1505 woodcuts



a copper token stamped with the month to hang round their necks. Any native found without such a token had both their hands cut off. Those that fled to the hills or resisted were hunted down by trained dogs, hung or burned alive. When the gold ran out Columbus turned to slavery, sending back 500 slaves to be sold in the markets of Seville. But the slaves died too quickly and this trade quickly petered out.

Terrible toll

Mass killings, slavery and increasingly group suicides by the Arawaks themselves took a terrible toll of Hispaniola's population. In the two years that Columbus was in charge over half the native population died: 125,000 is a conservative estimate. Within 25 years of 1492 the entire indigenous population of all the large islands of the Antilles had been wiped out.

Two entire peoples, the Arawaks and the Caribs had been wiped from the face of the earth. Later, black slaves from Portuguese Africa were brought in to establish and work the highly profitable sugar plantations.

Columbus in fact had only pushed the door open. It was Amerigo Vespucci, exploring at the same time as Columbus, who realised that a new continent had been reached by the Spanish. By 1507 it had been given the name America. As in the Antilles, exploration rapidly gave way to conquest as stories of a land of gold, El Dorado, filtered back to Spain.

Two great arcs of conquest moving outwards from the Antilles accomplished the subjugation of mainland America. One, organised from Cuba between 1516 and 1518, swept through Mexico between 1519 and 1522, destroying the Aztec confederation, and then radiated north and south from the central Mexican plateau. The other arc of conquest, starting in Panama, took the Pacific route southwards for the conquest of the Inca empire in 1531-33. The conquest of the Inca and Az-

¿Usted lee español?



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tec Empires was a qualitatively different undertaking to the suppression of the Arawaks. These two civilisations were highly developed military empires which conquered or brought into subordination a series of other cultures. The Aztecs dominated central Mexico while the Inca empire, centred on Cuzco, in Peru spread as far as modern day Ecuador and Chile. Both empires were based on developed agriculture with the Incas developing complex irrigation techniques to improve productivity on the land. Land was held communally or by the state—surpluses from production going to the nobility and priest castes. Both empires were governed by "god-kings" who could call on tens of thousands of warriors in times of war.

But neither the Incas nor the Aztecs were a match for the *conquistadores*, small in number but bringing with them the superior war technology of Europe. While the Incas and Aztecs fought with wooden clubs, slings, bows and arrows and spears, the Spaniards fought with steel swords, armour, muskets and pistols. They brought with them the horse and the wheel—unknown to both Inca and Aztec.

Alliances

Still, on their own, the few hundred *conquistadores* could never have smashed these mighty empires. It was only by making alliances with the subject peoples of these empires, only to betray them later of course, that they achieved their aim.

Hernando Cortes summed up the early aims of the conquerors when he declared: "I come for gold, not to till the land like a peasant". The whole first period of the Spanish conquest involved plundering the existing accumulated wealth of the civilisations of Latin America. The plunder extracted from the Aztecs and Incas made Columbus' efforts look puny. The captured Inca ruler Atahualpa attempted to ransom his freedom from his captor Pizarro by filling a room full of gold and silver ornament. The ransom when melted down was worth 1.5 million pesos—the equivalent to half a century's production in Europe! Atahualpa's reward, however, was not freedom. He was first converted to Christianity, then strangled!

Systematic plundering demanded complete "pacification". Initial resistance was met with massacre after massacre. Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands died in these wars of conquest. Even after victory seemed assured the indigenous peoples rose again, in the Inca rebellion of 1536-37 and in central Mexico where the Caxcanes rebelled in 1541. Meanwhile hunter-warrior peoples like the Araucanian Indians of Chile, the Chichimecas of northern Mexico and of course the Apache became consummate horsemen and adopted guerrilla warfare tactics against their oppressors.

Plunder

In the central areas of the new Spanish empire plunder gradually gave way to systematic exploitation based on, and linked into, the Spanish mercantile system. Areas of land were granted to the *conquistadores* to include the Indians within them who had to provide the labour and tribute for their new masters. First gold from panning, then silver from mining, became the major element of trade.

Forced Indian labour died in tens of thousands in the silver mines of Potosi in Bolivia, opened in the 1550s. By the end of the century Potosi was one of the world's largest cities with 350,000 inhabitants.

Its largest silver mine, Cerro Rico, alone provided half of the world's silver.

The colonial system established in Latin America during this period reflected the contradictions of decaying feudalism. Emerging from feudalism into mercantile capitalism, Spain was in no mood to transfer to her colonial territories feudal modes of organisation which might recreate an autonomous nobility free from the crown's control. The Royal Viceroy of New Spain, covering Mexico and central America, and the Viceroy of Peru, covering most of Spanish South America, were the monarchs' representatives who aimed to keep the *conquistadores* subject to royal authority.

But nor were the *conquistadores* anxious to become feudal barons. Cortes was a good representative of the nascent capitalist spirit

amongst the landowners of the time. His 25,000 square mile estate in Oaxaca was earning his son 80,000 gold pesos a year in Indian tributes by 1569, when the crown confiscated it. The Cortes estate also included a nascent silk industry, two sugar mills, wheat, fruit, horses, cattle, sheep and massive corrals for the mules Cortes bred to service the mines to the north!

Tribute

But as long as Indian labour was tied by a system of tribute to the masters there was little room within the system for the propertyless "free" worker selling his or her labour power—crucial for the emergence of capitalism.

The impact of the "discovery" on Spain and Europe was enormous. Spain kept a complete monopoly on

trade via yearly convoys setting out from Seville laden with European manufactures and returning with gold, silver and other produce of the Americas. Not only Spain grew rich out of this trade. The Spanish economy, commercially strong but weak in manufacture, had to exchange much of its precious metals for manufactured goods from the rest of Europe, especially from Britain and Holland.

The increasing amounts of gold and silver in Europe led to inflation; prices doubled and trebled in the sixteenth century. This rapid enrichment of the commercial bourgeoisie was accompanied by a dramatic fall in real wages as prices rose, which affected the peasantry, craftsmen and workers. Landlords, especially in the most advanced commercial nations like Britain, were themselves pushed further

towards the money economy, towards "commercialising" their land, by clearing the small scale peasant-tenants and enclosing the common land.

Marx and Engels had no doubt about the historical impact of these events on the development of capitalism as they pointed out in the Communist Manifesto:

"The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up new fields to the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the multiplication of the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry an impulse never known before, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development." ■

The myth of a golden age



"BEFORE THE arrival of the Spaniards, we were a communitarian society. In our land we did not know about hunger, robbery, lies. In the Andean region our *ayllus*, *markas*, *suyus*, were the base of our subsistence and a great civilisation, in which autonomy and diversification of jobs and organisations were respected. In the oriental plains, various independent peoples occupied large territories living in freedom, developing such skills as silverwork, music, hunting, gathering and fishing in harmony with nature."

So starts a document from the leading and most militant peasant organisation in Bolivia, the CSUTCP, entitled *Our History*.

This response to the history of conquest is growing in Latin America today, even amongst some who profess to be socialists. The conquest is seen as at the root of Latin America's problems. At its worst it takes the form of seeking racist solutions, expelling "today's conquerors"—those of Spanish descent and with "mixed blood". Generally it takes the form of looking back to a golden age, seeking solutions to the societies problems in pre-Columbian forms of organisation and culture.

Unfortunately there never was a golden age for the masses of Latin America. The great pre-Columbian civilisations, the Inca and Aztecs, were themselves based on the oppression and exploitation of whole peoples. The massive human sacrifices of the Aztec empire are well known. In one ceremony in 1486 over 20,000 living captives had their hearts cut out when the great temple of Huitzilopochtli was dedicated to the Sun-God. The Incas while less prone to mass sacrifice conquered and sometimes removed from their homelands whole peoples if they were thought "unreliable". Both societies kept slaves. And the exploitation of subject peoples by the nobility and priesthood undoubtedly contributed to the conquerors' success in finding willing allies to fight for them.

To say this is not to "excuse" the conquerors, nor to equate the everyday brutality of the pre-Columbian era with the massacres and deaths which were to come later at the hands of the Spanish. But we have to counter an ideology which looks backward to a civilisation gone forever rather than forward to really



A march last year of 800 indigenous people to La Paz, Bolivia, "for Territory and Dignity"

solving the problems afflicting the masses today.

A further argument of the "indigenists" is that left on its own, without the destructive impact of the Spanish conquest, Latin American society would have itself developed its productive forces and avoided the miseries inflicted upon it by capitalism. Some even argue that the state owned and communal forms of property existing in the pre-Columbian period could have allowed a smooth transition to socialism without having to pass through the horrors of capitalism.

Unfortunately there is no evidence in human history for an evolution from an ancient communal society based on kinship systems, or from the Asiatic mode of production, to a modern classless society (communism). A dialectical understanding of the laws of uneven and combined development causes us to reject the mechanical schema of passing through inevitable stages (slave, feudal, capitalism, socialism). But Marxists have always rejected the Narodnik (Populist) reactionary utopia of skipping modern industrial society and its class struggles in favour of the saving or re-creation of the rural commune.

Marx hypothesised that, when the socialist revolution triumphed in certain advanced capitalist states, if in others primitive communes still survived then indeed these might not have to pass through the vale of tears of their dissolution by private property and class antagonisms. But if this was even in the 1870s an unlikely course of events, given the rapid expansion and domination of capitalism over the rural economy, it is even

less likely today.

Others have used the example of Japan's self-isolation from the sixteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries to argue that, with a century or two of independent development, America too might have become a world economic super-power. This again is nonsense. Leaving aside the fact that Japan was a vastly more advanced society than the Inca empire, its capabilities for development did not come from isolation as such. They came from its own internal social evolution and its relationship to world developments before and immediately after its period of isolation.

Given the vastly different and earlier stage of development of pre-Columbian societies and the almost total absence of private property, the evolution of these societies to the point where they could have resisted contact with socially, technologically and militarily advanced societies, was not just a question of allowing them several decades or even centuries of isolation to "catch up".

Faced with the the Spanish conquest it is quite useless to wish it had not happened or to daydream of a golden age that was, or might have been. In fact the conquest of the Americas, carried out in exactly the bloody and brutal way that is inseparable from every major human advance under class society, contributed mightily to the development of capitalism and humanity's productive forces on a world scale.

Marx's analysis of the British conquest of India contained within it the only truly revolutionary and progressive approach to the triumph

and impact of merchant capitalism on such societies. He denounced the miseries it caused, realised that it created the pre-conditions for massive advances in those societies themselves, but recognised that these benefits could only be enjoyed once the colonial system itself was overthrown. Has the bourgeoisie, he asked,

"... ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation? The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

There are still workers' movements in Latin America today which use the symbols of pre-Columbian America as a culture of resistance to their own bosses and to the depredations of imperialism. There is still systematic racism against indigenous peoples.

But the battle to free Latin America from poverty and injustice cannot triumph unless it is internationalist in outlook, and embraces the most advanced modern technology as the basis of the struggle for socialism.

The strategy of permanent revolution, which links the struggle for socialism in backward countries to the overthrow of the whole system of imperialist exploitation, is the only progressive alternative to the nightmare that started 500 years ago. ■

Fascism's second

A wave of brutal racist assaults on immigrants is taking place in Germany. Leading the assaults are the neo-fascist groups which have been growing ever since the reunification of Germany last year. The "respectable" parliamentary parties claim to be outraged by the attacks. But they themselves have been whipping up hatred against immigrants with new laws on asylum seeking and propaganda targeting foreign workers as the cause of unemployment.

The Gruppe Arbeitermacht, (GAM), German section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International has been in the thick of the struggle against the resurgent fascism and racist attacks. Here we print a translation of the four page special issue of *Arbeitermacht* (Workers Power), 23 October 1991.

arbeitermacht

STOP THE RACIST KILLERS NOW!

OPEN BORDERS FOR ALL!

DOWN WITH THE RACIST ALIEN AND REFUGEE LAWS!

FOR A WORKERS' UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE FASCISTS!



THE SPIRIT of the pogrom reigns once again over Germany. A wave of racist attacks over the past weeks has shaken the whole Federal Republic, and has rekindled fears of the rise of fascism. Not a day goes by without foreigners being brutally assaulted and man-handled by racist thugs. Every week, refugee hostels are stormed and attacked with firebombs. Hoyerswerda [scene of a vicious Nazi assault] was only a bloody prelude to this.

The complicity of the police is clear: they prefer to look the other way, to arrive too late, to run away from the fascist killers. The hypocrisy of the bourgeois press is breathtaking: after months of official hate campaigning against foreigners and the offensive against rights of asylum, we now hear of their dismay at outrages committed against our foreign fellow-citizens.

The dragon's teeth, sown during reunification, are now springing up from German soil. The excrement of German nationalism pollutes the land. Putting a stop to it is fast becoming a matter of life and death for the left and for the whole labour movement. If we don't fight now, when will we?

Attacks on the increase

The fascist and racist attacks of recent weeks demonstrate not only a substantial rise in the activity of the far right and their growing ability to mobilise, but also far better co-ordination than in the past. Overall, the attacks display an organised character, and are not simply the work of copy-cat criminals.

There is a real danger that the pogrom-style attacks on foreigners could constitute a decisive step forwards in the building of a mass fascist organisation. What they lack

is a united party and a *führer*. According to the estimates of the "Verfassungsschutz" [a federal agency for "the protection of the constitution"] these groups contain around 36,000 organised members, divided between numerous fascist and far right groups like the DVU [German People's Union] and the Republicans.

It is also clear that support for these groups in the East comes above all from a declassed milieu (a kind of lumpen fascism) for whom demagogic populism is brought into play. Thus, a leader of the Republicans advertised his organisation in Thüringen as a "workers' party".

In the West, they recruit above all from the executive and upper middle classes—officials and middle to higher management staff—and the last elections revealed growing electoral support from the ranks of the labour aristocracy and working class youth.

Today the fascists still do not pose a serious danger to the existence of the entire workers' movement (because at the moment capital needs no fascist movement to keep the proletariat in check). But that can change very quickly. If they do not meet with decisive resistance today they will raise their pogromist attacks on foreigners to a virtual civil war level. The conditions of struggle for the left will be decidedly worsened and the working class when on strike or engaged in other forms of action will be confronted by fascist gangs in a way we have not seen since 1945.

... and official racism

The Bonn government and the bosses' media can no longer shut their eyes to the rapid growth in fascist and racist violence. But their sudden exclamations of horror ring

false. It was they who in recent months initiated the hate campaign against asylum seekers and refugees, a campaign which only differed from DVU election propaganda in its choice of words, if at all.

The reason why this situation has arisen now is clear. Capitalist re-unification has, quite contrary to Kohl's promises, brought mass unemployment, price and tax increases—and more blessings of the free market will be available in the coming months.

The "eastern boom" will turn out to mean social desolation across Germany. The economic upturn promised by the bourgeois gutter press is nowhere to be seen and will not be seen in the coming period. On the contrary, indicators such as falling orders in all branches of industry (above all, in capital goods), high state borrowing and diminishing consumer demand, show the entire economy is moving into recession.

It is for this reason—and in order to bring state immigration controls into line with Europe due to greater EC integration—that immigrants today face a sharpening of state racism. This is to be seen not only in increasing media hate campaigns, but also in deportations, limitations on the right of asylum, and restrictions of the conditions for entering and staying in Germany. In 1990 193,000 people sought asylum in Germany. In 1991 there are an estimated 30,000 more. The level of acceptance is approximately 4.1%, (in 1985 it was 25%), which means that not even 10,000 will obtain asylum over the two years.

Through these racist policies the government is trying to release the social tensions of capitalist reunification by dividing workers

between foreigners and Germans, thus weakening the ability of the entire workers' movement to resist.

This strategy has been increasingly successful. The CDU/CSU [Christian Democrats] are campaigning against "so-called refugees" and whipping up middle class racism.

The fascists and racists use this fertile soil to incite frustrated youth to act militantly against foreigners. The bosses use these attacks to display their "democratic face", their fake outrage against the fascist beast whose ground they have themselves prepared. They take the opportunity to represent the police as the protectors of those self-same foreigners whose deportation they will be carrying out tomorrow.

For these reasons all talk of the bourgeois state protecting immigrants is mere dreaming. The police look on, sometimes approvingly, as immigrants are attacked. Foreigners are threatened from two sides: first by the fascist attacks and second by the bourgeois state.

And the workers' movement?

The workers' movement and the Greens have done little aside from verbally condemning the CDU's double standards.

The SPD has played a particularly deplorable role. They joined the debate on rights of asylum, which the CDU had begun, by proposing further restrictions and the quicker enforcement of existing racist laws. In certain states such as Saarland or Bremen they have tried to cut the ground from under the CDU's feet with measures directed against foreigners. No wonder that they united with the government to speed up the asylum procedure,

i.e. deportations. They gained the fruits of this policy in the elections to the Bremen Parliament and the local elections in lower Saxony [SPD defeats]. The strategy of the capitalists was successful: playing the racist card to halt the SPD's run of election victories.

The petit bourgeois Greens, the troubled conscience of the "alternative" middle class, have shown their true face. "Of course" they are against anti-foreigner hate campaigns. But when it comes to advising the government they are for racist measures every time. Thus they support quotas on refugees. The ex-radical Cohn-Bendit [leader of the students in 1968] demands quite unashamedly that asylum seekers should first get official approval just to apply for an entry permit.

In the unions the mood is not as clear-cut as in the SPD over the shocking attacks. This is shown in the attitude of the IG-Metall chairman Steinkühler. On the one hand he speaks in favour of an immigration law "to stop abuse of the right of asylum and to steer primarily economic migration onto socially acceptable tracks" (IG-Metall Press Service 5.10.91). Thus he makes a proposal for how German capitalism can put an end to its "immigration problem". On the other hand, he calls on trade unionists to defend foreigners' hostels and even to set up defence guards to this end.

This is just talk—as one would expect from the SPD and trade union bureaucrats. It falls to the rank and file in the workplaces, to active trade unionists and works councils to force the trade union leaders to put their declarations into practice. Just how seriously the bureaucrats take the fight against racism and fascism is

coming?



Left: Nazis parade in Berlin, 1933. Above: workers must crush neo-Nazis before they grow

For a workers' united front against the fascists!

shown by the demonstrations of the last few days and weeks. They were marches of shop stewards' and workers' councils. But in Bremen, for example, the unions and SPD, hot on the heels of the latest SPD electoral setback, organised a demonstration in the city centre without informing the rank and file.

The PDS [the former ruling Communist Party of the GDR] showed the most courage. It condemned the racist and fascist attacks and supported the anti-fascist demonstration in Hoyerswerda. Gysi even went so far as to address a meeting on 3 October against all immigration controls.

But the current position of the party contents itself with calls for maintaining the right of asylum and current racist immigration controls. There is no talk of mobilising the party rank and file, let alone organising defence units and agitating for them in the working class movement.

Worse still: in Hoyerswerda itself the local PDS branch could do no better than to sign an all party declaration, which simply lamented that Hoyerswerda would get a bad reputation by coming into public attention because of a racist pogrom. Not one word in defence of asylum seekers, not one step towards the organisation of resistance to the fascist murderers!

Active resistance to the racist and fascist attacks remains correspondingly weak—and silent on the planned undermining of the right to asylum. The few mobilisations to date have been largely made up of Autonomists [a loose grouping of "alternative" anarchist youth akin to Class War in Britain]. Apart from them, the weak left was scarcely present. Immigrants were represented almost exclusively by Turkish and Kurdish Stalinist groups.

If we cannot overcome the limits of the current movement, then a further advance of the right, a massive deterioration in the living conditions of immigrants and asylum seekers, deeper divisions within the working class are guaranteed. The German workers' ability to fight will be weakened. In order to stop this we urgently need to build a federal-wide workers' united front against racist and fascist attacks and against state racism. ■

THE FASCIST and racist attacks of recent weeks have led, in many places, to the establishment of small action committees. In some towns there were protest demonstrations, which were made up mainly of autonomists, in some places alongside trade unionists.

All these initiatives have until now been divided and largely isolated from the organised labour movement. They also lack clarity about what should be done in the face of the right wing menace.

The anti-fascist congress due to take place on 1-3 November in Dresden could be the starting point to overcome this situation and build a real proletarian united front against racism and fascism. But the obstacles in the way of such a development are great.

Important participating groups (United Left, Ecoleft, Alternative List, PDS) want to keep action on the sidelines. They prefer to discuss fascism (and "the anti-fascism of the DDR"). Others who base themselves more firmly on action are prepared to settle for the existing self-satisfied perspective of demonstrations.

Whilst we have nothing against demonstrations, in the face of daily racist and fascist attacks they are not enough. That is why the building of self-defence groups is necessary in the communities, made up of those who are in a position to counter skinhead and Nazi attacks in an organised and militant way.

In addition there is a danger that such an organisation could adopt a sectarian attitude to the organised workers' movement and thus refuse to demand common action with parties like the SPD and the PDS and with the DGB trade union federation. An orientation towards winning the organised labour movement to such a united front must be the main outcome of the congress. The entire labour movement is threatened by the growth of the racists and fascists.

Contrary to widely held prejudices, the fight against racism and fascism is in essence not a battle between democracy and barbarism, which can be resolved by some all-class alliance of "all democrats". The hooligan gangs which are today attacking foreigners could tomorrow, if necessary, be directed against strikers.

The very class against which the extreme right direct their attacks has the power to smash them. Only the working class has the social power and the interest to annihilate fascism, racism and their social foundation, the capitalist economy. For

this reason it is imperative that we direct all our efforts to the winning of a great majority of the working class to a common struggle against the right.

Vain declarations, like that made by some 1,000 demonstrators from the autonomist scene that they are already the "anti-racist movement", can only hinder this struggle.

We must not run away from the task of putting demands on the existing reformist leadership of the labour movement, on the SPD, PDS and unions, and to take the fight for a broad front into these organisations. Only thus will these leaders be put to the test and the workers themselves be convinced of their inadequacy, half-heartedness and treachery.

The anti-fascist congress must be turned into the beginning of a national united front with democratically organised action groups in every city. That means common action with simultaneous freedom of criticism and propaganda for all participating organisations and groups. Such organisations must seek contact with the immigrants and their organisations and as a first step attempt to draw them into the committees.

They must immediately set about the task of building defence squads against fascist and racist attacks, militant counter-demonstrations against fascist marches and to commence a campaign of propaganda amongst the population to win the organised workers' movement to a common offensive.

AGAINST FASCISM AND RACISM: FOR WORKERS' AND IMMIGRANT MOBILISATIONS!

- Build self-defence committees against racist and fascist attacks, for the defence of demonstrations and against fascist marches!
- Mobilise against the Nazi menace and state racist policies!

NO CONCESSIONS TO FEDERAL RACIST LAWS!

- Against the opportunist adaptation of the SPD and DGB leaders to the racist policies of the government. Against any restrictions on asylum rights!
- For full citizenship rights for all who live or work in Germany!
- Against all restrictions of rights of entry or residence! Down with the surveillance and harassment of foreigners!
- Against every deportation! Every foreigner must be able to decide freely whether or not to live and work in Germany.

LRCI The RTT and the Soviet coup

SERIOUS TACTICAL differences over the fight against Stalinism in the USSR have emerged between the LRCI and the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) with whom the LRCI has fraternal relations. In particular the resolution "Only workers' revolution can stop capitalist restoration" in their journal, *International Trotskyist 4*, conflicts with the published positions of the LRCI.

Both the LRCI and the RTT insisted the coup had to be opposed by the whole working class. A difference emerged, however, over what temporary tactical alliances were permissible and necessary to stop the coup. The RTT considers that both the Emergency Committee and the Yeltsinites were equally reactionary. Consequently, no bloc was permissible with the latter to oppose the former. For the RTT only independent mobilisations of the proletariat could have brought a progressive outcome.

Coup

The LRCI considers that on 18-20 August the coup was the main danger facing the working class and all its political and trade union organisations created under the weakening Stalinist dictatorship. Therefore, the "greater evil" that faced both the vanguard and the masses was the Emergency Committee.

The re-imposition of a dictatorship would actually have strengthened mass illusions in bourgeois democracy and further identify the proletariat's gains (planning etc) with bureaucratic parasitism and dictatorship.

During the coup the LRCI considered it vital to fight for the following:

(i) A call to the working class to stop the coup and smash the plotters by class action, general strike, obstruction of army/KGB manoeuvres, winning over the soldiers, arming the workers. The RTT agrees completely with us on this.

(ii) The formation of soviet-type bodies, agitatingly linking this to the defeat of the coup and the defence of all those general (bourgeois) democratic rights the masses had already won or aspired to win. The RTT agrees on the need for soviet-type bodies but would only advocate the defence of organisations of the toiling masses; those of the workers, the peasants, the soldiers etc, and their democratic rights.

(iii) During the coup it was necessary to fight to oppose any working class political support for, or confidence in, Yeltsin. It was necessary to oppose his "seizure" or consolidation of power. But whilst the Emergency Committee's coup remained a threat the Yeltsinites were not the main danger. Once the coup collapsed Yeltsin indeed became just this. For the RTT, on the other hand, the Yeltsinites were not even temporarily the lesser evil.

Influence

(iv) The democratic restorationists were obliged to resist the coup in order to survive themselves. Moreover, their influence was predominant in most of the independent workers' organisations and amongst the intelligentsia. As a result, given the relationship of forces, it was necessary to form a common front of resistance, a military and class struggle bloc with those forces and with their leaders. In practice this would have centred on mobilising alongside the rank and file units of these forces, the miners' union etc. Revolutionaries should have

demanded that Yeltsin, Popov, Sobchak and their military and KGB supporters open the arsenals, use all the media to spread the call for a general strike and a workers' militia. A part of this united front call would have been to fight alongside the "democrats" and the Yeltsinites to defend all the centres of resistance to the coup including the RSFSR parliament (the "White House").

For the RTT such a united front was impermissible in principle, because of the reactionary nature of both camps. Only independent mobilisations of the toiling masses, led by the proletariat, could have brought a progressive outcome. Objectively Yeltsin's counter-attack was not fundamentally progressive. It was a counter-revolutionary attack against the very existence of the workers' state and against the planned property relations on behalf of the imperialists, the ex-bureaucrats aspiring to become capitalists and the existing small capitalist class itself. Any bloc with Yeltsin was not a united front but objectively speaking a popular front under the control of the bourgeois counter-revolution. Therefore the RTT considers that the LRCI has made a grave opportunist error.

The LRCI, on the other hand, considers the RTT position a serious sectarian error. Yeltsin's call for a general strike and for resistance to the coup was in itself a progressive act and was supportable. We distinguish clearly between his calls for resistance to the coup and his subsequent "seizure" of power. To achieve the former objective limited unity in action—with no confusion of banners or shared further objectives—was perfectly principled. Indeed it was obligatory for any realistic revolutionary strategy and tactics.

Defence

A common defence of these parliaments and city soviets against capture or dissolution by the coup-makers was in the concrete circumstances vital to smashing the coup. The coup-makers' attack and Yeltsin's defiance of them made the Russian parliament building the focus of resistance. Had Yeltsin's general staff here have been arrested or killed then the army and the KGB would have rallied decisively to the Emergency Committee. They would thereafter have mopped up all resistance piecemeal, including the resistance of the miners, the other independent unions and the "socialist" and "Trotskyist" groups.

In the absence of any alternative "independent" proletarian organising centre of resistance separate from the Yeltsinite and "democratic" forces the LRCI considers it abstract and sectarian to counterpose a non-existent workers' democracy or soviets to existent democratic rights and to institutions created by their exercise.

Finally, the LRCI differs with the RTT in that the latter believe that the pre-existing dual power between the two major factions of the bureaucracy has been decisively resolved.

The LRCI believes that whilst Yeltsin has established a restorationist government with executive power over the USSR and RSFSR state apparatus, and thus has shifted the balance of the dual power qualitatively in his favour, it has not yet resolved it.

Given the serious and principled character of these differences the LRCI and the RTT have decided to extend fraternal relations for a limited period with the object of resolving these if possible. ■

BORN OUT of a split from the SWP, like our own organisation, Red Action was founded in 1981 when the SWP undertook a turn, away from the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). Those members who had mistakenly regarded the ANL as a principled united front, who had seriously tried to implement the SWP's formal position of "no platform for fascists" and who opposed the ANL's dissolution, found themselves turfed out of the party and charged with "squadism". Some went on to found Red Action.

Red Action's expulsion from the SWP was the decisive event in shaping its politics. Identifying Cliff's brand of bureaucratic centralism with Leninism, they rejected the notion of the vanguard party. Identifying Lenin's vanguard party as laying the basis for Stalinism they have also rejected the very idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This error lies at the heart of their politics.

Red Action sought to build an organisation in the image of the working class. Its distaste for the fake intellectuals and "middle class toy town revolutionaries" of the SWP led Red Action to fetishise the question of class composition of the party over and above its programme. Action on any basis, particularly around Ireland and anti-fascist struggles, was stressed but the central tasks of theoretical re-elaboration were down-played.

In recent issues *Red Action* has, however, tried to explain the theoretical justification for its positions in the form of a return to what it sees as the real core of Marx and Engels' politics. For Red Action genuine Marxism is counterposed to the politics of Lenin and Trotsky. In their own words:

"The Bolshevik leadership did not cause Stalinism, which was due to social and economic factors, but the theories they advanced to justify the tactics they deemed necessary to retain power laid the theoretical groundwork."

Popular

Only the Marxism of Marx and Engels can be trusted, according to Red Action.

This is not a new idea. Paradoxically it is an idea very popular with the politics department lecturers and middle class leftists that Red Action despises. And it is still wrong.

Red Action tries to justify abandoning the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" by citing Marx:

"[Marx] lent the phrase no particular significance. In the two decades before the Paris Commune there was not a single case of Marx's use of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'."

They counterpose this to Lenin's own view that the question of the proletarian dictatorship was the "very essence of proletarian revolution".

This may seem an abstract question, but as Red Action recognise—although in the negative sense—it is the focal point around which all other programmatic questions revolve. What did Marx and Engels mean when they referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and what did Lenin and Trotsky inherit from them? They meant the rule of the revolutionary proletariat unlimited by any laws other than proletarian laws; a dictatorship by which the working class will consolidate its own rule, smash the counter-revolution and lay the basis for socialism. The workers' dictatorship will have to be highly authoritarian and centralised to the extent that is necessary to counter the centralisation and authoritarianism of the class enemy, the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Unlike the capitalist state, however, the dictatorship within a

RED ACTION

Red Action's concentration on anti-fascist work and its derision of the "middle class left" often make it seem anti-theoretical. This is a misconception. Red Action has a theory, and it is wrong, writes Bill Clinton.

Marxism without Lenin?

healthy workers' state will be governed by soviets—workers' councils. These will combine executive and legislative roles to allow the will of the masses to be expressed and implemented within a single body. Marx was not at all hesitant on this question, let alone opposed to it as Red Action imply. In a letter to Weydemeyer, written in 1852, Marx clearly expresses the centrality of this specific form of dictatorship for him:

"What I did that was new was to demonstrate: 1) that the existence of classes is merely linked to particular historical phases in the development of production, 2) that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to classless society." (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence* p64)

Eighteen years before he saw it happen in practice, in the Paris Commune of 1871, the dictatorship of the proletariat was lodged at the very heart of Marx's theory. It was the culmination of the class struggle and laid the basis for communist society. And the Paris Commune, which Marx and Engels chided for being too lenient, for not carrying through a red terror with sufficient vigour, was, nevertheless, their working model for the transition to communism. Its importance, as Engels made clear against the developing reformists in the ranks of the Second International in 1891,

war, i.e. when Lenin himself was still the leading personality and theoretician."

Leninism is not Stalinism but created it nevertheless, they argue. It did so for two reasons. Firstly, organisationally the Bolsheviks' method of democratic centralism aided and abetted the growth of the bureaucratic caste. Secondly, the revolution occurred too soon. In the prevailing backwardness and economic collapse faced by the Soviet Republic the Bolsheviks had no alternative but to take the measures they did in order to defend the workers' republic. These measures in turn inevitably led to the defeat of that republic by the bureaucratic caste.

For Red Action, once the revolutionary wave ebbed, and the party found itself in power on behalf of an atomised and listless working class, Russia ceased to be a proletarian dictatorship:

"If the term dictatorship of the proletariat is to have any contemporary meaning, other than the code word to distinguish one of them from 'one of us', then it can only mean the exclusive rule of the immense majority (with only the exploiters deprived of their politi-

an anti-fascist mobilisation centralisation, discipline and ruthless authoritarianism towards the enemy must be demonstrated. Where does this type of action point if it is not towards the proletarian dictatorship? Workers armed, mobilised and determined to fight for their own interests, will not stand any truck with those who would have them spare their enemies for fear of dictatorship. Why should we?

Another example is the picket line. A picket line is erected by workers against other workers—with the aim of beating the bosses. In the pit villages, once persuasion failed, miners had to stop scabs by depriving them of their "right to work" in a manner calculated to deter others from trying.

For Red Action there could only be two phases after the Russian revolution; a period of mass struggle and advance or, in the absence of this, counter-revolution:

"Once the revolution ceases to advance, it begins to retreat. The retreat signals that the counter-revolution has begun."

The problem with this is that it is no guide to action in the concrete circumstances faced by the Russian revolutionaries. It could have served as a justification for the ultra-left theory of the "revolutionary offensive" or for a retreat back to capitalism and bourgeois democracy, which—in case the comrades hadn't noticed, also constitutes a counter-revolution.



Only the Marxism of Marx and Engels can be trusted, according to Red Action.

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cal rights) in pursuit of their own interests."

This is a recipe for a pure revolution, something which will never happen. The Mensheviks were a workers' party. The Kronstadt sailors of 1921 were subjectively revolutionary workers and peasants in uniform. Nestor Makhno's anarchist guerilla army marched with anti-capitalist slogans. But because at different points they acted objectively (and in the Mensheviks' case, increasingly, subjectively) in the interests of the exploiters, where persuasion failed, they had to be deprived of their political rights by force.

When Red Action participate in

was that it was the dictatorship of the proletariat:

"Of late the Social Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat."

For Red Action it is the experience of the Russian Revolution which puts them off the workers' dictatorship. They believe that:

"The Bolshevik Party had ceased to represent the dictatorship of the proletariat in any Marxist sense shortly after the end of the civil

creed this—it was events themselves. It was not the Bolsheviks who destroyed soviet democracy—it withered and died under the pressure of extreme economic crisis and military intervention.

And in Russia the immense majority was not the proletariat at all—it was the peasantry. Within the workers' and peasants' alliance which made the revolution, there was always potential for a class war, with the proletariat imposing its rule and economic priorities, where necessary against the will of the majority of the peasantry.

Red Action's distaste for the reality of the proletarian dictatorship leads directly to its softness on the stages theory. If its politics tend to collapse in the direction of anarchism on the question of class rule, they collapse in the direction of Stalinism when faced with the problems of the revolution in backward countries. They quote Engels:

"The worst thing that can befall the leader of an extreme party, is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class he represents."

Resources

But Engels was referring to the peasant struggles of the Holy Roman Empire, not Russia in the imperialist epoch. World-wide the resources existed in 1917 for socialism—for the domination of the working class.

For this reason the leaders of the Bolsheviks placed at the centre of their programme the international revolution. The fact that this was delayed did not mean that they threw up their hands to say they could not implement their programme.

Rather it meant they instituted the measures necessary to suppress the counter-revolution, to defend the young workers' republic, to lay the basis for socialism in anticipation of the time when aid could arrive from their comrades abroad.

But they refused to hand power back to the bourgeoisie. At the time there were numerous "Marxists" who advised them to do just that, using the same quote from Engels as their justification.

The implication of this view for modern revolutions against imperialism is made clear in Red Action's "Where we stand":

"We recognise the difficulties that states such as Nicaragua—and others past and present—face, from capitalist backed mercenary armies, military intervention and economic sabotage, which make immediate transition to a socialist system impossible."

That is no different from the Menshevik theory, echoed and elaborated by Stalinism, that the workers of a backward country must rest content with a democratic, anti-imperialist stage of their revolution because objective conditions do not allow for working class power at all. If the Bolsheviks had followed Red Action's advice in 1917 there would have been no workers' dictatorship to complain about in the first place.

If Red Action are to complete their break from the opportunists of the SWP then they must re-examine not only Marxism but also their own mistaken rejection of Leninism and Trotskyism. For, as Lenin and Trotsky both made clear, they could lay claim to no new theory. They were happy with an old one—Marx's Marxism. Or as one contributor to Red Action put it:

"The sweeping rejection of Leninism/Bolshevism and the rest of the British left contained in the "Dictatorship" article throws a number of theories and principles into the dustbin of history that may have to be fished out again."

Haughey's last stand

Charles Haughey has been given three months to go quietly, after twelve years as leader of Fianna Fáil, seven of these as prime minister. Cabinet colleagues who twice in October planned a motion of no-confidence to remove him, backed off when he intimated he would step down once he had seen through the looming wage confrontation with the unions and the EC's Maastricht summit.

The mystique surrounding the man for more than twenty of his thirty years in politics disguises the larger forces which first put him in power, and with what mission. In the same way present allegations of corruption disguise the real political reasons for dumping him at this point.

Haughey was sacked from Jack Lynch's cabinet in 1970 and put on trial for allegedly trying to give arms to the IRA to defend Catholic areas. Fianna Fáil's verbal "republicanism" had been exposed as hollow by its retreat in the face of Loyalist attacks on nationalist areas in the North in 1968-69. The clique around Haughey tried to do a secret deal with the socially conservative wing of Sinn Féin. It had the explicit aim of confining the turmoil strictly within the Six Counties. The prosecution of Haughey confirmed Fianna Fáil decisively as a reliable broker for imperialism, clearing the way for twenty years of repressive legislation, no-jury courts, police brutality and extradition.

Toughness

It was Haughey's reputation for financial toughness which brought him back into government in 1979 after years of rebuilding a factional power base in Fianna Fáil. The party was returned to office after the Labour-Fine Gael coalition of 1973-77 presided over a jump in unemployment from 70,000 to 90,000, an inflation rate of up to 25% and the steady cutting of wages. The election was won, however, with inflationary promises which pushed state borrowing into an upward spiral that was never brought under control until 1989 and is now once more slipping out of control. Such were the conjunctures, then and now, that determined Haughey's entrance into power and his demise.

In 1979 he was expected to cut public sector finances—jobs, services and wages—in order to arrest the spiral of borrowing. Two factors disabled him.

The most important was the huge upsurge of strike militancy by workers, notably in the Post Office, and the gigantic tax demonstrations by workers from 1979-81. The other factor was his own political insecurity. Despite having a massive parliamentary majority, he was driven by the need to win public approval for his own personal leadership and so sought the earliest possible election before unveiling the expected austerity package. His plan was frustrated by the explosion of the H-block struggle. And when the poll was finally held in June, 1981 the election of H-block candidates and gains for "independent socialists" denied him his majority.

Austerity

A new Labour-Fine Gael coalition lasted only nine months until it fell over its own austerity measures—specifically Garret Fitzgerald's attempt to tax children's shoes! Haughey returned as the leader of a minority government dependent on deals with the "independent socialist" and the tolerance of the Workers Party. This lasted for a year with a new level of austerity, during which he tried to defer negotiated national wage increases. Yet he remained shackled by his own populist rhetoric. He made significant symbolic concessions to small groups of workers who fought closures with hunger strikes, even appearing at the bedside of one hunger striker in a factory occu-



Top: 150,000 march through Dublin in 1976
Bottom: Haughey—reliable broker for imperialism

patation.

A new Labour-Fine Gael coalition from 1983-87 intensified the austerity. As unemployment reached 200,000 and the national debt continued to grow, the coalition again paid the electoral price as Haughey campaigned with infamous billboards proclaiming that "Health cuts hurt the old and the poor".

But in the meantime Haughey's cynical alliance with the Church on the abortion and divorce issues, and factional hatred of his autocratic rule within the party led to senior minister, Des O'Malley, splitting to form the Progressive Democrats (PD). The PD was formed on a platform of balanced books, social liberalism and "clean hands". The PD's gains in the election denied Haughey a majority, but an unprecedented decision by his major rival, Fine Gael, kept Haughey in power until 1989 on the basis of the most severe austerity programme yet.

Cuts

The cuts, especially in the health service, drew masses onto the streets, but the union leaders undermined the resistance by negotiating a wages deal with Haughey. Fianna Fáil had always been the preferred "social partner" for the union bureaucracy, and Haughey's cynical populism made it all the easier for the bureaucracy to sell this wage restraint package under the label of "Programme for National Recovery". Profits boomed, the debt began to stabilise and the unions and Fianna Fáil played up their joint achievement of "a minor increase in

employment", conveniently ignoring the massive acceleration in the emigration of youth.

On the basis of an apparent economic stabilisation he went to the polls once more; yet again he was denied his majority. Both Labour and the Workers Party made some gains, but now the power broker was Haughey's rival from the split in Fianna Fáil. O'Malley's PD forced him to agree a coalition programme in 1989 making large concessions to PD's financial policy.

Just as the growth in the debt was stabilised in relation to GNP, the international recession led to a sharp rise in unemployment and new pressures to borrow. Specifically, Haughey's second three-year deal with the unions was now held responsible for obliging the government to increase its debt once more. The party's very poor results in the June 1991 local elections sowed deep discontent with Haughey among the party's grass roots. Then a dozen significant scandals of politically-connected business corruption exploded around Haughey.

Haughey was under pressure from the PD to meet their demand for tax reductions. He was faced with the mass of trade unionists rejecting any renegotiation of the wages agreement in the public sector. His covert drive for privatisation was delayed by scandals. In response he resolved to threaten savage public spending cuts as a weapon with which to browbeat the unions and hold the line on the public sector borrowing requirement.

Dependence

The thirty years of Haughey's political career have seen radical changes in the form of Ireland's dependence on imperialism. A vigorous industrial-export sector grew up on foreign capital which repatriates most its profits. Large indigenous capitalists stagnate, as in the food industry, or export their surplus capital. They are unable to lead systematic economic development at home to overcome the massive gap between Irish and EC average levels. Agriculture, dependent on the EC, has preserved an inefficient sector now faced with decline due to the attack on subsidies resulting from international trade negotiations. The massive debt accumulated to build a modern infrastructure (and buy votes at crucial moments) has become a cancer for the Irish ruling class.

All these changes have brought a growing crisis for the party structure of the Irish bourgeoisie. Populism has had to give way to naked austerity. The failed expectation

that Haughey would see through such a change a decade ago has led to splits and new potential alignments which threaten the mould of the two-capitalist party system which is presented as parliamentary democracy in Ireland.

Workers

It is a time, therefore, when workers must be won to force the trade union movement, Labour Party and Workers Party to break all collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Time and again in the past Labour and the Workers Party have bailed out the capitalist parties in their crises. It is vital now that we deny any such prop to them and instead open up the road of struggle and working class political independence.

If Haughey's leadership is tolerated for a further three months in Fianna Fáil, it will be with one eye to letting him carry the blame for the forthcoming austerity budget in order to give his successor a honeymoon period. But it will also enable the bosses to use, one last time, Haughey's sweetheart relations with the trade union bureaucracy to renegotiate the wage commitments already made to workers.

Crisis

The weeks of the simmering crisis saw important strike threats, and action, among building, bus and postal workers. The Communications Workers Union (CWU) forced the Post Office to pay up on a 6% special increase already deferred for two years—an important signal to the public sector workers as a whole who are threatened with wholesale cancellation of such awards. The bus workers struck to limit the public Bus Eireann company's use of private inter-city coaches, but far more systematic privatisation is being prepared and the union leaders are doing nothing to mobilise against it. CWU has responded to revelations about privatisation plans for Telecom simply with a billboard campaign arguing that privatisation will only benefit "the fat cats". Neither in Telecom nor An Post are union leaders mobilising workers' action against major rationalisation plans which threaten over 2,000 jobs immediately.

Now more than ever is there a need for an open conference of shop stewards, unemployed, community and socialist activists to organise committees of action to link public sector wage resistance, opposition to the cuts and the demands of the unemployed. Force the union leaders to fight, but do not trust them an inch! ■

Workers power

INSIDE

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MIDDLE EAST TALKS

No peace with Zionism!



- For a constituent assembly covering the whole of occupied Palestine with rights to vote for all over the age of 16—whether Arab or Jew.

To remain a specifically Jewish state, Israel must either artificially maintain a majority of Jewish inhabitants, by expulsions of Arabs and immigration of Soviet Jews, or it will need to deny democratic rights to Arabs, so preventing them from achieving a secular state.

This is why the West Bank is under military control. It is why Palestinians face violent encroachments and land theft by militant armed settlers. In short, the Israeli ruling class cannot grant real democratic rights to Palestinian Arabs without undermining the very basis of the Zionist project: to build a specifically Jewish state in a land originally inhabited by an Arab majority.

Self-determination for the Palestinians and real democracy for all the workers and peasants of Palestine cannot be negotiated with the Israeli racists or the warmongering imperialists in the White House. The willingness of the PLO and other Palestinian organisations to abandon the struggle against the Zionist state and to sponsor a reactionary settlement is a measure of the bankruptcy of bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism.

Genuine

Lasting and genuine liberation for the Palestinian masses, and for the Israeli Jews who are willing to give up their privileges based on the oppression of another people, can only be found in the establishment of a Palestinian workers' state.

A state based on workers' councils that sets itself the task of the nationalisation of the land, the banks and large scale industry under workers' control, the institution of a democratic plan of production for need and not for profit. A state that above all eradicates discrimination and oppression based on religion, race or sex within its borders. A state that sets itself the task of creating a socialist federation of the Middle East.

The Middle East peace conference can only obstruct this task. Whatever our political differences with the organisations—the DFLP, PFLP, Hamas—which have called for strike action against the conference, they are absolutely correct to do so. Workers in Britain should organise solidarity with these strikes.

This sell out peace conference needs to be greeted with a massive general strike of protest throughout Palestine. Above all Palestinian workers need their own revolutionary socialist party, not to negotiate their right to a new "autonomous" prison house, but to fight for the revolutionary overthrow of the Zionist state and a workers' republic of Palestine. ■

THE GREAT Middle East peace spectacular was set to kick off in Madrid on 30 October. The conference is intended to lead to bilateral discussions between Israel and the Arab delegations.

If it gets that far, that is. For Israel has been dragged kicking and screaming to the negotiating table. American threats not to grant vital loan guarantees gave Israel no real option but to attend the conference. Israel desperately needs to borrow money in order to house Jews arriving in waves from the USSR.

The Americans are not hosting the conference out of the goodness of their hearts. Hot on the heels of their Gulf War victory, and with their former Soviet rivals sliding into chaos, the USA is seizing the opportunity to achieve a regional peace settlement in its own interests.

It does not intend to remove the root cause of the instability, violence and poverty of the area. The root of all this is the oppression of the Palestinian people who were deprived of their land by the establishment of the Israeli state.

The USA wants to find a better and more stable way to exercise economic and political control of the region. It wants to stitch up a deal that will take the sting out of both the Palestinian uprising and Arab hostility to the racist Zionist state—without granting real or lasting self-determination to the Palestinian people.

A look at the make-up of the negotiating teams shows what a reactionary outcome can be expected from these talks if they reach agreement.

Israel have sent a strikingly hard-line crew; headed by Yitzak Shamir, and including a leader of the extreme West Bank settlers. Slightly less hard-line Foreign Minister David Levy was excluded.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, are not even allowed a delegation in their own right. They are part of a joint delegation with

the Jordanians. On Israel's insistence members of the PLO, the main Palestinian organisation, are excluded. Israel has effectively vetted the Palestinian team in advance.

The PLO still exercises influence over the Palestinian delegation, but it is an influence which undermines the true interests of the Palestinian people. The PLO is ready for compromise. At best it is hoping for some form of autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza.

Current American proposals are for a five year transition period with interim "self-government" on the West Bank and Gaza. Even if they are actually carried out, this would be a cruel parody of independence and a sell-out of the Palestinians historic demand for the re-establishment of a democratic secular state of Palestine, including the land area stolen

from them to establish the state of Israel in 1948.

The Palestinian "autonomous zone" or "authority" would have no ability to defend itself, no economic independence and would be unable to adopt any policy unacceptable to the Israeli capitalists and their state. With or without PLO participation, it would be a powerless puppet regime. It would remain essentially a colony of Israel.

A real peace demands real democracy:

- For all Palestinians to have the right to return to Israel
- Down with restrictions of the movement of Palestinians
- Free elections to all municipal authorities
- Legalise the PLO and all political parties
- Complete equality of language
- Release state hostages and political prisoners