

Workers power

INSIDE

Number 167 May 1993

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Mandela demands compromise, youth demand...

SOUTH AFRICA

"GIVE US GUNS"

"THERE'S A LOT of pain. Not just because of Comrade Chris—many others have been killed before him. We should have taken action before. Now we should take revenge. We should take up arms against the enemy. It's not the whites—it's De Klerk. It's the regime. It's the police."

These are the words of Macbeth Ndaba, a member of the ANC Youth League, on the day of Chris Hani's memorial rally. Every word is true.

Black workers and youth in South Africa are on the receiving end of a murder campaign designed by the white far-right and their Inkatha puppets to destabilise peace negotiations. Every demonstration sees youth subjected to tear gas, rubber bullets, shot-guns, beatings and detention.

The black majority of South Africa has suffered enough. It should declare war, not only on apartheid, but on the capitalist system which created it. "Give us guns", the chant which swept across memorial demonstrations after Chris Hani's assassination, is not just radical talk. It is a burning necessity for the black workers and youth of South Africa.

Right now they need to defend themselves. They need not just guns but organised township and factory-based defence militias. And those militias need to be created not only to defend the mass movement

but, linked to delegate-based workers' councils, to take power in South Africa through revolution.

The deal which Nelson Mandela is negotiating with the apartheid bosses is a sell-out. It guarantees the white minority the final say right up to the year 2000. It will leave poverty and deprivation untouched. It will leave the ANC sharing power with the murder merchants of the National Party and even Inkatha.

When Mandela visited Sebokane, scene of the April massacre of 30 unarmed township dwellers, the youth demanded guns. What was Mandela's reply? Join the ANC militia, (MK) and be "part of a disciplined unit". The only problem is that as part of the ANC deal with De Klerk the MK will be disarmed and incorporated into the South African army! It has already declared a ceasefire with the apartheid state.

The ANC Youth League has promised mass action against Inkatha and to kick white police out of Soweto. If it listens to Mandela it will lead its members into battle defenceless. That must not happen.

Chris Hani's death sparked the biggest wave of mass action for years: the biggest ever mass strike, and massive demonstrations which had the police and army fleeing for their lives as their armoured cars were wrecked and burned. Meanwhile the world's bosses trembled at the thought that the ANC could "lose control" of the mass movement and talked of an impending "race war".

The masses of South Africa should break from the ANC and its strategy of sell-out negotiations. They should demand an end to all negotiations: there is nothing to negotiate. Instead they should fight for a democratically controlled workers' militia, workers' councils and a sovereign Constituent Assembly to implement full democracy and socialism for South Africa's working people.

That will not be a race war, it will be a class war. And every working class person in Britain, black or white, should stand with the black majority of South Africa in that struggle. ■

• Turn to p12 for more on South Africa



Sebokane youth with wooden guns—they need the real thing!

Hani's killers: trained in Britain?

Janus Waluz shot down Chris Hani in cold blood. But he was no lone madman. Already South African police have detained two key members of the South African Conservative Party (CP)—the "respectable" face of far-right racism.

Clive Derby-Lewis, arrested for conspiring to kill Hani, was a leader of

the CP and a member of De Klerk's Presidential Council. He was also leader of Western Goals, a London based right-wing think-tank.

Western Goals has devoted itself to inviting the likes of French fascist Le Pen and Mussolini's granddaughter to address covert gatherings of Tory MPs, and has tried to take

over the right wing Tory Monday Club.

Last year Western Goals secretly organised a training programme to prepare white South Africans for the coming "race war". Soldiers from the British Army, the former Rhodesian Army and the South African Defence Force were recruited by Derby-Lewis. ■

THE FASCIST British National Party (BNP) held a march and rally in central London on Sunday 25 April.

They had intended to assemble at Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria Station. In the end the police made them assemble at the station instead. Their march was re-routed and their rally was in Pimlico. But both took place.

A counter-mobilisation by the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and other anti-racist and anti-fascist groups succeeded in assembling between 500 and 700 outside Grosvenor Gardens, all raising the militant chant to "Smash the BNP".

But what was needed was a serious attempt to stop the BNP march: it should not have been allowed to go ahead at all. With decent reconnaissance, disciplined and militant stewarding, and the use of mobile squads, a sustained attempt could have been made to disrupt the fascists' assembly, to stop them marching, or at the very least harass their march along its route.

Since the BNP only got around 300 people on its march, the anti-fascists had the numbers to make a decent attempt at doing this. The close attention given by the police to a group of about 150 militant anti-fascists who attempted to get at the march, compared to the relatively light policing of the ANL picket itself, showed that they were worried that the attempt might have enjoyed at least some success.

The mood of many rank and file supporters of the ANL was clearly in favour of such action. Later in the day ANL members successfully attacked a fascist coach and a couple of fascists lingering in the vicinity. But the leadership of the ANL had different ideas.

At a stewards' meeting on the Friday night before the march (which was kept secret from other anti-fascists mobilising against the BNP), the ANL made the decision to restrict the counter-mobilisation to a passive and pacifist protest.

The full effect of this decision was revealed on the Sunday. At one point a group of around 20 fascists appeared in Beeston Place near the ANL picket, threatening the demonstration. ANL stewards intervened to block anti-fascists, who spontaneously surged towards the fascists, from getting near the enemy.

The arguments used by the ANL leaders to justify this cowardice were all red herrings: that confrontation would have "split the demo" (untrue), that we would end up going off on a wild goose chase (untrue), that it "wasn't worth it" to teach the fascists a lesson (untrue!).

With adequate stewarding there is no reason why confrontation

BNP MARCH Make no platform mean no platform!



BNP marches—ANL claims victory

should have disorganised the anti-fascist forces. What is more, it would have sent a clear message to the BNP that they harass the pickets and meetings of the left at their peril.

Fortunately, while the SWP leaders were letting fascists taunt their picket unscathed, supporters of Workers Power and other anti-fascists moved in to explain the meaning of militant anti-fascism to the cocky BNP lads. They were less cocky after being given a short, sharp lesson on this subject.

The ANL stewards' main role on the day was preventing confrontation, not co-ordinating a successful challenge to the fascists. After the incident at Beeston Place, the ANL

leader Paul Holborow announced over a megaphone that the BNP had been prevented from even assembling. This was a brazen lie designed to mollify his supporters. The BNP assembled, the BNP marched, and the ANL leaders sought to prevent them being physically confronted.

ANL members, the overwhelming majority of whom are in the Socialist Workers Party, need to hold their leaders to account. We know that many of the rank and file want the policy of No Platform for Fascists to *mean* No Platform for Fascists. Unlike their leaders, they are not satisfied with the spurious victory of "forcing" the police to alter the fascists' assembly point

ANL and Ireland

A WORKERS' united front against fascism would need to be a straightforward agreement between working class and black organisations on concrete action against the fascists. Other political questions on which the components of the united front do not agree would not be introduced as a basis of the campaign.

The BNP's demonstration was around their call for IRA fighters to be hanged. The counter-mobilisation needed to involve anti-fascist forces from across the movement, including many who do not support the IRA. So far, so good.

But the SWP members that lead the ANL have actually been prepared in their own leaflets and statements to play to anti-IRA feeling.

Rahul Patel of the ANL (himself an SWP member) told the *Guardian* that the BNP was only using the Irish issue and

"... is not a party who oppose violence and terrorism."

This clearly suggests that it is legitimate to oppose the "violence and terrorism" of the IRA. For a socialist, let alone a self-designated "revolutionary", to describe the IRA's campaign in terms identical to the right-wing and the Tory press is a disgrace.

The IRA's violence is a response to the British state's military occupation of Northern Ireland and its systematic violence against the nationalist population. It is the violence of justified resistance.

The SWP leaders are prepared to renege even on their own party's paper principles in order to avoid the difficult job of confronting widely held prejudices within the British working class movement. ■

by a few hundred yards.

They must call for democratic structures in the ANL, joint committees with other anti-fascist groups, the building of joint anti-fascist defence squads, and a strategy of physically preventing the fascists from marching, meeting, selling or organising. ■

**FASCISM: WHAT IT IS
AND HOW TO FIGHT IT**
by Leon Trotsky
Available from Workers
Power
Price £1.75 inc p&p

KATHY MURPHY

We demand the truth!

MONTHS AFTER being exposed as a leading Blood and Honour activist, and after a concerted campaign to get her sacked, Coventry DSS worker Kathy Murphy remains at her job. The failure of the campaign to oust Kathy Murphy holds some important lessons for anti-fascists.

Crushing fascism while it is small is an important task. It is absolutely correct for anti-fascists to drive known fascists out of the unions and out of the workplaces, particularly out of benefit offices where the Nazi activists can gain access to thousands of addresses and other personal details. It is also correct to raise the sacking of fascists as a demand on the bosses, as long as it is not a substitute for organising the workers in the workplace itself.

This is where mistakes were made on all sides in the Kathy Murphy case. After Murphy appeared and was photographed at Blood and Honour's Waterloo debacle, CPSA branch officials interviewed her. They extracted a statement that she was not a racist or a fascist and had broken all links with fascism.

But this was not done in front of her fellow workers. Nor was there a chance for Coventry anti-racist and anti-fascist activists to quiz Murphy about her activities. The CPSA branch and Coventry anti-fascists should have established a mechanism for monitoring Murphy's activities inside and outside the workplace and imposed that on her as a condition for accepting her statement.

After this unsatisfactory outcome, the ANL then picketed the workplace and demanded her sacking saying simply "we don't believe her".

Neither does *Workers Power*. But the ANL's action had the effect of alienating her fellow workers and building sympathy for Murphy.

Now the ANL has more or less let the matter drop.

There should have been a workers' inquiry established into Murphy's activities, past and present, specifically charging her with participation in organised fascist violence at Waterloo on 12 September 1992.

Unless she can explain that, and other activities documented by the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*, to the satisfaction of the CPSA and the Coventry anti-fascist movement, she should be hounded out of her job. ★

THE ANTI-RACIST Alliance (ARA), backed by Labour MP Harry Cohen, has drawn up a draft Racial Harassment Bill. Though it has little or no chance of becoming law, the Bill and the campaign around it raise important questions for anti-racists.

The Bill seeks to create an offence of Racial Harassment on similar lines to that of the Crime of Hatred legislation in the USA. The definition of racial harassment would range from physical attacks through to arson, damage to property and verbal abuse.

The other major aim of this Bill is to create national monitoring procedures in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the extent of racial harassment.

With previous legislation, such as the Race Relations Act, the state has proved itself incapable of implementing real equality, or of effectively combating racism. Such legislation has turned out to be an empty promise for countless victims.

This new Bill is far more likely to demobilise the struggle, becoming a serious diversion and a source of confusion. Cohen and the ARA are putting this legislation forward as the supposed key to fighting racism and fascism

RACIAL HARASSMENT

Can the Bill stop it?

at the expense of building united action against racism and fascism by workers.

The Bill is effectively counterposed to the building of black community self defence. ARA's campaign in support of the legislation threatens to channel activists' energies down a dead end.

The elimination of racism and fascism, at which the Bill is aimed, is an important task. But it would be utopian to believe that legislation alone could dissolve the material basis of racism and fascism.

The central weakness of the Bill is the way in which it relates to racism in the abstract. It describes racial attacks as something that a person of "one racial group" commits against a person of "another racial group".

Implicit in this is the idea that racial harass-

ment equally affects all racial groups.

This leaves the door open for abuses such as when black nationalist Michael X became the first person to be prosecuted in Britain under the Race Relations Act!

It ignores the fact that racial oppression exists—the systematic discrimination that takes place against black people.

It could lead to the same situation as in 1981, when Brixton police monitoring claimed that "racial attacks" on whites by blacks were far more prevalent than the opposite!

Whatever the intentions of the Bill's sponsors this shows the potential for such legislation to be turned against black youth and the left.

This is a serious shortcoming and the draft contains many more. For example it leaves all

interpretations of racial harassment in the hands of landlords, local authorities, the bosses and the police and relies on these forces to deliver protection.

With these failings anti-racists should not allow their energies to be diverted into the campaign around the Bill.

A revolutionary socialist MP would abstain on the Bill.

Workers, black and white, should break from the illusion that the capitalist state can eradicate racism.

Against racial attacks the key task is to organise black self-defence and labour movement support for it, with the aim of building united workers' self-defence organisations in every community.

Despite the fact that many anti-racist organisations have made similar criticisms there is potential for widespread support among large numbers of workers for such a Bill.

We have to fight to turn that support into the kind of campaign that really can defeat racial harassment: organised self defence, smashing the fascist groups and a mass anti-racist movement based on workers' organisations and workers' action. ■

EDITORIAL

Russia after the referendum

AT THE TIME of writing only the initial results of Boris Yeltsin's referendum are known. It has been estimated that 65.7% of voters voted. Of these nearly 60% backed Yeltsin as president whilst 53.6% backed his economic reforms. Asked whether they were in favour of new elections for parliament a smaller majority (43%) said yes. Asked if they wanted new elections for president the result was 31% for, 32% against.

What do these results tell us about the political situation in Russia and the prospects for a working class fightback against the effects of capitalist restoration?

Putting a brave face on it, parliamentary Speaker Khasbulatov called the result "a draw". In itself the result decides nothing in the dual-power stand-off between Yeltsin and parliament. Now it is a question of what measures Yeltsin takes to resolve this impasse. The referendum itself was the result of the two sides' fear of taking matters to the fatal arbitration of the soldiers in the barracks, and the masses on the streets. Faced with the possibility of an open split in state forces the would be "Bonaparte" Yeltsin pulled back from emergency rule by decree. In return parliament pulled back from impeaching Yeltsin.

The referendum result was undeniably a triumph for Yeltsin. But to turn this into a decisive victory he must use it to oust his enemies in the parliament, the central bank and in countless cities and provinces across the vast Russian Federation. This will require some sort of unconstitutional act that the army and ex-KGB chiefs will support and carry out. This could mean promulgating a constitution by decree and calling elections to a new parliament. To take any decisive action Yeltsin must risk an open conflict, even civil war, with the powerful remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The boldness and decisiveness of Yeltsin's actions over the next few weeks will be not so much a test of his own strength of character as a measure of the balance of forces within the fragmented bureaucratic caste that still rules Russia.

What will this conflict be about? Yeltsin would like some form of fast track, Thatcherite, capitalist restoration programme. The parliamentary opposition to Yeltsin opposes that, but with a variety of alternative economic programmes.

The Russian Unity faction is an alliance between neo-Stalinists and ex-Stalinists who have become monarchists and proto-fascists. They are united on the need to return to some sort of central command planning and the imposition of a Russian-dominated reunification on the former USSR.

The Civic Union faction wants capitalist restoration, but slowly, under authoritarian rule and with as much of the new capital going to members of the managerial bureaucracy as possible. Civic Union represents the majority of the old bureaucracy who are caught in a trap: they want to profit from restoring capitalism but not all of them can.

Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, the leaders of the anti-Yeltsin camp, are rooted in neither of the main oppositions. They were both Yeltsin loyalists in August 1991. Their ability to

"Bonapartism enters the scene in those moments of history when the sharp struggle of two camps raises the state power, so to speak, above the nation and guarantees it, in appearance a complete independence of classes - in reality only the freedom necessary for a defence of the privileged . . . The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time the question is presented to the citizens: for or against the leader? And the voter feels the barrel of a revolver between his shoulders."

(Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed 1938)

flit between camps makes both of them, but particularly the war hero Rutskoi, prime candidates to play the role of "Bonaparte" rising above the warring factions and imposing absolute rule.

In short none of the leaderships on offer represents a progressive alternative. Of course it is possible for workers to side with one against another *tactically* in pursuit of an independent, working class solution to Russia's crisis. Any real socialist workers' organisation in Russia should have campaigned for a vote against Yeltsin, against his policies and for new elections for both President and parliament. But since such plebiscites and referenda always leave ultimate interpretation of the result in the hands of the ruling elite, socialists should have campaigned for the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly to decide the basis for the elections. Workers' councils and an independent workers' militia would be the only truly democratic means of carrying out that process and developing into an alternative to all parliaments and presidents.

That's what should have happened - but it didn't. Because there was no independent socialist alternative, unsoiled by the filth of decades of Stalinist dictatorship, the referendum appeared to the Russian workers as a choice between Yeltsin and the Stalinist past. They opted for Yeltsin for a variety of reasons. Distrust of what Rutskoi and the parliament's rampant nationalism might lead to in multi-ethnic Russia and the CIS. Fear of a return to the

totalitarian past whether draped in the old Soviet flag or the Tsarist emblems and anti-semitic slogans of the neo-Nazis. Belief that only Yeltsin could ensure the arrival of the promised billions of dollars in foreign aid.

Underlying all of these reasons is the fact that, contrary to the weeping and wailing of many Stalinists and even self-styled Trotskyists in the west, capitalism has not yet been restored in Russia. The stalled restoration process has created near hyper-inflation and drastically cut the living standards of the old and infirm. Doubtless millions of them either voted against Yeltsin or have sunk into hopelessness and apathy. But the process has not yet forced across-the-board real wage cuts or anything like mass unemployment. Thus millions of workers gave Yeltsin another chance. The workers of Poland began to fight back only after eighteen months of severe privations - privations on a scale that have not yet been seen in Yeltsin's Russia.

Nevertheless, whatever the reasons, backing Yeltsin was an act of monumental self-injury. It reveals the continued depths of atomisation, the stifled class consciousness of the Russian working class. This class consciousness is measured neither by the workers' willingness to carry icons of Lenin nor to tear down statues of him. It is measured by their self-organisation and their capacity for collective struggle in defence of both their immediate interests and their historic gains.

Before the remnants of Stalinism get on their high horses, and start cursing the stupid Russian workers for backing Yeltsin, they should remember the root cause of this state of consciousness: 60 years of brutal Stalinist dictatorship misnamed "really existing socialism".

In the coming months and years the most important task is to build - alas almost from nothing - a revolutionary socialist party amongst the Russian workers. Ultimately it will have to be built from those young workers who today are still mesmerised by the western pop culture that seems to embody "freedom", and which the Yeltsin camp has made its trade mark. They, and the millions of workers who voted for Yeltsin, are in for a rude awakening.

They have unwittingly voted for a social catastrophe. If Yeltsin manages to resolve the dual power situation in his favour and restart the capitalist restoration process they will get catastrophe with a vengeance. Economists predict a rise of unemployment from one million to 5 million this year and a new hyper-inflationary spiral of the ruble against the dollar. In the coming months and years, as Tsar Boris's axe is raised over the job security, wages and social gains of the Russian workers, the conditions will mature for an equally savage disillusionment with him and with capitalism. ■

Published every month by Workers Power/Britain:
BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
ISSN 0263 - 1121
Printed by Newsfax International Ltd:
Unit 16, Bow Industrial Park, Carpenter's Rd, London E15

MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

Workers Power branches run a regular series of meetings to discuss vital issues facing the working class movement today, both in Britain and overseas. So don't just read the ideas in the paper, come along and discuss our theories and our practice in a lively and informal atmosphere.

Cardiff:
Fascism: What it is and how to fight it
Wednesday 12 May, 7.30pm
see sellers for venue.

Birmingham:
The fight for Abortion Rights
Tuesday 11 May, 8pm
see sellers for venue

Leicester:
Women's Oppression,
Women's Liberation and
Socialism
Wednesday 19 May, 7.30pm
See sellers for venue

London Marxist Discussion Series:
• After Hani's murder: South Africa on the brink?
Thursday 6 May, 7.30pm

• 90 Years on:
How the Bolsheviks built a revolutionary party
Thursday 27 May, 7.30pm
• Ireland: republicanism at the crossroads?
Thursday 10 June, 7.30pm
Venue: Room S419 London School of Economics, Houghton Street, WC2

London PUBLIC MEETING

Women Workers in Struggle

Women on strike at Timex and Burnsalls speak out.

Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm
Calthorpe Arms,
252 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1

FUND DRIVE

£3047.24

CONGRATULATIONS! We've made it. Rather, you've made it. We have (just) reached our £3000 target.

Thanks to two supporters in Leicester for sizeable donations, and to sympathisers in Birmingham, London and Chesterfield. One supporter went as far as Hamburg to bring back German anti-fascist T-shirts which were eagerly snapped up back here, raising over £70.

An Order of Lenin goes to one comrade in Cardiff who raised £100 in a sponsored bike ride. . . and broke his collar bone in the process! Get well soon, comrade: and thanks for your fundraising work.

To all our readers: we have no secret source of funding—none of the remaining Stalinist regimes would send us a penny (they know who their enemies are) and Trotskyist millionaires have always been hard to come by. We need *your* backing to carry on producing this paper.

Raising over £3000 isn't the end of the story. Keep those donations coming in. ★



MAYDAY 1993: GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS— ESPECIALLY CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS!

workers power

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). The LRCI includes:

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Strike against privatisation

RAILWORKERS ORGANISE

TORY TRANSPORT minister, John MacGregor, warned the rail unions:

"Every further day of strikes is putting their jobs at risk." What a joke!

British Rail is being lined up for privatisation. The whole network will be parcelled up. The "cherry pickers" who buy the privatised network will only want the juiciest bits.

Lines that are needed, but are not profitable enough, will be closed. Services will be run down. Whole chunks of the network will disappear. Thousands upon thousands of rail jobs are at stake.

This is the reality of privatisation. Which industries, sold off by the Tories, have increased the size of their workforce in the aftermath of privatisation? Not one. Which of the same industries have sacked workers after privatisation? Every single one.

A determined all out strike against privatisation can stop the looming jobs massacre on the rail.

The starting point for the fight against privatisation is the current fight to force BR to guarantee no compulsory redundancies and to stop further contracting out. It is an inadequate starting point, but it is the issue that the leaders of the RMT and ASLEF chose to fight on. Building for an all out strike on these issues, by all rail unions (including the TSSA) can lay the basis for organising an all out strike against privatisation itself.

The leaders of the unions involved are dead set against this course of action. After only two separate days of strike action the RMT leaders are looking for a way out.

Both strikes (2 and 16 April) were solid. They cost BR an estimated £20 million. They forced a limited concession from BR that there would be no compulsory redundancies for the next two years. They show clearly what can be achieved by action.

And the RMT leadership's response to this? Ten hours of negotiations with the bosses followed by 30 hours of talks by the executive itself followed by... another ballot!

The RMT leadership has a mandate for action. It could have pressed home its advantage because BR



Knapp: more delays than British Rail

was retreating from its original position. It could have given a clear lead to its members, who voted by a 62% majority for a fight, by stepping up the strikes. Instead, because there wasn't a two-thirds majority, the leadership are trying to wriggle out of a fight by holding another time-consuming ballot on the BR offer.

The ballot will not be held until May 6 and 7 and the result won't be out until May 14. Even if there is a clear majority for rejecting the offer, look at the time that is being wasted. While the executive are recommending rejection of the offer they are not campaigning to secure a majority and they are not offering rail workers a perspective of how to win.

There is an enormous danger that this will lead to demoralisation and confusion, particularly since the bosses' press will launch a vigorous campaign against rejection. This could lead to a vote to accept the offer.

Such a vote will get Jimmy Knapp and the rest of the executive members who are opposed to a serious fight off the hook. Knapp can turn round and blame the members for the failure of his own miserable leadership. This is what he meant when he commented:

"The voice of the members will tell us the way forward."

He hopes with all his heart that the voice will give him an easy way out.

Rank and file militants need to do their best to make sure that

what Knapp hears is an angry and militant voice. A rank and file campaign to reject the offer must be launched. It must be linked to a campaign for an all out indefinite strike against job losses, contracting out and privatisation itself.

On 24 April, on the initiative of certain Scottish branches of the RMT, between 60 and 70 militants from most BR regions met to discuss setting up a Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union. The meeting discussed both the current dispute and the need to take the union back from the bureaucrats.

This is an important development in the RMT. It shows that there are forces on the left of the union (in organisations and non-aligned) who want to fight. In every region, in all of the branches, militants should start to build this campaign as a militant rank and file organisation around the current ballot. It needs a clear set of policies (which it hasn't got yet) and a structure that enables militants to link up across the union.

By mounting a massive campaign now to reject the offer and fight for an indefinite strike it can become a powerful force in the union. And it can offer BR workers a perspective not just of telling Knapp "the way forward", but which mobilises the rank and file around a strategy that can deliver a tremendous victory against the BR Board and its Tory masters. ■

INTERVIEW

"Let's do it now"

Workers Power interviewed John McDonald, a Manchester RMT Branch Secretary, on the picket at Manchester Piccadilly on 16 April. John was speaking in a personal capacity.

WP: How would you describe the mood on the picket line?

JM: Excellent. As far as the RMT goes, its solid.

WP: What do you think of Knapp's strategy?

JM: It's going as far as it can at the moment. If it's going to be extended, it has to be built.

WP: What has the response been like from other workers?

JM: Very good, we have had quite a lot of sympathy from the public and other unions have sent messages of support.

WP: Is there any prospect of spreading the action?

JM: Apart from the buses and the miners, there doesn't seem to be a great prospect of action by workers outside the rail. The leadership of the various unions are to blame—they are backing away rather than taking advantage of the mood that exists.

WP: Do you think the rank and file is in a position to pressure them into action?

JM: Yes. When you take the transport industries, the effects of privatisation, deregulation and so on, the mood is there, they could force the issue.

WP: Could the current dispute over redundancies be turned into a fight against privatisation?

JM: Without a doubt. This is purely about privatisation. You used to be guaranteed a job on the railways; if you were made redundant, you would be guaranteed a job elsewhere. With privatisation that will have to go.

WP: Militants have been victimised here in the past?

JM: Yes, they sacked four reps in August. We're waiting for an industrial tribunal at the moment. It was the first shot in this war. The RMT have always been strong here. Piccadilly is a bit of a flagship, they had to get rid of that. The four at Piccadilly were an example to the rest and the unions, to their shame, let them get away with it. It had the desired effect for management but with the one day strikes being so solid confidence is being rebuilt.

WP: What do you think the next steps are?

JM: If BRB are going to continue the way they are, the only thing we can do is build for an all-out. If they are going to take us on, we have to go to the membership and say that we have to stop until they come round to our way of thinking.

WP: Will the leadership call all-out action?

JM: It is up to the rank and file members, we need to put pressure on the leadership. That's what we are doing here. We are telling the full-time official every time he comes here. We have Grades Conference coming up and the AGM in June. If nothing has happened by then, we will be pushing for an all-out there.

WP: What would you say to other workers about the dispute?

JM: We have got to see this as a great opportunity as a class to mobilise a fightback. Workers should get themselves on the picket lines. My message to the workers and the union leaders is we may never get a chance as good as this again. Let's do it now and we'll remove these bastards once and for all.

LONDON BUSES

BY DAVE BEECH

All out strike needed

LONDON BUSES' management are pressing on with their preparation for privatisation. Pay and pension rights are under attack. Some bus operators are paying drivers as little as £3.58 per hour. They also want to extend the working day.

Busworkers, organised by the TGWU, have already responded to this with one day strikes but they will need to go further to defeat an intransigent management.

The refusal of the London Bus Committee (the TGWU London bus leadership) to fight on an all-London basis has emboldened the management.

Local managers are bringing in the new rosters area by area. These new rosters mean that the working day can be extended by as much as one and a half hours. One management "concession" on the new rosters was to reduce the extended day by 10 minutes. Big deal!

The leadership are sitting on their hands, hoping for further negotiations. Their determination to limit the action to sporadic one day strikes was shown when they refused to spread the action of around 200 workers in Shepherd's Bush. These workers were left isolated when they struck for 15 days against the new

rosters.

The days of strike action called for May must include every one of the ten London bus subsidiaries. Not one busworker should be working on those days. Militants should attempt to get meetings at every garage to discuss the issues and expose the useless strategy of the current leadership.

By using these mass meetings and by linking up in a London-wide conference made up of delegates from all garages, control of the action and the negotiations can be taken away from the present leadership. If they remain in control of the dispute it will go down to defeat.

Already the London Bus Committee has shown, in the fiasco of advising workers to sign the new management contracts, that it is incapable of defending its members. The management wanted to intimidate busworkers into signing the new contracts in order to weaken the union and pick off busworkers one by one.

Busworkers should have been given a clear instruction by the London Bus Committee not to sign any new contracts. In the event of a single worker being victimised the Committee should have pledged a walk out by all busworkers. Instead the advice given was to sign the

contracts.

The chair of the Committee, Peter Gibson, a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP—Workers Press) defends this cop-out. He claimed he was being clever. He said he knew that militant workers would refuse to sign and this would create the chance of building action in their support. Far from doing this it has led to the victimisation of militant busworkers in Leaside and West London.

Gibson's "manoeuvre" was really cover for the right wing. It serves their strategy of limiting the fight back. Will he now admit this and get on with the job of calling for strike action to win reinstatement for the victimised workers? He should, but he is so enmeshed with the bureaucracy that he probably won't.

To smash the bosses' plans and win reinstatement we urgently need a London-wide indefinite strike. The one day actions must be turned into an all out strike. If garages are not called out by the union leadership they must be picketed out.

Militants must make it clear to the misleaders of the London Bus Committee that if they are not prepared to do the job of getting an all out strike, rank and file busworkers will. ■

WHAT ABOUT ASLEF?

The ASLEF leadership have betrayed the immediate possibility of a united fight on the rail against privatisation and job losses.

After a one day token stoppage, which was designed more to save Derrick Fullick's "left" reputation than to win anything substantial for his members, ASLEF settled with BR. If the RMT hold another strike ASLEF, by agreeing to BR's formula about no compulsory redundancies for two years, will not support it.

This is a piece of treachery from the loudmouthed Fullick, who only a few months ago was talking about the need for a general strike!

Against this it is vital that the

Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union in the RMT tackles the problem of sectional divisions on the rail with a campaign to build rank and file cross-union committees across the whole industry.

We can do without the bureaucracy of both unions playing power games with each other. These manoeuvres make a mockery of our "Unity is strength" banners. Rank and file militants must make these slogans count by building unity, on the ground, around a perspective of drawing ASLEF (and the TSSA) into an all out strike against privatisation and job losses facing members of any union on the rail network. ■

Solidarity is the key!

"I NEVER use to swear before all this", says Edna after a couple of white collar scabs whizz past the afternoon picket. A 19 year veteran on the Timex Camperdown production line, every day Edna is on the 24-hour picket outside Fortress Timex.

Along with more than 300 others she has been on strike since 29 January, and locked out by manager Peter Hall and US-based Timex bosses since 17 February. She sums up the bitterness, determination but enduring good spirits of strikers in the face of one of the most vicious management offensives of recent years.

Empire

The Camperdown factory, 15 minutes from the centre of Dundee, is all that remains of the corporation's former local empire. In the mid-1970s various Timex sites in the area employed nearly 6,000. This plant has become a widely hated symbol of bully boy management not only in Dundee but throughout Scotland and elsewhere in Britain as well.

The vast majority of the strikers are women. Of the men, many were engaged in the six week long occupation of the now defunct Milton site in 1983.

The current fight, the first indefinite strike in the plant's history, began after Hall had torn up the previous layoff agreement. Shop stewards' convenor, John Kydd Jr., told *Workers Power* that there was "definitely" a pattern of victimisation in the selection of workers for layoff. Kydd said "myself, Willie Lesslie, the deputy convenor, and, of the ten shop stewards on the committee, six of us were laid off."

Leadership

The strikers are all members of the AEEU, yet their union's national leadership has not even visited the picket line. Jimmy Airlie, the union's executive officer, has paid two flying visits over the course of three months and then "only to tell us off", in the words of one picket.

The top union officials have pleaded for a re-opening of negotiations. The response from Hall is that the dispute is over and there is no longer anything to negotiate. The plant boss is reportedly on more than £100,000 to direct this union busting operation. The AEEU bureaucracy appears willing to see yet another set of its members go down to an avoidable defeat rather than even think about the illegal action which could win the Timex strikers a swift and decisive victory.

Strikers appreciate only too well that the outcome of the battle does not hinge on the quality of general secretary Bill Jordan's performance before a Parliamentary panel. Many also recognise that the widespread public sympathy which exists for the sacked workers, however important for morale, will not shift Hall.

The daily pickets have been an

TIMEX

BY G R MCCOLL

The strikers are all members of the AEEU, yet their union's national leadership has not even visited the picket line. Jimmy Airlie, the union's executive officer, has paid two flying visits over the course of three months and then "only to tell us off", in the words of one picket.

important focus, sustaining the involvement of a large proportion of the strikers. But they are hardly succeeding in disrupting Hall's scab-herding operation.

The AEEU leadership has blatantly sought to undermine the effectiveness of the pickets, using minor scuffles with police, and 14 arrests on 22 March, as a pretext for denouncing outside agitators. The following week Gavin Laird, the union's number two, sent letters to strikers threatening the loss of £30 a week in strike pay and even expulsion from the union.

Convenor Kydd has since faced the threat of disciplinary action by the AEEU after declining a local journalist's invitation to call for restraint on the Easter Monday mass picket. Bail conditions imposed on Kydd prohibit him from appearing within one mile of the factory.

The behaviour of the union bureaucrats suggests that they would prefer to repeat the defeats suffered in the past two years at Craven Tasker and Albacom, a short distance from the Timex plant. The words of AEEU executive member, Jimmy Airlie, to the STUC conference on 20 April that "all our members must be back in the factory" ring hollow.

Restrained

While strikers recognise that the performance of their national leadership has been "very poor", the real fear of losing official support has restrained the Timex Strike Committee from pushing beyond the bounds of the anti-union laws.

One hundred and seventy scabs have been recruited from the dole queues. Whatever success Hall has achieved so far is due to brazen strikebreaking by white collar staff in MSF, known by pickets as My Self First.

The union's members at Timex have scabbed since 29 January. Even if the national bureaucracy were to issue a call to respect picket lines and join the strike it would go unheeded. Members of other MSF

branches should press for the immediate expulsion of these thieves who have trained Hall's scabs.

Productivity and quality have suffered since production resumed in late February. The boycott of all Timex-supplied parts by workers at Creda cooker and Electrolux factories could play a key role in bolstering the strike. But the bulk of the Dundee plant's output now goes to the non-union bastion of IBM in Greenock.

Contracting in the electronics industry is a notoriously cut-throat business but IBM bosses, busy slashing their own workforce, may be willing to tolerate poor quality for some time to assist Timex in its own union busting exercise.

Despite the obstacles on the road to victory Timex strikers still have everything to fight for. Hall's dictatorial style has hit a raw nerve in large sections of the Dundee working class.

The demonstration called by the STUC for 12 April was the most dramatic illustration yet of the depth and breadth of support commanded by the strikers. On a work day 6-7,000 marched in a show of solidarity. More than 500 AEEU members from the nearby NCR plant joined the march after stewards extracted the concession from a management fearful of raising the temperature.

Women from the Levis plant, lo-



Timex strikers: locked out for 90 days

cal firefighters, council manual workers, TGWU members from Michelin Tyres and GPMU printers turned out in support. At Bulkbag, a small manufacturing firm, more than half the workforce walked off the job to go on the march.

The STUC has agreed to call another demonstration in Dundee for Saturday 15 May. This is once more likely to be a protest march, followed by another lecture from STUC's top brass on how Timex workers are fighting for

"the nation".

They are really striking for reinstatement in their old jobs on their previous wages, terms and conditions, and for the existence of trade union organisation.

On 17 May, 90 days on from the mass sackings, the strike committee has called another demonstration. From then Hall can begin hiring selectively from the ranks of workers he fired. It offers an ideal

opportunity to launch a Dundee-wide General Strike. Such action is possible and it looks increasingly necessary to win. First the strike committee must be won to issuing a call. Real pressure would then be put on the STUC to turn words into action.

This would place an enormous burden on the strike committee.

Arsenal

The anti-union laws and other legislation in the bosses' arsenal could well be used against individual members of the committee. The alternative, however, may be a crushing defeat.

Their fight is our fight. Every class-conscious worker has a responsibility to the Timex strikers to win material support and fight for solidarity action.■

Donations and messages of support to:
TIMEX STRIKE FUND
AEEU Office
2 Union Street
Dundee DD1
Telephone: 0382 22406

**MASS PICKET
MONDAY
17 MAY**

MINERS' SUPPORT

Conference sabotaged

BY RICHARD BRENNER

NUM national officials as they were not able to attend on that date".

That is absolute rubbish. The conference was announced well in advance. Even if there had not been a single NUM official present, which of course there could have been, it would have been far better for the conference to go ahead. But the excuse given in the letter was not made in good faith. In essence, the conference was called off on the instructions of the NUM.

At the January conference the agenda was rigged to try and stop a full plenary discussion of strategy and voting. At the centre of this manoeuvring was Carolyn Sikorski, a member of the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, and a supporter of the "revolutionary" paper *Socialist Outlook*. Like her organisation she is a paid up member of the Arthur Scargill fan club. What he says goes. She enforces it. And it is quite clear Scargill said no to the conference taking place.

On Saturday 3 April, Arthur Scargill addressed a meeting of the North-West Miners Support Groups Network. He told them that their job was to support the NUM and that meant supporting all the decisions

THERE IS still widespread opposition to the Tory pit closure plan. Across the entire labour movement rank and file workers back the miners in their campaign to save jobs.

But ever since October, there has been an urgent need to translate these feelings into action. Miners need to take national indefinite strike action. The different struggles across the public sector need to be linked together. These links have to be built at all levels of the movement from the base up.

The recalled Solidarity with the Miners National Conference in Sheffield on 24 April should have done just that.

The last conference, on 9 January, wasted its time listening to an endless succession of platform speakers. It allowed no time for a full, democratic debate on the strategy for winning solidarity and building militant joint action. The recall conference was supposed to be an improvement on that. In the event it was worse: it did not even take place.

Only three days before the conference, delegates received a letter from the organisers announcing that it had been "postponed". The postponement was "at the request of

of the NUM leadership. He attacked the call raised by a number of the support groups for the national support network to have a democratically elected leadership. He attacked those support groups which had tried to amend the NUM statement at the January conference. He raged against the support groups that had opposed the NUM's nationalist call for import controls.

Worst of all, he insisted that it was not for the support groups to build solidarity with other sections of workers, but only for the miners, specifically attacking a highly successful demonstration that had been organised in the North West against local authority cuts!

This small-minded bureaucratic sectionalism is what lies behind the NUM leaders' moves to stop the Support Groups' conference.

The lessons of all this must be taken on board as a matter of urgency. Scargill's "people power" strategy is not working, and in a classic bureaucratic manner he is trying to stop the miners' supporters from pointing to any alternative based on developing further joint strike action with the rest of the public sector unions.■

●Scargill's politics—pages 8 & 9

Transform the unions

BY CHRIS BRYANT

TRADE UNIONS are the largest and most widespread working class organisations in Britain.

The importance of the unions to workers is obvious if we just consider the question of wages.

Across the whole public and private sector workers in trade unions get an average of 10% more money in their wage packets than those not in unions. The principle of collective organisation and collective bargaining through the unions pays dividends for workers.

Trade unions are the elementary self-defence organisations for workers. Every worker should join a union as a step towards stopping the bosses walking all over them. Today union density (the proportion of the total workforce that is unionised) is down to 33% (under 8 million union members) as compared to 54% in 1979 (over 12 million union members).

Workers in many new small industries have no unions and union density amongst part-time workers is only half that of full-time workers. The fight to unionise these workers is no longer an optional extra for the trade unions. It is a matter of extreme urgency. The weaker the numerical strength of the unions, the stronger are the bosses' chances of driving down wages, of introducing speed ups and sacking workers at will.

Halted

But while the unions are essential, and while their decline must be halted, the bitter truth is that they have become less and less effective as fighting organisations.

Throughout the 1980s workers fought, in the steel industry, the mines, the print industry, the docks and many other sectors besides. They fought courageously and with a determination that more than matched the determination of the class enemy to smash them. Yet in each of the great battles the unions went down to defeat.

The explanation for these defeats lies in the treacherous role and compromising reformist politics of the leaders of the unions: the union bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy, which today cloaks its age old profession of class collaboration in the modern dress of "new realism", has systematically betrayed the workers in struggle, has systematically retreated in the face of the Tories' anti-union laws and has systematically failed to do anything to organise the two-thirds of the working class outside the unions.

Why is it that the top union leaders, like Bill Morris (TGWU), John Edmonds (GMB), Doug McAvo (NUT), Bill Jordan (AEEU), Alan Jinkinson (NALGO) and many others of the same breed, have run away from a fight and handed easy victories to the enemy?

It is in the nature of trade unionism itself that we find the explanation of the disgraceful antics of these leaders.

Unions were formed and continue to exist to better pay and conditions under capitalism. They can and have succeeded in winning enormous advances for workers, but, under crisis-ridden modern capitalism, there comes a point where the bosses have to grab back those gains.

Limitations

By consciously accepting the limitations of the capitalist system, rather than openly challenging it, pure trade unionism cannot consistently defend the interests of the working class. Those interests contradict the needs of the capitalist system at every turn.

As a result trade unions themselves are profoundly contradictory. On the one hand rank and file workers within them are driven to defend themselves against capitalism, and are driven into conflict with it. On the other the leaders of the union, sticking fast to the reformist limitations of pure trade

unionism, are driven to compromise with capitalism and betray the interests of their members.

Since its birth, the bureaucracy has become a self-perpetuating caste whose role is to arbitrate between the workers and the bosses. In 1893 the Webbs (themselves reformists) wrote a description of a typical trade union leader which remains valid to this day:

"The former vivid sense of the privations and subjection of the artisan's life gradually fades from his mind; and he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable... He goes to live in a little villa in a middle class suburb. The move leads to him dropping his workmen friends... A great strike threatens to involve the Society [union] in desperate war. Unconsciously biased by distaste for the hard and unthankful work which a strike entails, he finds himself in small sympathy with the men's demands, and eventually arranges a compromise, on terms distasteful to a large section of his members."

Caste

The relevance of this description is underlined in countless disputes today. During the recent dispute at Yarrow's shipyard in Glasgow, for example, the AEEU full-time official made plain at the outset that he was in favour of the management's abolition of tea breaks and miserable wage offer.

The four week strike was a troublesome waste of time for him. He didn't lift a finger to help it. He made clear that the compromise he had negotiated at the outset was all he was prepared to negotiate. The strike was defeated, largely thanks to his role as arbitrator. The all-powerful role of the full-time official in secret negotiations with the management needs to be blown apart.

An immediate rank and file answer to this kind of negotiation is to build up effective and democratic workplace organisation—strong and independent shop stewards' committees, joint union committees, strike committees and rank and file control, through mass meetings, of all negotiations.

The problem, though, is not confined to controlling shaky arbitrators. The bureaucracy is not merely a "middle man". It is a caste with its own distinct interests rooted in the material benefits that it has accrued through its control of the trade union apparatus.

Courtesy of members' contributions (and frequently the commercial investment of union funds) the bureaucracy cream off substantial sums of money to pay their salaries and finance their perks.

NALGO leader, Alan Jinkinson, earns more than £50,000 per year. Yet 10% of his members earn below the official European poverty line. When striking members of his union from Newham burst into his office they found a suite that would rival some of London's poshest hotels—a luxury bathroom, televisions and videos, drinks cabinet and so on. And this was just where he worked. Imagine what his house must be like!

Jinkinson is no exception. The un-

ions, on the basis of members' contributions, have built up substantial financial assets that pay for expensive cars, trips abroad, country retreats with saunas, tennis courts, jacuzzis and of course restricted access—only bureaucrats or trainee bureaucrats get into these holiday camps. In total there are approximately 4,000 full-time union officers as compared to just under 8 million union members. Yet the amount of money spent on the salaries and administration of union offices comprises 40% of union income (across all unions).

Even in the age of service unionism the 1988 statistics on union finance revealed that spending on members' benefits across all unions was £59,817,000, whereas spending on salaries and administration was £407,693,000. The staggering discrepancy shows just where the bureaucracy's priorities lie—with themselves.

Ironically it was Tory legislation that forced through elections of all national union officials in 1988. Of course this was not because the Tories were interested in union democracy or control by the rank and file. Nevertheless, prior to this only a handful of unions, notably the AEEU, had regular elections of national officials. In the TGWU and NUM national officers, once elected, were in the job for life. In NUPE they were appointed by the executive. In other words there was no real democracy to enable the membership to hold the leaders to account.

This top leadership of the unions functions more like a management board room than the general staff of the labour movement. The task facing rank and file militants, if they want to turn the unions into organisations that fight for them, is to remove the basis of this bureaucracy. The unions must be democratised from top to bottom. Elections, which need to be preceded by workplace and mass meetings where the relevant issues are debated in front of the members (whatever form of voting takes place), must be annual.

Union leaders must be subject to recall if they betray their pledges or act against the interests of the rank and file. Union papers must become open, democratic and campaigning organs of the membership, not photo albums for the bureaucracy. Conferences must be made up of lay delegates, elected directly from branches and workplaces. All officials must be bound by conference policy.

Service

The wealth and assets of the union must be put at the service of the members through fighting funds to finance strikes, support campaigns and help with organising drives. The unions, which spend millions on salaries, spent a miserable £78,000 on an organising drive in the Trafford Park complex in Manchester.

Nine hundred members were recruited. But the bureaucrats decided against further such campaigns because of the cost. Their assets were more important than spreading the union in unorganised areas. What a

scandal.

No perks, other than necessary expenses, should be granted to officials for union business. No union leader should be allowed to earn more than the average wage of members of their union. A rank and file watchdog committee must be established in every union to scrutinise accounts. This will sort out those who want a full-time post to serve the working class from those who just want a cushy career.

This cannot stop at the level of full-timers. The perks some unions give to lay branch officers and stewards transmit a bureaucratic mentality down to the base units of the organisation. They can amount to a tidy bonus. We know of one lay branch officer in Sheffield who swells his bank account by about £4,000 a year in this way. Bureaucratic privilege has to be rooted out at every level of the unions.

Obstacles

Democratising the unions is a means of transforming them. But the objective of transforming them is to turn them into instruments of revolutionary class struggle. For the bureaucrats the unions are a means of maintaining "a continuing relationship" with the bosses, as the old TUC leader Lord Citrine put it.

For the workers they must become organisations for a continuing war with the employers. In the first place this means getting rid of the many obstacles to members taking strike action.

The overwhelming majority of strike ballots (95%) result in a "yes" vote but less than half (48%) actually result in any action.

Only one major union, the National Communications Union, has rules that allow branches to organise a ballot for action, but only "in order to protect their immediate interests." All of the other major unions demand that action can only be authorised by the union's national executive, the General Secretary or a combination of both. Then there is the willingness of the bureaucrats to implement the anti-union laws.

The workings of the secret ballot system mean that it takes a minimum of around two weeks after a grievance has been raised before any action can be taken. The next piece of Tory anti-union legislation will lengthen this time to eight weeks. The bosses can launch surprise attacks and finish the job before we are allowed to fight back. All of these laws have to be defied and smashed.

Politics

Today the union leaders are bemoaning the Tories' attack on the various tripartite bodies and "quangos" that enabled them to hobnob with the bosses and the politicians. They long for the days when they could sit down to dinner and claret with the enemy.

We don't. We are for breaking from every single tripartite institution, every single joint committee with the bosses (other than those that enable us to negotiate from an independent position), every form of class collaboration.

It is vital that the brick wall between politics and economics is broken down. The unions must become militant, fighting organisations, committed to a programme of defending the basic interests of the working class and pressing on to the abolition of capitalism itself. All of this means renovating the unions.

All of it will require an organised revolutionary presence in the unions and an organised rank and file opposition to the bureaucracy. And if we don't want a re-run of the defeats of the 1980s, or a scenario of continuing union decline to a point where they become significantly weaker, all of it needs to be fought for urgently. ■



Norman Willis playing a musical comb

THE 1830 SWING REBELLION

"We have suffered enough"

The rise of British capitalism and the achievements of the industrial revolution are well documented. But the destruction of rural communities and the early struggles against the system are not so well known. In *Captain Swing*, Rudé and Hobsbawm provide the best available account of these struggles through meticulous research of often obscure records.

The Swing rebellion of 1830 was the most widespread revolt of the English agricultural workers. It affected 20 counties and lasted for the best part of a year. It began with the traditional act of rural revolt, the burning of hay ricks. It went on to include a wide range of new forms of struggle: "Swing letters" threatening death if demands were not met, collective wage meetings to formulate demands, machine breaking and factory burning, attacks on overseers and Justices, riotous assemblies for money and provisions, and the enforced reduction of tithes, rents and taxes. All were with the simple aims of decent pay and an end to rural unemployment.

Agricultural England in 1830 was unlike anywhere else in the world. Feudal relations in the countryside were all but destroyed. The division between landlords, rich tenant farmers and rural workers had already taken place. Less than 4000 proprietors owned over half of the land. The average English farm was massive compared with farms on the continent. The vast majority of rural inhabitants were not peasants but wage labourers: proletarians.

This explains the character of the Swing rebellion. Unlike peasant struggles in Europe its demands did not centre around the redistribution of the land, but focused on wages and an end to unemployment. It arose from the degradation of the working class faced with the effects of the industrial revolution.

The condition of rural workers was extremely insecure. During the Napoleonic Wars of 1795-1815 production of agricultural produce had doubled to feed the army, navy and rapidly expanding towns. Agricultural workers were hired by the week, day or even hour and threshing machines had been introduced to meet the shortage of workers.

The conditions of agricultural workers deteriorated rapidly at the end of the war. The drop in demand for agricultural produce was combined with the return of 250,000 former sol-



Rick burning in Kent 1830

*The republication of **Captain Swing** by George Rudé and Eric Hobsbawm provides a reminder that the traditions of the British working class are not peaceful and gradualist, as the Labour and trade union leaders insist, but militant and revolutionary.*

BY BILL JENKINS

diers. The extreme flexibility of labour meant that workers could not resist wage cuts or unemployment. Farmers had an incentive to keep wages at an absolute minimum because of the Poor Law. Local magistrates set the minimum living allowance payable to any worker but this was not a minimum wage. Rather any worker receiving less than the minimum would have their wages made up by the parish - like Family Credit today!

The demand for Poor Law relief grew with unemployment. Magistrates responded by reducing the minimum allowance and making it "more deterrent or rather, harsher in administration, more humiliating, more repellent." By 1830 England was ripe for rebellion. There was a dramatic increase in rick burning, cattle maiming and poaching. In their investigation of the causes of the rebellion, the Poor Law commissioners cited "unemployment", "distress", "antipathy of paupers to overseers, game preservers and threshing machines", "the parish system" and the "game laws". The harvests of 1829 and 1830 were

exceptionally bad. Attempts to reduce Poor Law relief had reached their limit. The July Revolution in France and the influence of radicals like Cobbett encouraged rebellion.

The first threshing machine was destroyed at Lower Hardres near Canterbury, East Kent on the night of 28 August 1830. By the third week 100 machines had been destroyed, and by October the movement had spread to Dover. At first the rick burning and machine breaking had been done by small groups at night, but now workers assembled in broad daylight in large groups to demand pay rises. A report to the *Times* said, "They are very quiet, all they require is more wages. They say the next thing they intend doing is to go to the landlords and make them lower their rents."

At Brede a committee of labourers was elected to negotiate with farmers. They resolved to take the overseer, a Mr Abel, out of the parish, so he was placed in a cart and duly dumped over the border! This be-

came a model for the rest of Kent and Sussex. The most rebellious areas were the cereal growing south and east. These areas tended to have the lowest wages compared to the north and west which were predominantly pastoral. The most active areas were around the larger villages. These had a higher proportion of artisans like shop keepers and craftsmen. It was these workers, who were more independent of the farmers and who had better access to radical literature and education, who usually led the movement. Large villages also had better communications and weaker parish roots, so workers did not feel so tied to the Poor Law or the master/servant relationship.

The movement gained its greatest momentum in Hampshire and Wiltshire. There was less co-operation between farmers and labourers and more machine breaking and levying of money. In each county over 300 prisoners were taken compared to 100 in Kent. The Tasker Waterloo Foundry was demolished by protesters and it took a troop of the 9th

Lancers to restore order. At Hindon troops battled with labourers and shot one dead.

At Kintbury on the Wiltshire border delegates armed with hammers and bludgeons refused to be bought off with promises from the magistrates. William Oakley, a wheelwright, expressed their demands:

"We will have £5 before we go out of the place or be damned if we don't smash it. You and the gentlemen have been living upon all the good things for the last 10 years. We have suffered enough, and now it is our time and we will have it."

While the rebellion was at its height the authorities could do little against it. Much of the old Yeomanry had been disbanded after the Napoleonic War; the regular army was scattered and could only make sporadic shows of strength; the magistrates under pressure in their own towns were unwilling to pass severe sentences on rioters. Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, was forced to offer a £500 reward for the capture of rioters and issued a circular to magistrates instructing them to act more energetically.

But a movement of this type could not sustain itself indefinitely. By December 1830 it had effectively died out. By then around 1,900 rioters were in jail awaiting trial. Fearing the leniency of local magistrates a Special Commission was set up to try their cases. In Winchester 101 were sentenced to death, of whom 6 were executed. Sixty-nine were sentenced to deportation and 68 to imprisonment. In Reading 227 were sentenced to death of which only 3 were finally executed following a mass petition for a reprieve signed by 15,000 townspeople. The repression was fiercer than even the Luddites or the Chartists received in the following decades.

The Swing rebellion showed that the working class was willing and able to fight the effects of capitalist exploitation. As Marx pointed out they mistakenly directed their attacks "not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves". But they marked a stage in the development of the working class as a class for itself. All workers and socialists should read this marvellous book, which helps us not only to oppose the ruling class chorus against legitimate working class violence but also to celebrate the arrival of our class on the world stage. ■

Karl Marx and machinery

WHENEVER WORKERS oppose the sackings, speed ups, shift working and longer hours that accompany new technology, they are described as wreckers or "Luddites", who are holding back progress and the tide of history.

These arguments are as old as capitalism itself.

In 1830, at the time the Swing riots were sweeping England, the bourgeois economist MacCulloch wrote:

"If it be advantageous, to develop the skill of the workman more and more, so that he is capable of producing, with the same or with a less quantity of labour, a constantly increasing quantity of commodities, it must also be advantageous that he should avail himself of the help of such machinery as will assist him most effectively in the attainment of this result."

In plain English: "machines lighten the workers' workload."

But the capitalists do not intro-

duce labour saving machinery to lessen the burden of work. They do it to maximise profits. Far from operating as labour saving devices, machinery is accompanied by an increased workload, lower wages and unemployment.

The agricultural workers of the Swing movement felt the immediate effects of this but they directed their fury at the machinery itself because they had not yet learnt to blame the system.

As Karl Marx wrote *Capital*: "Machinery in itself shortens the hours of labour, but when employed by capital it lengthens them . . . in itself it lightens labour, but when employed by capital it heightens its intensity . . . in itself it is a victory of man over the forces of nature but in the hands of capital it makes man the slave of those forces . . . in itself it increases the wealth of the pro-

ducers, but in the hands of capital it makes them into paupers".

Because of this it was nonsense for the ruling class economists to claim that anyone who fights the effects of machinery is an enemy of social progress.

Marx mocked the bosses hypocrisy without mercy, comparing them to Bill Sikes, the cut-throat from Dickens *Oliver Twist* who would have argued:

"Gentlemen of the jury, no doubt the throat of this commercial traveller has been cut. But that is not my fault, it is the fault of the knife. Must we, for such a temporary inconvenience, abolish the use of the knife? . . . Where would agriculture and trade be without the knife? Is it not as salutary in surgery, as it is skilled in anatomy? And a willing assistant at the festive table? If you abolish the knife—you hurl us back into the

depths of barbarism."

It is not the knife socialists want to abolish but the thug who wields it: it is not machines we are against but the system that turns these creations of human labour into things that dominate and control our labour.

1830 saw workers take independent action in France for the first time as well as the Swing rebellion. This was a turning point, not just in the activity of the workers but also in the battle of ideas.

Up until the 1830s, capitalist economists were carrying out a serious analysis of the workings of their system in order to defend it against the reactionary aristocracy. But the arrival on the scene of working class struggle transformed capitalist political economy from an honest scientific enquiry into a crude apology for the system of exploitation.

As Marx explained, :

"The learned dispute between the industrial capitalist and the wealthy landowning idler as to how the booty pumped out of the workers may most advantageously be divided for the purposes of accumulation had to fall silent in the face of the [French] July Revolution. Shortly afterwards, the urban proletariat sounded the tocsin of revolution in Lyons, and the rural proletariat began to set fire to the farmyards and hayricks in England . . . The hour of vulgar economics had arrived."

Today workers must refuse to be bamboozled by the lies of the latter day vulgar economists. The introduction of the miracles of modern technology need not lead to unemployment, but under workers' control could lead to the immediate shortening of the working week to 35 hours, with no loss of pay. That way machines could begin to serve humanity, and not the other way round. ■

Scargill's politics

IN A RECENT interview with the *Independent* Arthur Scargill pinned responsibility for the weakened state of the unions on the movement's leaders. Asked if he shared in the collective responsibility for the union leaders' retreats he replied:

"No. I am the exception that proved the rule."

It was a good reply. He was, after all, the one union leader to place himself at the head of the decisive battle against Thatcher's war on the unions, the 1984/85 strike.

But the reply is incomplete. It begs other questions. Why did Scargill fail to defeat the bunch of cowards who run the TUC? Why, instead of fighting these leaders, has Scargill embraced key planks of their strategy in the campaign against the latest round of pit closures? Why has he not broken ranks with the bureaucratic clique at the head of the unions and campaigned openly for an organised rank and file opposition to them?

To answer these questions we need to understand the weaknesses of Scargill's politics. Politics that can be summed up as militant but bureaucratic trade unionism.

Three powerful influences shaped these politics: Stalinism, syndicalism and the militancy of the Yorkshire miners. These influences explain the twists and turns in Scargill's evolution, the contradictions of his politics and, above all, his latter day move to the right.

Scargill's political training took place in the Young Communist League (YCL), the youth section of the Stalinist Communist Party (CP). As a young miner Scargill led apprentices in a bitter struggle. He was barred from his union branch and expelled from the NUM for his militant stance. One of the first strikes he led was against the NUM! He fought to get the union to change branch meeting times so that young miners could attend.

Stalinism gave him an anti-capitalist world view. But Stalinism, rooted as it was in the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy of the USSR, grafted onto Scargill's outlook a bureaucratic vision of socialism and a reformist strategy for its achievement.

This led Scargill to defend the crushing of the Hungarian workers' rising in 1956 and, years later, support the crushing of Solidarity in 1982 in Poland on the basis of defending the "socialist state". The idea that General Jaruzelski, in crushing the ten million strong workers' organisation, was preserving a socialist state was laughable. But it is logical if you identify socialism with the ruling Stalinist bureaucrats.

Strategy

Stalinism also gave Scargill his "Broad Left" strategy for the union. It was a strategy based firmly on the capturing of the NUM's official apparatus for the left through piecemeal advance in union elections. Missing from this strategy was a perspective of organising the rank and file independently of and against the entire bureaucracy with the objective of fundamentally transforming and democratising the trade union itself. In other words, the decisive task was to get a left bureaucracy in place of a right wing one.

In pursuing this task Scargill was initially obliged to use rank and file organisation and pressure. In the late 1960s he was a prime mover in the

Bamsley Miners Forum. This was not a campaigning rank and file organisation, but it did bring rank and file miners together to discuss a wide range of union and general political questions. It gave Scargill an important platform to address Yorkshire miners.

The perspective was never to build the Forum into a rank and file opposition. Once the left captured the official machine the Forum's days were numbered. After years of a desultory existence it collapsed in 1976, long since abandoned to its fate by Scargill.

This strategy was the battle plan of Scargill and the Broad Left. They never aimed to organise the rank and file to transform the union. Rather they mobilised the rank and file, when necessary, as leverage in their attempts to get hold of the official union machine.

Scargill was always at pains to express his opposition to the notion of rank and file groupings. As late as 1978 he told a socialist paper:

"I don't want it going into *Socialist Challenge* that Scargill says, 'Erect an alternative leadership to that which already exists'. I'm talking about a leadership which is being created which will be ready to replace the present leadership when that leadership goes. I'm not talking about a caucus within the union, because that would tend in my opinion to even further fragment the trade union movement and that would be disastrous."

He said this at a time when the "existing leadership", the Gormley-led

"Our priorities in my opinion lie in winning for our membership and maintaining for our membership the best wages and conditions possible. Once you have that foundation, you can then start to develop into other spheres"

right wing, defied two national ballots and accepted the area productivity scheme that split the NUM down the middle. At a time when a rank and file organisation needed to fight the existing leadership tooth and nail, not simply wait for it to retire, Scargill placed unity with the right wing bureaucrats above the need to organise a rank and file opposition to them. He did this in 1984/85 and again in 1992, to both his own and his members' cost.

Syndicalism led Scargill to break with organised Stalinism. In essence syndicalism is reducible to the belief that the unions themselves are self-sufficient in the struggle to get rid of capitalism. For the young Scargill the idea of loyalty to a party, even a reformist one like the CP, conflicted with loyalty to the union. The CP was small, despite its influence. The NUM was a powerful organisation of hundreds of thousands. The NUM had power, the CP did not.

Scargill's flippant response to being asked why he left the YCL (he was never a member of the CP itself) is that they wanted him to sell papers on Fridays when he had union business to attend to. He revealed his real

The evolution

Nine years ago this month the Battle of Orgreave, the most bloody episode of the great miners' strike, began in earnest. Almost twenty one years ago the Battle of Saltley Gate marked a turning point in the 1972 miners' strike. On both occasions Arthur Scargill, the current President of the National Union of Mineworkers, played a leading role in these mass pickets. He was arrested during both confrontations.

These are just two of the more famous examples from Arthur Scargill's record as a militant trade union leader. It is a record that few, if any, of his counterparts at the head of the trade union movement could match. It is a record that has made him the subject of frenzied attacks by the media, of fear and indignation at the dining tables of the rich, and of contempt and hostility amongst the leaders of the unions and Labour Party.

His actions have earned him thousands of militant miners 85 and from thousands of other of Britain's left wing organisations Scargill.

Last October at a lobby of the made up of Socialist Worker wing organisations, greeted him with the unbridled joy of Christ's second coming.

Understanding the limitations of unionism that Scargill stands for, today, Scargill is not leading the scale of the 1984/85 battle.

These limitations disarm him represented—in the 1984/85

reason to *New Left Review* in 1975:

"... irrespective of what I did politically in the Young Communist League or the Labour League of Youth as it then was, or any other political organisation, the real power—and I say that in the best possible sense—the real power lay either with the working classes or with the ruling classes. Now the working classes were obviously identified with the trade union movement..." (*New Left Review* July/August 1975)

Reformism

This did not stop Scargill joining the Labour Party in 1966, nor has it stopped him espousing a left reformist political vision based on the perspective of electing a left Labour government. But it does illustrate why he believes that the union was central to the achievement of political ends.

Above all, this explains why he has instilled into his members the idea of the "NUM Party". Political and class wide questions do not need a political instrument, a party, according to Scargill. An NUM, led by the left, training and educating its militants into NUM cadres, and playing a vanguard role on behalf of the class, is sufficient.

It is, at the same time, limiting and self-defeating. It excludes workers from other industries from the "party". It reduces the programme to that of the NUM. It subordinates all political issues to the needs of the sectional interests of the NUM. It obstructs the fighting unity of militants across the class, in favour of tightly knit unity within the NUM itself. Above all, it wrongly believes that the struggle over exclusively trade union issues will generate a socialist consciousness amongst rank and file workers. In the same 1975 interview Scargill was candid on this point:

"There's a very fundamental question that's got to be posed: where do our priorities lie? Our priorities in my opinion lie in winning for our membership and maintaining for our membership the best wages and conditions possible. Once you have that foundation, you can then start to develop into other spheres."

He adds:

"If you've got a revolutionary leadership that can't even win wage increases, but can go on platforms all over Britain on the Irish question and a thousand and one other things, the workers won't have any faith in that leadership."

True enough, but the counterposition is false from start to finish and expresses the cruel limitations of trade union, syndicalist consciousness. Win-



... but Arthur's strategy can't

ning wage rises with militant trade union tactics, as the Scargill of the 1970s did, does not automatically prepare your union members for the political obstacles to winning further wage rises and defending jobs in conditions of acute capitalist crisis where the enemy has decided to make the fight political.

Sectionalism

Politics and economics are not separate and counterposed as Scargill, the syndicalist, implies. They are inextricably linked and to win struggles around wages, jobs, the Poll Tax or Ireland and abortion, the limits of sectionalism that are inherent in trade unionism need to be transcended.

Scargill's syndicalism and his bureaucratism are fused in his belief in the self-sufficiency of the NUM as it is, but led by the left not the right. The third major influence on Scargill, the pressure of the militant Yorkshire rank and file, stands in partial contradiction to these two aspects of his politics. It explains what makes Scargill different from other bureaucrats, namely his real militancy.

In the post war period the Yorkshire coalfield was the bedrock of militancy in the NUM. Through the various dis-

trict NUM Panels Yorkshire militants organised action in defiance of both the Coal Board and the right wing leaders. In the late 1960s the NUM was reborn as a militant union thanks to unofficial strikes originating in Yorkshire. The flying picket became the hallmark of the unofficial or semi-official strike committees and Panels. Militancy caused a sea change in the union. Scargill rose through the ranks to President of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM.

His rise was the result of the Broad Left's election campaigning and his willingness to base himself on the militant rank and file. He was tireless in the unofficial strikes of 1969 and 1970. He was the supreme commander of the Saltley Gate picket in 1972 during the national pay strike. He was a genuine embodiment of the militancy of the miners he represented.

Even when the right wing leader of the NUM, Joe Gormley, retired in 1981 and Scargill won the national presidency with an overwhelming majority, his militant stance seemed unchanged. He campaigned for strikes over pay in 1982 and 1983 (only to lose the ballots). And in 1984 he put himself at the head of the strike against closures that began unofficially and became the Great Strike.

Death of Arthur Scargill

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demobilising role in the fight against the new round of pit closures.

Scargill's entire career shows left bureaucratism's inability to provide a strategy capable of securing lasting victories in a period of capitalist crisis. Scargill's current role in the fight against pit closures is evidence of the inevitable rightward movement of left bureaucratism faced with its own failure.

To state this openly is an important part of the fight to build a revolutionary party in the British working class. To pretend otherwise may get you an easier ride in debates with militant miners, but it won't help them in the fight to save their jobs.

Mark Harrison looks at Scargill's career and evolution to show that whatever his merits as a man, his politics are flawed.



Not always a militant

SCARGILL'S MILITANCY is infamous. Less well publicised, by either his class enemies or his left wing supporters, are the practical consequences of his bureaucratism.

These consequences have been crucial in the development of the NUM and in the defeats it has suffered. They flow inexorably from Scargill's politics (see main article).

As soon as Scargill was enthroned in the NUM's Bamsley headquarters (Camelot, he jokingly called it), evidence of his preparedness to compromise in the interests of bureaucratic unity began to manifest itself. In 1977 the right wing pushed through Tony Benn's divisive area productivity deal, in defiance of two national ballots against it.

Campaign

When the right wing authorised regional ballots in order to get its way Scargill made no recommendation on how to vote and went to the courts to get the executive decision reversed. He failed. But instead of using a campaign in Yorkshire as a springboard to defeat the deal and oust the Gormley leadership he contented himself with making his personal opposition known while opposing any moves to force Gormley to resign.

He followed this up with an effective sell out of the pit rescue teams' dispute in 1978. The productivity deal led to a sharp rise in the number of deaths. Pit rescue men were under considerable strain and struck for higher pay. After making a secret deal with the Coal Board Scargill called the strike off. Predictably the Coal Board reneged on the deal, but Scargill steadfastly refused to launch a strike to defend the pit rescue teams. He was learning fast the "responsibility" that came with bureaucratic office.

Even worse was his role in the 1981 pit closure crisis. Thatcher prematurely tried to push through her plans to butcher the industry. South Wales and Kent met her proposals for closures with spontaneous strikes. A rolling national strike began. Thatcher panicked and retreated. But this victory owed little to Scargill. He held Yorkshire back from the fight.

He got an 86% vote for action in Yorkshire during this crisis, but delayed calling a strike. When Yorkshire finally struck the Coal Board verbally promised drilling tests in Yorkshire,

prior to any closures. On the basis of this, a repeat of the pit rescue dispute scenario, Scargill proposed a return to work despite the continuing threat to pits in other areas.

Scargill's role in the 1984/85 strike was considerably more honourable than these episodes. But honour is no substitute for a revolutionary strategy.

The key to victory in the 1984/85 strike was solidarity action from other workers. In the first six months of the strike it was necessary to shut down industry to make the coal strike bite. In the last six months it was necessary to win class wide action to stop the full scale war on the NUM by the police, the courts and the Tory government.

To achieve such action it was necessary both to fight for the official movement to sanction solidarity action and, in the likely event of the bureaucrats not giving such a sanction, to openly appeal to the rank and file workers to take action regardless of their leaders. To win it was necessary to shatter bureaucratic unity if that unity was obstructing a real fight.

Scargill refused to countenance this. When the dockers struck in the summer of 1984 there was a golden opportunity to unify the struggles. The TGWU leadership refused to do this. In panic they treated the docks' dispute as a separate sectional issue. Scargill allowed them to get away with this. It was left to rank and file Kent miners to issue an unofficial appeal to the dockers to "open a second front".

Meanwhile Scargill appeared on television endorsing the TGWU line that the two disputes were separate. It was a terrible error. The class enemy recognised this. When the dock strike ended, leaving the miners isolated, Thatcher declared to one of her aides:

"Arthur Scargill must now be wondering where he can turn."

Control

He turned to the TUC. But while he gained a resolution endorsing solidarity, he agreed with the TUC leader Len Murray that the TUC would retain control of organising the solidarity. The Brigadier in charge of the state's Civil Contingencies Unit (strikebreaking) was put on red alert. Within weeks the alert was over. The TUC

leaders steadfastly refused to deliver solidarity action. The most they came up with was financial help for hardship cases during the strike.

Scargill greeted the TUC's decision on solidarity with these words: "In supporting the NUM with physical and financial solidarity, Congress placed itself squarely behind our campaign to secure a speedy and victorious end to the dispute."

This was simply not true. The TUC was only interested in ending the dispute, not winning it. Yet, to the very end, Scargill refused to utter a word of open criticism of the traitors. Fatally, he refused to use the Congress decision to appeal directly to the rank and file of other unions to get them to deliver action. The reason for this was simple. His commitment to bureaucratic unity forbade him "splitting" with his fellow bureaucrats and from organising a rank and file opposition to them.

After the strike he said, in his presidential address (1985):

"There is also the failure of the TUC to translate into positive action decisions taken at the 1984 congress. And it was this, according to well informed sources, that led the Coal Board to a change of attitude, and they saw it as a green light to intensify their attacks against the NUM."

This criticism is spot on. But it was made public nine months too late. Scargill is not a stupid man. Far from it. He could see what the TUC were up to days after the Congress. We could, and we said so. *Workers Power's* headline after the Congress was "Beware the TUC". The reason why Scargill was silent at the time was that he put the "responsibility" of high office in the trade union movement above the needs of the rank and file.

Aftermath

The aftermath of the strike saw Scargill at his most isolated. Within his own union the right wing advanced. Scargill was denounced by regional leaders like Des Duffield (South Wales) and George Bolton (Scotland) for being too left wing, too militant. At the 1986 TUC he suffered the indignity of being debarred from speaking against the anti-union laws by his own delegation.

Still he refused to organise a rank and file opposition. A National Rank and File Miners' Movement was established in 1985. It had a limited programme, but it was marked by militancy and an anti-bureaucratic spirit. Scargill kept his distance from it throughout its existence. Many of its members were firm Scargillites, but his attitude of doing things exclusively through the bureaucracy meant that he would not throw in his lot with the militant minority.

The isolation Scargill suffered in this period pushed him to the left. His October 1987 S O Davies Memorial Lecture "New Realism: The Politics of Fear" was a resounding rebuttal of the defeatist politics being peddled by the entire union bureaucracy at that time. In startling contrast to the positions he argued during the 1992 mines' crisis, he said of new realism:

"It calls for a consensus with those of our class enemies who at present (recalling many capitalist philanthropists of the past) find themselves appalled at the excesses of the Thatcher government. This approach is not unlike wooing the executioner to win either a slight delay or a less painful death."

And again:

"The supporters of 'new realism' constantly argue for lobbies of Parliament, marches, demonstrations, meetings and broad alliances involving all sections of society including the churches—they see this programme of action as a substitute for, and not complementary to,

industrial action."

During these years Scargill was relatively powerless. Having foolishly denied for a long time that the 1984/85 strike was a defeat he was paying the terrible price for that defeat—watching powerlessly while the industry was decimated. He was witch-hunted by the Maxwell press. The NUM lost its seat on the TUC general council.

But what he never did was outline a strategy to reverse the retreat. He never espoused the organisation of the rank and file against the bureaucracy. Indeed, his isolation drove him closer to the mainstream bureaucracy, as became evident in his adoption of the very tenets of New Realism that he had so sharply condemned in his 1987 speech.

Limitations

With the 1992 coal crisis the limitations of Scargill's politics came home to roost. Having failed to break with the bureaucracy and base himself on the rank and file, he threw his lot in with the very people who had betrayed the 1984/85 strike. Instead of action, with lobbies complementary to it, we got the opposite. Lobbies, marches, stunts and eventually one day protest strikes, as an alternative to all out industrial action. Scargill went a long way in rationalising this change of heart with references to "people's power".

Remember what he said in 1987

The reason why Scargill was silent about the TUC's betrayal at the time was that he put the "responsibility" of high office in the trade union movement above the needs of the rank and file

about "alliances" with the class enemy. This is what he said in 1992:

"Now we have got the support of the British people, we must not underestimate the power of the movement. People power can change this insane energy policy."

Remember what he said in 1987 about industrial action, as against purely protest gestures like lobbies. This is what he said in 1992:

"If the government continues to be impervious to the fair and reasonable case, I ask on behalf of the NUM, that the general council [of the TUC] call a national day of action involving the public and the whole movement."

Scargill is even prepared to turn on his supporters in the Miners' Support Movement. The Miners' Support Network in the North West was summoned before Scargill last month and told in no uncertain terms that it could do nothing without the authorisation of the NUM, it had no business supporting struggles other than those carried out by the NUM (it had organised a mass demonstration against local service cuts), it was not to criticise Labour councillors and it was not to push for any democracy inside the Miners' Support Conference.

And if people didn't like any of this, they would have to lump it. The wheel has come full circle. Bereft of a revolutionary strategy militant trade unionism—albeit of a bureaucratic character—has turned into a left version of new realism. That which Scargill once excoriated is now extolled as the way to win. As his militancy has waned his bureaucratism has intensified. ■

The warring militias of Bosnia-Herzegovina marked the first days of spring with a three-way orgy of racist murder.

As the Bosnian Serb militia closed in on Srebrenica its commanders ordered a 40 minute artillery bombardment which killed scores and wounded hundreds of civilian refugees in the town. Meanwhile, in Vitez the Croatian armed forces were engaged in a campaign of slaughter against the local Muslim population, reportedly in retaliation for a campaign of ethnic terror aimed at Croats by Muslim militiamen.

Why is Bosnia descending into chaos? Is there any method behind the madness? Is there any progressive solution? These are questions most ordinary people ask when confronted nightly with images of carnage. For once ruling class politicians are deeply divided about the answers.

The vast majority of Europe's rulers, the British government included, want to carry on with the strategy they have adopted since the war began: do nothing and hope that a new balance of power will emerge as the warring sides exhaust themselves. If Serbia emerges as the guarantor of the new order then, they reason, it will be preferable to an all out Balkan war.

On the other extreme stand Thatcher and around fifty Labour "left" MPs. They want decisive military intervention on the side of the Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs.

In the middle, dithering, stands US president Clinton, pressing the European imperialists into some form of limited military action against the Bosnian Serbs whilst reassuring the American public that no American lives will be put at risk.

The politicians are not just divided: in their heart of hearts none of them believes their solutions will work.

Inaction plainly hasn't worked. Full scale military intervention would tie down thousands of imperialist troops, split NATO and the U, and possibly intensify the conflict into a full scale regional war. Limited air strikes or arming the Bosnian Muslims would inflame the conflict and would not contribute to any lasting political solutions. In David Owen's words "all of the solutions have their down side".

Roots

To outline a socialist alternative to this confusion, and to the seemingly inevitable drift towards imperialist military intervention, we need to understand the roots of the conflict and the way imperialism's "peace plan" has encouraged and legitimised ethnic cleansing.

The collapse of Stalinism and the break up of Yugoslavia sealed the fate of the one republic whose very survival relied on Yugoslavia's continued existence as a multinational state—Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Before the present war began in April 1992 Bosnia-Herzegovina contained intermixed Croatian (17%), Serbian (32%) and Muslim (44%) communities. The collapse of the republic's Communist Party led to the formation of ethnically based parties, the Muslim-based Party of Democratic Action being the largest.

Between June 1991 and January 1992 Serbia and Croatia fought each other to a standstill, with Serbia occupying much of the Serb minority area of Croatia. During this period imperialism's strategy towards the region changed dramatically.

Formerly US, British and French policy had been to encourage the maintenance of a unified Yugoslav state to oversee the orderly resto-

BOSNIA

Srebrenica has become a symbol of the total failure of the United Nations' "peace plan" for Bosnia-Herzegovina and a rallying point for those demanding western military intervention. Paul Morris explains what is happening and why socialists should oppose UN intervention and the arms embargo.

The road to Srebrenica

ration of capitalism. Of the imperialist powers only Germany and Austria openly advocated the break up of Yugoslavia.

But the Serb-Croat war bounced the main imperialist powers into supporting the break up. This was the signal for an alliance of Muslim and Croat politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina to launch the ill-fated independence referendum of February 1992.

The referendum delivered an overwhelming vote for independence, but was boycotted by the Bosnian Serb population. One month later Serb nationalist leaders in Bosnia declared their own republic. By this time war had broken out, with the well armed Bosnian Serb militias, led by General Mladic, fighting an alliance of Croats and the Muslim-led, but multi-ethnic, defence force of the republic.

The Croat-Muslim alliance was always a marriage of convenience as far as Franjo Tudjman, the Croatian president, was concerned. By mid-summer 1992, Croats in Herzegovina had declared their own self-governing republic in defiance of the Sarajevo regime. This territory is now controlled by the Croatian armed forces and is ripe for incorporation into Tudjman's "historic Croatia".

In October 1992 the full consequences of the secret deal between the Serb and Croat governments were revealed. The Zagreb-Belgrade highway was reopened. Serbia and Croatia exchanged ambassadors. Meanwhile Muslim fighters defending the town of Jajce were abandoned by their former Croat allies. After turning against and defeating the Muslim militia, Croats began ethnically cleansing the Muslims of Prozor.

Faced with this carve up of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Croatia and Serbia, the United Nations' peace negotiators in Geneva drew up the "Vance-Owen plan". Bosnia was to be divided up into ten ethnically-based "cantons" with a very weak central government based in Sarajevo and under multi-ethnic control (see bottom map).

Territory

Far from being a progressive solution the Vance-Owen plan was a recipe for ethnic cleansing.

Virtually every one of the ten areas contains a significant minority population who, for obvious reasons, would remain armed to the teeth to defend themselves against their new rulers. In addition the Muslims, who represented 44% of the population, would be allocated much less than a third of the land.

Much of the territory allocated to the Muslims was, at the time the plan was drawn up, in the hands of the Serb militias! Since then the

Serbs have conquered even more. Meanwhile the Croats have launched an offensive to capture as much of the area north west of Sarajevo as possible, leading to the recent fighting around Vitez.

This violent outcome was inevitable. The Vance-Owen plan was a recipe for the rival militias to "create facts" on the ground. The Croats, and now the Muslim leadership, have signed the Vance-Owen map. But it is a total fiction. Compare the two maps below to see why. The whole of eastern Bosnia bordering Serbia is under Serb military control with the exception of Muslim enclaves around the towns of Srebrenica, Zepa, Konjevic Polje, and Gorazde.

Two months ago there was another large enclave, around Cerska. But Serb militias conquered Cerska in March, killing hundreds and forcing out 10,000 Muslims who then swelled the refugee population of

Srebrenica to over 30,000.

Now Srebrenica faces the same fate. The siege of Srebrenica began in April 1992. No food convoys or UN humanitarian aid reached the city until November. By February 1993 the town's War Council reported 2,149 dead from sickness and hunger, 2,562 killed in the fighting and over 14,000 wounded.

In March the French UN general, Phillipe Morillon staged a dash into Srebrenica and presented himself as a human shield against further Serbian advance. But by 18 April—its defenders exhausted and its refugees under repeated artillery bombardment—Srebrenica was a conquered city.

UN troops returned to oversee a ceasefire which allowed the Muslim militias to be disarmed by the UN, the Muslim population to be deported under UN supervision, and the town to pass to effective Serb political control if not yet mili-

tary occupation. Despite their propaganda against the Serbs and ethnic cleansing, and despite the real possibility of Western intervention, the UN's actions in reality assisted the Serbs. It is like the present arms embargo, which perpetuates a situation in which the Serbs are well armed, whilst the Muslims feel the full effects of the boycott.

Solution

Srebrenica reveals that imperialism's plan for Bosnia cannot work, and that imperialism has not yet the will or the means to impose a different solution. These events throw into sharp focus the impotence of liberals and the Labour left faced with the Yugoslav crisis. They confirm to the letter the political solution advocated by Workers Power and the LRCL.

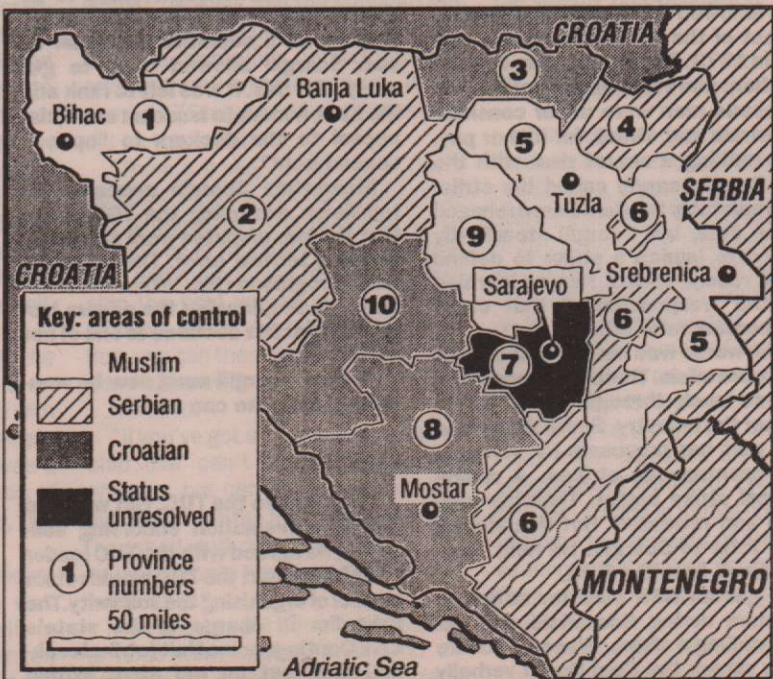
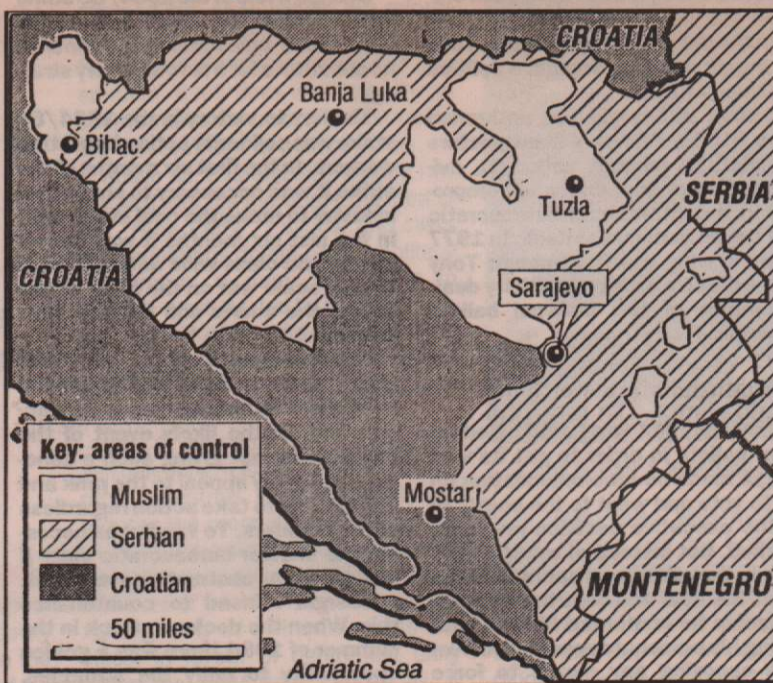
Faced with the breakup of Yugoslavia it was suicidal for the Bosnian Muslim community to follow the utopia of "national independence" advocated by Alia Izetbegovic. The Serb boycott of the independence referendum doomed Bosnia to civil war. The Bosnian independence vote was not and could not be an expression of the desire for "national independence" since there is not a single, unified "Bosnian" nation. Revolutionary socialists should have fought for the creation of a multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina committed to a socialist federation of the Balkans.

This may not have stopped Serb nationalists, such as Radovan Karadic and military leader Ratko Mladic, from attempting a Serb secession from Bosnia-Herzegovina. But it would have been the surest way of undermining support for such a movement.

At the outset of the Bosnian war it was far from utopian to attempt to build multi-ethnic militias. Even today a small percentage of Croats fight with the Muslim militias, along with fighters from the smaller minorities. But the only purpose of building such a militia would have been to fight for a progressive non-nationalist solution, something the Muslim leaders never stood for. In their drive for EC-recognised independence they drove many Serbs and Croats into the hands of the nationalists.

At the start of the war in Bosnia revolutionaries had to take a position of "defeat on all sides". Whilst recognising the right of any community to defend itself against pogroms we argued that workers should not throw in their lot with any of the three leaderships: each of their solutions was reactionary.

But with the collapse of the Muslim-Croat alliance and the secret deal between Serbia and Croatia, the character of the war changed.



Top: the real military balance, Bottom: the Vance Owen plan

As recent events at Vitez show, all sides remain capable of ethnic cleansing. But after the fall of Jajce and Prozor the war was transformed into one aimed primarily at the destruction of the Bosnian Muslims as a community.

In a little over a year 1.3 million people (35% of the population) have been uprooted, and an estimated 130,000 killed. Proceeding from the right of the Muslim systematic to defend itself from nationalist pogroms, revolutionaries had no hesitation in declaring in favour of the victory of the Bosnian Muslim forces once the war itself became just such a pogrom.

But should workers support the intervention of western forces, in the shape of the UN, NATO or some other flag of convenience for imperialism? No.

We said, when the UN troops went in, that they would not defend working class communities and would only act to enforce the reactionary Vance-Owen peace plan. There could be no better confirmation of this than the behaviour of the French UN contingent at Sarajevo airport. It routinely captures and turns back Muslims trying to flee the city. According to its commander:

"If we don't stop these men and women, the Serbs will do it themselves and use our powerlessness as a pretext to occupy the airport."

Even if the Canadian troops guarding Srebrenica find themselves shooting at Serb militiamen over the next month they will still be engaged in the same kind of operation as the French in Sarajevo: defending the status quo established by Serb and Croat military supremacy. The disarming of the Muslims in Srebrenica and the effective conquest of the town by the Serbs only confirms this view.

That is why we do not support calls emanating from the hypocrites of the Labour left, like Bernie Grant, Ken Livingstone, Tony Banks, Chris Mullin and Peter Hain, for either air strikes or full military intervention. As the Kurds and Shi'ites found out in Iraq, and as the nationalists quickly discovered in Northern Ireland: when imperialism intervenes it does so to assert its own interests, not to liberate oppressed communities.

The imperialists' dithering over intervention has material roots. Marxists recognise that war is the continuation of politics by other means. When western generals warn against air strikes on the grounds that they would have "no clear goal" they are reminding their paymasters of this fact. Military doctrine demands absolute clarity on the intended outcome. But Imperialism has not yet adopted the Milosevic's Serbia, for smashing interrelated reasons:

Reconquer

- Tudjman has resolved to reconquer every inch of Serb held territory in Croatia. Western intervention would signal the start of this and the imperialists would find themselves in alliance with the fascist HOS militia and a President who denies the occurrence of the Holocaust.

- An anti-Serb intervention would split NATO and the EC, destabilising the whole region. Greece fears expanding Turkish influence in the Balkans. It has refused to allow Turkish planes to overfly the country to implement the no-fly zone in Bosnia. At the same time a section of its bourgeoisie is covertly pro-Serb because of the Macedonian question.

- Serbia remains a strong mili-

tary power with its own arms industry. It could not be simply bombed and fought into submission like Iraq without enormous overhead political costs in the imperialist heartlands. An older generation of imperialist politicians recall that the Serbs (and the Greeks) held down and defeated some of Nazi Germany's best divisions in a bloody guerrilla war. For most of the European imperialists there is the added problem of their conscript armies. So far, French imperialism has been careful to deploy the paid mercenaries of the Foreign Legion on the Sarajevo front line, not its French working class conscripts. But in an all-out intervention that would change. Hundreds of thousands of European youth protested over the Gulf war when most had no chance of being sent to die. But a Balkan Vietnam could lead to a youth rebellion of 1968 proportions.

Summon

What if the imperialists did summon up the will and the means to radically change their policy and mount an intervention? In that situation—which is far from excluded—workers the world over should have no hesitation in denouncing it, campaigning for troop withdrawal and giving critical support to those fighting the imperialist presence—which in the first instance is likely to be Serbia.

The working class has to face the fact that there are no easy over-throw solutions to the conflict. Revolutionaries must refuse to be drawn into the orgy of national chauvinism, and prepare for the moment when exhaustion with the hate and carnage forces workers to look to a revolutionary alternative, just as they did at the end of the first world war.

Immediately we can and must campaign for the lifting of the imperialist blockade on all the warring participants. It operates in practice as a blockade of the Muslims only, since the Muslims have no heavy weapons and cannot make them. The embargo has little effect on Serbia, with its domestic arms industry and with its Eastern European trading partners standing to lose urgently needed millions if they observed the boycott.

Crocodile tears over the fate of the Muslims are worth nothing unless all possible means are adopted to enable the Muslims to get arms: the only sure way of resisting the annihilation of their communities.

Workers should build solidarity with the Muslims fighting to defend themselves, so they are not driven into the arms of Thatcher and her ilk. But because we do not trust the imperialists with the liberation of oppressed communities we should oppose sanctions against Serbia. They will only serve the purpose of preparing for reactionary intervention.

We have to campaign for the right of refugees to enter Britain, and say to the bleeding hearts of the Labour left and Tory right: if you want to do something for the Bosnians, at the very least open the borders to refugees and provide homes, food and clothing for them.

Above all, we have to spell out to a generation of youth, not only in Eastern Europe but in the west, that the imperialist new world order is a hell without end. If capitalism is allowed to survive—with its poisonous racism and nationalism, its military machine, its hypocritical politicians—horrors like the Bosnian conflict will proliferate and wreck the lives of millions in the years ahead.■

French right on the rampage

It didn't take long for the French right wing to capitalise on its crushing electoral victory. The new Prime Minister Eduard Balladur likes to present himself in an aristocratic light—"the velvet glove" of French politics. But the velvet glove conceals an iron fist. In the space of 10 days, in addition to the announcement of huge public spending cuts, three youths were killed by racist police, provoking widespread rioting. Emile Gallet reports.



French plain clothes police meting out racist "justice"

At the end of March, the right-wing coalition of the RPR and UDF won over 80% of the seats in the National Assembly. The Socialist Party (PS) was swept from power. "Socialist" President Mitterrand was obliged to name his political opponent Balladur as the new Prime Minister. A new period of "cohabitation" has begun, in which Mitterrand will try and use every slip the government makes to regain support for the ailing PS.

Balladur is determined not to repeat the mistakes of the right-wing government of Jacques Chirac in 1986-1988. Chirac's aggressive neoliberal policies created a wave of popular hatred which gave Mitterrand victory in the 1988 Presidential election.

The government's immediate solution has been to play the racist card. Unemployment is mounting and the far-right Front National (FN), which got 12% in the election, is winning support for its racist project. Balladur is now copying the FN's argument that immigrants are the cause of crime and unemployment. He is arguing for a change in the nationality law to remove the right of anyone born on French territory to claim French nationality.

Balladur has put Charles Pasqua in charge of the Ministry of the Interior. Pasqua was once the leader of the SAC, a far-right clandestine military grouping. The appointment gave a clear signal to racists and cops alike that the high-profile "security" mania of 1986-1988, when immigrants were expelled by the plane-load, would be repeated.

Dangerous

This kind of cheap and dangerous demagoguery, coupled with a number of populist measures (no new carpets in ministers' offices, no new official cars, 10% reduction in ministerial salaries etc), at first seemed certain to increase support for the government.

But the police heard the racist message only too well. Emboldened by the victory of the right and—often literally—drunk with success, trigger-happy cops killed three French youths in a series of "accidents":

- On 1 April, in Chambéry, a youth suspected of robbing car radios was shot dead whilst being questioned by the police.

- On 3 April, in Paris, a Zairean youth, suspected of robbing a tobacconist, was questioned in the police station. The Inspector shot him dead.

- On 7 April, in Wattrelos in the north of France, gendarmes were called in to stop youth driving cars around a playing field in the middle of the night. One of the youths was shot dead by a drunk policeman.

Following the killings, spontaneous protest demonstrations in Paris and in the north turned into mini-riots as the police viciously attacked the crowds. Shops were looted and cars were set on fire. Plain-clothes snatch-squads arrested scores of demonstrators, brutally beating their captives.

However, not everything has gone the police's way. Given their obvious guilt Pasqua was obliged to criticise the police and threaten the culprits with "punishment". But anti-racists rightly take this with a pinch of salt. The murderer of Malik Ousseine, who was killed by police during the 1986 student rebellion, got away with suspended sentences!

Despite the wave of popular revulsion against the police and the racists the left has done nothing. The only demonstration, promptly banned by Pasqua, was abandoned by the left. There has been no suggestion of any further mobilisation before the 1 May.

The main anti-racist organisation, SOS-Racisme, and the rest of the anti-racist organisations have refused to do anything about the FN's new traditional May Day march, in which tens of thousands of racists and fascists will strut through the streets of Paris, flags flying and drums beating.

So cowardly are the "defenders" of the immigrant community that they have even rejected the idea that May Day should also see a demonstration against the proposed change in the nationality law! In these circumstances, the racists and fascists of the FN will go unchallenged. So will those in the RPR-UDF and the PS or the Communist Party who are trying to win over the FN's racist voters.

Pasqua's banning of protest demonstrations in Paris led to Mitterrand making his first public criticism of the new government. Although couched in extremely mild terms this disagreement shows us how the President intends to act in the coming months. He will try to present himself and the PS as the true friends of the people. His major problem, however, is that the PS appears to be mortally wounded. Following its crushing electoral defeat—the PS got less than 19% of the vote, compared with 53% for Mitterrand in 1988—the PS immediately set about committing suicide.

In a process strongly resembling the Labour Party's debates, all sections of the leadership agreed that everything would have to change and that the party would have to move to the right.

During the election campaign itself Michel Rocard, ex-Prime Minister and "virtual Presidential candidate", called for a "big bang" in French politics, fusing the PS with the ecologists and various liberal bourgeois to form a new party. Although the "big bang" disappeared with a whimper—the ecologist vote collapsed—Rocard is still keen to dump the Socialist Party and try and fool the French public into buying old (sour) wine in a new bottle.

To prove his point Rocard launched a vicious bureaucratic faction fight and ousted PS leader Laurent Fabius, together with his clique. Fabius—also an ex-Prime Minister, and Mitterrand's favourite—also wants to see a "broader" PS, but retaining the name and his leadership. All the other factions inside the PS lined up behind Rocard and threw out Fabius.

Differences

There are virtually no political differences between the leadership groupings in the PS, all of which are centred on personal ambitions. About the only—partial—exception to this general rule is the "Citizens Movement" set up by one-time Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, as a de facto split from the PS.

Chevènement, once the Tony Benn of the PS, has always had a very nationalist streak; his "Movement" aims to rally the whole of "the nation"—including "patriotic" right-wingers—behind his standard with a view to standing in the 1995 Presidential election. The working-class response to these developments is difficult to gauge as yet. The government's proposals to freeze public sector pay and to impose £2 billion public spending cuts will inevitably produce a response, waking the French workers from their Socialist Party-induced slumber which has seen strike figures plummet to their lowest level since the war.

It remains to be seen, however, whether the current doubt and uncertainty which afflict the reformist left will enable the workers to break free of its stranglehold and find a new leadership and a new programme capable of defeating the Right.■

For more details of the political crisis facing the French left, see *Trotskyst Bulletin* 3.

Chris Hanu was a key architect of a "peaceful" negotiated transition in South Africa. This proved no defence against murderous white reactionaries. The "safe" white suburb where Hanu lived was less safe for him than the black townships which he had left behind.

Hanu's assassination and its aftermath have exposed the many obstacles confronting the peace process. De Klerk's government, while demanding the ANC disarm its guerilla wing (MK) and leave townships undefended, has let the right wing conspire and arm themselves to the teeth. There is plenty of evidence linking the security forces, the High Command and cabinet ministers to past conspiracies such as the murder of activist Matthew Goniwe, the funding of Inkatha and various dirty tricks campaigns.

De Klerk's moves against the right in the government and the armed forces have been piecemeal and half-hearted. While figures from the apartheid past such as Magnus Malan have been demoted and then removed from office, right wingers still occupy important positions as shown by the conspirator Clive Derby Lewis who sat on De Klerk's Presidential Council.

Whatever measures De Klerk now takes against the right—and he will probably use the occasion to try to weaken their challenge to the National Party's reforms—white reactionaries and their allies will remain armed while the black opposition is defenceless.

A more serious threat comes from the official defence forces and police themselves. Under current plans agreed in bipartisan talks between the ANC and the government, the South African Defence Force (SADF) will remain intact, despite some "mergers" with MK. As MK is disarmed in South Africa itself this essentially means the SADF, with its racist officers, will remain the sole armed force. ANC plans for supervision of the armed forces would mean little unless there is an alternative armed force to disarm the government forces!

Hanu's death has lifted the lid on the mass of anger felt by the black population, especially the youth, at the continued survival of the white dictatorship. The stayaway on the day of mourning was the biggest ever with millions of workers striking. Even in the Inkatha stronghold of Natal, an estimated 80% stayed away. This reflected not only Hanu's own standing but, as became clear in the rallies and demonstrations, impatience with the ANC leadership's current strategy.

Betrayal

That strategy—a negotiated settlement backed up by "mass action" when needed—is paving the way for a great betrayal. Already, even before the start of the current round of constitutional talks (the replacement of the CODESA talks which broke down last year) the ANC leaders have made huge concessions.

Under pressure from the demands of the mass movement Mandela has pushed De Klerk to bring forward the date of elections to this year rather than next. But even if this were to happen power would still remain firmly in the hands of the existing ruling class, to be joined by those of the black population whose business or political career brought them into the higher echelons.

Under current plans there will be no majority rule before the end of the century. First will come a Transitional Executive Council with the ANC leaders effectively co-opted alongside De Klerk and his ministers. After elections will follow a five year transitional period with a government of national unity. This is effectively a power sharing plan under another name. It ensures that if ANC government mem-

SOUTH AFRICA



Apartheid's cops armed to the teeth as ANC sticks to sell-out strategy.

Anatomy of a sell out

BY LESLIE DAY

bers come under pressure from their supporters for social and economic change, there will be a veto in place.

Where will this leave the majority of black workers and the rural poor? The huge inequalities characteristic of apartheid society are still largely in place despite the disappearance of legal segregation. Taking public sector workers as an example, average black wages in 1991 were 1,349 rand while for white workers the figure was 3,346 rand.

While white unemployment is rising marginally, rates for the black population run at an estimated 40% of the potential labour force. While the new black middle class can move into pleasant suburbs, 7 million urban dwellers live in informal housing.

To make even the minimum first steps to overcome this poverty requires a huge marshalling of resources and redistribution of wealth through an emergency plan including a public works programme, education, training and job guarantees. But this is just what South African imperialism cannot afford. The plans of the IMF and South Africa's big business advisors involve raising the resources for investment from holding down wages and public spending.

Expanded

ANC leaders have made clear that they expect little in the way of wealth redistribution in the early years. They favour a "restructuring accord" between labour and capital—a form of social contract—in which resources for state spending and reform would be expanded in exchange for workers holding down wages.

The ANC's impending sell-out confirms the bankruptcy of the "revolution by stages" theory that Stalinism has foisted on struggles for democ-

racy all over the world. Under this theory the working class is supposed to hold back on the struggle for socialism in order to preserve a strategic alliance with "progressive" bosses to achieve democracy.

It doesn't work and has never worked. Because only the working class has the social strength and the will to self-sacrifice that is needed to overthrow apartheid and crush the right wing resistance, it has to lead the struggle and use working class methods to win it.

Schema

In the process it can and must challenge for power in the factories and the townships, demanding an end to poverty and deprivation. In South Africa the same big imperialist bosses, who according to the Stalinists' schema qualify for the label "progressive", are the ones who cruelly exploit the workers.

Limiting the struggle to what the bosses will accept means not only that the workers' living standards will remain the same. It also means that real democracy will not be fully realised. The sham the ANC is prepared to sell to black workers and youth will leave them effectively powerless and unarmed.

In the struggle for democracy, the working class must come to the fore, and must refuse to sacrifice its own interests just to keep together an alliance with the untrustworthy capitalist exploiters. No class but the workers has an interest in establishing untrammelled universal suffrage in South Africa. But, in the course of the struggle for democracy, the workers need to go forward to the establishment of their own political power,

and proceed to the overthrow of capitalism itself. This strategy, the strategy of permanent revolution developed by Leon Trotsky, is being borne out in the struggle against apartheid today.

Far from opposing the ANC's plans to betray the struggle, the South African Communist Party (SACP) that Chris Hanu led has been a prime mover in selling these plans to the masses. SACP members occupy key posts in the ANC leadership and even if they moved to a greater degree of independence (such as Hanu had been considering for the future) this would be as a loyal alternative.

SACP member Joe Slovo first suggested the "sunset clauses" which are a key concession in the constitutional talks. Not only will there be power sharing at the governmental level but white civil servants will have protection in their posts. SACP theorists have also been important in the reconstruction accord. As the CP's Jeremy Cronin put it, "Realistically the prospects of substantial economic change in South Africa are not great".

The SACP has used its reputation as a workers' party and the left wing of the liberation movement to win militant workers and socialist youth to support the ANC model of transition. In this plan mass action is relegated to a supporting role, to be called on just as pressure on the regime. The armed struggle has even less of a role. Hanu's last political task was to broker an agreement which would undermine the activities of the Pan African Congress' military wing, the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA). As a former leader of MK he was well placed to do this.

Hanu used his connections with the head of the Transkei homeland, Bantu Holomisa. Holomisa was prepared to give house room to the PAC as well as

the ANC and, after APLA attacks on white civilians, he had found the Transkei under siege from government troops. Hanu made clear that the ANC wanted to see an end to APLA activities. He publicly denounced these fighters in the week before his death.

In yet another irony, his assassination has given a further boost to the support for the PAC amongst militant youth who think the PAC is more prepared to fight. Young militants even went so far as to boo Mandela's calls for peace and conciliation at a rally after Hanu's death. This shows the tremendous fighting spirit of the youth can be channelled into a revolutionary alternative to the ANC. But their belief in the PAC is misplaced. The PAC's rhetoric of "one settler, one bullet" masks a policy which is as open to accommodations with the existing ruling class as that of the ANC's.

Share

The PAC's policy of no reliance on white leaders is no guarantee of intransigence over majority rule or social reform. Indeed, at the same time as PAC leaders were defending the APLA activity they were seeking entry into the constitutional talks. There is no doubt that their leadership wants to maintain a presence in these talks and thus a chance of a share in the transitional arrangements.

The PAC traditionally sees the main divide in society as being between the races and not the classes. In apartheid South Africa the difference was hardly visible, but now the potential dangers are more apparent as the prospects grow for a black middle class, and black participation in a ruling class itself.

Militant workers and youth wanting to fight the betrayal from the ANC leaders will have to struggle long and hard to build a leadership capable of mounting such a challenge. The PAC cannot provide it and neither can the so-called hardliners such as Natal ANC leader Harry Gwala or the maverick Winnie Mandela. These leaders, under pressure from militancy within the ranks, are talking left at present. But they have failed to put forward a coherent alternative strategy. At every stage in the ANC's deliberations on the negotiations, Gwala has in the end stayed with the majority. He has not led a movement against the talks. As an old-time Stalinist, he shares along with the "new thinkers" responsibility for the SACP/ANC strategy of forcing the regime to negotiate and going through a "democratic stage" before any socialist measures should be advanced.

Building

A new leadership will have to be built committed to smashing the apartheid state and not negotiating with it. This means building an independent revolutionary workers party.

It will have to challenge the ANC and SACP in the unions and community organisations for leadership of the struggle against the government.

It must fight for a sovereign constituent assembly and immediate elections to a truly representative body with no vetoes or power sharing fixed in advance.

It must oppose the dangerous illusions of the ANC that the racist security services can be democratised and made to act in the interests of the majority. Instead it must demand and organise the arming of the black workers, youth and communities. It will have to lead the building of an alternative source of power—workers power with councils linking workplaces and communities.

Workers and youth will have to break from the ANC and the PAC to form this leadership. Otherwise they will be tied to a strategy that is bringing disaster to South Africa's majority. ■

A WAVE of revulsion after the Warrington bombings has seriously threatened the tenuous links Sinn Féin maintains with its sympathisers in the Republic. *An Phoblacht/Republican News* felt obliged to state that it would "not excuse or explain away Warrington" before proceeding to attempt precisely that. Nor was the irony of events lost on Northern anti-unionists who have witnessed 121 children killed in the last twenty five years with little reaction in the South. Needless to say, there were no floral tributes or state representatives at the funerals of the six nationalists killed by loyalist murder squads in the same week.

The IWG has always unconditionally supported the revolt of the anti-unionist masses against the violent denial of their national rights. Partition has meant systematic oppression of the nationalist "minority" imprisoned within the six-county statelet artificially created in the north-east.

We support the democratic and anti-imperialist content of that revolt and the struggles of nationalists against the increased repression by the British state. That is why we consistently take the side of the IRA against the British state.

Imperialism is ultimately responsible for the carnage that results from the Northern conflict. If those who carried out the Warrington bombing were imprisoned tomorrow, we would call for their release. We will continue to support them as long as murder, violence and repression are meted out to the opponents of British occupation.

Sinn Féin continues to pick up one third of the nationalist vote in the North despite the endless sacrifices of its beleaguered supporters; despite the outrage felt by many of its own supporters at IRA attacks on "soft" targets; despite efforts to bolster the SDLP and despite the fine-tuning of the state's repressive apparatus.

Sinn Féin maintains a limited mass base in the North because they continue to speak out on behalf of the most oppressed anti-unionist communities, who daily (and nightly) experience harassment and brutal repression at the hands of state forces and loyalist gangs.

Our unconditional support for this anti-imperialist struggle does not, however, mean that we support the political or military strategy of the IRA. Their "strategy" of guerrilla warfare, overall, is counterproductive. Its *monopoly* by an unaccountable armed nucleus reduces the masses to the role of passive spectators.

Repressive

Nor can the armed struggle achieve its stated objective: to pressurise the British into withdrawal from Ireland. On the contrary, over twenty years of struggle has delivered up 700 republican prisoners, an avalanche of repressive legislation and unparalleled levels of collaboration between the British and Irish state. Republican fortunes, by any measure, are at a low ebb.

So too is their capacity for rational political calculation. A 1992 policy document states: "Our will to secure a lasting and peaceful settlement . . . is greater than the British will to remain in our country". It is sheer fantasy to believe that a collective effort of will is all that is required to dispatch the oppressors from the scene.

Even if the IRA were capable of escalating the armed struggle, there is no logical connection between this and a collapse of British morale. Instead of engendering panic in the hearts of the British ruling class, it is more likely to give them the green light for a more overt shoot-to-kill campaign.

To the extent that the republicans continue to deliver own-goals like Warrington, the task of the British government gets easier every time. The killings of civilians by the IRA, whether intentional or not, has invariably handed the enemy a major propaganda weapon. The IRA states that the British authorities "deliberately failed to act on precise and adequate warning" in respect of Warrington. Did they really expect that the British police would help them score a propaganda victory?

The killing of civilians has continuously

AFTER WARRINGTON

The impasse of Republicanism



Relatives for Justice were spat at on this 'peace' demonstration

eroded support for the anti-unionist struggle throughout Ireland. As one commentator has noted:

"Since the Warrington bombing, every right-wing hyena in Ireland now feels they have the IRA on the ropes, and are calling on the IRA to stop, but as part of an agenda to bury the issue of Irish unity altogether".

Since 1975 the IWG has called for an end to the bombing of civilian and so-called "economic" targets. The routine of daily life goes on and the primary effect of the bombings is to worsen the living conditions of the Northern masses.

The republican "strategy" is a spectacular failure and the sooner this is recognised, the better. Nothing of substance has been won since the highpoint of the struggle when the Stormont parliament was dissolved in 1972—and that was won primarily by mass mobilisations in the North. Even the H-Blocks campaign was initiated, not by Sinn Féin, but by prisoners' relatives. When it saw an advantage in developing it, Sinn Féin used it to appeal for a pan-nationalist alliance with its own enemies in the SDLP, Catholic hierarchy and Fianna Fáil instead of making it a militant and democratically organised working-class and community mobilisation.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 signalled increased collaboration by the Irish state to tighten the noose on republicanism. Progress since has been slow but real. Sinn Féin talked of a united front of anti-imperialists on the issues of extradition and other forms of repression, but translated this into a caucus of petty-bourgeois nationalists pleading for nothing more than defence of Articles Two and Three of the Southern constitution (which contain the territorial claim to the Six Counties and are the legal basis of dual citizenship for Six-County residents).

Incoherent

Similarly, the decision to stand for elections after the H-Block struggle saw support in the South actually decline because Sinn Féin's electoral programme was an incoherent rag bag. It has never put itself at the head of any significant political or social struggle for needs of workers and on the woman question, it has positively disgraced itself. A timid pro-choice position passed at an annual conference was subsequently overturned by the *Ard Comhairle*.

The Brooke talks were initiated in 1990 and promised a role for the Irish govern-

ment in the North's future. Despite the frenzied predictions of a sell-out by unionist politicians, the backlash failed to materialise. Since then acres of newsprint have explored the nuances of "talks about talks", the posturing over preconditions and diplomatic manoeuvres.

The unionists have been brought sulking to the conference table—but to little avail. They are now insisting on a trade-off between any new political arrangement and a referendum on Articles Two and Three of the Irish Constitution. Labour leader Dick Spring would like to make his mark by moving the talks on. But Fianna Fáil's Albert Reynolds has his "green" grass roots to think of, and his utterances of late indicate that talks may not resume for some time yet.

Promise

The UDA has delivered on its promise of increased killings. Loyalist paramilitaries claimed a total of 38 victims in 1992. The IRA was responsible for 28 deaths. The increases are partly explained by unionist disappointment with the failure of the Hillsborough process to deal more decisive blows to republicanism. The unionist veto seems less secure in a situation where Catholics now account for 43% of the population (1991 Census) and 60% of school-goers. General uncertainty concerning their future is one of the fundamental reasons for the increased loyalist terror.

The IRA has targeted more Protestant "off duty" security personnel than armed soldiers over the years. It has bombed Protestant more often than Catholic areas—not because these people are Protestants as such but more probably because they rightly fear any deeper alienation of "their own" communities from their campaign or even because they see Protestant areas as bastions of support for the sectarian state. The bombing of civilian areas as a "tactic" inescapably lends a sectarian aspect to the campaign. It destroys all possibility for now of appealing to any section of the Protestant working class to recognize that the northern state, the loyalist and unionist parties and British imperialism are their real enemies.

The IRA's guerrilla campaign is not in essence sectarian. It has little if anything in common with the sectarian hooliganism and random killings conducted by loyalist gangs for the explicit purpose of terrorising Catholic communities. The degree of

fecklessness leading to "accidental" outrages by republican fighters is fuelled by frustration and brutal repression rather than a reactionary agenda of vengeance against Protestant communities.

Republicans know they are being gradually marginalised, squeezed between the twin pillars of repression and censorship. Hence their repeated calls to be given a place at the conference table and repeated attempts to validate the claim to Irish self-determination by reference to the principles of "international law". Sinn Féin has appealed to the United Nations "as a guarantor of respect of international law and fundamental human rights" (sic) to monitor a "decolonisation process" and to convene an international conference to produce "a democratic resolution". Like the UN has done in the case of the Palestinians, perhaps?

Sinn Féin boxed clever on the peace rallies organised in the aftermath of Warrington by encouraging republican involvement on a humanitarian basis. The physical and verbal abuse dished out in Dublin to the republican relatives of northern child-victims has effectively split the peace movement into three separate groups. Elsewhere protest marches have been small, or swelled, as in Belfast, by the nationalist Relatives for Justice contingent.

Stagnant

The crisis in the northern state continues unabated, and cannot be fundamentally alleviated except through socialist revolutionary means. Republicanism is ghettoised in the North, with stagnant, if not declining levels of support. Its perspectives in the South have little hope of winning more supporters.

The programme of the LRCI for Ireland is for working class power. We do not, however, make the raising of this slogan a precondition for united action with republicans in the actual struggle of the day. There is no concrete way forward but for workers, socialists and republicans to unite for political action on a progressive anti-imperialist basis around concrete slogans.

We argue for self-organised mass democratic campaigns against repression, centred on organised workers leading united action among nationalist communities; for an end to emergency powers; for the release of political prisoners and for British troops out now. None of these goals will be achieved without mass mobilisations and working-class direct action. To open the road to a struggle of this kind republican supporters must demand immediate cessation of bombing campaigns against civilian and economic targets, and an end to the shooting of construction or other service workers at security bases. Republican fighters must be compelled by growing united-front action to subordinate all armed tactics to the democratically controlled defence of mass struggle.

Struggle along these lines alone can hope to appeal for solidarity to the all-Ireland working class. And developing a working class leadership and methods of struggle are the only basis on which a class appeal can be made to protestant workers to see that their own historic interests can only be guaranteed through the creation of a workers' republic in Ireland as a step towards international socialism. ■

MARTIN LUTHER KING A dream deferred

Twenty five years ago an assassin's bullet cut down Martin Luther King Jr. **G R McColl** considers the US civil rights leader's contradictory legacy, focusing on his leftward political evolution in the last three years of his life.

ON 4 APRIL 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. died of gunshot wounds in Memphis, Tennessee. King had gone to the southern city to lend his support to a strike by Memphis' predominantly black refuse collection workers, who were fighting for union recognition.

Renewed controversy has flared in recent weeks over who really killed King. A mock television trial acquitted the supposed assassin, James Earl Ray, lending further credence to the view that the US state, and specifically the FBI, was responsible for the murder.

Assassination

Since the 1968 assassination the US establishment has sought to incorporate the martyred King as yet another "great American", often with the assistance of surviving family members and one-time Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) aides. Despite initial opposition from the Reagan administration and some state legislatures, King's birthday became a US national holiday in the 1980s. Every year the media marks the anniversary of his assassination while his idealistic vision of racial harmony appears further away than ever.

Amid the media hype generated by Spike Lee's film on Malcolm X, the significance of King's role at the head of the mass movement for basic democratic rights for Afro-Americans had slipped from view. A crude contrast has been made between Malcolm X, the militant, and King, the compromising liberal. Many on the left and among a new generation of radicalised blacks have adopted this view.

Theology

In his own words Malcolm's university was the streets of Harlem and Roxbury, whereas King gained a PhD in theology from Boston University. While Malcolm was a child from a broken home who had spent his youth and early adulthood living on the edge, King came from an upper middle class Atlanta family.

Unlike Malcolm, King never broke from his belief in non-violence, yet his murder sparked a wave of urban uprisings which engulfed 40 cities within a fortnight of his death. By then some of his views had converged towards Malcolm's, and in some key respects his critique of US society was more radical than in the 1950s and early

"You know they went after King when he spoke out on Vietnam He turned the power to the have-nots And then came the shot." Wake Up by Rage Against the Machine (US hardcore rap band, 1992)

1960s.

King has long been seen as the "acceptable" face of black struggle in the US for white liberals. For them King is the great orator of the 1963 "I have a dream" speech. The leader who helped defuse militant protest in the apartheid South in exchange for the promise of civil rights legislation from the Kennedy administration. By 1965 a new generation of embittered youth in the North's inner city ghettos, not surprisingly, saw King as either irrelevant or an "Uncle Tom". An increasingly frustrated wing of the Afro-American student movement, the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) voiced loud criticisms of the SCLC and King in particular.

Ideologies

Separatist and black nationalist ideologies were gaining increasing influence among many of those who had been at the forefront of occupations and lunch counter sit-downs for integration. After the defeat of the Selma Alabama campaign for voting rights in spring 1965, which was marked by two racist murders and savage attacks by police and state troopers, King and the SCLC appeared to be a spent force.

With the current fashionability of Malcolm X's radical rhetoric it is important not to accept a one-sided view of either Malcolm or Martin Luther King. King's central error was his pacifism in the face of state violence and his reliance on reforming capitalism.

The two were linked: King's demos, beaten and teargassed before the eyes of the world, were meant to shame the US liberal ruling class into reform. This strategy could have only limited effects. It could remove the worst aspects of the apartheid-style Jim Crow system of the south, at a terrible cost to the movement in broken bones and racist murders. But it could only ultimately create the conditions for enlarging the black middle

class. Thirty years after King described his "dream" of black equality and social justice the life expectancy of a black man in Harlem is less than that of a Bangladeshi peasant.

Credit

To King's credit however was his preparedness to organise a mass movement. It is not fully spelled out in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, but the Nation of Islam more or less completely abstained from mass action.

Whilst King never fully broke from pacifism and reformism he significantly reoriented these politics towards specifically working class and anti-imperialist goals in the last two years of his life.

King not only saw the need to change the objectives of the SCLC but was willing to risk splitting this fragile cross-class alliance along ideological lines. Many of King's erstwhile allies were uncomfortable when he made comments like:

"... we're treading in very difficult waters, because it really means that we are saying that something is wrong with the economic system of our nation... It means that something is wrong with capitalism."

Southern politicians sought to paint King as a "red sympathiser" while the Kennedy administration pressured him into dropping Stanley Levison, a Communist Party member and King's personal friend, from the SCLC staff.

Criticisms

By mid-1965 King had voiced his first tentative criticisms of the Vietnam war. Much of the SCLC leadership told King to remain silent on the issue, partly out of fear that a public attack on the Johnson administration would jeopardise its support for the Voting Rights Act. King beat a hasty and shameful retreat. In early 1967 he did make a decisive break with openly pro-imperialist social democrats in the movement. With self-critical honesty King told his staff:

"I backed up a little when I came out [against the war] in 1965. My name then wouldn't have been in any book called Profiles in Courage. But now I have decided. I will not be intimidated. I will not be harassed. I will not be silent and I will be heard."

King's mesmerising oratory gained a new cutting edge. From the pulpit of New York's Riverside Church he branded the US "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today". His anti-war stance quickly cost him numerous black and white allies in the Democratic Party. The once laudatory liberal media distanced itself from him.

In an April 1967 address in Atlanta, King laid bare the hypocrisy of his fair weather friends:

"They praised us in... Birmingham and Selma, Alabama. Oh, the press was so noble in its applause

and... praise when I would say 'Be non-violent toward Bull Connor' [Birmingham's sheriff] There is something strangely inconsistent about a nation and a press that would praise you when you say, 'Be non-violent toward Jim Clark' [Selma's police chief] but will curse and damn you when you say 'Be non-violent toward little brown Vietnamese children'."

His public frustration with white liberals grew and extended beyond the question of Vietnam. Though King always insisted that the urban uprisings were misguided and counterproductive, after 1965 he clearly identified with the rage of the dispossessed youth in the northern cities. For King the riots were "... caused by nice, gentle, timid white moderates who are more concerned about order than about justice."

In the last year of his life Malcolm X had come to see racism as inextricably linked with capitalism. King had



"There is something strangely inconsistent about a nation and a press that would praise you when you say, 'Be non-violent toward Jim Clark' [Selma's police chief] but will curse and damn you when you say 'Be non-violent toward little brown Vietnamese children'."
Martin Luther King April 1967

arrived at similar conclusions by 1966. He had come to recognise that the achievement of full citizenship rights for Afro-Americans was woefully inadequate and so the movement had to mobilise a new constituency around different objectives. In his words:

"The fire bombs of Watts... blasted the civil rights movement into a new phase... and Chicago was now the testing ground."

Once more defying advice from senior figures within the SCLC, King sought to turn the movement's focus to the appalling housing conditions of black workers in the north. In January 1966 he moved into a slum flat on Chicago's South Side launching a campaign to win an open housing law and a dramatic increase in state funding. The administration conceded little. A white populist backlash followed which turned violent in the suburb of Cicero. Local whites physically attacked a King-led demonstration. Such experiences made King far more pessimistic about the prospects of appealing to basic decency and a commitment to "America's democratic traditions" within the white population. Yet he still failed to see the

need for organised self-defence and to understand the limitations of reforms.

He was shocked by the sense of hopelessness in the Chicago ghettos, but he also moved closer to a class understanding of the system which had created such slums; in his words:

"... little more than a domestic colony which leaves its inhabitants dominated politically, exploited economically, segregated and humiliated at every turn."

King remained as the SCLC's leading figure until his death. But he tried both to change the organisation and go beyond its ideological constraints by attempting to launch a national Poor People's Movement.

At the time of the assassination this movement was in its infancy and it did not really survive King's death. It was, however, clearly committed to extra-parliamentary protest, a vast expansion of state social welfare spending and opposition to the Vietnam War.

While the Poor People's Movement did not by itself make up the nucleus of a mass anti-capitalist party, its success would have swiftly dictated a clear break with even the most liberal elements of the Democratic Party.

Anniversary

An August 1967 speech to the SCLC's tenth anniversary convention summed up much of King's leftward moving political outlook:

"We've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. 'Who owns the oil?'... 'Who owns the iron ore?'... 'Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two-thirds water?'"

The hysterical, paranoid anti-communism of the US security apparatus' top officials does not offer a sufficient explanation of the FBI's obsession with King. If the FBI did indeed kill King it acted out of a real fear that this increasingly left-wing, charismatic leader was prepared to put himself at the head of a multi-racial, class based movement against poverty and inequality. Key sections of the US ruling class have never been prepared to tolerate mass organisations which consciously fought against the realities of capitalism.

Ultimately, King's intertwined bonds to Christianity and non-violence were fetters on his political evolution. Mentally and physically exhausted by the time of his death King proved unable to bequeath the legacy of a coherent, unified political force which could survive his passing. Nonetheless, his progressive contributions were undeniable. While many of the concessions wrested by the civil rights movement probably promoted the short to medium term stability of US capitalism, these gains were not granted freely. The struggle often exacted a terrible toll: racism would not pass peacefully into history and the federal government was a thoroughly unreliable ally.

Militant

While King was no convert to revolutionary Marxism, the protest movement he led was the largest of its kind in US history and was more militant than any predominantly black organisation which had preceded it. Both Malcolm X and King had tremendous strengths and glaring weaknesses.

An urgent task confronting today's fighters for Afro-American liberation and thus for socialism in the US is the development of a critical appreciation of both men's legacies as part of the fight to advance a programme for a black working class movement and a multi-racial revolutionary party. ■



King's dream of black equality and social justice led to support for workers' struggles and condemnation of US policy in Vietnam

Disability and Oppression

Dear Workers Power,
I am writing as regards Workers Power's conception of social oppression. You define social oppression as forms of oppression without which capitalism cannot function, e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia. Whilst it is true that these oppressions are necessary to the bourgeoisie in order to maintain their system, this does not mean that other forms of oppression are relegated to lesser evils.

In particular I am referring to the oppression of the physically and mentally handicapped. These are peo-

ple who are oppressed on the question of their disability first and their colour, gender or sexual orientation second. Things that even the socially oppressed take for granted e.g. the most basic rights to movement and information are denied the

disabled. A working class person with disabilities is one of the most oppressed people in society.

However, I have never read a single article in your paper on the topic, let alone any real work in the class on the issue.

Marxists are materialists and this is a material problem for thousands of working class people, please don't abandon them because they do not fit into your neat theoretical conceptions.

Revolutionary Greetings,
Joe Toomey

Gobsmacked!

Dear Comrades,

I have been in the anti-fascist movement for many years. I know that Workers Power has been the only one of the "Trotskyite" groups that has consistently defended the idea of physical confrontation with the fascists in word and deed. I don't agree with Trotskyism, but I do respect your organisation for its anti-fascist record.

I was pretty gobsmacked, therefore, when I read in the latest copy of *Red Action* that you had left AFA to team up with the Anti-Racist Alliance. If this is the case then you are betraying the anti-fascist movement. ARA are, if anything, worse than the ANL. They have got no record of confronting the fascists and look to me to

be more keen on promoting the careers of their leaders.

If *Red Action* are right then I think you are betraying your past.

DB,
Stoke on Trent

We reply:

Don't worry Dave, we were as shocked as you were by the allegations about us throwing in our lot with ARA. It seems that for Red Action if you disagree with them, as we did over AFA's strategy, then it is alright for them to come out with any old rubbish about you.

The sad thing is that the only source we have been able to find for this mischievous rumour is the fascist rag, the League Sentinel.

Its clear that the fascists are trying to create disunity by spreading false rumours. It staggers us that militant anti-fascists, which we believe Red Action are, however much we disagree with them, have given credence to this particular rumour. There is no basis for it in fact.

We will carry on pursuing militant anti-fascist tactics. Our major difference with Red Action was not over that issue. It was over whether or not the fight for such tactics should be carried to the bigger left organisations and the wider labour movement. We thought it should, they thought it shouldn't. Spreading rumours about us avoids a debate on this issue. It doesn't clarify it.

Scruples?

Dear comrades,

As a reader of *Workers Power* since the first issue I was a little disturbed by one or two of the things you had to say in last month's editorial on IRA bombings.

You wrote:

"... it is our duty to state openly that the tactic employed by the IRA at Warrington undermines the fight for internationalist solidarity in Britain. This is not a scruple: it is a plain fact."

Just like free lunches, there are no such things as "plain facts" in an editorial. Facts are used to make or support an argument.

What is the argument? That the IRA should stop bombing "economic targets" because it can't possibly win their struggle; or that they should stop because it makes our life harder when we seek to win British workers to solidarity with the Irish cause?

I agree wholeheartedly with the first proposition. But my recollection is that you always used to criticise the SWP (and others) who ran scared on the Irish Question and attacked the IRA for "making our job [building solidarity in the UK] harder".

Doesn't the second proposition sound suspiciously like an echo of this position?

In comradeship,
Chris Swan

Dear Comrades,

Both British Rail and British Coal have now started moves to abolish the check-off system whereby the unions collect subs via the wage packet.

This is just the latest part of the employers' offensive against effective trade unionism and should be resisted by every organised worker.

Before the system of deduction at source was introduced the unions built themselves at ground level by active rank and file collection of subs at the workplace or in union branch meetings. Miners would organise regular "show cards" at the pit head to encourage full union membership in the face of union-

PAYING OUR DUES

busting bosses.

Faced with the abolition of check-off workers might have to revert to this form of activity and many union activists argue it would be no bad thing, helping the shop stewards to build up their influence and independence from the bureaucrats.

Personally I think that the check-off system has to be defended and, if abolished, a fight conducted for its reinstatement. There is no point in reverting to a time-consuming process in a world where many

workers pay their bills, pay at the supermarket, do their banking and even receive their wages through computerised finance. Of course it can also lead to disasters such as that organised by the NUT bureaucrats, who lost the addresses and subs of thousands of members through an administrative error, after removing administration of membership from branch control.

Defending check-off, and learning how to organise without it if necessary, are going to become serious questions for the workers' movement. What do other readers think?

Yours fraternally,
Hugh McCulloch
Derby

Repression in Peru

IN THE last 10 years of "democracy" more than 30,000 Peruvians have been killed in political violence. The Fujimori dictatorship daily increases its repression.

Fujimori claims that within a few months he will wipe out the Castroite MRTA and by 1995 he will have completely annihilated Sendero Luminoso (SL), the Maoist guerrilla movement.

More than half of the country is under military control. Masked police and tanks patrol the streets. Dawn raids on the shanty towns are a daily event, the occupants are forced from their homes and hundreds arrested.

To turn the screw on the opposition, new legislation is being passed. The war with the guerrillas is to be re-defined as an "ex-

ternal war" by an act from Fujimori's Cambio 90/Nueva Mayoría coalition. This allows the death penalty to be used—the constitution only allows executions in cases of "treason to the homeland in times of external war".

The legislation is being applied retrospectively so that guerrilla leaders currently in detention can be executed.

Anyone suspected of terrorism is interrogated by the experienced torturers of the special anti-terrorist unit. Suspects can be held for 15 days without access to a lawyer or relatives.

There is no right to *habeas corpus*, that is the state does not have to tell anyone when a suspect is detained or prove that they are still alive. People quite literally disappear.

Secret military tribunals

can condemn people within a few days. Lawyers are limited in the number of suspects they can defend in a given period and it is not easy to get a lawyer. The media stigmatises lawyers willing to defend political prisoners as "pro-terrorist", leaving them open to a visit from the men in masks—the death squads and the police.

In a deliberate act of intimidation two lawyers defending SL's guru, Abimael Guzman, and another top SL leader have been sentenced to life imprisonment. They were accused of acting as messengers between the defendants and SL.

The Peruvian workers have to face another enemy as well as Fujimori and his henchmen. The Maoist guerrillas of SL have a policy of killing workers' leaders. In December, for example, Pedro Huilica, Secretary

General of the Stalinist-led General Confederation of Peruvian Workers, was gunned down by SL.

The despicable actions of Sendero do not prevent us from demanding the release of all those held by the regime on political grounds. We particularly want to draw attention to the case of left wing sociologist, Danilo Quijano who is in prison falsely accused of being "pro-terrorist".

In the past Luis Robles of Poder Obrero and Hernán Cuentas from the Partido Trabajadores, Manuel Chuquipiondo and Raúl Castro Vera have all been released as a result of international solidarity campaigns.

Today we need similar campaigns for the release of all Peruvian political prisoners. ■

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed

workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-

capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International ★ Price 40p/10p strikers ★ Solidarity price £1

Boycott Tory tests!

TORY EDUCATION minister John Patten has obviously learnt a lot from the nation's playgrounds. If you disagree with his plans for the education system, he's likely to start calling you names.

"Luddites" and "neanderthals" are the names he has been calling his opponents. He means that anyone who opposes his compulsory tests for fourteen year olds is either an enemy of progress or congenitally stupid, ape-like, barely human. What a nerve!

Snobs

There are a lot of us about though. Members of the two main teachers' unions are for a boycott of the tests. The Federation of Parents and Teachers Associations support the boycott. They represent seven and a half million parents and numerous school governors.

The Tories want us to believe that the tests are all about improving standards. For years they have been trying to blame teachers for falling standards in the schools, but no-one should be taken in by that. The real reasons are that the Tories and the big bosses they represent have been starving state schools of funding for books, teachers, equipment and facilities.

Bringing in standard compulsory tests is just part of the Tories' strategy for wealth based education. They want to label working class and black kids as failures at an early age. So they have rushed in the 14-plus tests with almost no pre-planning.

So keen are they to put schools in a league table that their tests reduce complex subjects like English literature to a series of yes or no

answers. Now they are introducing a scheme to teach children something called "Standard English" from the age of five.

Standard English is not the English ordinary people speak. It is the curious accent adopted by snobs, newsreaders and solicitors. It is not about educational standards: it is about class. As one teacher told a newspaper recently:

"If children started speaking Standard English at home, their parents would think something was wrong with them."

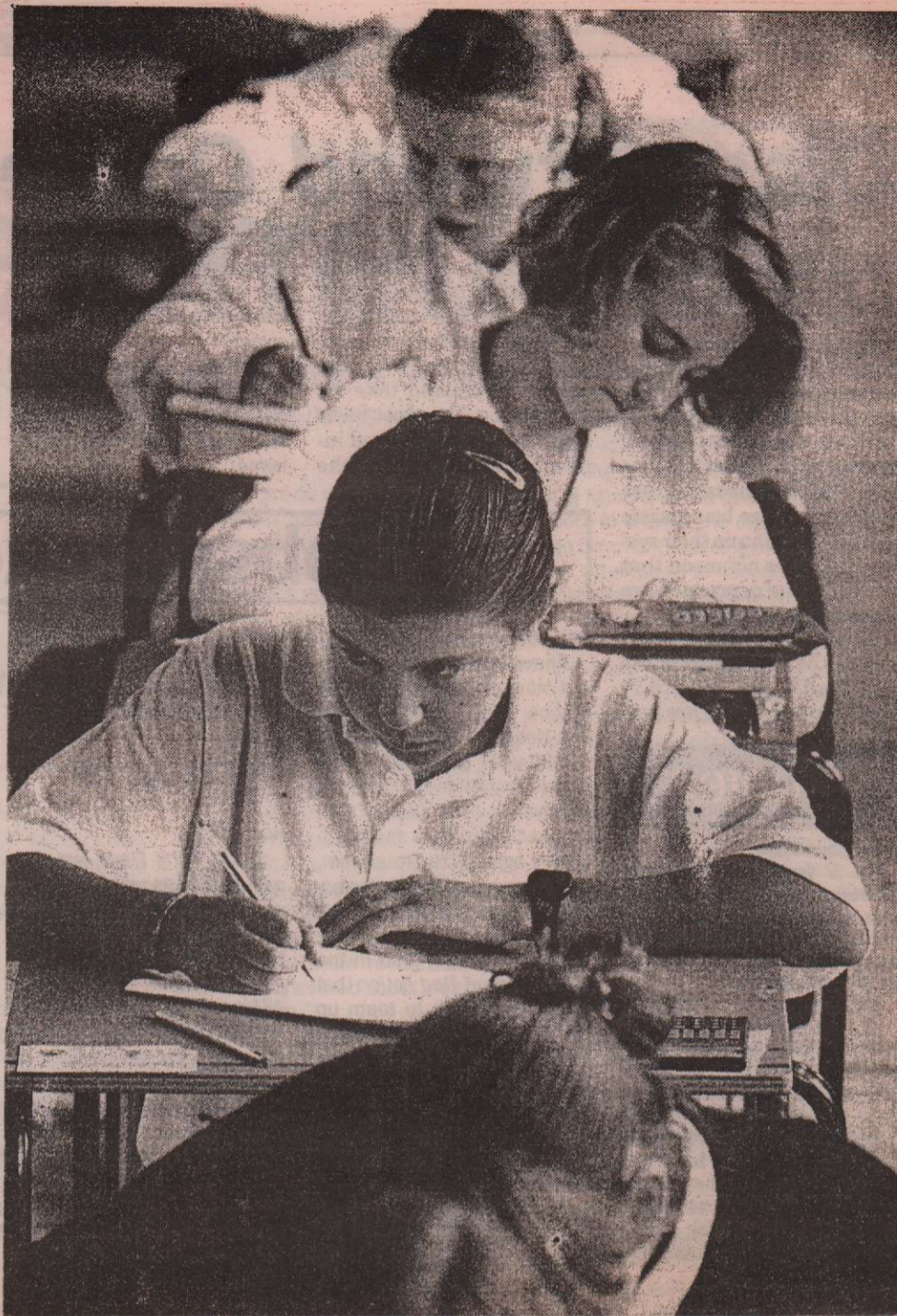
The whole scheme is biased in favour of the accent, the dialect and above all the children of the upper-middle class. It means the vast majority of working class kids will find out the moment they

start school that the way they speak is "wrong".

Teachers already bear a heavy workload, overburdened with constant assessment, the ever-changing requirements of the national curriculum, and endless administration. The unions estimate that tests will increase the working week to 52 hours. Teachers are to be constantly assessed in the classroom and their pay will be "performance" related.

Unions

Far from helping, this makes the situation worse, with teachers having to force students to jump through all the hoops that the Tories have placed in their path. "Payment by results"—standard practice in 19th century



schools—is on its way back in. The "results" will inevitably be to exclude more working class children from a decent education.

Teachers are angry, because they care about their working conditions, because they care about their pay which is being limited to a 0.5% rise this year and because they care about the children they teach.

That is why the National Union of Teachers has voted to ballot on a boycott of the tests, and why the NAS/UWT, the other main teachers' union, has already voted for a boycott by 88%.

The NUT also voted for a ballot to boycott the appraisal scheme. But the cowardly union leaders have only set in motion a straw poll, without any commitment to action against the appraisal or even against the pay freeze. Rank and file teachers have to organise to extend the action themselves. If the Tories

use new anti-union laws against the boycotts, then the teachers' unions will need to strike together to force them to back down.

All this presents rank and file militants in the two main unions with the chance to build cross union links.

In every school teachers from both NUT and NAS/UWT should organise joint meetings and demand a united campaign under rank and file control.

Militants in both unions should use the opportunity to say to members of the "professional" ATL who want to fight: you can't do it inside that organisation, so leave it and join a real union.

Parents

Alongside the teachers' action, parents need to get organised. Children as young as seven should not be put through the trauma of a test that can determine their fu-

ture: parents should withdraw their kids from the whole procedure, and link up with the teachers through joint meetings and joint committees to run a massive campaign of civil disobedience aimed at making the tests unworkable.

Action

School students need to use the test boycott to launch school students' unions. They need to make sure that even if the teachers' action starts to crumble, a students' boycott can finish off the tests.

This way we'll not only beat the Tories' plans, but start building the sort of organisations that can plan a really comprehensive education system. That would be a system under the control of working class people, with proper resources, to provide a decent education for all, free from the constraints of the profit-system and the prejudices of our rulers.■

Smash their anti-union laws!

AFTER TEACHERS' unions voted overwhelmingly to boycott the tests this year, Tory ministers got together to discuss ways to make sure it never happens again.

In a secret letter leaked last month Tory employment minister Gillian Shephard proposed the introduction of legislation outlawing strike action which gets in the way of the "statutory duty" of public services.

This means not just teachers but firefighters, postal workers, health workers and

the rest of the five million public sector workers would be deprived of their right to strike!

Shephard suggested amending current Tory anti-union legislation before parliament.

"We would make it clear that our intention was to deal with any industrial action whose purpose was to frustrate the will of parliament", she wrote.

After the letter was made public Tory ministers quickly back-pedalled from the suggestion. But it is clearly on

the agenda that John Major's "classless society" is to become a "strike-less society" with the introduction of the most draconian anti-strike legislation since the Tolpuddle Martyrs!

Already anti-union laws prevent:

- solidarity action
- effective picketing
- strike votes by show of hands
- action to preserve closed shops

They include provisions for unions, stewards and individual members to be bank-

rupted for organising unofficial action.

The introduction of a bill along Shephard's line of thinking would mean the effective abolition of the right to strike in Britain.

If the Tories press forward with this attempt, the TUC should get off its knees and organise general strike action to stop it. We can predict now what it will do: whinge and whine and appeal to the European Court of Human Rights—anything but defend itself. The spinelessness of the trade union

bureaucrats is the only reason Tory ministers could even think about outlawing strikes in the public sector.

In the short term an effective test boycott which destroys John Patten's education plans is the best answer to the Tory schemes. It will demonstrate to millions of workers why they need industrial action: to save their jobs, conditions and services from the ruthless Tories who want to destroy our lives.■

★ Transform the unions—page 6