

# workers power

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For Internationalism, Socialism and Workers' Revolution

No 189 May 1995

## Africa



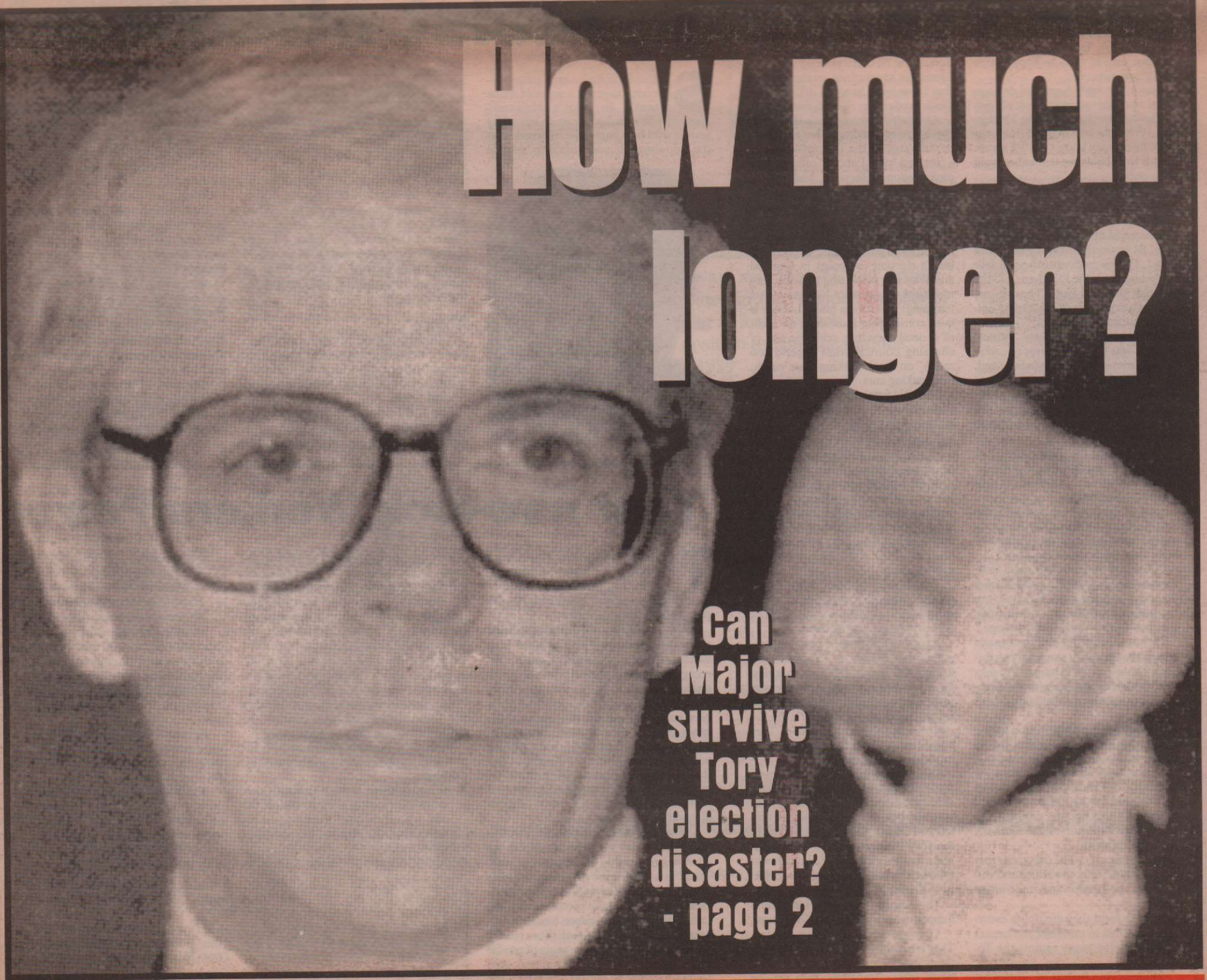
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# How much longer?



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# Incapacity Benefit

## "Calculated cruelty"

**T**HERE ARE approximately 6.5 million people with disabilities in Britain. Only 1.6 million of them received Invalidation Benefit. And this was 1.6 million too many as far as the Tories were concerned.

Invalidation Benefit is to be replaced with Incapacity Benefit.

What's in a name? A saving of £5.3 billion over the next three years according to the Treasury. Because with the change of name the government plans to reassess the cases of 900,000 Invalidation benefit claimants. They aim to put a minimum of a quarter of a million of these people back onto the dole.

In addition 55,000 new claimants will be denied their right to benefits every year. And new claimants will get considerably less under the Incapacity Benefit rules. Instead of the £98 a week that a 50 year old man with a non-working wife gets now, benefit will be cut to £58.85 a week. It will become taxable after 28 weeks.

by Mark Harrison

To prove that you are incapable of work, because of sickness or invalidity, you will now have to be assessed by Benefits Agency doctors, instead of your family doctor. These latter day Joseph Menges are employed to stop you becoming eligible for the new benefit.

### Useful

You will be put through a test designed to prove that no matter how ill you are you are capable of doing some work. Two elements of the test include picking up a coin and carrying a bag of potatoes with one hand. Perform these two really useful job skills successfully and you will be deemed able to work.

This latest piece of calculated cruelty is prompted by the rise in the number of people claiming Invalidation Benefit. It has gone up from half a million in 1975 to 1.6

million today. John Major says that it "beggars belief" that so many people should be too ill to work.

Yet capitalism systematically poisons, mutilates, damages and sickens millions upon millions of people. In the privatised mines safety measures have been abandoned. On the building sites danger haunts the workers every day. In offices Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) inflames the muscles and joints.

The irony of the new measures is that people with disabilities who want to work are often refused jobs. When they are given work, it is frequently demeaning and the pay is worse than the benefit levels. That's why disabled people at Remploy have been on strike and are going on strike again.

Anyone who has a disability deserves the right to work if they can. They should also have the right to benefits set at the average industrial wage if they can't. A system that cannot afford this simple human decency is itself too sick to be cured. ■



Disabled protesters blockade parliament

## How much longer can Major survive?

**B**Y EVERY law of politics the Tories should no longer be in power. In the Scottish local elections on 6 April they were annihilated.

In the local elections in England and Wales on 6 May, the same thing looks set to happen. Tory local councillors will become as rare as Tony Blair's policy commitments.

Major can only hope for damage limitation. He is accusing Blair of "gutter politics" because Labour's TV election broadcast branded the Tories as liars. Everybody knows the Tories are liars. It was about time that Labour said so in public.

Despite a blatant attempt to rig the Scottish elections by redrawing the boundaries to their own advantage, the Tories ended up with only 11% of the vote: 81 councillors out of a total of 1,161. They were the fourth party, falling behind both the Lib Dems and the Scottish National Party. They do not control a single one of the 29 new unitary councils they created.

This was not a mid-term "protest vote". It was the biggest ever rejection of the Tories in an election in Scotland. The prediction is that they will lose between 1000 and 2000 seats in England and Wales. We need the biggest possible vote for Labour on 6 May to make sure this happens.

The scale of the Tory defeat is a symptom of their divisions and paralysis and the hatred that millions of people feel towards them.

John Major hopes to deal with the first problem by appealing for party unity. He made this his theme immediately after the Scottish massacre:

"People in this country expect Conservatives to be united... and when it does not happen I think people are naturally concerned about it. I think they have sent a fairly clear message."

He has appealed for unity before and it hasn't happened. It won't happen this time. There is a split in his party's ranks over British capitalism's future direction. It cannot be resolved this side of an election.

As for getting people to stop hating him, he hasn't a hope. Any tax cuts in the next two years will be seen as a cheap bribe by all workers. More importantly, they know that any such cuts will be paid for by the government's relentless attacks on the disabled, the unemployed, the nurses, the teachers, the local councils.

Major has to go. The only thing that can save him is the cowardice and stupidity of the Labour and trade union leaders.

True to form they are doing everything possible to minimise the impact of the massive anger against the Tories.

Millions vote against the Tories because they are sick of seeing their

schools starved of cash, their local services crumble, their hospitals close, their jobs disappear.

If Labour was serious about mobilising these millions to drive the Tories out it would make firm promises to repair the damage, to fund an expansion of the NHS, to pour money into education, to renationalise the services that have been hawked off, to fund much needed pay rises to workers.

And Labour would back the struggles in the here and now that are trying to put a stop to the Tory attacks.

Instead "new Labour" offers a pale pink version of Toryism. And when it comes to attacking strikers, they are shouting just as loud as the right wing Tory ministers.

Frank Dobson, the shadow minister for local government, opened Labour's election campaign in England and Wales by promising that the Tory measures that restrict local spending (capping) will stay in place. Labour is even considering publishing an audit of council spending, with the aim of shaming councils that "spend too much" on local working class needs, into making cuts.

The only firm promise we ever hear Blair make is that none of the Tory attacks will be reversed.

There is a clear warning for every worker in this. Unless we organise now to impose our needs on Labour—the need for a minimum wage, for an end to the cuts, for a massive expansion of public spending paid for through steep taxes on the rich and powerful, for the renationalisation of the privatised industries—Blair will attack us once he gets in office.

That is why voting Labour is not enough. We need to organise to fight—to fight the Tories now, and to fight Blair if he wins a general election.

If we don't do this the possibility remains that Major, or a replacement leader, will live to fight another day. Every time a Labour spokesperson unveils yet another Tory policy, cloaked in the language of "fairness", the Tories breathe another sigh of relief. They know that working class anger will go unfocused and ignored.

Labour's triumph in Scotland, welcome as it was, revealed an uncomfortable fact: Labour's 44% share of the vote was below well below their opinion poll lead of 53%, and fell short of the 46% the party won in 1984. That was a famous victory for Labour. It was followed by defeat in the general election of 1987.

The way to make sure this doesn't happen again is to fight the Tories now.

They are weak. They are divided. They are reeling. If we organise to fight them now with strikes, demonstrations, mass campaigns, then we can smash them. ■

## Sheffield

# Somalis fight racist attacks

by Steve Conrad

**S**heffield's Somali community is organising to resist a wave of racist attacks. In March Mohamid Hussain was attacked by up to ten white youths with iron bars as he returned from the chip shop. He was rushed to hospital



Mohamid Hussain: "lucky to be alive"

in a coma and is "lucky to be alive" after developing a blood clot on the brain. Another Somali man received cuts and bruises in the attack.

On 27 March racists hurled bricks through the window of a Somali household, hitting a young boy in the face. When Abdi Ali and Ahmed Omar attempted to chase off the attackers, police arrested them. They were detained for 24 hours and have been threatened with charges of assaulting a police officer and carrying offensive weapons.

### Abuse

Throughout their detention Abdi and Ahmed were subjected to racist abuse from police. Their requests for halal food were ignored, and police later claimed they had refused to eat.

The attacks show the urgent need for organised self defence and labour movement support. The Somali community has

refused to collaborate with the police. As one Somali put it:

"Why talk to one lot of racists about racist attacks from another lot?"

Community self-defence groups have been set up, but these need to be organised and given the backing of the whole community and the rest of Sheffield's working class—black and white.

Community workers and anti-racists have called a "Youth Get Organised—Self defence is No Offence" meeting on 27 April. On 2 May at 4.30pm there will be a picket of Sheffield's Bridge Street police station, when Abdi and Ahmed are due to find out what charges they will face. (For further information ring 0114 2508760).

Sheffield Workers Power supporters have been at the forefront of the campaign for solidarity with the Somali community and for organised self-defence. As one commented: "The anti-racist positions of the Labour and trade union movement will count for nothing unless they are prepared to support and organise the active defence of this community." ■

## Your new-look Workers Power

**T**HIS MONTH *Workers Power* has a new look and a variety of new columns and features. Clare Heath, Editor of *Workers Power*, explained the purpose behind the redesign:

"*Workers Power*, as a monthly socialist paper, has to combine several tasks. It is, unashamedly, a propaganda paper. We recognise that our present relatively small audience needs to be exposed to a wide-ranging set of ideas. Some of these ideas need room to breathe in the paper and the space to have an argument. But propaganda needs to be concrete, and the many activists who buy *Worker Power* want and find in its pages the essential news and arguments they need when they are involved in the major struggles of the day—nationally and internationally.

Combining these tasks is always a challenge, and today we have to address the changing readership of the paper as well. There is a new layer of young activists emerging from the anti-CJA struggles, anti-racist struggles, school protests and trade union disputes. Our paper has to be accessible to them—many of them having grown up politically in the years of retreat of the labour movement. We cannot take for granted that all our readers remember the 1984-5 miners strike, or even the Poll Tax battles."

The new look *Workers Power* is an attempt to combine our well respected international reporting, in-depth analysis of key questions in the class struggle, and basic Marxist ideas with up to date monthly coverage of the British class struggle. We will continue to have regular coverage from the press of the other sections of the LRCI in Europe, South America and Australasia. Debate between competing tendencies inside the workers' movement and within the Trotskyist left will also continue to figure strongly in the new-look paper.

In the new *Workers Power* we have introduced regular columns and features, including:

- Whistleblower: a shop-stewards column where leading activists explore the day-to-day problems of communist activity in the trade unions and workplaces.
- A to Z of Marxism: a series aimed at

newer readers to introduce Marxist ideas and arguments.

- A World to Win: brief surveys on the class struggle world-wide and updates on previous articles.

We will alternate Jack Tully's Science column with features on medicine, culture, technology and the environment. And we are continuing our series on Engels, commemorating 100 years since the death of one of the founders of scientific socialism.

The paper includes new design features using new technology we have bought with the money raised so far in our £3,000 fund drive. (see box)

If you like the new-look paper, pass it on to your friends, order extra copies to sell, subscribe and get in touch with our local branches to get active in building the revolutionary workers' party we so desperately need. ■

### £2130

As the fund drive nears its deadline date of 1 May we are still a long way from completion. So we are issuing yet another call to our supporters and friends for donations large and small so that we can report a big leap for-

ward in next month's *Workers Power*. This month London comrades raised £96, including one donation of £60. A reader in the North East donated £20. Thanks again to all our standing order payers.



## in this issue



### Labour's great education betrayal

Labour education spokesman, David Blunkett, shocked even the scab teachers' union PAT last month. Its leader, Pete Smith, said: "There is a very considerable danger that Labour's answer to Conservative policy is more conservatism rather than a fresh approach. - Page 4



### Women in the unions - is proportionality the answer?

In Unison, a complex system of quotas at all levels has been established, meaning reserved seats not just for women but for men as well. But, writes Clare Heath, the bureaucracy are as unwilling as ever to fight for the issues that affect women most. - page 6

### Engels and the 'historic defeat' of women

Over the last two decades advances in anthropology and a growing body of feminist writings have put Marxism's view of the origins of women's oppression to the test. Helen Watson explains that, despite secondary weaknesses, Engels' explanation remains valid - page 14

### In next month's issue

### Labour in power - 1945

In June 1945 a landslide victory brought a left wing Labour government to power. In next month's Workers Power, Mark Harrison contrasts its reforming zeal to today's new Labour and asks "was it truly a socialist government"? ■



## VE Day

# What is there to celebrate?

**P**redictably the Tories want to make the VE Day anniversary an orgy of patriotism. They have learned the lessons of last year's D-Day fiasco, when veterans threatened to boycott the celebration because of its frivolity.

This time there will be a short and relatively solemn celebration, deploying the full weight, and what's left of the dignity, of our traditional institutions: the army, the monarchy, the working class street-party and Vera Lynn.

They have given us all a day's holiday, but only by abolishing May Day. And that too is symbolic.

Because, above all else, the history of World War Two is the history of gigantic class struggles—of the Warsaw Ghetto Rising, of Gandhi's Quit India rebellion, of the socialist-dominated "soldiers parliament" of the British 8th Army. The purpose of the VE Day celebration is to obscure these class struggles.

What is there to celebrate about a war which killed an estimated 40 million people? For those not prone to militarism and bone-headed nationalism, the only reason is that it destroyed fascism. That was the supposed war aim which the governments of Britain and the USA used to persuade their initially unenthusiastic workers to lay their lives on the line and endure huge privations.

But the "democratic war against fascism" was always a lie. The British bosses who went to war with Hitler in 1939 had spent the previous decade encouraging him to re-arm. They had barely disguised their admiration for Hitler and Mussolini as they smashed the best organised workers' movements in Europe. And that was not only the position of the ruling class advocates of "appeasement" who Churchill swept from office in 1940.

In 1934 Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Mail* greeted Mosley's British Union of Fascists with the immortal headline "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!". After Britain had approved Hitler's conquest of Czechoslovakia, at Munich in 1938, Beaverbrook wrote of Hitler's "honesty and sincerity".

The same Lord Beaverbrook was minister in charge of aircraft production in the

"anti-fascist" war. Churchill himself told a fascist audience in Rome in 1927, five years after Mussolini's march to power:

"If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from the start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism . . . Externally your movement has rendered a service to the whole world."

In 1939 Churchill wrote of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*:

"The story of that struggle cannot be read without admiration for the courage, the perseverance, the vital force which



**"I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war, I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations." Churchill 1939**

enabled him to challenge, defy, conciliate or overcome all authorities . . . I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war, I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations."

Only when Hitler encroached on Britain's colonies and spheres of influence did the British bosses go to war. Their real motive was reflected in their military priorities.

For four years Churchill resisted, delayed and diverted resources from an invasion of Western Europe. He deployed the armed forces to defend Britain's colonies. Tens of thousands of British troops were stationed in India to protect a system of naked, racist apartheid and colonial domination, ruthlessly crushing the Quit India movement. Thousands of soldiers were killed or captured as Churchill ordered them to defend Britain's colonial outposts in Hong Kong and Singapore to the last man.

As regards the fight with Germany, until 1944 this went on largely in the deserts

of North Africa where the two imperialist powers tussled over who would exploit the Arab masses and the oil.

That is why revolutionary socialists said then that British workers should not support their bosses' war. Of course it was not a question of supporting Hitler either, but of saying: "no truce with the British bosses, the main enemy is at home".

For almost four out of the war's five years the real conflict was fought on the Eastern front. Twenty million Soviet soldiers and civilians were killed. Six million Jews were exterminated. Hitler had to crush the Soviet workers' state in order to survive—

Athens—in the grip of a general strike—as a "conquered city".

Across Eastern Europe workers rose against the Nazis as the Red Army approached. Time and again they seized the factories only for the Stalinist chiefs to move in and hand them back to what was left of the local ruling class.

The revolutionary opportunities which socialists expected as the war ended did occur—from the workers' rising in Northern Italy to the workers' rising in Warsaw. But they were crushed and they were misled.

All across Europe, east and west, the real anti-fascist fighters—the partisans—found themselves disarmed, demobilised and, in some cases, liquidated by the combined forces of Stalinism and imperialism.

As one participant in the partisan struggle wrote, in 1944:

"There is a spirit abroad in Europe which is finer and braver than anything that tired continent has known for centuries and which cannot be withstood. You can, if you like, think of it in terms of politics, but it is broader and more generous than any dogma. It is a confident will of whole peoples who have known the utmost humiliation and suffering and have triumphed over it, to build their own life once and for all.

I like best to think of it as millions—literally millions—of people, young in heart whatever their age, completely masters of themselves, looking only forward and liking what they see . . ."

These words—not from a socialist but from a British Major seconded to the Bulgarian resistance and later executed by the fascists—give a sense of the possibilities as Nazism collapsed and a revolutionary spirit gripped Europe.

But Stalinism and Imperialism crushed that spirit. Their victory laid the foundations of a "world order" of wars, oppression and famine, haunted by the mushroom cloud.

That is the victory our rulers are celebrating this month—the post war counter-revolution. And that is why no worker should be waving the red-white-and blue on 8 May. ■

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Workers Power (Britain)  
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WC1N 3XX  
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paulmorris@easynet.co.uk  
ISSN 0263-1121  
Printed by Newsfax  
International Ltd, Unit 16  
Bow Industrial Park,  
London, E15





## NUT conference

## Teachers vote for action

**T**HERE WERE several victories for the left at this year's National Union of Teachers' conference: on pay testing and class sizes.

The left were in a confident mood, buoyed by the support of parents and governors across the country in challenging education cuts. With the Tories buckling under pressure on education, now is the time to take them on.

At Conference the right-wing Executive seemed to lose every vote. Conference voted for a one day national strike on class sizes. The Executive's attempt to water this down to local action was defeated.

On pay, Conference voted for the left's resolution calling for a rise of 8% plus £1,500, and called for a special salaries conference in November to discuss the campaign. The call for the TUC to organise a national public sector strike on pay was carried.

Even an amendment calling for the tests boycott to be reinstated was carried, though the motion in which it was contained fell for lack of time.

The right wing were left fuming to the press about how Conference suddenly didn't really represent the membership. Doug McAvoy proclaimed that delegates did not represent the views of ordinary teachers who, "live and work in the real world. They are not immersed in the self-indulgent deception of unending revolution."

Doug, of course, knows all about real teachers, despite never having been one himself. He certainly knows about self-indulgence. He indulges himself with a massive salary of £75,000 a year, plus expenses. And he is a past master at deception. He fools teachers into thinking he represents their interests.

The bureaucracy's whining was taken up by their friends in the press. A whole theory was invented about how ordinary teachers were working too hard to go to union meetings leaving mad activists to run amok. Clearly these activists don't have to go to all the extra meetings, develop the new schemes of work, teach the large classes that "ordinary" teachers have to.



After losing key votes, union leader Doug McAvoy decided that conference did not really represent teachers. But thousands of teachers marched at last month's FACE demo, which McAvoy tried to sabotage



Presumably their Headteachers let them off on the basis that they need extra time to go around fomenting revolution.

Who is living in the real world?

There is, we are told, a growing gap between the activists and "ordinary" teachers. No. That gap is closing. The real gap is between classroom teachers who have had enough and the right-wing bureaucrats who stifle agreed action at every turn.

According to some of the (unelected) union officials one third of the (elected) delegates were "extremists". Extremely committed to defending jobs, extremely committed to fighting for the resources needed to give working class kids a good education—obviously. You would hope

that we could expect some of this sort of "extremism" from our officials.

Militants in the NUT need to prepare for action in the coming term. The left has had successful conferences in the past. The problem is what happens after Conference.

Militants will have to work hard to get the Executive to carry out the wishes of Conference and then to win the membership to voting for action in the face of a massive anti-strike campaign by Labour, the bureaucracy and the press. This will require a coordinated effort amongst rank and file activists throughout the country. Clearly the opportunity to fight over class sizes and to defend state education is there.■

## Labour' education policy

## "Something borrowed, something blue"

**L**ABOUR USED to have an education policy that was mildly progressive.

Of course, Kinnock kept quiet about spending commitments in 1992. Nevertheless, we were promised the extension of comprehensive education, the restoration of control to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and the bringing of Grant Maintained Schools back into the state system.

The oratory of "Brompton" Blair has been markedly different. Truancy, he told an audience of right wing *Spectator* readers, is one of society's main ills and is the fault of parents. Truants and parents will have to watch out under his ominously named "School-Parent" contract.

Every "Old Labour" policy has been torn up. Blunkett, the shadow education minister, has become the spokesman for an education policy that concurs in virtually every detail with that of the Tories. Even the most right wing teachers' "union", the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), were staggered by Blunkett's "Fresh Start" proposals. Its leader, Pete Smith, said:

"There is a very considerable danger that Labour's answer to Conservative policy is more conservatism rather than a fresh approach."

What prompted this anger by a scab leader was Blunkett's announcement that the "Fresh Start" would mean closing down "failing" schools, sacking the teachers and reopening new schools with new staff. He

said:

"We must not allow failing schools to bring down the quality of much of our teaching profession and of our education service."

In 1992 Labour rightly pointed out that underfunding, Tory "reforms" and oversized classes were the real reasons why teachers got demoralised and schools failed. Now all such considerations go out the window. Taking the government's grotesque league tables of schools (which do not take account of the differences in funding, size or location of schools) as gospel, Blunkett has targeted 44 schools for closure, even before Labour is in government.

Blunkett's "Fresh Start" is a declaration of war on the teachers and the education system, not a policy for repairing the terrible damage done by the Tories. It goes hand in hand with a rejection of previous policies. Labour have announced that they intend to continue with the league tables and the hated national curriculum tests imposed by the Tories. They no longer intend to bring opted-out schools back under the control of Local Education Authorities.

They won't even begin to consider the elementary, progressive reform of introducing VAT on fees for private schools. When Blunkett suggested this he was quickly contradicted by Blair and the policy was ditched. It seems Labour is happy to see VAT on all sorts of things that workers are forced to pay for, but anxious not to

upset the tiny percentage of rich fee payers who send their precious offspring to public schools.

Labour has not yet published its full proposals on education. It will do so in June.

We needn't wait until then. The Blair/Blunkett policies are an absolute betrayal. They condemn our kids to a lousy future.

Teachers have been condemned by Labour as being louts, militants who do not care about children and bad at their job. They have been promised nothing, other than the sack. Every worker who looks to Labour as an alternative to John Major needs to challenge this sort of treachery now.

Teachers who strike should be supported. They are not damaging students and inconveniencing parents. Apart from the fact that thousands of teachers themselves are parents, with children in schools, any action they take now to save the schools from Tory wrecking tactics will benefit children in the future.

On the wider policy issues the fight in the unions and in the Labour Party constituencies must begin now to throw out Blair and Blunkett's policies and commit Labour to a fully comprehensive education system, the nationalisation of all private schools, the restoration of local democratic control over education, with student, teacher, parent control over the schools, and a massive injection of cash to help reduce class sizes, repair buildings and improve learning resources.■

## Witchhunt

## Who are the "ordinary" teachers?

**A**N "UGLY incident", "menacing", "loutish", carried out by a "rabble" who were "as bad as fascists". These were some of the colourful words used by the press to describe a small demonstration of teachers organised by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) at the NUT conference against David Blunkett, Labour's spokesman on education.

A protest by less than 50 teachers made it to the front pages of every newspaper and was broadcast on every television news programme. Last month over 25,000 teachers, students and parents marched through London protesting against education cuts. It barely got a mention in the media.

Why the difference? Simply, that the press smelled the chance of a witch-hunt.

What crime did the SWP demonstrators actually commit? They arrived at conference determined to highlight the appalling positions of "new Labour" on education. In particular Blunkett's recent announcement that under Labour failing schools would be shut and the teachers, whom he clearly holds responsible for all problems in the education system, would be sacked.

The SWP attempted to get an emergency motion onto the agenda, and they got people to sign a petition against Labour's policies. When Blunkett arrived, surrounded by the press, they attempted to talk to him. When he walked past, they chanted slogans. When he was ushered into a room, they stood outside and demonstrated. Big deal.

Yet it was this action that led to hysterical articles in the press and speeches of condemnation in the House of Commons. *The Daily Mail*, famous for its witch-hunts of teachers, proclaimed the demo was the "unacceptable face of the teaching profession". In the days following the demo the press was full

of rabid articles about the protest, clearly aimed at stoking up a reaction amongst management, governors and parents against the teachers involved.

Some clearly thought the demonstration was wrong simply because David Blunkett is blind. According to the patronising press, not being able to see means that you can't listen to anyone else's arguments. The truth is that Blunkett can listen, he just doesn't want to. Blunkett didn't come to Blackpool to hear the views of rank and file teachers. He spoke at a fringe meeting organised by the leadership which was strictly invitation only.

The role of the union leadership in this witch-hunt has been appalling. Union President John Bills made a speech apologising to Blunkett in which he virtually called on employers to sack the demonstrators:

"I wonder what their employing local authorities will think of them and what their governors will think of them... It is also open to any governing body to decide what to do with teachers who bring schools into disrepute."

Conference rightly rejected a motion calling for action against the demonstrators and Bills was heckled during his speech.

The only shame about the demo against Blunkett was that it would have been bigger and more effective if the SWP had coordinated with other forces in the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union. But this should not stop anyone from defending the SWP activists in the face of this witch-hunt.

If the NUT leadership attempt to kick anyone out of the union, a campaign in their defence, including a national lobby, must immediately be organised by the left. If any education authority or governing body attempt to discipline or sack demonstrators, we must respond with strike action.■



## Council elections

# Vote labour! – which one?

**Jan Lewis reports on the growing number of independent Labour candidates in the Cardiff local elections.**

This year's local elections in Wales, like Scotland, are for "shadow" authorities. This is in preparation for the new unitary authorities devised by the Tories which are due to be in operation from April 1996. The incoming shadow authorities are sharpening the fight for seats on the gravy train in some Labour strongholds.

In South Wales for example, Cardiff City Council and most of South Glamorgan County Council will be combining to form Cardiff County Council. This change means fewer seats and a number of long standing Labour councillors have found themselves without a safe seat on the new council.

Bill Herberts from Cardiff Central originally decided not to seek re-selection but then made a last minute decision to do so. However, he was not re-nominated and so suddenly decided to break with the Labour Party and stand "on his record" as an independent Labour candidate.

This is not the first time in recent years that Labour Party members and councillors have decided to stand as independents. A few years ago Bute Town "community leader" Betty Campbell won the traditionally held Labour seat.

Last year Margaret Cook failed to win

the Labour Party nomination for Splott ward and stood as Independent Labour. She managed to oust former Labour council leader, Lord Jack Brookes. This seemed to be the result of an anti-Jack Brookes vote rather than the reward for Margaret's strong political campaign, which was based on the claim that she "did a lot for charity" and was "Mac's wife". Mac himself worked at the local steel works and this year is also standing—so delivering to the Labour Party the slogan "Too many Cooks spoil Splott!" Margaret Cook played a role in witch-hunting Militant. Driving out some Labour Party members obviously wasn't enough for her, she drove herself out as well. How is the Labour Party dealing with this competition from the independents on the doorstep? Canvassers are being told to simply to say "we stand for the 'official' Labour Party". Little is said about what that actually means in terms of the politics that will affect peoples' lives and living standards.

Working-class people in Cardiff know from experience that Labour councils will do all the Tories dirty work, implementing cuts and attacking services. In Wales, Labour councillors tried to deflect the anger onto the unelected Welsh Office. But these same councillors have never supported calls to actively oppose the Tories by implementing a deficit budget.

Wales Militant Labour (WML) is standing a candidate in Cardiff's Llanrumney area. They are standing on a "no cuts" ticket but there has been no real campaign against cuts in the area. The Labour Party cannot defend the working class from the attacks of the bosses. It does not have the will, let alone the ability to do so. The danger is that as Labour fails to deliver the promised goods, disillusioned voters may be tempted by the independents. This time it may be the self-selected community leaders, next time the door may be open to others, such as the fascists of the British National Party, to cash in on the frustration and anger felt in the Labour heartlands. ■

## From Coventry Jim Taylor reports on Militant Labour candidate, Dave Nellist, who is standing against Labour

DAVE NELLIST is one of two candidates representing Militant Labour in this year's local elections in Coventry. For many on the left the urge to support him is irresistible, seeing him as the antidote to Tony Blair's "New Labour".

Nellist represented Coventry South East in Parliament from 1983 until he was deselected by Walworth Road in 1992. He was deselected because of he was a supporter of Militant. The Labour leadership imposed another candidate, even though Nellist had been chosen by constituency members to fight the election.

After de-selection he stood as an independent candidate. Workers Power argued that workers should support Nellist and vote against the official, imposed Labour Party candidate. At that time a vote for Nellist was a vote against the witch-hunting of Militant supporters and against the Kinnoch-led march to the right in the Labour Party.

Nellist polled over 11,000 votes in the election. This was a significant vote, just 1,000 less than the official, imposed Labour candidate.

In this year's local elections a vote for Nellist rather than the official Labour Party candidate would not have the same effect. We are opposed to supporting Nellist in the May local elections. Why?

Our opposition is not because of Dave's record. If elected to the council he would no doubt be a much better councillor than many standing for the Labour Party. Nellist is standing on an anti-cuts programme, again this is better than the position of the local Labour Party, who are carrying through the cuts.

However, the fact remains that there is no genuine anti-cuts campaign in existence in Coventry and so, in spite of his undoubted popularity in the city and his commitment to fight, Nellist's candidature remains one which avoids rather than advances the real issue of forcing the Labour Party to fight.

His candidature will not take forward the fight against cuts in a way guaranteed to win—one that mobilises rank and file trade unionists together with community organisations and local service consumers in demonstrations, strikes and occupations. ■

## What we say

**Vote Labour but organise to fight!**

LABOUR LOOKS set to repeat its Scottish local council triumph in England and Wales. But with Tony Blair praising Maggie Thatcher, David Blunkett attacking strikers and Labour sounding more and more like Tories, many activists are looking for an alternative. Some "independent" Labour candidates are just mavericks—victims of bureaucratic in-fighting who can be even further to the right than the "official candidates". Militant Labour however represents a consistently left-wing alternative.

What tactics should socialists adopt where "independent" left candidates stand?

First of all there is no objection in principle to a revolutionary socialist standing at the polls against Labour. Workers Power—if it had the resources and enough backing from the working class—would stand against Labour. We would do it to expose the rotten sham of capitalist democracy and mobilise workers for action outside the council chamber.

Even then however, the main task would be to forge fighting unity with workers who vote to put Labour into office and force Labour to fight. As long as Labour remains the main party of the working class, we have to operate the tactic of "critical support". Labour may be exposed to the activists and the left as a pro-capitalist party, but as the Clause Four constituency vote shows, many grassroots Labour activists do not see it that way. Nor do millions of working class voters. To blow away those illusions we have to put Labour in office and force them to fight.

Where left-wing candidates stand the main question is not their political programme. Militant claims to be revolutionary, but in fact its programme is, and always has been, a left reformist one. The main question is, do they command real mass support from a section of workers breaking, however half-heartedly or temporarily, from Labour? Do they represent a real struggle, in the sense of having organic links and active support from, say, a big strike or anti-cuts campaign?

If the answer to these questions is no, in general revolutionaries should not support these campaigns. Their politics are inadequate. And with minimal support we are not putting anybody's illusions to the test other than perhaps the delusions of grandeur of left-wing sects. ■



## Striking in the 1990's

**An NUT school rep explains the pros and cons of "going unofficial".**

A GROUP of teachers at school or at the local NUT association take a collective, democratic decision to strike. They have discussed the issue carefully. They chew over the other options, maybe even take other forms of action first.

For many reps getting this far involves a lot of work: meetings to arrange, people to get along, arguments to be had out, finally, everyone is agreed.

Then your *real* problems begin.

The first hurdle is to see whether you can get official support for the strike. This gets you at least a formal blessing from the NUT and some sort of protection from the law.

But it is increasingly difficult to get the national union behind you and the anti-trade union laws are so complex that, even if you do get their support, you spend weeks trying to get a legal ballot and then going through the whole balloting procedure.

First of all you have to have an up-to-date membership list. You need this because employers now have a right to know who is in the union and who you intend to ballot. Employers can attempt to stop the ballot if they consider your list is not accurate.

Having an up to date membership list is obviously a good idea, and may not sound too difficult when you have one workplace. But when you are balloting across an area involving a number of workplaces the problems quickly increase. You have to cope with endless changes in address, members who are not paid up and, worse of all, members who left five years ago but the national union computers still consider to be members! The membership list rule becomes a weapon for the bosses.

Nevertheless, winning the ballot can sometimes be the easiest thing to do.

Then you have to inform management again of the names of those coming out on strike and give them at least seven days notice of when you intend to strike.

This gives management plenty of time and the information to try to dissuade individuals from striking. They can put out their own propaganda against the strike and intimidate those committed to the action.

The only way to describe this whole process is to use an old phrase—a total palaver. So it is not surprising that strikers are increasingly forced to go unofficial.

But unofficial strikes bring with them their own problems.

Management may not have the same advance notice to prepare their tactics as they get with official strikes but they certainly play on the idea that you are "putting yourself at risk" by coming out unofficially.

Basically, you lose all rights and protection under employment law. When they found out about the plans for unofficial action at our school, management told us at every opportunity that we faced the sack—sometimes frantically chasing us around our workplace to remind us.

You expect that from the bosses. But you also have to cope with the NUT officers doing the same thing. Anyone seen to be supporting unofficial action risks being kicked out of the union! This leads to all sorts of clandestine meetings, carefully worded leaflets and the need to quickly form some sort of alternative organisation.

Yet there is something very refreshing about all this. The bureaucrats have no chance to sell you out because they are busy disowning the strike. Action is decided at rank and file meetings, which can elect an accountable leadership. You are freed from complexities of the law because you go totally illegal.

Being in such a vulnerable position can be a harrowing experience. Our school's NUT members felt intimidated, though they also felt very angry at management tactics.

But above all the experience underlined for all of us that our strength comes from ourselves—not from some multi-million pound headquarters in central London.

Being out on unofficial strike can mean that a union branch feels more united. And, as rank and file militants, we were more able to control our strike action and, therefore, were more committed to it.

The laws, of course, are there to scare strikers and undermine any action before it can even take place. Virtually everyone is covered by the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, which makes strikers liable to fines or prison if their strike endangers human life or, probably more serious for the bosses, endangers property.

Ambulance workers, firefighters and nurses are the obvious targets for such legislation but, in effect, teachers could be done for causing kids to be out of school and miners could be done for allowing pits to deteriorate.

So why don't the bosses use these laws all the time? Because they fear that doing so may make it worse for them.

Our only protection against summary dismissal for taking unofficial action, or being kicked out of a union for disobeying the bureaucrats, is collective strength.

When strikers taking official or unofficial action have been fined or imprisoned, a rapid response from other workers in the form of further strikes and demonstrations has often made the bosses back down. The bosses know that their laws are only effective when they can intimidate workers.

Which makes it all the more disgraceful that our union leaders have done so little to fight against the Tories anti-union laws. In fact they have become surrogate policemen for those laws.

We need to make sure that these laws which strengthen the bosses hand in a dispute are scrapped. In the meantime teachers have to learn what other workers have learned from experience—unofficial action can work. It is a legitimate answer to bureaucratic treason and Tory laws. And it can be a brilliant experience! ■

## Summer School 95

THIS YEAR's school takes place on the eve of the centenary of Frederick Engels' death. There is a core course devoted to his contribution to Marxism:

- Engels before Marxism
  - The revolutions of 1848
  - Systematising Marxism in the 1870s
  - Engels on women's oppression
  - Building the Second International
- In addition there is a choice of six seminar courses:
- Understanding World War Two
  - Plan and Market; is socialism possible?

- Imperialism and resistance in sub-Saharan Africa
  - Marxism and Religion
  - Ireland—roots of the conflict, prospects for the settlement
  - Introduction to Revolutionary Socialism
- A series of individual lectures will cover subjects as diverse as post-modernism, Marxism and the environment and the slave revolt in Haiti.
- There will be a creche, bar, bookstalls, sports.
- The school will run from 26 July to 30

July. It takes place in the West Midlands and the cost, which covers bed and breakfast, is £50 (waged), £30 (unwaged). Day rates are available.

For full details and to book your place write to:  
Workers Power Summer School, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX  
Make cheques payable to Workers Power and write "Summer School" on the back of them.

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX



**W**OMEN ARE now just as likely to join their trade union at work as men, making up 36% of the total membership, compared with 20% in 1961. The proportion would be higher except that millions of women work part time and in poorly organised sectors such as catering and shop work.

Despite the rise in the number of women in unions, men are still over-represented at all levels of leadership and officialdom.

In a *Labour Research* survey of the ten largest TUC affiliated unions, carried out in 1993, none of the unions had women represented on their national leadership bodies in proportion to their membership. There are over 70 unions affiliated to the TUC and only four of the general secretaries are women!

This imbalance flows from the obstacles women face in getting involved in the representative structures of the unions. A branch secretary of the shop workers' union, USDAW, explained:

"Despite a majority of women members, USDAW like a great many other trade unions, is still a male dominated organisation."

It is not enough to say that it is a democratic organisation and women have the same chance as men to get involved. The administration of the union is geared towards male convenience—evening meetings, often in licensed premises etc, while men do not have the same amount of domestic duties as a woman. Men have been guilty unwittingly of excluding women from the trade union world, through years of tradition and habit.

Women find it more difficult to get involved at all levels of the union for the same reasons women face obstacles getting decent jobs—they are oppressed by society.

There are many practical problems related to women's domestic responsibilities, particularly with regard to childcare. Those women who are active at branch official level, and above, are unlikely to have young children. Yet for men, having a young family does not seem to be as much of an obstacle to union activity. A delegate to a special TUC conference on positive action back in 1980 emphasised this point:

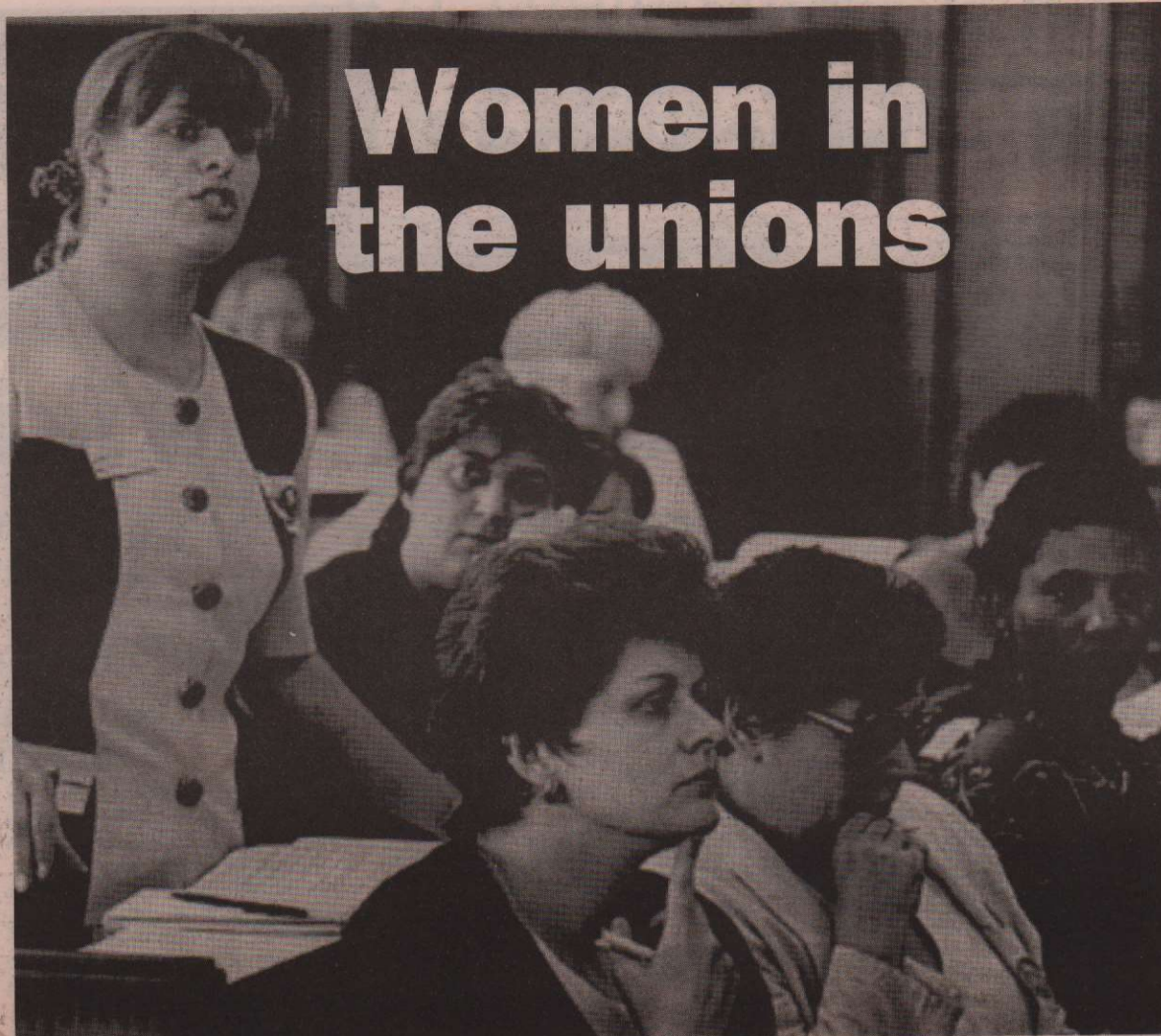
"When will our unions start telling our members to do their fair share of work at home, so that our members can get out to meetings?"

### Priority

It is not only these practical problems that impede women in the unions. Women are not brought up to consider their work or their political views to be their first priority—family and home still dominate the expectations of millions of women. One important effect of this is to make women feel less confident in themselves within the public domain. Women often don't think they are really up to the job, and to compound that problem they find it difficult to take part in meetings:

"Most women feel very inhibited when they have to take part in courses with men or stand up among men at branch meetings. I would like to see more union courses being run solely for women to try and help them gain more confidence and help them feel less inhibited in what can be a very male dominated union." (USDAW branch officer)

These general problems of women's participation do not mean that women are passive members. Struggles have helped overcome some of the elements of sexism and male exclusiveness that used to be the norm within unions. Many more women are taking up leading positions, especially at shop steward level.



Union regional women's conference

# Fighting to be heard

Women are almost half of the workforce. Three million are trade union members. Yet the trade unions are still dominated by men. What role can positive discrimination play? Clare Heath survey's women's influence in the union and looks at the "proportionality" debate in UNISON.

The exception is the prized positions of general secretaries and full time national officials where men seem to be protecting their privileges more staunchly. The most extreme example is the Health Visitors Association, where men are 0.5% of the membership and 25% of full time officials!

There is a growing recognition by the union leaders that they can ill-afford to ignore women workers. With trade union membership declining in the 1980s, the union leaders needed all the new recruits they could get.

One way of attracting more women was to increase the profile of women. So union leaders became more responsive to the demands for positive discrimination for women. Many unions, and the TUC,

adopted policies to increase women's participation. These included target setting, reserved seats, special women's conferences and women's officers.

The GMB adopted a system of reserved seats for women on the national executive in 1987. Prior to this there had been a maximum of one woman on the executive at any one time, and only three in its entire history.

### Officials

In 1980 women were 34% of the GMWU (forerunner of the GMB) members, 5% of full time national officials, 4% of the TUC delegation and 0% of the national executive. By 1993, the GMB had 38% women members, and women were

13% of full time officials, 33% of TUC delegates and 36% of the executive. The 1987 policy of reserving ten executive places for women had the effect of increasing women's election to the open seats as well—in addition to the 10 reserved places there are 15 other women on the executive.

The system of reserved places for women has had the effect of increasing women's representation more generally.

The TGWU does not have a system of reserved places on the executive; women make up 18% of the membership and only 5% of the executive and 4% of full time officials. TUC delegations from TGWU used to include 10 places reserved for women; the current policy is that the

number of women delegates must be at least in proportion to women's membership of the union—in 1993 women were 20% of TGWU TUC delegates.

The TUC general council in 1991 told affiliated unions that each union's delegation to the TUC should reflect the proportion of women in their membership by 1993. Only limited progress towards this target was made, with women making up 28% of delegates to the 1993 Congress (up from 20% in 1991). The council is now considering setting quotas.

Positive discrimination for women, and other oppressed sections of the working class, is necessary to overcome their current under-representation within the labour movement. Special rules to ensure a minimum number of women are elected, through reserved seats, will help women to have a voice. In addition, special committees, conferences and caucuses at all levels of the union, enable women to organise.

### Restrict

But we should oppose all attempts to restrict voting to particular groups in union elections (women can only vote for women's reserved places, blacks can only vote for black reserved places). This is a road to separatism in the unions.

Positive discrimination on its own, however, is no solution. Women officials are just as capable of selling out. They are under just the same pressures as their male counterparts in the bureaucracy. We have to organise at a rank and file level to prevent this.

We need to fight for rank and file control over all officials, so that they can be forced to represent the interests of all workers or be replaced.

We need to fight for meetings in work time, and facilities to encourage the participation of women with children or other dependents. Women, and other oppressed groups, need the right to caucus in the union and to be able to form women's sections. This is not to marginalise women, but another way of increasing participation through the activity of all women, not just the election of a few.

Democratic women's sections should have the right to put resolutions to conferences and committees at all levels of the union. We should link positive discrimination and leadership to this form of organisation. Women's conferences should elect a leadership which has the resources to organise meetings, publish material, propose action and they should have the right to attend meetings of other leadership bodies.

### Fighting

Most importantly we should raise the issue of a fighting union that takes up issues that are of relevance to women, low paid workers and part timers as the real way of increasing women's participation.

The increase in the number of women active in the unions is, above all, a result of women organising and taking action. From the equal pay strike at Ford Dagenham in 1968 through countless other equal pay and union recognition strikes up to today, women have shown the capacity to organise and fight for their own interests in the unions.

Using positive discrimination to build on that, but relying in the first place on rank and file self-organisation and action is the way forward. It was action that pressured both the male bureaucrats and the bosses to take women trade unionists seriously. It will be action that will genuinely open the unions to women workers. ■

**U**NISON'S MEMBERSHIP is predominantly female (68%), but like many other unions women are under-represented on the leadership—only 42% of the National Executive Committee (1993) and 20% of full time officials are women.

The three unions that merged to form Unison had different positions on positive discrimination and women's participation. Women were 79% of the membership of COHSE, 75% of NUPE and 55% of NALGO. Representation on the executives was (in 1991): 54% COHSE, 42% NUPE, 50% NALGO.

When it was established, Unison adopted a policy of aiming for "proportionality" of women on all leading bodies:

"Structures at all levels of Unison are required to aim to achieve proportionality for women and fair representation by the year 2000."

But "proportionality" within Unison has become a bureaucratic distortion of positive discrimination. Rather than ensuring that the oppressed members of the union are encouraged to stand, and en-

sureing a minimum level of representation, Unison is trying to make all delegations exactly match the make up of the union. A complex system of quotas at all levels has been established, meaning reserved seats not just for women, but for men as well. In a delegation of three people, for example, some branches will be instructed to elect one low paid woman, one other woman and one man. This would ensure that women could never be over-represented, as men have been for the past hundred years!

The guidelines on proportionality. Getting the balance right, include details of how increased representation is to be achieved, and mean that political contests for places do not always take place. Strict interpretation of the rules has led to some branches being disenfranchised because

they cannot achieve the right mix of people. And of course on the major area where women are under-represented—full time officials—the leadership is in much less of a hurry to implement the changes. At all other levels the changes are immediate, but on this one that may threaten the jobs of some overpaid male bureaucrats, the position is, "Unison has established a target to ensure women comprise 30–40% of senior management in the union by the end of the century!"

In contrast to strict proportionality we argue:

- That one third of the seats on the National Executive Committee, delegates to the TUC and all other representative bodies, be reserved for women. These seats be elected by all members.
- That women must have the right to

caucus at all levels of the union, and that such caucuses can report to that level of the union and put resolutions.

- That the national women's conference, made up of delegates from such caucuses, should elect a leadership which has the resources to organise meetings, publish material, propose action and has the right to attend meetings of other leadership bodies.
- That positive discrimination and reserving of one third of positions, should also apply to full time officers.

While positive discrimination is important in increasing women's participation in the union, the system of proportionality makes a mockery of the whole idea. It is a cover for the fact that Unison is doing very little to defend the interests of women members. Defending jobs and services,

fighting for decent pay, improving the lot of part timers or achieving better maternity and paternity rights—these issues are crucial ones for women members of Unison, but instead they are fobbed off with glossy pamphlets about proportionality.

Women need their voices to be heard. They also need a fighting union which can defend their jobs, conditions and services. Rank and file organisation, of women and men, is the only way to make sure both of these needs are met. ■

COHSE: Confederation of Health Service Employees  
GMB: General, Municipal and Boilermakers  
GMWU: General and Municipal Workers' Union  
NALGO: National Association of Local Government Officers  
NUPE: National Union of Public Employees  
TUC: Trades Union Congress  
USDAW: Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

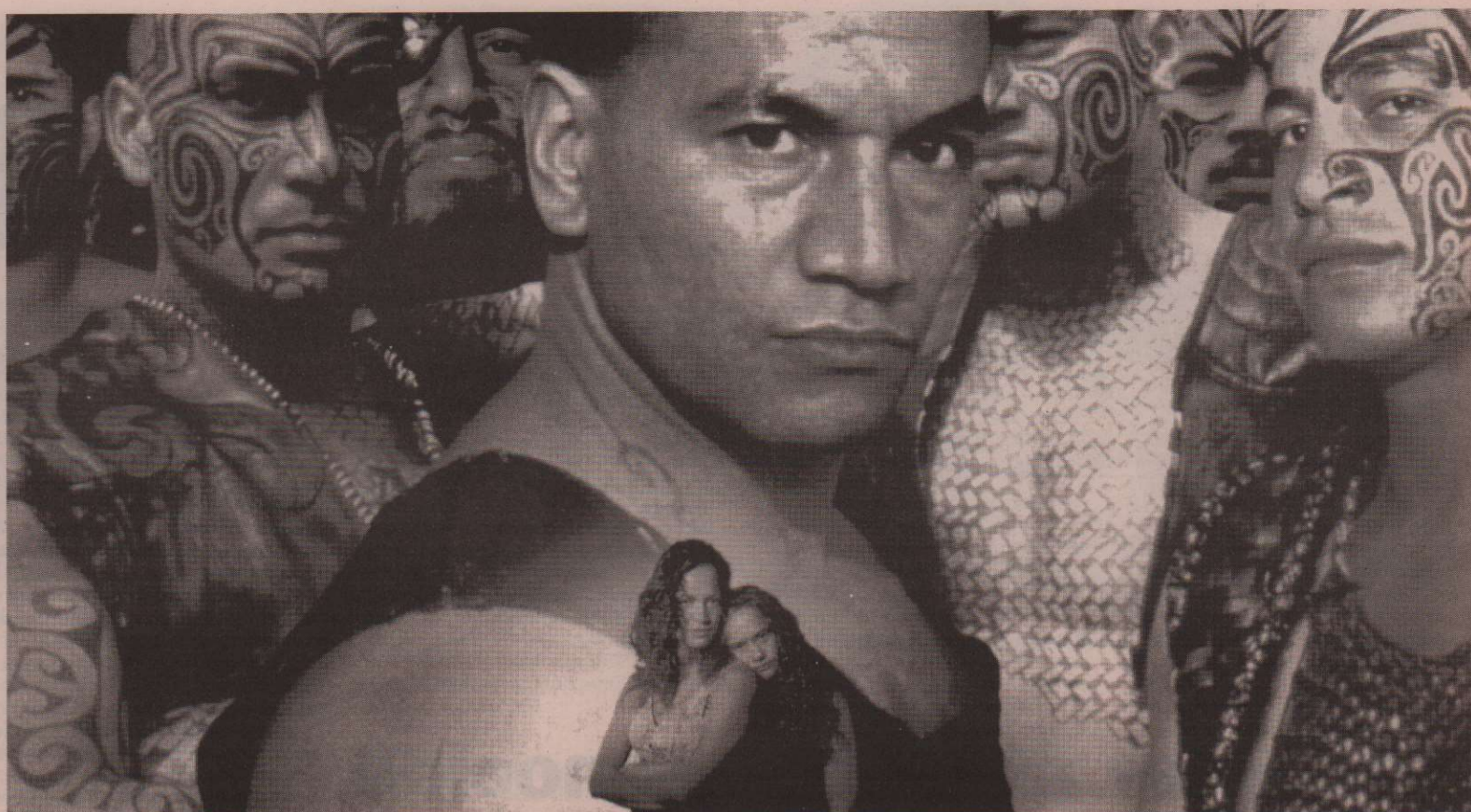
## UNISON

# Out of proportion



Pamphlet  
**Battle  
for  
Hyde  
Park**

**"The Battle for Hyde Park:  
ruffians, radicals and  
ravers, 1855-1994"**  
Available from Practical  
History, 121 Railton Road,  
London SE24.  
(free or donation).



**“**SMALL CROWDS indulged in stone throwing . . . some shop windows were broken . . . such trouble as occurred was attributed to the rowdy persons who are always ready to create disturbances on the slightest pretext.” (*The Times*)

Sounds like a report about the anti-Criminal Justice Bill demo in October 1994. In fact it's from October 1932 after a demonstration against unemployment. This pamphlet from Practical History covers the events surrounding several demonstrations that have taken place in Hyde Park over a period of 150 years.

The authors point to the fact that we have had to fight for the right to demonstrate:

"Some opponents of the CJB seem to believe that it represents a departure from traditional British liberties . . . A quick look at history scotches the myth of the tolerance of the British state."

*The Battle for Hyde Park* starts off with a demonstration in 1855 against new laws stopping working class people from doing anything on the Sabbath like shopping, drinking and other recreational activities. Meanwhile, the rich were allowed to do what they liked.

Karl Marx was so excited about the 1855 demo that he wrote,

"We were spectators from beginning to end and do not think we are exaggerating in saying that the English Revolution began yesterday in Hyde Park."

We are taught that we have had a democracy in Britain for hundreds of years. This is a lie. Women and working class men have had to fight to even get the chance to put an X on a ballot paper once every five years.

In 1866 the Reform League was demanding universal suffrage for all men. When it tried to hold a meeting in Hyde Park the government banned it. The crowd broke through police lines and held a meeting anyway. A radical newspaper of the day describes the victory:

"The people have triumphed . . . they have vindicated their right to meet, speak, resolve and exhort in Hyde Park. True they were not allowed to enter by the customary, the legal, and the constitutional way. But then, they found out there were other ways than the legal, the constitutional and customary way of effecting an entrance."

In 1914 when women were fighting for the right to vote the Suffragettes were banned from holding meetings in Hyde Park. They defied the police and marched in, even having a "water carnival" in the Serpentine before being arrested.

The 1932 demonstration by the unemployed was attended by thousands of workers. After mounted police charged, the workers "tore up railings and used them as weapons and barricades for the protection of their meetings." Now there's a lesson for all of us!

Practical History have put together a useful pamphlet for anyone who wants to understand the history of working class and oppressed people fighting back.

So next time you hear someone saying that we're lucky to live in a democracy tell them that it's not a question of luck but a question of struggle. ■

Film

**"Our people once  
were warriors"**

**This review of the New Zealand film "Once Were Warriors", just released in the UK, was published in *Workers Power*, the paper of our sister organisation in New Zealand (100, June/July 1994).**

**I**T IS difficult to watch the film of Allan Duff's novel without being moved. It is equally difficult to forget that Duff stands to the far right on most social issues in New Zealand, including racism.

Duff is a conservative and he supports the New Zealand National government's cutbacks and attacks on workers. His general position on Maori—the subject of this film—is that they should pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

So how does his work spawn a movie that everyone from wishy-washy liberals to the left have greeted as such a magnificent depiction of oppression in modern New Zealand?

Well, as a friend who saw the film commented—the best thing about it is that, aside from writing the novel, Duff had nothing to do with the production!

The film tells the story of a typical poor Maori family, living on the breadline, in a council house with more children than rooms to fit them in. There is an attempt to evoke the kind of poverty that many families live in, but the whole film has the feel of a music video—we could just as easily be in New York as South Auckland.

What is clear, and most powerfully presented, is the violence of this existence: the casual beatings in the pub, the brutal domestic violence, the traumatic rape scene.

And it is in the character of battered wife, Beth, that the film manages to transcend some of Duff's own right-wing stere-

otypes. Beth does the seemingly impossible for a battered wife. She breaks through her fear of her husband, Jake's, violence and stands up to him.

There is something very positive, very hopeful in this transition from victim to warrior—even if, for most working class women, financial necessity, and emotional dependency is often enough to force them to stay trapped in abusive relationships.

Duff's, and also ultimately the film's, solution to the problems of poverty and violence for Maori is a return to traditional ways. The film gives us a totally uncritical and utopian view of an idyllic, golden age of Maori. It could even imply that Maori

unemployment and crime are caused because people left the *marae* (tribal home) rather than because of institutionalised state racism and massive attacks on the working class.

Beth's break from her abusive relationship to return to her home *marae* offers no solution to the thousands of urban Maori. They have nowhere to go and no desire to return to some rural dreamtime.

There is also a very ambiguous, even contradictory, message running through the film. One of the major tensions between Beth and Jake is their origins in different ranks within traditional Maori society. Beth is from the *rangitira*, Jake is a slave. The option of returning to her original status, redeeming herself in the eyes of her family by leaving Jake, is one that is open to her because of her high rank.

Jake on the other hand was born a slave and has no chance of escape. This mixed message about rank contradicts the feminist reading of the strong woman overcoming diversity that would otherwise be the uncluttered message of the film. To some extent Beth is rescued not by her own efforts but by her high position within traditional society.

Yes, there are positive messages throughout the film—a sense of light at the end of the tunnel, hope and regained *mana*, a memory that "our people once were warriors"—but it is a confused message. A mixture of feminist proselytising

and rhetoric about traditional values is no solution to real, material poverty.

By making the issue one of cultural identity or value systems—the film seeks the solution there too. If you can change your "attitude" you can also change your life. This brings us back to Duff's "bootstraps" philosophy. Back in South Auckland, people don't have the choices that open up for Beth when she remembers what rank she was born into.

That doesn't mean the situation is hopeless. There is real way out of the cycle of poverty and violence which is the lot of people in the film.

The solution is in organising together to protect ourselves from domestic violence and the violence in the pubs and streets—solutions that are based on collective action. This is lacking between the women. In the film Beth's best friend is there for her emotionally, but there is an acceptance in these women that "you should keep your mouth shut and your legs open" if you want to avoid a beating. But any beating is unacceptable and women (and men) need to organise to defend one another from the violence in the home and on the streets.

Maori often suffer the worst of the crisis, have the highest rate of unemployment and the lowest standard of living. But the exploitation and oppression that come with capitalism are things that the whole of the working class has a stake in removing. ■

Film

**Defiant in their robes**

**P**riest, written by Jimmy McGovern of *Cracker* and *Brookside* fame, has predictably drawn the fury of the Catholic church down on him. That's commendation enough, perhaps. However, while the film will certainly tug a few heartstrings, it is a disappointingly empty exercise.

*Priest* follows the development of Father Greg, a young right-winger appointed to a Liverpool parish, where his fellow priest is a battle-scarred old socialist. Father Greg is soon put right on a few basic facts of life in the run-down inner city.

He learns to appreciate the resilience and spirit of the local working class. However, despite some (literal) sermonising about unemployment and homelessness, these issues have little to do with the main plot, which revolves around the fact that

John Underwood reviews **Priest** On general release

Greg is gay. Pained by his isolation, Greg picks up a man in a gay bar. What starts out as a one-night stand ends up splashed all over the local paper.

Greg is forced to choose between making amends and making a stand. Despite excellent acting Greg's gay relationship is less than convincing.

Moreover, homophobia is seen as primarily a problem created by the bigots of the church hierarchy.

Lacking any analysis of the source of the problem, the film predictably ends with a vain plea for tolerance. Indeed, Greg's

request for forgiveness, the uncertain fate of the lover and the ambiguous final image, may create the impression that he is, indeed, a sinner.

Intertwined with this storyline is a subplot in which a young girl confesses to Greg that her father is abusing her. Greg finds his faith useless in helping him determine what to do. He fails her. However, when Greg finally elects to take mass at the end of the film, it is the abused girl who, alone, relates to his pain and accepts communion from him. The final image of the two clinging together expresses the fundamentalist love-thy-neighbour ethic of the film.

Be warned therefore: despite its blasphemies and gay sex, this is a Christian film. Both priests remain defiantly in their robes to the end. The message is clear; the church is reformable. ■







Magara camp in Burundi, now deserted it was home to 40,000 refugees from Rwanda

## Rwanda

# One year after the genocide

**T**HE STENCH of rotting flesh still lingers in the streets of Kigali, the capital of the Central African republic of Rwanda.

The genocidal civil war, that started on 6 April 1994 and ended with the victory of the Tutsi-based Rwanda Patriotic Front/Army (RPF), claimed an estimated one million lives—one-sixth of the population.

The vast majority of those who died were Tutsi civilians or Hutus known to be sympathetic to the power-sharing Accord between the Hutu-chauvinist regime and the RPF. It was the result of a long prepared and calculated "final solution" to the "ethnic strife" in Rwanda.

Once the TV cameras left war-torn Rwanda last July, the western governments and their puppets in the media quietly forgot about this African republic which has no strategic or economic importance for world capitalism. Of the \$550 million worth of aid promised in the immediate aftermath of the war, only a tiny trickle has arrived.

The RPF estimate that £2.2 billion in aid is needed to simply rebuild Rwanda to what it was at the start of the carnage. Yet Britain has sent a paltry \$89 million. Even if the full £2.2 billion was available this would not end the misery of the Rwandan peasants and workers.

For the whole of the twentieth century, the imperialists have sucked Rwanda, and neighbouring Burundi, dry. During this period, the region was deliberately underdeveloped and the seeds of today's ethnic divisions were sown.

Belgium's colonial administrators ruled over the two feudal kingdoms which were divided between cattle-rearing overlords (Tutsi) and poor farmers (Hutu). All evidence suggests that these divisions were social rather than ethnic by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, both Tutsis and Hutus shared the same language (Kirundi), customs and religion.

In a classic example of divide and rule Belgium strengthened and distorted the division in favour of the minority Tutsi. Old customs of bonded labour were reinvented by the Europeans.

### Discrimination

As the Belgians' hold on Rwanda became fragile, so its discrimination against the Hutu majority increased. This led to mainly Hutu-based liberation struggles which finally resulted in independence in 1962. However, in Burundi the Tutsi elite held onto power, whilst a Hutu regime in Rwanda began a systematic policy of reverse discrimination.

The initial uprising of Hutu against the Tutsi elite in Rwanda in the late 1950s was justified, but the resulting oppression and periodic slaughter of ordinary Tutsi peasants and workers was a cover for the enrichment of a tiny Hutu ruling class.

Conversely, the one-party dictatorship in Burundi led by Micombero (1966-1977) and Bagaza (1977-1987) could only survive by monopolising armed power in the hands of the Tutsi elite and regular pogroms against the Hutu. In 1972 and 1993 the army murdered hundreds of thousands of Hutus.

The spiral of ethnic distrust and periodic slaughter can partially explain the fear that has driven large numbers of Hutu and Tutsi peasants into the arms of the racist

extremists. Besides the one million dead in Rwanda, an estimated 2.2 million, mainly Hutu, Rwandan refugees live in makeshift camps in neighbouring Tanzania, Zaire and Uganda. Some 55,000 refugees in Burundi are at present stuck on the closed Tanzanian border—prey to a marauding band of Tanzanian soldiers and the Tutsi militia, San Echech, led by ousted dictator Bagaza.

Does this carnage mean that black Africans cannot rule themselves, as racists like to assert? No!

First, the west, especially the French government, has been complicit in providing the arms and military training that have made genocide possible.

Secondly, since independence, the plight of the peasants in both Rwanda and Burundi has deteriorated considerably. Even before the present round of slaughter, both countries were among the ten poorest in the world; average income was just £5 a week.

The capital needed to develop the economy never came because, unlike Nigerian oil, for example, there are no raw materials to be found of any great worth in these two countries. The only source of foreign exchange was gained by destroying traditional agriculture and turning the land over to coffee production. When this market collapsed in the late 1980s the

population faced economic ruin.

Over 90% of the population live on the land: over 12 million peasants crowd hill-sides in a country the size of Wales. Grinding poverty and land hunger are the primary causes behind the willingness of some peasants to join or support the militias and also the inability of the RPF government to rebuild the country.

Without land reform—giving the land to those who till it without discrimination and encouraging small co-operatives to introduce modern farming methods—there can be no real progress in either of the two countries.

Yet land reform alone is not enough. In itself it would not reduce the country's dependence on the imperialist controlled coffee market.

Peasants would have to be encouraged to leave the land. The state would have to undertake a process of industrialisation and modernisation of the infrastructure so that these countries could begin to depend less on imports and gain some meaningful economic independence. Production on the land could then be turned to feeding a new urban population.

But the continued existence of private property in industry is incompatible with this type of development. Only a socialist revolution can make this perspective real. ■

**W**HILST THE globe has been covered by "nation states" during the twentieth century many of these have been chronically unstable. They have been vulnerable, from within, to sub-national claims which have fragmented them. They have clashed repeatedly with each other over territorial claims.

Nowhere is this clearer than in sub-Saharan Africa, a region which has been transformed by three distinct periods of contact with capitalism.

The earliest phase brought the slave trade. It has been estimated that 150 to 200 million Africans were "exported", largely to the plantations of the new world, or perished in Africa as a result of the slave trade.

This was followed by the epoch of "free trade" which signalled the wholesale seizure of the coastal regions of the continent and the systematic exploration of the interior. Lastly, this century has seen the colonisation of the entire continent and then its de-colonisation after 1945.

During all these three epochs Africa's human and natural resources have been plundered on a massive scale. This forced "contribution" to the development of capitalism in Europe and North America led to Africa's near exclusion from capitalist development itself, except in South Africa and in those regions with some extractive industry and cash crop agriculture.

The speed and thoroughness of the European conquest in the nineteenth century was due to the economic and military disparity between the European powers and

Africa. Some important states had developed before the European onslaught: Benin and Asante in the west, Great Zimbabwe in the south-east and Ethiopia in north-east Africa. Cities like Mali, Timbuktu and Kano had highly developed artisan production and a metal-working culture.

Powerful monarchies existed in Africa long before the Europeans arrived. In addition some tribal confederations were evolving into states. But by the time the Europeans arrived in force they had not transcended varieties of the so-called "Asiatic mode of production" and feudalism.

Their relative isolation from intercontinental trade left them economically and militarily vulnerable to plunder and conquest. The slave trade turned these states and tribal confederations against one another and tied their rulers to the European traders.

The success of England's South African settler colony after the discovery there of diamonds and gold, led the way to the "scramble for Africa" from 1885 to 1896. The entire sub-Saharan continent was colonised, apart from Ethiopia which succeeded in warding off Italy. The Europeans' new colonies rarely, if ever, coincided either with the boundaries of previous kingdoms or the territory of tribal confederations. They possessed little or no linguistic or ethnic

**B**Y THE year 2000 an estimated 300 million Africans will be living below subsistence levels in desperate poverty. Governments in the West tell us that this is a result of bad luck or bad judgement. The liberals stress drought and underdevelopment as the causes, and call for aid and charity. Right wingers blame Africa's internal wars, bad governments and corruption.

Government corruption does exist. Wars and drought have damaged the lives of millions. But what we never hear is that the Western governments bear the main responsibility for both the natural and human disasters that blight Africa.

Not only is Africa still living with the legacy of colonial plunder, partition and distorted economies. Over the last decade and a half it has also been subject to a "cure" which has worsened the poverty, starvation, internecine conflicts and dependence.

After independence the countries of sub-Saharan Africa faced enormous tasks of reconstruction. The political and social problems left by the departing colonial administrators were accompanied by huge economic ones.

A decade of growth gave the new governing elites some cause for optimism and helped win them support, or at least toleration, amongst the masses. By the mid-1970s this picture changed.

The collapse of commodity prices, especially key primary products, seriously hurt countries such as Zambia, heavily dependent on copper exports, and Ghana, dependent on its cocoa trade. These countries had been unable to break from the economic pattern established in the colonial period and still encouraged by the major imperialist nations—concentration on the export of commodities needed by the industrialised world.

### Collapse

This collapse of export earnings, combined with developments in the world economy associated with the rise and then fall of oil prices, created a spiralling debt problem. African economies stagnated. By the mid-1980s many African countries had a lower GDP per capita than before independence.

This debt crisis gave Western imperialism further leverage. The main institutions of the post war economic order established

**A year after the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda, there are fears that renewed fighting will break out there and in neighbouring Burundi.**  
**Jeremy Dewar and Lesley Day reveal a history of exploitation and broken promises by western governments as well as the failure of pro-capitalist independence leaders throughout sub-Saharan Africa to break the domination of imperialist interests.**

by US imperialism—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—gave their diagnosis on the ills of sub-Saharan Africa. There had been too much state intervention and high government spending and too many restrictions on trade and enterprise.

The international financial institutions (IFIs) set about prising open the African states. In exchange for loans from the World Bank, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were imposed on more than half of all African countries from the mid-1980s. These involved devaluing currencies, reducing budget deficits, removing internal and external trading controls as well as abandoning price fixing of basic goods. The next stage brought privatisation.

According to the World Bank this liberalisation should have led to growth, especially through increased exports and lower inflation. The transition would be painful, of course, but it would all be worth it in the end with sustainable growth and rising living standards. This pretty picture was a cruel mirage.

After a decade of Structural Adjustment,

# Making and break

homogeneity.

Rather, they reflected agreements struck between the European powers. They were just so many straight lines drawn on a map in Berlin in 1885 and at subsequent conferences.

Yet after 1945 these were to be the boundaries of the new nations of Africa. The colonial divisions drawn up in this way were only the beginning of the process of establishing the colonies. The traditional societies of Africa put up a heroic resistance to the white invaders. Momentary successes against the British, such as that of the Zulus at Isandhlwana or the Mahdi at Khartoum, were followed by larger and overwhelming defeats.

In most African colonies the big bourgeoisie was either absent or it was European. The large scale capitalist farmers were likewise Europeans, except in parts of West Africa where feudal relations were being gradually transformed into large scale capitalist land ownership.

There was a "native" merchant and commercial bourgeoisie and in some regions a layer of rich peasants. But for long after independence there was virtually no equivalent to the small industrial and large comprador bourgeoisie of India or China.

The first modern classes of Africa were the agrarian and mining proletariat, transport workers (dockers and railway workers) and the educated middle classes created by the imperialists to play a subordinate role in administering the colonies. Colonial, military and missionary schools and colleges turned out relatively large

numbers of teachers, preachers, lawyers, administrators, black NCO's, and eventually a black junior officer, caste.

These social classes were forced to absorb the idea of the European nation as the motor force of history. Naturally enough, they began to work towards a nationalism of their own.

They fashioned an ideology that provided a basis for the modernisation of their homelands and for mobilising a movement to win independence from the colonialists.

The Italian colonisation of Ethiopia in the 1930s awakened the intellectuals of the whole continent who had taken pride in the one independent black state that had hitherto thwarted colonialism.

Despite the many struggles after the First World War by the young workers' movements of the continent there was no serious political challenge by the working class to petit-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism. The extreme fragility of the African bourgeoisie and the political weakness of "communism" opened the way for a petit-bourgeois nationalism, with a non-class "socialistic" gloss.

The existence of the colonial states, with their economies oriented to the imperialist metropolis, with their elites speaking the colonial languages, with the influence of liberalism and reformist socialism from the "mother" countries, meant that no real African movement ever developed on the continent.

Despite the fact that these states' borders cut across ethno-linguistic groups, despite the fact that each had some form of

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# Africa led by debt

only a handful of countries even begin to approach the successes predicted. The average African has 10% less food to eat than 20 years ago. Last year's World Bank report on 29 African countries acknowledged that eleven of these countries had seen deteriorations in the economic situation and in living standards.

And the Bank's reports of its success stories have been challenged by critics. For instance Ghana, which has experienced growth, is still putting only 8% of GDP into local investment, cutting the possibility of diversification. Overall, 90% of sub-Saharan African export earnings come from commodity exports. In the decade to 1994, whole areas were de-industrialised as state supported industries wound down and private investment failed to materialise.

## Investment

Lack of investment is accompanied by unfavourable trading conditions. Many commodity prices remained depressed. Even when there is recovery (for instance the world hike in coffee prices) weaknesses in long term support and infrastructure pose a problem for producers.

In Uganda, smaller scale coffee producers who had been forced to abandon or curtail production in the years of depressed prices cannot now benefit from the rise as there is a three year gap between planting and the first crop.

Structural Adjustment has allowed a degree of recovery in agricultural production in some countries, for instance Nigeria and Tanzania. The IFIs claimed that their policies encourage expansion not only of primary products for export but also of food production for local consumption. The abolition of market boards allows prices to rise for producers—but this necessarily has an impact on both urban dwellers and the rural poor as consumers, in the absence of subsidies. And in many countries, the liberalisation has not brought the desired results.

Overall, African food production decreased by 5% in the decade 1984-94, a period when agricultural advances saw food production rise substantially in the rest of the world.

War and drought played a large part in this. But even these apparently "internal" factors, which allow critics to refer to the

poorest nations as hopeless "basket cases", are related to imperialism's stranglehold.

The effects of drought have been exacerbated by concentration on production for the market and over-use. Wars and ethnic rivalry emerge in circumstances of want and scarcity. Some originate in the original partition of Africa by the West. The divide and rule tactics of the old colonial regimes are exacerbated by imperialist backing of "friendly" regimes, including for decades the expansionist apartheid state of South Africa.

The final irony is that the SAPs have not solved the problem of debt. While total debts in sub-Saharan Africa started to fall slightly in the early 1990s, the cost of debt servicing in many Africa countries still runs at twice what can be earned in exports.

Sub-Saharan Africa paid out \$11.3 billion in debt servicing in 1993, four times as much as public spending on health and education. World recovery has reached a handful of better-off nations. But for the poorest there is little prospect of relief.

It is the urban and rural poor who have borne the brunt of economic failure and the SAPs.

Unemployment in Zimbabwe over the period of its SAP rose from 37% to 45%. Minimum wage provisions were lifted. Education spending in the 1980s in sub-Saharan Africa plummeted, with primary school enrolments actually falling on average from 80% to 69%. "User fees" have put clinics and hospitals out of reach for many—in the 1990-94 Zimbabwean SAP, health spending per capita fell by a third.

African women have borne the greatest burden as social provision has been cut and more families are forced back into dependence on small plots of land and increasingly casual and low paid occasional work.

## Decreased

The wages of urban workers in Zimbabwe in 1994 decreased 15% in real terms while the top government officials felt able to give themselves rises of three times the rate of inflation—on top of the fringe benefits they enjoy through corruption.

This has left higher schooling and university education ever more the preserve of the ruling class and governing elites. A whole layer of the lower middle class and urban workers who were looking forward to an improved standard of living have seen

their hopes dashed.

Is there a way out of this deadly cycle of debt, crisis and decay? Some on the African left, despairing of being cast as "victims", stress the need for African countries to tackle their own problems—to fight endemic corruption, to bolster legitimate projects and to stimulate manufacturing growth. This needs elements of state intervention to protect young industries, create a balanced wages and prices policy and encourage middle sized peasant agriculture.

In certain circumstances this neo-Keynesian prescription can bring some successes. But the circumstances that allowed growth for countries like South Korea and Singapore were specific and already the barriers are going up as imperialist rival blocs emerge.

## Giant

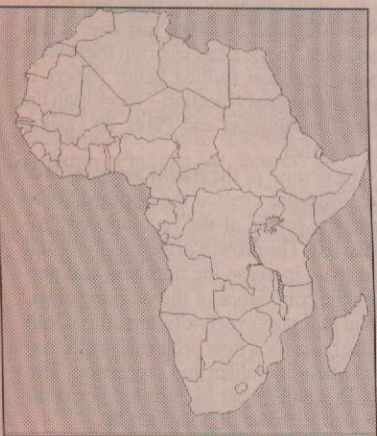
Others look to the new giant of black South Africa to lead the way. However, while peace and reform in the southern half of the continent will promote trade and growth, the question remains who will benefit? Already imperialist South Africa is setting the agenda, using the economic and trade organisation COMESA to fix favourable trade regulations to benefit its big monopolies—sending, for instance, Kenya's beer producers scurrying to demand tariff protection against South African breweries.

For many countries of sub-Saharan Africa there is little prospect of sustained recovery while imperialism keeps its grip. The real alternative lies neither in a return to the one-party bureaucratic regimes of the past, nor in the failed free-market experiments of the SAPs or the "compromises" of joint market and state regulation.

The socialist alternative relies on the ability of the African working class and rural toilers to overthrow the corrupt regimes and take industry and agriculture into its own hands.

This cannot be achieved without confronting imperialism itself. Even the cancellation of the debt, a simple demand for fair play, will not be countenanced by the imperialists except where it is in their own interests. Debt, the need for investment, the need for markets are all tools manipulated by imperialism to ensure its continued domination. The hope for the future lies in the destruction of that domination. ■

# ing nations



was necessary if they were not to provoke even more radical movements.

The 1960s saw the granting of independence to all but the white self-governing settler colonies. At one pole stood pro-imperialist dictators, little more than tools of the former colonialists; "Emperor" Bokassa, Houphouet Boigny, Mobutu, or Banda in Malawi.

At the other pole the necessity of a long anti-colonial struggle in the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau produced radical—indeed, revolutionary—nationalist movements and leaders such as Agostino Neto and Amílcar Cabral.

These movements gained valuable military support from Cuba and the Soviet Union but were ultimately conserved by this support.

The lessons of nation building and nationalism in the countries of Africa is clear. Movements for national independence whether of a "national" bourgeois or Bonapartist type, whether petit bourgeois or Stalinist have all proved incapable of achieving real independence against world capitalism in the twentieth century.

Whether they encompass a small or large economic area, they remain vulnerable economically. For all the ferocity with which national identity has been asserted it is constantly challenged by sub-national ethnic identities taken up by rival elites. Repression meted out in the name of the nationhood of the post-colonial states only inflames this and hastens the disintegration of the state.

The first generation of anti-imperialist fighters, those who were still distant from the levers of power, developed the utopian vision of pan-African unity. Utopian because it was to be on the basis of private property and the rule of capitalism.

In reality, whenever these nationalists came to power they were first and foremost concerned to hold on to it within the borders set by colonial development.

The sadly misnamed Organisation of African Unity proclaimed the inviolability of borders. In so doing it renounced the elementary democratic right in the whole sphere of national life; namely, the right to self determination of peoples, including the right to secede.

A trans-national unity is necessary to break the grip of imperialism. This is possible only on the basis of the democratic recognition of the right of nationalities to secede and the creation of regional, continental and finally a world federation. Only such federations will negate the tendency to subdivision and weakness at an economic level and abolish privileges at a political level.

No exploiting class can lead such a struggle. It requires the leadership of a class "which has no country" and which can recognise national rights whilst constructing a fundamentally international order.

That class is the working class. The only solution to the bloody carnage of imperialist and nationalist wars is a Socialist Federation of Africa as part of a socialist world. This is not a utopia but a burning necessity in the decades ahead. ■



## The A-Z of Marxism

is for

# Alienation

by Colin Lloyd

IT WAS a sunny day, so the foreman let us work

outside, in the yard. We sat there hammering small metal discs into shape over a die for about an hour. Then Terry, another young lad who was supposed to be showing me the ropes, announced: "I'm fed up."

I looked up. "Know what you do when you get fed up?" he said. I shook my head. "This", he said. And he stood up, bringing his hammer down with a crash onto the die, ruining the part he was working on and scattering hundreds more onto the floor.

Terry was definitely "alienated" from his work.

The idea of "alienation" is central to Marxism, as important as notions of "class society" or "exploitation". Most people think of it as a fancy word for being fed up or depressed, without being able to pin it down. But for Marxists it means something more precise.

At the same time it helps explain the real roots of many people's sense of drift and distance from most of their daily activities.

For thousands of years humans lived in a state of dependence on nature—even after we had separated ourselves off from other higher animals by being able to consciously use tools.

We were prisoners of nature. But as we developed we were able to overturn this condition of absolute dependence and—through our labour—control it and domesticate it. Production increased; our needs diversified.

But the more we emancipated ourselves from nature the more we fell into dependence on the social relations we developed to dominate nature. As production increased the surplus and other property became controlled and owned by an elite; class society had arrived.

As human society progressed a division of labour emerged. The more advanced the society, the more detailed the division of labour. But for Karl Marx, the founder of Marxism, the division of labour—absolutely necessary from the point of view of overcoming nature's limitations—was also the source of human alienation.

Over the centuries a majority of people have lost control over the products of their labour, the tools they use to produce things and the very process of working itself. Mental labour is separated from manual labour. Both become subordinated to machines. We work on parts of things instead of seeing the whole. In short, we have become "alienated" or estranged from the most essential part of our nature as humans—our labour.

Under capitalism alienation is at its most complete. We sell our labour to an employer. For the duration of that contract they can do with us what they will. What we produce during that time does not belong to us, but to the bosses.

We become a means to someone else's ends. Our labour dehumanises us. Many of us are, literally, the servants of machines. Others have their work dictated by bureaucratic office routines or by piece-work quotas.

No matter how much piped music and "teamwork" the bosses introduce to make us identify with the company and its products most workers don't really identify with the things they produce or the services they provide. Occasionally the result is sabotage, as described above, but in general the result is that we can't wait for the work-

day to end. We live our "real lives" at home and, as the

song says, "we don't like Mondays".

We are often most unhappy with what is most human about us. This is the basic form of oppression that class society imposes on us. The selling of our essential human function—labour—to another, Marx calls "the loss of self".

Many people will say that they only really feel "free" pursuing activities outside of work; in sex, eating, drinking, child-rearing, sports & hobbies.

This is not to say that everybody is happy with their sex lives, body shape or over-demanding kids. But it is a recognition that in these activities people are not involved in buying or selling their labour to someone else—they are free to spend their non-work time as they see fit and within the limits of their finances and social oppression. But as Marx notes this kind of freedom to act outside

of work is no answer since:

"... abstractly taken, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions".

The answer to alienation is to end

the social conditions that gave rise to it—class society. Class societies, including capitalism, were historically justified in that they raised the general level of material output and technological progress even at the cost of great social conflicts and general alienation. Now this is no longer true. Class society holds back further development and alienation is unnecessary.

Alienation will only be eradicated when the division of labour takes place freely and in a society where labour is not bought and sold, and not compulsory.

That is why only communism can liberate humanity.

Under communism labour is freed. Workers are the masters of the process of work and the products of their labour. In collective, voluntary organisations they will choose what priorities they want for dividing up the social product. They will democratically decide on which material needs should be fulfilled and how much of these to postpone or trade-off against increased leisure time.

Of course, nature will still impose relative restrictions on what we can achieve. But once we have secured the basic needs of all humanity then the solving of material problems ceases to be an absolute priority for us. We can free ourselves from the constant preoccupation with how to squeeze ever more out of a given moment.

Non-productive labour will become more and more important. We can prioritise the development of creative activities (crafts, drama, sports), of our rich individuality, of our relationships with each other. These things will be fused with work, altering it fundamentally. Material egoism and the aggressive competitive spirit will wither away as the social basis for it passes. Alienation will be overcome and we will find pleasure and fulfilment again in that which makes us human. ■

If you want to learn more, read;  
• Alex Callinicos  
*The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx* (chapters 3 & 4)  
• Paul Walton and Andrew Gamble  
*From Alienation to Surplus Value* (chapters 1 & 2).





# Bolivia

## End the state of seige!

IN THE early hours of 19 April the Bolivian government declared a major state of emergency for ninety days "in order to establish social and regional peace".

All constitutional rights are suspended. Trade unions and political parties are specifically forbidden from meeting. No more than three people are allowed to assemble and there is a curfew in force from midnight until 6am each day. Armed police and the army have been deployed on all street corners of the capital, La Paz. They control workplaces, schools and colleges.

Shortly before the state of emergency was announced, the army broke up a delegate meeting of the COB (Bolivia's trade union federation) in La Paz, arresting all those present. At the same time, in Copacabana on Lake Titicaca, the police arrested all those attending an international gathering of coca producers.

### Arrested

In all more than 1,000 trade union, student, peasant and political leaders have been arrested. They join other militants such as Vilma Plata and Gonzalo Sorucco, leaders of the La Paz Urban Teachers Union, who were jailed one month ago. They are being threatened with sentences of between four and fifteen years in jail.

Over three hundred of the newly arrested were sent to detention camps in the rainforest. Two hundred more have been sent to military garrisons near the frontier.

The police are reported to have arrested Guillermo Lora, leader of the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party). The POR only has a couple of hundred active members but POR militants lead the La Paz city teacher's union, one of the most militant in the public sector.

The government decided on this drastic

Hundreds of Bolivian trade unionists and political activists were rounded up and put in detention camps as the government reacted to a growing strike wave by declaring a state of emergency. Here we survey the reasons behind the crack down based on information supplied from our Bolivian LRCI section—**Poder Obrero.**

action in an attempt to crush four separate, but increasingly converging, struggles. Since early March over 70,000 urban and rural teachers have been on indefinite national strike against the privatisation of education, demanding more money for education and better wages.

Teachers earn less than £100 a month. The strike has caused them great hardship. As one teacher, Germán Busch, said: "We don't have a penny and our stomachs and those of our families are empty." The national teachers' strike attracted the support of the parents and student associations and also of the universities, community organisations and other unions.

All the important cities declared civic general strikes in support of the teachers. A spontaneous general strike launched by all the unions and peasant organisations led to daily mass demonstrations. Several times demonstrators successfully resisted state forces sent in to repress them.

The second element of the growing wave of struggles was the strike of the telecommunications (ENTEL) workers fighting the impending privatisation of their industry. By clamping down on the strikes the Government hopes to push through the necessary legislation.

### Secessionist

Thirdly, there is a growing secessionist movement within the poorer regions of Bolivia. In Tarija, a poor province on Bolivia's southern border with Argentina, the administration declared independence from La Paz in mid April. This was a protest against the lack of resources being channelled to them from the capital. There were strong signs that other regions were thinking of following suit.

Finally, the government is battling with the increasingly militant coca growers. The government hopes that the state of emergency will allow it to push through the eradication of the coca leaf production. The declaration allows the militarisation of the main cultivating regions like Chapare. The coca producers have organised some of the biggest anti-government protests of recent years and have resisted all attempts to force them to turn to other, less profitable, crops.

One of the few leaders of the COB to have escaped detention so far, Alberto

Vilar, declared from hiding that the state of emergency:

"is an operation mounted by the ministry in order to comply with the coca eradication agreements made between the USA and the La Paz government".

The present government of Sanchez de Lozada is determined to press ahead with the neo-liberal policies. He started the whole process when he was economics minister in 1985. Now, as President, he hopes to carry it through to a conclusion and line his own pockets in the process. Sanchez de Lozada is one of the richest men in the country. He is the owner of the

biggest mining company in Bolivia. He is using his power to sell the state-owned companies at knock down prices, sack the majority of workers, and thereby destroy the state mining company Comibol—with the aim of increasing his own private business interests and those of his friends.

Despite the declaration of the state of siege the COB elected a clandestine committee of resistance to continue the fight. The main leader of the coca producers, Evo Morales, also in hiding, has issued a call for the highways to be blocked and for a march of wives and children on La Paz from 24 April. The Bolivian workers' movement must reorganise its forces for renewed combat.

- End of the state of siege now!
- For the immediate and unconditional release of all political and trade union prisoners!
- Support the demands for better wages and against privatisation of education and state owned industries!
- Army and US advisors out of the coca growing regions!

From the  
press of  
the LRCI

## Peru

# Fujimori wins second term

ON 9 APRIL Alberto Fujimori was re-elected President of Peru with 65% of the vote. He didn't even need a second round.

The main coalition of opposition forces—Union for Peru—supported Pérez de Cuéllar. He polled just over 21%. Meanwhile, the traditional candidates of the pre-Fujimori era, Belmont, Toledo and United Left, got less than 10% between them. Fujimori's supporters were similarly successful in the elections for Congress.

Such an overwhelming victory is unusual in Latin American politics. After a few years in power civilian governments generally become discredited and lose most of their support. When Fujimori came to power in 1990 it looked as though he would go the same way.

Within weeks of winning he completely discarded his campaign promises and implemented a savage programme of economic measures slashing the living standards of the majority of the population. Hundreds of thousands have been thrown out of work in the last five years. He froze wages and in one month increased the prices of oil and other goods 35 times.

### Bonapartist

As our LRCI comrades in Poder Obrero (Peru)—PO(P)—wrote in a bulletin issued for the election:

"The Bonapartist regime of Fujimori has shown itself to be the most open defender of capitalism (assiduously applying the decrees of the IMF in a brutal manner). On the other hand, Fujimori has managed to achieve a certain degree of independence from the dominant classes (and their parties), operating through the armed forces and the state apparatus... Fujimori surrounded himself with a team of technocrats and ambitious businessmen."

So how did Fujimori keep his electoral support after five years of attacks on the masses?

First of all, he conquered hyper-inflation, something appreciated by the millions



Compulsory voting did not prevent mass abstentions

who live in a cash-based, informal street economy. Moreover, after a serious recession during which output collapsed by one-third, the economy has bounced back in the last two years, growing by 11% in 1994, mainly in fishing and building industries. For the 90% of the Peruvian population that do not have a stable job, Fujimori appeared as the man who could attract foreign capital and give them jobs.

Secondly, he went onto a final offensive against the guerrilla movements—Sendero Luminoso (SL) and the MRTA. He murdered political prisoners, created army tribunals and militarised the whole country. In 1993 he arrested Guzmán ("Chairman Gonzalo", the leader of the SL), Polay and the other main guerrilla leaders. Many people supported these actions as the SL had themselves targeted trade unionists, peasant and community leaders.

His dissolution of parliament and the judiciary in 1992 was also popular, it was

seen as part of a clearing-out of corruption. Fujimori's election speeches against the established parties and the "partidocracy" were very effective.

The main reason why he was able to get away with his programme is, as PO(P)'s election bulletin stated:

"... due to the great discredit in which all the political parties are held, as well as the Stalinist left (today more right-wing than ever), the trade union bureaucracy and the authoritarian guerrillas."

The traditional right (AP and PPC) was discredited after its disastrous period in office—1980-85. The bourgeois/social-democratic APRA and the United Left (IU) were identified with the 1985-90 populist regime which completely bankrupted the economy and produced one of the worst rounds of inflation and then recession in the whole world.

Of course, Fujimori used his position of power to influence the outcome of the elec-

tions. He left little to chance. In half the country the military had complete power. They used it to diminish the opposition's strength and to threaten the population with reprisals if they did not support Fujimori. The border war against Ecuador, some weeks before the elections, was also used as a way of closing down any electoral debate and "uniting" the country around the President. All the parties capitulated to the wave of chauvinism. The IU and the CGTP (trade union confederation) supported the reactionary war.

### Campaign

It is hardly surprising then that the left did badly in the elections. PO(P)'s bulletin argued for a campaign inside the workers' movement to get a Workers' United Front list that would be:

"chosen in permanent assemblies of the rank and file, with workers and popular deputies that would be mandated and revocable by the base organisations."

This failed to materialise. It was impossible to support any of the Presidential candidates but the PO(P) called for critical support "for the representative workers' and popular candidates inside the United Left (IU)" on the basis of a struggle against privatisations, for workers' control, for a minimum wage, against state of emergency and other key demands that could serve to revitalise the workers' movement.

The miserable vote for the IU (less than 0.6% in the Presidential and 2% in the Congress elections), shows that the masses have not forgotten its record. Nor do they find much different in the manifesto of the IU for the elections, with its support for many of the past privatisations and more repression of SL. It either mimics the present day Fujimori programme or is reminiscent of the failed policies of APRA's government of the mid 1980s.

The last elections were among the most de-politicised in the history of the country. No candidate was against all the

## SOLIDARITY ACTION!

Workers Power in Britain, like other sections of the LRCI, has initiated a solidarity campaign. The Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee is organising pickets of the Bolivian Embassy, a petition and delegations to the Embassy to demand the immediate and unconditional release of all political and trade union prisoners and an end to the state of emergency. The Committee is winning support from Latin American solidarity campaigns, trade unionists, left groups and Labour MPs. The first picket is being held on 26 April, at 6.30 pm outside the Bolivian Embassy, 106 Eaton Square, London SW1.

Send letters of protest to:

Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia. Send faxes to the Bolivian Embassy on 0171 235 1286

guia

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Chirac rally - but he can be stopped

## French elections

# How to stop the right

by Emile Gallet

**N**EVER BELIEVE the opinion polls. That's the lesson of the first round of the French Presidential elections that took place on 21 April.

For weeks the polls predicted that the right-wing Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, would run away with the election. Instead he came second, with only 20% of the vote. The Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin came top with just over 23%, despite putting forward a programme that was barely to the left of Tony Blair.

Most of the right-wing politicians—including most ministers—had lined up behind the current Prime Minister and "the market's favourite", Eduard Balladur. Balladur, hated by the youth because of his attempt to cut wages last year and because of his racist Interior Minister, Pasqua, came close behind Chirac following a vicious campaign between the two right-wing candidates.

The most worrying result was the vote for the fascist Le Pen, who got around 16%, an increase on his 14.4% in 1988. The other far-right—but non-fascist—candidate, Philippe De Villiers, got 5%. In total one voter in five voted for candidates whose main message was racist, anti-immigrant and demagogic answers to growing unemployment.

The key to the second round—to take place on 7 May—is held by the right wing voters. The right-wing candidates got 59% of the vote. Chirac remains odds-on favourite to beat Jospin but none of the other right-wing candidates votes can be taken for granted by Chirac.

Throughout the campaign, Chirac has refused to make any alliance with Le Pen and his ideas. It was Balladur who was prepared to make deals with Le Pen over tougher anti-immigrant measures in return for second round support. Le Pen has refused to call on his supporters to vote for Chirac in the second round.

The five million racists who voted for Le Pen may be reluctant to back Chirac unless he gives some hint that he will follow a more racist policy.

Also, the wounds inflicted on the traditional right-wing electorate by the combat between Chirac and Balladur may be sufficient to stop some Balladur's supporters voting for Chirac despite Balladur's plea to vote for Chirac on 7 May.

If Jospin benefits from these right-wing divisions and wins in the second round, he

would find himself faced with a massive problem. How can he govern?

The right wing has a 400-seat majority in parliament. If Jospin were to dissolve parliament, there is no way there would be a socialist majority. He would be obliged either to carry on "cohabiting" with a right-wing government or to create a coalition government with right-wing "centrists".

This has been Mitterrand's plan for many years, as part of his project of dissolving the Socialist Party as a workers' party.

On the left, the "new look" Communist Party candidate Robert Hue, got slightly less than 9%. This was better than the PCF's result in 1988, but it was disappointing compared to opinion poll projections.

Arlette Laguiller, the candidate of the left-wing organisation Lutte Ouvrière, got over 5% of the vote—over 1 million votes, and only half the score of the PCF!

In her previous four campaigns she had limited herself to abstract propaganda for socialism. This time her organisation took a step toward forward by presenting what

she called "An emergency plan for the workers"—open the books, 1500f wage raises for all workers, requisition of firms that sack workers at the same time as they make profits, and a massive programme of public works.

However, the real defect of this deliberately non-revolutionary campaign was a failure to use the elections to call workers to action. Instead of calling for workers to occupy their enterprises, Laguiller only called on the state to "requisition" them.

This passivity was even more striking on the key question of racism. This question was deliberately given very low priority in her campaign, and she persistently refused to call for any concrete action against Le Pen.

The reason for her increased vote was largely to do with the discredit of the PS and the failure of the PCF to offer any alternative. It was a protest vote, a warning shot to the main parties. The exit poll suggests that up to 20% of Arlette's voters will vote for Chirac on 7 May.

Despite Laguiller's calls, after the result of the first round, for the creation of a mass left-wing workers' party, the sectarianism of Lutte Ouvrière was clearly shown by their refusal to call for a vote for Jospin in the second round.

The biggest surprise of the campaign was the unprecedented strike wave that made itself felt in the speeches and propositions of all the candidates. The strikes—mainly over wages—took place in Renault, Michelin, and many enterprises in the public sector, in particular the railways and the metro. All the candidates, except Le Pen, refused to criticise the strikers.

Even Balladur, Prime Minister and the man responsible for the poor state of most workers' wages, and who had resolutely refused to allow wage increases, claimed that he "understood" the reasons for the strikes!

This gives an indication of the potential crisis awaiting the winner of the second round. The French bourgeois workers' parties have largely lost their mass support, the level of unionisation has dropped and yet the spontaneous combativity of the working class remains high. The struggles of youth, workers and blacks over the last two years have shown that the anti-working class programme proposed by both Chirac and Jospin will meet a wave of resistance whoever wins. ■



Le Pen

## A world to win

### Child labour in Pakistan

IQBAL MASIH's parents sold him into slavery for \$16 when he was only four years old. He spent the next six years in a small workshop in Pakistan, making carpets. He was tied to a machine for twelve hours a day.

Iqbal was one of ten million Pakistani children in the same condition. But at the age of 10, Iqbal broke free. With the help of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front, he campaigned against the terrible slavery he had endured.

Iqbal organised demonstrations of child labourers, protesting against the refusal of both the Pakistani and Indian governments to do anything to change the situation.

When he returned to Pakistan earlier this year, he received a number of death threats after the government decided to close down dozens of illegal workshops employing child labourers. "I'm not afraid of my boss," said Iqbal, "It's him who's afraid of me."

Just how afraid was shown on 16 April. Iqbal was out riding his bike with a couple of mates, like any 12 year old. The bosses' thugs shot him dead in an attempt to stop the movement for youth liberation.

Youth all over the world should take inspiration from Iqbal's short but heroic life. Despite the fact that the bosses cut him down, his struggle was a victory, because he fought back. ■

### French strike wave during election campaign

Throughout March and April the Presidential election campaign in France has had to compete for attention with a number of public sector strikes. Air Inter workers have held five strikes in the last six weeks in protest against 600 job losses the management want to push through as part of the merger with the European operations of its parent company, Air France. Renault car workers in several plants were on strike in March and early April for higher pay, and the Metro workers in Paris have held partial strikes in April.

The militancy of the French workers is only marred by the disunity between the several trade unions involved in each dispute. There are eleven unions in the Air Inter strikes. And the Metro action was spread over three separate days by three separate unions, none of them successfully closing the whole system down. Overcoming this disunity remains a key task for French trade unionists. ■

### Russian workers on the move

On 12 April an estimated 10 million workers across Russia went on a one-day warning strike to demand the prompt payment of £760 million in back wages, and for measures to reduce unemployment.

Official unemployment is 15% and could double by the end of the year. Some Russian workers have gone two years without pay. Alarmed by Yeltsin's suggestions that he might postpone elections, due in December of this year and next summer, the strike was also a warning to Yeltsin that he should abandon any such idea. The day of strikes was organised by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia and supported by the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions.

The Russian workers have taken many body-blows since the 1992 shock programme of Yeltsin—coming as it did after decades of atomisation and workers having been organised in prison house trade unions, tied to the old Stalinist state. The next task is to shake off illusions in Yeltsin and other "democratic" pro-capitalists. Unfortunately there are still Yeltsin supporters among the leaders of many trade unions. ■



# SCIENCE

by Jack Tully

## Cell death Programmed suicide?

**M**ARX, ENGELS, Lenin and Trotsky always took a great interest in contemporary developments in natural science. Science is, necessarily, materialist. It provides insights into the continuities and ruptures, the contradictions that are the dynamic of organic and inorganic matter. Science itself also develops unevenly, with text-book "received wisdom" being periodically turned upside down by new discoveries and theoretical advances.

Our understanding of human and animal development—from the production and fertilisation of an egg, through growth, birth, ageing and ultimately to death—has recently made one of these leaps.

Development requires growth through the multiplication of cells and their maturation into different forms of tissue. But for this process to go on in an orderly way, cells also have to die.

Over the last few years scientists have realised that this process is not passive, due simply to wear and tear, but involves cells actively "choosing" to die in a wave of "programmed cell death". This has been called "apoptosis".

Basic research into this phenomenon has led to a new understanding of some of the most important diseases—such as cancers, strokes and AIDS. These diseases occur when apoptosis goes wrong in one way or another.

In cancer apoptosis is abolished, cells do not commit suicide. You get unrestricted, pathological growth.

In AIDS, apoptosis is induced in cells that should not die, such as the lymphocytes which normally protect the body from infection, sending natural defense mechanisms haywire.

The most optimistic outcome of this research may therefore be the development of new treatments for previously incurable conditions.

So what is known about apoptosis?

When a cell dies through apoptosis, it gradually shrinks. Its contents are snipped up into ever smaller bits, and after about five hours it is swallowed up and digested by one of the body's specialised cells.

In contrast, when a cell is damaged and dies "accidentally", it swells up and dissolves, often producing inflammation around it and potential damage to other local cells.

How does a cell know when to self-destruct?

In fact, the question puts things one-sidedly. Each cell's fate is decided primarily by the cells around it.

It appears that all cells are ready to self destruct, but in general they are prevented from doing so by continuous or regular signals from neighbouring cells—a process that guarantees both stability and change.

By carrying on producing the signals, a balance of different types of cells in a given tissue is maintained. That's why your liver remains your liver and doesn't start turning into something else.

For development to take place, however, this balance has to change.

At certain moments the surrounding cells stop providing their signals, and a cell dies, enabling other cells to grow, or helping to give shape to a future organ. These moments are defined genetically—they form part of our "programming".

When does this kind of "social control" of cell survival break down? When the body is attacked by viruses, by dangerous chemicals, or by radiation, or when a cell is isolated from its neighbours.

At the moment, very little is known about the chemical signals provided by neighbouring cells to ensure continued life. Attention has instead been concentrated on a problem that is easier to study—what happens once a healthy cell is committed to self destruction?

This is all the more important because, very often, only one cell out of a group will die, although the chemical signals saying "die!" will be present throughout the group. The other cells protect themselves by production of substances within which suppress messages sent by their neighbours—until the fateful moment arrives.

In a small worm called *C. elegans*, much studied by developmental biologists, two genes called *ced-3* and *ced-4* are required for apoptosis to take place. If either of these genes are turned off, cells that normally die during development survive.

A third gene, *ced-9*, protects cells that should survive from undergoing programmed cell death. This gene is very similar to a human gene called *Bcl-2*. If you put the human *Bcl-2* gene into a worm that is deficient in its own *ced-9* gene, development proceeds more or less as normal.

This and other research suggests that apoptosis is an identical process in all multi-cellular organisms, from worms right up to humans. Evolution has done very little to change this essential and ancient process, which has been around for about 500 million years.

And that is probably why some diseases that involve apoptosis, like cancer, have also been around for the same amount of time.

For the moment, studies of disease mechanisms in AIDS have not been able to show a direct link with genes involved in the control of apoptosis. However, research on the link between apoptosis and lupus, arthritis, psoriasis and certain types of diabetes are only just beginning.

It seems very likely that this recently discovered phenomenon will hold the key to defeating some of the most dangerous and debilitating diseases known to mankind.

Scientific advances like this are often made through laborious research into areas that seem rather off-the-wall to many non-scientists.

People who spend their time observing, breeding, chopping up and describing small worms appear a million miles away from real life. But without this work, and adequate state funding for it, there would be no major breakthroughs in medicine and associated areas. ■

Newt Gingrich



USA

## Newt's "whitelash!"

by G.R. McColl

**N**EWTON GINGRICH, Republican Party Speaker of the US House of Representatives, has spent his first one hundred pushing through some of the most reactionary legislation ever seen in the USA.

Although Newt's legislative programme, "Contract with America", sailed through the lower House of the US Congress, even Republican leaders in the Senate are anxious that it may be too open a declaration of class war. Keen as he is to stoke up the so-called "whitelash", Bob Dole, veteran Senate leader and front-running Republican presidential hopeful, is very anxious.

Dole and the older Republican generation are treading warily, in part because they do not want to give Bill Clinton the chance to pose as a last line of defence against right-wing ideological zeal before the 1996 Presidential contest. They also suspect that moving too far and too fast could unleash a torrent of pent-up rage among millions of exploited and oppressed Americans.

A key clause of the Republican "Contract" is a revival of the Reagan era's efforts to redistribute income—upwards! In Newtpeak, this becomes the American Dream Restoration Act, which features some £120 billion in tax cuts for the rich, large sections of the middle class and better paid workers, especially those with children.

Beware, however, if you are a single mother still in receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the principal form of welfare benefit in the US. The Republicans' Personal Responsibility Act seeks to slash total welfare spending and cut all benefits to unwed teenage mothers.

Despite the Republicans' obsession with axing the federal budget deficit (which, ironically, ballooned under Reagan's presidency), they are committed to finding more dollars for the Pentagon's next generation of weaponry and to build more prisons. The "tough on crime" Taking Back Our Streets Act blocks avenues of appeal against death sentences—a gruesome move to relieve prison overcrowding.

Among the provisions of the Personal Responsibility Act are other measures to reduce the "surplus population" through axing cash benefits to alcoholics, drug addicts, many of the physically disabled and non-US citizens.

Of course, most of the key elements of the Gingrich offensive have yet to reach the statute book and some will certainly

be diluted in the Senate, but that hasn't deterred Newt from pursuing the second stage of the programme for the USA's "moral rearmament".

The immediate targets include gays in the military, and some form of compulsory Christian worship to be introduced into state schools—especially significant in a nation supposedly founded on the constitutional separation of church and state. Meanwhile, the Republican leaderships of both Houses of Congress are concentrating their rhetorical fire on "affirmative

**Measures to reduce the "surplus population" include axing cash benefits to alcoholics, drug addicts, many of the disabled and non-US citizens.**

action" programmes.

These anti-discrimination measures date from the Johnson and Nixon administrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s and have helped open professional jobs and higher educational opportunities to women and ethnic minorities. At a federal level, Clinton has already declared open season on affirmative action with his promise of a "review", while in California the misnamed Civil Rights Initiative seeks to "end affirmative action as we know it".

Pete Wilson, the Republican California governor helped introduce the notorious Proposition 187. This denies all "illegal" immigrants and their children access to medical care and education. Wilson says that white, male, "middle America" has been the victim of "reverse discrimination".

There are risks, however, in pursuing a programme to turn the clock back three decades. Already in California, the threat to scrap preferential admission policies has sparked large protests on long-quiet state college campuses.

Another more immediate threat to the jobs, living standards and even lives of millions of poor people comes in the form of state governments seeking to implement local versions of Gingrich's Contract.

In New York State the recently elected

Republican governor, George Pataki, unveiled a savage assault on the state Medicaid programme—the main form of medical funding for impoverished New Yorkers who have no private health care insurance.

Pataki's attack, part of a £2.5 billion cuts package, would decimate an already hopelessly inadequate system of health care provision and cost upwards of 50,000 healthworkers' jobs. But the governor's war on Medicaid has galvanised the most dramatic opposition yet to the current of-fense.

Two major unions, representing both private and public sector healthworkers, have combined to launch an emergency coalition, which attracted 30,000 people on to the streets of New York City for a militant weekday demonstration. While the bosses' media gave the march no coverage whatsoever, the unions responded with their own *Weekly News*, distributed citywide after the demonstration.

Coming in the wake of spirited opposition to state welfare cuts packages in Massachusetts and Virginia, the New York campaign is hopeful, but suffers from serious political weaknesses.

The leadership of the largest union involved (the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) is content to build nothing more than a letter-writing and lobbying campaign. It hopes that this will not alienate the support given to the campaign by religious leaders ranging from Jesse Jackson and the Reverend Al Sharpton through to the rabid anti-abortionist, Cardinal John O'Connor.

The campaign against health care cuts is forging links with similar movements by students and staff against tuition fee rises and course cuts in state sector higher education, and with opposition to the gutting of public transport in New York. But there is no talk amongst the leaders of the sort of strike action which will be necessary to deter Pataki's confident regime from implementing the Medicaid and other welfare cuts.

The time is ripe in New York City and elsewhere to fight for the creation of delegate bodies, with recallable representatives from both the private and public sector unions and community user groups. Rank and file militants in the unions need to give a lead in building such fighting organisations. They need to hammer out a strategy for effective resistance to this nationally co-ordinated ruling class offensive. ■

## Oklahoma bombing

**T**HE US government was whipping up racist hysteria about Arab terrorists even before the fires were out at the bombed federal government offices in Oklahoma.

And then the truth intruded. The slaughter in Oklahoma of nearly two hundred people (the death count is rising as we go to press) was the work of right wing, white supremacist fanatics.

They saw themselves as striking a blow for the white race against a supposedly pro-black federal government.

The Michigan Militia denies planting the bomb, but it seems certain that its members were responsible. This outfit claims that it was set up to prevent federal government encroachments, supposedly embodied in the siege of Waco by FBI agents two years ago.

In fact the Michigan Militia is just one of hundreds of fanatical right wing private armies that are dotted all over the US,



The face of a bomber

particularly in the midwest and the southern states. They are either overtly fascist, or maintain close links with the fascist parties in the US. They train for war—war on blacks, communists, latinos, gays, trade unionists, women who have abortions or doctors who carry them out, and pinko liberals like... Clinton.

The Oklahoma bombing shows what these crazies are capable of. But it would be entirely wrong to go along with Clinton's attempt to tighten up the gun laws as a means of curbing this menace. The US people have the right to bear firearms. That is a democratic right and it should be defended.

The problem is not the gun, but who pulls the trigger. This outrage is in the tradition of Ku Klux Klan lynchings and burnings of blacks and company gun-thug shootings of strikers. It shows that the fascists and the far right are willing to kill all those they regard as enemies of the "white race".

The working class, black and white, need guns to deal with these vermin. They need to organise workers' defence squads, with guns pointed at the fascists and the likes of the Michigan Militia, not help Clinton take a step towards abolishing the right to bear arms. ■



# Turkish invasion

# Defend the Kurds!

*Philippe Martin reports on the Turkish attempt to destroy the Kurdish people*

**T**HE TURKISH army launched "Operation Steel"—35,000 special troops sent into Kurdish areas, backed by artillery and air power—on 20 March. Their mission was to "cleanse" the areas where the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) are based.

At the heart of the Turkish government's policy is the desire to systematically destroy a national identity, to carry out a genocide against a people.

Around 40,000 Kurds, originally from Turkey Kurdistan, now live in the north of Iraq. They have been hounded out of their villages in Turkey, accused of "collaboration with the PKK separatists". All reports coming out of the region tell of massive bombardments of civilians, of a wave of injured seeking help in the Red Cross and Red Crescent camps.

For Turkey, the stakes are high. Through its intervention in northern Iraq, Turkey intends to prove its usefulness as imperialism's watchdog in the region. It aims to set up a controlled zone in northern Iraq, like the zone created by Israel in southern Lebanon in 1982, in order to stop the Kurdish resistance from retreating to this region and using it to prepare further guerrilla operations.

Profoundly shaken by a recent upsurge in struggle, and notably by the recent mass riots in Istanbul and Ankara, the Turkish government has to try and balance two opposing pressures.

On the one hand, it has to give "democratic" guarantees to the European Union (EU), as part of its programmed integration into the EU. That is why the government is attempting to entice the reformists who lead the union federations—Türks and DISK—into a coalition, thus giving the impression of greater "democratisation" of the regime.

On the other hand Prime Minister Ciller has to take account of the army's desire for strong action against the Kurdish "separatists and bandits". Hence her unconditional support for Operation Steel. If it fails, the army may seek to repeat its 1980 coup in order to crush the labour movement and the Kurdish national movement.

The US and EU have supported the intervention, despite their timid questioning of the fate of civilians in the region. The USA has given its diplomatic blessing,

whilst France and Germany provided the arms and transport (helicopters and armoured vehicles). To make it clear which side he is on, the German Interior Minister has recently allowed Kurdish political refugees to be deported to Turkey.

Since the end of the Gulf War, northern Iraq has been a Kurdish autonomous region. Initially supported by the imperialists, in the hope of weakening Saddam Hussein, this autonomy is entirely fictitious. The first measure undertaken by the new "autonomous" Kurdish parliament in the region was to disarm the popular militias that had organised the fightback against the Iraqi army following the mass exodus of 1991.

The only forces to have benefited from

"autonomy" are the Kurdish semi-feudal parties which have been able to reinforce their political hegemony over other resistance forces. Turkey's General Erim has even declared that the government has the support of certain Kurdish clan movements, such as Barzani's Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan (PDK-I), in setting up a "system of protection". It is thus hardly surprising that the PDK-I supports the Turkish generals in their struggle against the PKK. For four years, the PKK has been in political competition with these old clan formations.

In the face of the massive attack the PKK has tried to minimise its losses. Its political strategy, however, is turning ever more to the right. In 1992 its leader, A. Ocalan,

claimed that all the PKK wanted was autonomy for Turkish Kurdistan, with the possibility of a federation with Turkey.

The PKK does not call for workers' revolution in Turkey, despite the fact that only this would lead to a progressive federation with an independent Kurdistan. The PKK has made unjustifiable concessions to religion. It now considers that Islam is part of the Kurdish "character" and is a fundamental part of the fight for national liberation. The PKK's nationalist point of view has been reinforced and even its rhetorical references to "socialism" have disappeared.

The PKK's misplaced confidence in its "anti-imperialist allies" (Syria, Iran and Iraq) has led to its current weakened posi-

tion. Yesterday the PKK was obliged to evacuate its training camps in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley in Lebanon. Today it has to withdraw from its camps in Iraq. The PKK is thus becoming increasingly reliant on its alliance with Iran, the same clerical regime that butchered the Kurds in 1979-80.

Although it remains the main Kurdish political party, the PKK is beginning to fragment. The Kurdish masses are increasingly distrustful of its religious turn and many workers, women and youth prefer to support the workers' organisations of Turkey and Kurdistan.

Kawa and other Kurdish groups organised a massive demonstration in the town of Süleymaniye in order to protest against the Turkish invasion. In the town of Zaho, armed clashes have taken place between Kawa and both Kurdish feudal groups and the Turkish military. The recent formation in Kurdistan of the Socialist Unity Platform of Kurdistan (KSBP), set up by Kawa and four other Kurdish left organisations, could represent an alternative to the narrow nationalism of the PKK. It at least aims for a united Kurdistan and the unity of the Turkish labour movement. In the light of the invasion the immediate basis for such unity should be:

- Turkish troops out of Kurdistan! Form workers' and peasants' militias against the attacks of the Turkish army!
- Equal social and cultural rights for the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria! Down with chauvinism, down with racism!
- For the right of Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan to self-determination!
- No to the feudal landowners! Land reform under workers' and peasants' control!
- No to capitalist exploitation! Workers' control in the factories, refineries, building sites.
- Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies: enemies of the workers! For the unity of the working class of Turkey and of Kurdistan!

We must build solidarity with the Kurdish resistance, and fight within Europe to demand the opening of all EU borders to Kurdish refugees, and no more deportations of Kurdish and Turkish workers from the EU.■



Turkish army and Iraqi Kurds collaborate to crush PKK

## Palestine

# Arafat against the people

**"M**ORE THAN 50% of Arafat's appointed ministers to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) are land-owners or employers from the territories and he is banking on their investments and donations... This class cannot be alienated."

These words, spoken by Palestine trade union activist Hassan Barghuthi, perfectly summarise the class basis and bias of the PLO leader's micro-fiefdom in the Gaza Strip.

Yasser Arafat has hand picked local bosses to administer Gaza under his rule and is refusing to hold elections. Elections to the PNA should have been held eight months ago.

Meanwhile Arafat has managed—with money from the US and Arab states—to build up a 17,500 strong security service to repress dissent, shoot protesters and settle old factional scores. Last month Arafat put his new "state security courts" to work. They are not connected to any civil judicial system; the judges are military officers appointed by Arafat and are allowed to hear secret evidence against defendants. Five Hamas militants have been sentenced to long prison terms so far.

The reason for Arafat's actions is not hard to fathom. The Oslo agreements of 1993, and the meeting later that year between Arafat, Clinton and Israel's Rabin, signified the end of the PLO's attempt to fight for a Palestine in the whole of the territory stolen from them in 1948 by Zionists. Arafat "recognised" Israel and in return Israel agreed to meaningless autonomy in a patch of coastal desert (Gaza) and the city of Jericho on the West Bank. Rabin promised further "land for peace" talks in future and to redeploy Israeli troops at some point in the future.

In return, Arafat had to promise to crush all dissent inside Gaza; specifically, all Palestinian forces using Gaza to carry on armed actions against the Israeli settlers or army. Since Arafat's PNA gained some control, security for the Israeli settlers has been stepped up inside the West Bank and, against the Oslo accords, new settlements are still being built.

Arafat has alienated a large proportion, possibly a majority, of Palestinians in the diaspora with the Oslo accords which accepted that they had no right to return. He has also provoked key leaders in the PLO still residing in Tunis into opposition to

the Oslo process because of the obstructions that Israel has placed in the path of meaningful autonomy as well as the outright corruption among Arafat's bureaucratic machine. Against this Arafat is using patronage within the PNA to build up a base inside Gaza and Jericho, drawing in the old landed Palestinian elite.

Meanwhile, the mass of camp dwellers see no improvement—no jobs, no investment, no schools. Just more UNICEF hand-outs and more border fences, barbed wire, curfews and sealed borders. This has fuelled anger and support for oppositionists in the PLO has grown and even more so for Hamas which rejected the Oslo agreements from the outset.

The opposition inside the PLO remains weak. The PLO National Council has not met since Oslo and while the opposition has the numbers to convene it, no Arab country will host it against Arafat's wishes. The PLO Executive berate Arafat for his overriding concern with Israeli security needs and his open corruption. But they will not break with him quite simply because they have no alternative political perspective.

PLO leaders like Faruq Qaddumi have

accepted the idea of coming to terms with Israel and have abandoned the struggle for an independent state of Palestine. They reject the armed struggle and its only realistic progressive alternative—mass working class, poor peasant and camp dwellers' action.

Opposition forces outside the PLO have taken a number of initiatives this year. In January the Movement for Palestinian Democracy was formed in Gaza. It does not denounce the Oslo agreements in principle but seeks to oppose the autocratic practices of Arafat and the PNA. More representative is the initiative to form a "Palestinian Assembly" in late February, by the former mayor of the West Bank town of Nablus. It seeks to unite all forces in Palestine, irrespective of religion or ideology who are opposed to the Oslo accords. The largest secular anti-PLO groups (the PFLP and the DFLP), as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have agreed to join it.

Any assembly of this kind will face persistent repression from Arafat and the Israelis. Arafat has set an 11 May deadline for Hamas to hand over their weapons to the PNA or face more arrests and attacks. Given the disillusionment that exists with

the peace without justice process in Gaza, a civil war is a real possibility this year. Major concessions by Israel and/or a further massive repression by Arafat against the opposition would be needed to forestall such a development.

All progressive opposition forces must unite in the next period around the following demands:

- Scrap the Oslo accords, a betrayal of the Palestinian's right to self-determination! For the right of return of all Palestinians in the diaspora! Settlers out of the West Bank!
- For a real permanent Palestinian Assembly, not just of heads of opposition groups, made up of Palestinian delegates from the camps and the towns of West Bank, Gaza and Israel!
- No surrendering of weapons to the PNA, an embryo of a bourgeois state in Palestine! Build accountable mass workers' and camp dwellers' militias to fight off the PNA and Israeli police and army!
- Smash the Zionist state of Israel! For a workers' (Arab and Jewish) republic of all Palestine in a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.■



THE UTOPIAN socialists, like bourgeois liberals of the Enlightenment, had linked the position of women in society with its general level of development.

In 1844 Marx reflected this view when he wrote, in *The Holy Family*, that:

"... the change in a historical epoch can always be determined by women's progress toward freedom, because here, in the relation of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The general degree of emancipation of woman is the natural measure of general emancipation."

Weak and strong? In describing women and men in this way Marx reveals that his break with the utopian socialists on this question was, as yet, partial and undeveloped.

### Weakness

His early views now sound non-PC and old-fashioned. They were. Marx suggests that the weakness of women is inherent in their gender, and optimistically argues that human society can overcome the brutality in the relationship between the sexes. The liberation of women comes about as result of society's gradual attainment of greater and greater levels of civilised culture.

Criticism of Marx on this is justified. But it should be placed in context. This was not sexism—something that some feminists suggest is inherent in Marxism. At the time little anthropological and archeological research existed, and Marx had yet to apply his still developing method of historical materialism to the evolution of the family.

Marx redeemed himself in later years, providing the methodology for a materialist understanding of women's oppression.

But Marx himself never developed this work. It was Engels who supplied the first rounded materialist explanation of the development of women's oppression in class society. He took forward unpublished insights from Marx (now available in his *Ethnological Notebooks*), and wrote *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published in 1884. This remains a socialist classic.

A few years earlier, in 1878, Engels outlined his understanding of the oppression of women and the nature of the family in the polemical book, *Anti-Dühring*. He argued that the form of the family was rooted in social relations. Different forms existed in different class societies.

### Monogamous

The family as it then existed in capitalist society—a monogamous pairing of man and woman exclusively caring for their own offspring—was not "natural" and permanent. This form had evolved (only recently and only amongst particular layers of society). Different forms had preceded it and it could be changed if society was transformed.

This seems almost common sense to us today. But in the late nineteenth century there was a powerful ideology, developed by the ruling class, which held that the bourgeois family was a natural form.

It said that family relationships, including the subordination of women and children, were God given and eternal. Such a family was presented as the norm, which all must strive to attain.

Engels developed his critique of this bourgeois view of the family after studying the work of Lewis Morgan, an American anthropologist. Morgan described the evolution of modern society, using his detailed studies of Native American societies, such as the Iroquois in New York State, to cast light on earlier forms of social organisation.

Marx and Engels seized upon this important work and, with their conscious grasp of historical materialism, gave it theoretical coherence.

Morgan's work itself was a major breakthrough in the study of human society. Engels wrote that Morgan had, "discovered afresh in America the materialistic conception of history discovered by Marx 40 years ago."

### Innovations

Engels used the detailed descriptions of early society to prove that the development of the productive forces—through technological innovations in agriculture, the domestication of animals and associated improvements in tool making and application—had brought about changes in the organisation of society itself, including family and broader group relationships.

His insights into the early development of private property, and with it the division of society into classes of exploiters and producers, is beyond the scope of this article. But within that wider description, Engels also gave us a theoretical basis for



London Matchgirls' strike 1888. Inset: Zetkin, Engels and (right) Bebel

## Women and class society

# The dawn of oppression

Frederick Engels died 100 years ago this year. One of his greatest contributions to Marxism was his writing on women's oppression. Engels proved the link between the development of women's oppression and the emergence of class society. In our continuing series on Engels, *Helen Watson* defends that central thesis.

understanding women's oppression.

In earlier forms of human society a rough equality existed between the sexes. There has always been a sexual division of labour. But in the period Engels calls "primitive communism", the work of women was different but it was no less valued than that of men.

In particular, where women's work was associated with what we would now call domestic labour or housework, it was regarded as a valuable contribution to the wider group. The household work had a "public" character, and was as important

to the survival of the group as the hunting of men and foraging of women and men.

Engels, basing his views on Morgan, also described how such societies were grouped into households and kinship groups—basically who was related to whom and who lived with whom.

### Development

This is done in great detail, going through each stage of development of human society.

The core of his argument is that, prior to the development of private property and

class society, lineage was determined through the female side—it was as anthropologists say *matrilineal*. This generally coincided with *matrilocality* (men moving into the household of their spouse rather than the other way round).

Engels used the term "mother right"—lineage, and with it possessions—passed through from mother to child. Kinship was between a child and its mother and her brothers, not with its father.

These early forms of society were called forms of "savagery" and "barbarism" by Engels and Morgan—terms we associate

ist class have been abolished and complete legal equality of both classes established.

The democratic republic does not do away with the opposition of the two classes; on the contrary, it provides the clear field on which the fight can be fought out. And in the same way, the peculiar character of the supremacy of the husband over the wife in the modern family, the necessity of creating real social equality between them and the way to do it, will only be seen in the clear light of day when both possess legally complete equality of rights. Then it will be plain that the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and that this in turn demands that the characteristic of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society be abolished."

Clara Zetkin and other revolutionary organisers of women were able to build on the work of Engels, and Marx, to argue against any capitulation to bourgeois feminism, to resist those in the socialist movement who thought women should remain in the home, and to argue vigorously for the integration of the struggle for women's liberation with the struggle for socialism. We must do the same. ■

## Reform or revolution?

ENGELS WROTE *The Origin* in just over two months in early 1884. He was in a hurry to publish it as a contribution to the debates on the programme for women that were under way in the socialist movement.

In 1879 August Bebel, another leader of the Second International, had published *Woman Under Socialism*, which was very influential. Bebel's book lacked the theoretical premises that are to be found in Engels' work, and it reflected the views of utopian socialism more than it did the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels.

*The Origin* was partly a covert polemic with Bebel. Engels was insistent that reforms were not enough. While supporting the struggle for legal and political equality, he recognised that this would not liberate women. Their oppression is rooted in social relations of production and reproduction, not the legal structures. He makes a specific analogy with the struggle of the working class for "equality":

"In the industrial world, the specific character of the economic oppression burdening the proletariat is visible in all its sharpness only when all special legal privileges of the capital-

with imperialism and racism. In a way this shows quite how revolutionary their work was. The language may have lagged behind the ideas, but they were challenging very deeply held views about the history of society and about the position of women.

Engels describes how the development of private property and the introduction of class society brought with it a transformation in family, household and the relationship between the sexes:

"The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male."

As groups produced more food than they needed (as well as other products), they could begin to hoard them and later exchange them for products from other groups.

Because of the pre-existing division of labour, it was generally men (although not all men) who were best able to take advantage of these opportunities and start to accumulate private property which was not communally available to the whole of the group. This developing private property then came into conflict with the matrilineal nature of communal society.

### Transmit

Engels pointed out that matrilinearity made it impossible for men to transmit their newly acquired private property onto their own children:

"Mother right, therefore, had to be overthrown, and overthrown it was."

He went on to argue that, "the overthrow of mother right was the world historic defeat of the female sex." (original emphasis)

Although subsequent research has cast doubt on many of the details of Engels' analysis, his recognition of the unity, the inseparability, of the development of women's subordination with the emergence of class society is crucial.

It has not been refuted, but strengthened, by subsequent work.

For even if the extent of "mother right" was less universal than Engels supposed (and many critics of his theory insist that it was far less universal) the substance of his theory remains valid. The negative changes in the status of women still arise from the new content of patrilinearity—the passing on of accumulated private property along the male line.

Patrilineal societies that existed prior to the development of private property and class society did not have this content. They did not have, necessarily, oppressive consequences for women.

### Dramatic

In his dramatic talk of the historic defeat of the female sex Engels links the two fundamental features of women's oppression today to the emergence of private property.

The overthrow of "mother right" was done through its replacement with the monogamous, patriarchal family.

At the same time, women's labour in the household was transformed from a valued part of the social, public work, to a private service performed by a wife, for her husband.

From this insight Engels lays down the foundation for the programmatic positions already developed by himself and Marx. He writes:

"The domestic labour of the woman no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra.

We can already see from this that to emancipate woman and make her the equal of the man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social productive labour and restricted to private domestic labour.

The emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time.

Only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry, which does not merely permit the employment of female labour over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends toward ending private domestic labour by changing it more and more into a public industry. ■

For an in depth survey of Engels' work in the light of modern anthropology read - **Marxism and Women's Liberation** an LRCI pamphlet Price £1 Available from address on page 3 Cheques to Workers Power



# LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 189 MAY 1995

## In defence of outing

Dear Workers Power,

The recent furore against outing has united unlikely allies from the left and right in their condemnation and vilification of Peter Tatchell and OutRage!. Tory backbenchers are demanding a privacy bill and the left are defending the fundamental right to privacy!

Neither outing or the tactics of OutRage! will lead to the ending of oppression for the masses of working class lesbians and gays.

OutRage!'s increasingly individualistic and legalistic solutions will not lead to equality: formal equality means nothing without the material means with which to exercise it. But in the face of severe attacks by the state machine both OutRage! and Peter Tatchell should command at least some critical support from the left.

Whilst not supporting an outing campaign conducted by the right-wing or by straights, outing can have a part to play in the fight for Lesbian and Gay liberation. Although the extent to which it is used and by whom must be carefully considered.

What does the outing of public figures do? First it seeks to highlight the hypocrisy of the state and it also points out to

working class lesbians and gays that there is not a unity in oppression with bourgeois lesbians and gays. Secondly, it serves notice on all bourgeois lesbians and gays that they will no longer be protected by working class lesbians and gays when they put their bourgeois class interests first; when they support reactionary legislation and preach damnation from the pulpit in order to defend the family, a key pillar of capitalist society—especially when their wealth and privilege enables them to mitigate the full brunt of discriminatory legislation that they have actively supported or by their silence condoned.

It's been suggested that an outing campaign will lead to a reactionary witchhunt of working class lesbians and gays who will be outed at work and victimised or sacked as a result.

But this happens all the time at present and it is in part fuelled by the homophobia of closets in the church and the state machine! Dr David Hope (whose sexuality is now a grey area) has an appalling record on gay rights: he opposed the equal age of consent in the House of Lords, he has upheld the ban on lesbian and gay fostering by the Children's Society and he has

refused to speak out against Christian organisations such as the Courage Trust and the Waters programme which seek to "cure" us of our homosexuality! His diocese has been sacking gay clergy and imposing gagging orders on those that are dismissed.

A working class lesbian and gay movement is needed to fight to end our oppression. The tactics of OutRage! will not on their own do that for us, but we must recognise that even a working class lesbian and gay movement may in some circumstances have to resort to outing.

Outing alone is not the road to liberation but it does serve notice that those closets who put their class interests first will not be protected in their hypocrisy by the working class lesbian and gay community they are attacking.

The right to privacy does not extend to those who wish to use it merely to cover up their own hypocrisy when they publicly support reactionary legislation, which seeks to deny the right to privacy for millions of working class lesbians and gay men.

In comradeship,  
Jackie Conway

## Eric the red?

Dear Comrades,

Has your paper been taken over by Manchester United groupies? Your back page sub-headline "Free Cantona!" was a politically correct version of the breathless United fan's declaration, "The King is free", outside court at the end of March.

No marks for accuracy. I got your paper, with this sub-headline, on 31 March—the day a judge revoked the two week jail sentence and gave Cantona a cushy 120 hours community service coaching youngsters in football.

It was obvious to absolutely everybody that the prison sentence would be revoked. The upper class dominated football establishment, the FA, and most of the media condemned the sentence.

Even the malignant Thatcherite Jimmy Tarbuck condemned the sentence.

So much for your conspiracy theory. Moreover, the highly paid lawyers dealing with the case knew full well that a judge (as opposed to a magistrate in Croydon who probably supports Crystal Palace) would overturn the sentence on the grounds of legal precedent.

Yet you carry a sub-headline saying "Free Cantona!". He was just in a cell for an hour! And between this incarceration and the crown court appearance he certainly was free . . . to up his weekly wage to £50,000 and keep open his option of going to Inter Milan, and earning millions.

The original sentence was an aberration by a wayward magistrate, not part of the state allowing "any amount of resources to make an example of Cantona".

Cantona had no idea that Simmons was a fascist when he kicked him. He apologised for his action after it became known that Simmons was a fascist. He pleaded guilty in court, after he knew Simmons was a fascist. He disavowed his action and insisted it was "out of character" and would never happen again.

In short, he kicked a fascist and since then has done everything he can to stop himself becoming a "figurehead" to workers to "act with intelligence in an anti-racist direction" as you strangely put it.

Cantona's action—whatever his anti-racist views (which are well rewarded through Nike's sponsorship of him)—was not consciously anti-racist or anti-fascist to begin with, and he has deliberately spurned the chance to make it so in the aftermath.

The real fight against racism and fascism in the football grounds can be helped by footballers (as Ruud Gullit showed in Italy) but it cannot be won by them.

Fans don't want them as "figureheads" in this struggle, because they are never

around when it really kicks off against the fascists, and never will be. They are paid too much, and have a big stake in keeping things respectable.

That goes for Cantona as well. The activities of trash like Simmons and the C18 hit squads are being, and will continue to be, dealt with by working class fans.

The fans will stop the fascists taking the grounds, not "figureheads" like Cantona. We don't want "saviours from on high".

Yours fraternally  
Dee Ferguson

## Abuse "light hearted"

Dear Comrades,

Your defence of Eric Cantona as an avowed "socialist" and "anti-racist" is a smokescreen (WP 187).

You can just as easily say Cantona is a privileged and rich professional athlete who has pursued a profitable and easy lifestyle unavailable to the vast majority.

Cantona seems to be defended by the Guardian reading classes in the mainstream press just because he reads poetry.

As a season ticket holder at West Ham United and a regular attendee since the age of ten—some eighteen years—I can inform you that ritually abusing players is part of letting off steam and getting the frustrations of capitalism's rat race out of your system.

Today, thanks to supporters like myself, fanzines and independent supporters' organisations, the culture of football has evolved so that racist and homophobic abuse has virtually disappeared. Sadly Workers Power's coverage perpetuates the myth, and it always was a myth, that white male working class fans are reactionary.

Coverage on the television news bulletins of recent crowd disturbances has clearly shown police in Dublin, Bruges and London indiscriminately lashing out at fans.

Instead of blowing this out of proportion—the nationalistic, not racist, abuse

of one sad individual—and pretending that a few C18 wallies have any real influence, when basically the England team's following is nationalist and to the right of the average club side, Workers Power should condemn police violence at football and state the obvious fact that most "abuse" is light hearted and likely to be aimed at ginger haired or tall players.

Newham Monitoring Project condemned the abuse of Paul Ince, a black player, at Upton Park as racist. I was at that game.

He was abused simply because while still a West Ham player, he featured in the national press wearing a Manchester United shirt. All the chants referred to him as "Judas" or "scab", or "traitor". None referred to his race.

Some isolated individuals may have tried to work a racist element into the "abuse" but they were rejected by the vast majority of the fans. The national press lied about the nature of the abuse.

Finally, singing the "Dambusters" tune to Jurgen Klinsmann is no crime when compared to clubs changing kits every year and ripping off hard working fans who cannot afford to be replacing their kids' kits every time.

Yours fraternally  
Mick Hitchin  
East London

## Don't mourn, harmonise

Dear Workers Power,

In November of this year the Sheffield Socialist Choir will be hosting a major musical event—"Raise Your Banner", a weekend festival of political song commemorating Joe Hill who was murdered by the state of Utah 80 years ago.

Joe Hill was one of the major popularisers of political song in the English speaking world. He migrated from Sweden to the USA in 1902 and in 1910 joined the Industrial Workers of the World

(the "Wobblies"). He joined many working class struggles, capturing the solidarity and fighting spirit of those struggles in many memorable songs.

In 1915 Joe Hill was executed in Utah after being framed for a murder he never committed. The state's real motive was to remove him from the free speech battles that the Wobblies were leading at the time.

At his funeral in Chicago 30,000 workers marched behind his coffin and speeches about his life and struggles were read to

the crowd in nine different languages.

"Raise Your Banner" will take place in Sheffield from 17 to 19 November, 1995. It will promote and publicise socialist songs and musicians and will comprise workshops and exhibitions, as well as concerts.

Details are available from:  
"Raise Your Banners", 100 Leader Road, Hillsborough, Sheffield S6 4GH,  
Tel: 01142 2330 525.

Yours fraternally  
Nigel Wright

## Where We Stand



### Capitalism

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



### The Labour Party

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



### The Trade Unions

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

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



### October 1917

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

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.



### Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour



### Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third and Fourth Internationals. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. 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

Engels on the  
origins of  
women's  
oppression

British section of the LRCI – League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 189 May 1995 ★ Price 50p

## Bolivia

Hundreds of trades unionists arrested as military breaks strike wave. Report from Bolivia – page 10

### “A state of siege”

BRITAIN'S  
DEPORTATION  
CAMP

## Close down

# Campsfield!

“**C**AMPSFIELD HOUSE” sounds like an attractive stately home. In fact it is more like a concentration camp. This flagship detention centre was opened in November 1993 to house victims of the Asylum Act. Since then it has been the scene of hunger strikes, brutal assaults on inmates and a full-scale riot in June 1994.

Criticisms from the EU and Amnesty International, and a militant anti-Campsfield campaign, have embarrassed the government. So they sent Judge Stephen Tumim, Chief Inspector of Prisons, to investigate.

#### Blame

Judge Tumim's report, published in April, is a complete whitewash. Tumim lays most of the blame at the door of Group 4, the private security firm which runs Campsfield. Their failings are simply put down to poor training and inexperience. Last June's riot is portrayed by Tumim as a result of the inability of poorly-trained warders to respond quickly to a dangerous situation.

Group 4 say they expected detainees to spend no more than 40 days at the centre; delays in

processing appeals led to far longer stays, and hence greater tensions.

Immigration minister Nicholas Baker quickly latched onto the implications of this; let's speed up the procedure to kick people out of the country.

What was the real reason for the riot? The riot blew up the day after a large anti-Campsfield demo, when an Algerian, Ali Tamarat, was given summary notice of deportation without even the right to collect his belongings or contact his solicitor. A second prisoner, concerned about Ali, was attacked by warders. It was the final straw for detainees, many of whom had been on hunger strike against camp conditions.

The rebellion was put down and prisoners were locked up alone in their cells without even the right to speak to each other at meal times.

Nicholas Baker is unapologetic about the lack of facilities or activities at Campsfield; after all, the “great majority” of detainees “do not qualify to come to the UK”. Detainees such as Sita Kamara, the 18-year-old raped and threatened with death by soldiers in the Ivory Coast; Valerie Senoo, an

athletic, deported to Ghana bound and gagged; or Elizabeth Blanchard, who battered herself unconscious in Banbury Prison after being taken from Campsfield, also bound and gagged. According to Baker these people have no rights.

#### Detained

Since the introduction of the Asylum Act, the numbers of refugees and immigrants detained in Britain has risen by 250%. Up to 200 detainees around the country have been on simultaneous hunger strike. Eighty suicide attempts have been reported in Pentonville prison. Meanwhile, three quarters of asylum seekers are now refused entry compared to less than one in five before the Act.

Alongside the increasingly draconian asylum laws have come a number of well-publicised swoops on “illegal immigrants”. Southwark council employees, Lloyds of London cleaning staff and even employees of the Home Office itself have been targeted. In each case, the majority of those arrested were not “illegals” at all. They just happened to be black, like the 190 Jamaican holiday-makers arrested and strip-

searched at Heathrow last Christmas—a prelude to an unofficial visa system whereby Jamaicans must prove they have a decent income before being allowed to travel to Britain.

As a further incentive to immigration officers the Home Office has introduced quotas. If officers fail to refer sufficient numbers of would-be immigrants for further examination, they risk having their pay docked. So much for assessing cases on their merits.

The British government is determined to demonstrate to its EU partners that no country is more committed to the concept of Fortress Europe—a Europe whose doors are almost entirely closed to refugees and asylum-seekers, no matter how “genuine”; a Europe in which black workers are kept stateless and devoid of rights; a Europe in which racism is consciously and systematically used to tie the white working class to their thieving bosses.

#### Threat

In the wake of the Oklahoma bombing, John Major called for yet tougher immigration controls to combat the threat of Middle Eastern terrorists. Will



Michael Howard's ruthless persecution of Asylum seekers turns misery and violence into a way of life at Campsfield.

he now consider similar measures against the white racist supremacists who actually did the bombing? No—because the truth is that immigration laws are racist laws.

We must oppose all immigration laws. Where the black community, the labour movement and the left mobilise to defend the rights of immigrants, as in the Rahman family campaign, we can achieve victories.

We must fight to close Campsfield and all immigration detention centres. We should

also demand the immediate release of immigrants from conventional prisons. Seeking respite from hunger and terror by coming to Britain is not a crime: it is, however, criminal to humiliate innocent people and send them to their death. ■

The Campaign to Close Campsfield can be contacted at 111, Magdalen Rd, Oxford (Tel: 01865 724452). Support nationwide demonstrations against detention centres on 24 June.

## FIGHT ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!