



FOR OVER two months, the major Western powers, with the assistance of the most reactionary Arab states, have been preparing war against Iraq. This has been accompanied by propaganda and diplomatic offensives designed to isolate Iraq and soften up public opinion for a military strike in defence of 'democracy'.

Throughout Europe, the leaders of the workers' movement have fallen into line; with 'socialist' president Mitterrand of France even attempting to ban all pro-Iraqi demonstrations. The only condition Kinnock and his European social democratic friends place on an all-out assault, whether by land or air, is that it must have the blessing of the United Nations – which is like asking a group of cannibals to observe good table manners.

Workers everywhere must ask themselves in whose interests a war against Iraq will be fought. Whose 'democracy', whose 'rule of law' do Bush and Thatcher speak for? Clearly not for the Arab masses, whose rights to self-determination have been consistently violated by imperialism. The shooting of 21 Palestinians in Jerusalem on October 8 is the latest bloody outcome of this policy. Indeed, all the outstanding questions in the region – the Balkanisation of the Lebanon, the denial of Palestinian statehood, the division of the Kurds, the rule of museum-piece kings, sheikhs, emirs and sultans around the Gulf – are the result of the influence of British, French and American imperialism. Together they drew and redrew borders with only one aim in mind – to safeguard capitalist profits and particularly the oil wealth of the region.

Imperialism has covered its naked search for profits at every stage, first in the cloak of the League of Nations and, since 1946, in that of the United Nations. Trotsky once remarked that in British politics hypocrisy had been raised to a fine art. The abrupt discovery by the Tories, the Labour leaders and the British press that Saddam Hussein is a mad, fanatical dictator, and a new Hitler, only raises more questions as to why, in the interests of Middle Eastern 'stability', Britain armed Iraq throughout eight years of the Iran-Iraq war. As with the Argentinian junta in 1982, Britain's allies of yesterday only have their brutality exposed when they come into conflict with imperialist interests.

What of Kuwait and its 'legitimate government'? The bulk of the indigenous population – a minority in Kuwait as a whole – live on the exploitation of foreign labour which is denied elementary democratic rights and suffers legalised discrimination. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was not motivated by anti-imperialism but by the Iraqi state's need to shore up its tottering economy. But workers in Kuwait have no interest in restoring the Emir, the al-Sabah ruling clique, or the artificial statelet from which they derive their parasitic existence.

Seeing through the hypoc-

By Richard Price

ris of *Sun*-style hate propaganda is, however, only the beginning of knowledge. Broad sections of British workers still consider that, despite everything, it is necessary to grit their teeth and stand up for the 'national interest' in the event of war. It is this chauvinism, pumped into the working class by the Labour and TUC leaderships, which must be challenged and defeated. British workers have nothing to gain and everything to lose by supporting their own ruling class in its exploitation of the masses of the Middle East, in its starving or bombing of Iraq into submission.

They have much more in common with Arab workers and peasants than they will ever have with the bankers, industrialists and share profiteers of Thatcher's Britain. The interests of the 'nation' – the Tory tune to which the Labour leaders dance – are the bosses' interests. If workers tie themselves to the employers, they will surrender their own class interests.

The Falklands/Malvinas war remains a vivid lesson of the price workers pay for not opposing imperialist war. Then, Michael Foot, in his infamous speech on April 3, 1982, earned the praise of senior Tories, who said 'that he truly spoke for Britain'. The result of this heart-warming solidarity with Thatcher was a dramatic revival in the Tories' fortunes and a general election victory in 1983 enabling them to gear up for further rounds of privatisation and attacks on youth, on jobs, on health and social services and on the trade unions, culminating in the defeat of the 1984-85 miners' strike.

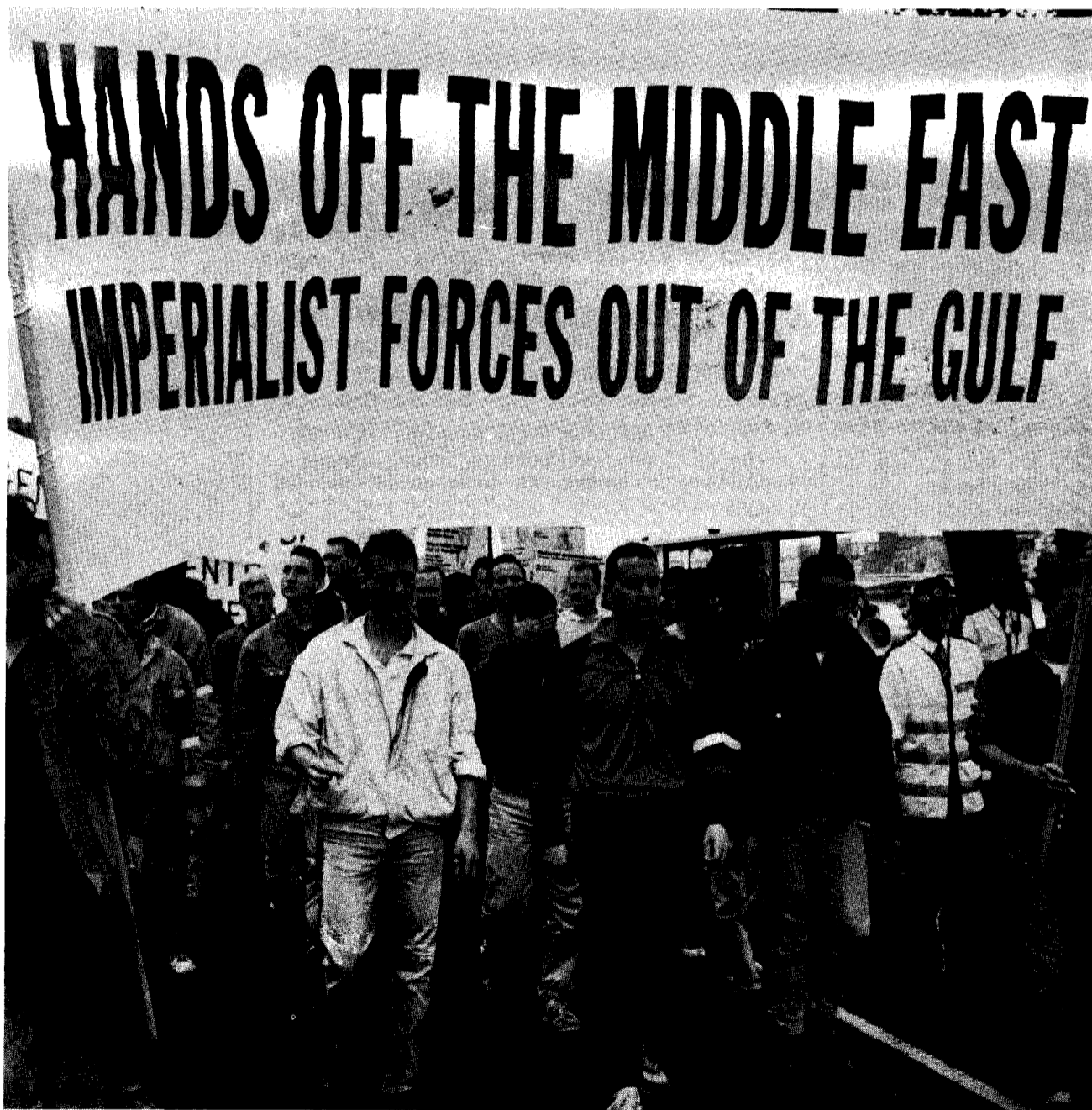
History, as Marx said, repeats itself the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Kinnock is playing the role of Foot with the difference that Kinnock has now discovered that 'the national interest' is paramount in peace as well as in war. Tony Benn, the great white hope of the left in the early 1980s, is still touting the UN as the solution of the crisis with the difference that this time it is war, not mediation, that the UN is likely to sponsor.

To the left, *Militant*, which distinguished itself by calling for a trade union boycott of Argentina to back up Thatcher's trade boycott in 1982, has avoided any public activity against the imperialist war threat. Although *Militant* manages to describe Bush and Thatcher's plans as a 'bosses' war' and calls for a 'socialist Middle East' as the answer, it fails to advance a single measure towards this goal.

Members of the Socialist Workers Party, whose paper ran the bizarre headline 'It's a

## THE MAIN ENEMY IS AT HOME

### No to UN blockade of Iraq!



The front of the 1,500-strong demonstration on September 8 organised by the Ad Hoc Hands Off the Middle East Committee

mad, mad, mad war' during the 1982 war, are rushing around like a group of headless chickens. In some areas they are joining local anti-war campaigns, in others they are walking out of them. Privately they admit to being in favour of the defeat of imperialism; publicly they attempt to confine any campaign to the pacifist demand of 'Stop the war'.

Similarly, the leadership of

the Campaign Against War in the Gulf, formally committed to fighting for 'US and British troops out', has declared its aim as 'to orient to the right' towards Benn and the pro-imperialist pacifists.

'Stop the war' means all things to all people. It is an attempt to find common ground with those like CND who support UN sanctions. But what are sanctions – designed to cripple and starve

Iraq – except war by other means? Any movement built on such a basis will collapse as soon as the first shot has been fired.

We believe that the struggle against the war plans can only be effective if it is openly opposed to imperialism and directed against the ruling class here. This means fighting for the immediate withdrawal of all interventionist forces from the Gulf; it means de-

fending Iraq as a semi-colonial country, opposing the UN blockade and boycotting the movement of all war materials to the Gulf; it means demanding that the Labour and TUC leaders break with the Tories and mobilise class action against the war.

The weapon to translate words into deeds is the class struggle. The fight against the war must be carried into every workers' organisation.

# Saddam turns into his opposite

By Richard Price

ANY MEMBERS of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party who are still getting free copies of Sheila Torrance's *News Line* must be pleased to discover that their party has been restored to the leadership of the 'Arab revolution'.

Not content with defending Iraq and opposing imperialist intervention, the world's smallest circulation daily paper has striven to render Iraq's invasion of Kuwait even more profound. According to *News Line* (August 4), Saddam Hussein has done nothing less than 'reveal the weakness of imperialism and the stage that the complicity of imperialism and Stalinism has reached, in their joint effort to save the imperialist system'.

So that's clear enough. Saddam is for smashing world imperialism, even if it is at odds with everything that *News Line* has written about Iraq for several years.

In the early 1970s, the SLL/WRP remained sharply critical of the Iraqi bourgeoisie. On February 12, 1974, for instance, *Workers Press* referred to 'the bloody Ba'athist regime which has imprisoned and killed hundreds of Communists and carried out a ten-year war against the Kurds'. By 1978, however, the WRP had executed a 180-degree turn and was vigorously supporting the Ba'athists against both the Kurdish people and the Iraqi CP. This line reached its zenith in 1979, with the WRP endorsing the execution of members of the Iraqi CP (*News Line*, August 10, 1979) and publishing a glossy brochure extolling the regime's 'achievements' entitled 'Iraq under the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party'. The WRP's youth movement went so far as to credit Iraq, along with Algeria and Libya, with 'embarking on the socialist construction of their economies' (YS Annual Conference draft resolution, 1979).

With the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980, the WRP tried vainly to keep up relations with both 'revolutions' before finally throwing its support behind Iran. From then on, Saddam Hussein underwent another miraculous transformation into an 'imperialist stooge', and the struggle

of the Kurds in Iraq for self-determination was rediscovered (although this support did not extend to Kurds in Iran). Until the latter stages of the Iran-Iraq war, Torrance's *News Line* cheered the Iranian leaders' calls for a march to Baghdad and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Although *News Line* gave its full support to Khomeini's death sentence against Salman Rushdie in 1989, the Iranian leaders have repaid its loyalty by far from 'revolutionary' efforts to reach a new accommodation with US and British imperialism.

Torrance has condemned Kuwait - not inaccurately - as a 'US stooge regime'. The only problem is how this squares with the WRP's fund-raising mission to Kuwait in 1979, when a delegation succeeded in collecting fat cheques from the Crown Prince and other reactionaries. Couldn't a *prima facie* case be made that *News Line* is a CIA-KGB front?

Anyway, Saddam's back in favour, even if sight-seeing tours of Iraq may be some way off. Another triumph for what Torrance calls 'our dialectical method'!

# Bennism - or internationalism?

The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Workers International League on the September 15 demonstration organised by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

BRITISH imperialism's contribution to the huge military threat to Iraq has been enthusiastically underwritten at every stage by the Labour leadership. Kinnock, Hattersley, Kaufman and the rest of the front bench are playing an identical role to the one they played under Michael Foot during the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982. Kinnock, like all his predecessors, is an opponent of war in times of peace, and a professional patriot in wartime. Like the Labour leaders' 'bipartisan' support for the military occupation of the north of Ireland, their unanimity with Thatcher today is the means for rallying the working class behind its 'own' imperialist state.

How has the Labour left fought this open treachery and warmongering on the part of the right wing? Most of the 35 MPs who forced a division at the end of the Commons debate have no principled objection to punitive UN sanctions against Iraq (even if some Campaign Group MPs are bleating about the embargo on food and medical supplies). Most have a touching faith in

the healing powers of the United Nations. Some, like Ken Livingstone, want the luxury of being 'against' a war in the Middle East, whilst vehemently condemning those who call for the withdrawal of imperialist forces from the Gulf. In a letter to the Stalinist *Morning Star* on September 10, Livingstone - along with co-signatories from the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, the Green Party, Plaid Cymru, CND and Labour Action for Peace - denounced the Campaign Against War in the Gulf and the slogan of 'US-British troops out of the Gulf' as 'deeply damaging to the efforts of those working for peace'. According to Livingstone's logic, the cause of peace is best served by maintaining the war machine assembled in the Middle East!

The Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, which has been sponsored by Tony Benn, is an

attempt to establish an alliance between the labour movement and openly capitalist parties such as the Green Party and Plaid Cymru. This motley collection of social democrats, pacifists and nationalists will remain confined to the limits placed on it by the 'liberal' wing of the ruling class and will resolutely oppose independent working class action against the war plans of Thatcher and Bush.

Benn's own position is a parody of socialist internationalism. His speech to the House of Commons on September 6, although liberally spiced with opposition to a war to defend American oil interests, was a typically evasive performance. His demagogic references to the United States are the reverse side of his belief in the manifest destiny of British parliamentarianism. Benn's opposition to 'action

outside the UN' not only leaves the door ajar to his supporting a war sanctioned by the UN Security Council; it also creates the monstrous illusion that the UN can act in the interests of both the oppressed Arab masses and the British working class.

The United Nations has been used by the major powers since 1946 to carve up the world in their interests. Benn invokes the UN as an instrument of peace at the same moment that the imperialists seek to use it as an instrument to justify war. Irony of ironies - the South African government appealed in the past week to the UN to put pressure on Nelson Mandela and the ANC to agree to peace talks with Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. In Cambodia the auspices of the UN are being used to rehabilitate the Khmer Rouge.

Benn's position is an obstacle to the development of a movement based on the working class committed to the struggle against imperialist war. Such a movement must not only recognise in words the imperialist nature of the war being prepared against Iraq, but also actively oppose it.

Whilst fighting in a united front alongside all those who call for 'imperialist forces out of the Middle East', the Workers International League insists that, on its own, such a slogan leads up a pacifist blind alley. It is absolutely necessary that revolutionaries defend Iraq against imperialist attack in spite of the reactionary Ba'athist regime. For the working class in all imperialist countries the main enemy is at home. Consistent socialists - rather than humbugs and pacifists - must be for the victory of Iraq and for the defeat of their 'own' ruling class. We say:

## HANDS OFF IRAQ!

A torchlit demonstration through central London on October 10, organised by the Ad Hoc Hands Off the Middle East Committee, ended with a rally at Conway Hall where representatives of affiliated organisations addressed the marchers. The following speech was made by Ian Harrison on behalf of the Workers International League



The platform at the rally on October 10 organised by the Ad Hoc Committee

Comrades, I bring the fraternal greetings of the WIL to this rally called in opposition to the mobilisation of the imperialist war machine in the Gulf region.

The WIL places on record its condemnation of the treacherous role of the Stalinist bureaucracies in Moscow and Beijing. By lending their support to the imperialist war effort they have rendered imperialism a vital service in its hour of need. The Stalinist bureaucracies are trading off the conflict in the Middle East at the expense of the working class and oppressed masses in order to obtain loans from the West to shore up their own tottering regimes.

The Moscow bureaucracy

has gone further than simply lending its support by offering to participate in an attack on Iraq subject to its being under UN control. In a speech quoted in *Cyprus Weekly*, Gorbachev's close ally Genady Gerasimov has called for the strengthening of UN committees to give them a full military capability enabling them to intervene in regional disputes. This is the most wretched product yet of Gorbachev's new diplomacy with imperialism. At a time when the UN's role as a fig leaf for imperialist banditry is becoming clear to millions of workers, particularly in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, Gorbachev and Co attempt to give it credibility as an impartial arbiter of disputes.

Gorbachev has further used the Gulf dispute as a cover to strengthen diplomatic and trading links with the reactionary regimes in Israel and Saudi Arabia.

No less treacherous has been the role of the Kinnock-led Labour Party in Britain. British imperialism's contribution to the military threat to Iraq has been enthusiastically supported by Kinnock and the rest of the Labour leadership. The Labour front bench are playing the same despicable role to the one they played under Michael Foot during the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982. Kinnock, the CND member, is an opponent of war in times of peace, and a professional patriot in wartime. Like the Labour leaders' 'bipartisan' support for the war in the north of Ireland, their agreement with Thatcher to-

day is the means for rallying the working class behind imperialism.

And how, we ask, have the Labour lefts fought this open treachery by the right wing? Livingstone, Benn and his Committee to Stop War in the Gulf have demonstrated a touching faith in the UN - the same UN that is trying to starve Iraq and bring it economically to its knees. The same UN that is covertly supporting Pol Pot. Benn's Committee is an attempt to set up a cross-class alliance between the labour movement and openly capitalist parties like the Green Party and Plaid Cymru. This collection of social democrats, pacifists and nationalists will consistently oppose independent working class action against the war plans. It is an obstacle to mobilising the working class in opposition to Thatcher and Bush's war machine.

For socialists, it is necessary not only to recognise in words the imperialist nature of the war being prepared against Iraq, but also to actively oppose it. The WIL fights for a united front with all those who demand the withdrawal of imperialist forces from the Gulf. But we are not pacifists - the WIL stands for the defeat of our own ruling class in Britain. We stand for the defence of

Iraq as a semi-colonial country facing an onslaught from imperialism. We are for the victory of Iraq in spite of the bloody history of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad. We call for the smashing of the imperialist blockade.

The WIL wants to make clear, however, our support for Kurdish self-determination. We do not call for that struggle to be put on ice, nor do we call on the working class in Iraq and Kuwait to suspend the class struggle in the event of war. If the Iraqi bourgeoisie wants the support of Kurdish people in a struggle against imperialism, then let them grant the Kurds the right of self-determination.

Comrades, the work of the Ad Hoc Committee must be developed. It must break out of a bloc of small left-wing groups and take root in the wider labour movement. It must win the affiliation of trade union branches and trades councils and establish a network of local affiliated campaigns. At the same time it must endeavour to force all those waverers like the Campaign Against War in the Gulf into joint activity on a principled anti-imperialist basis. As revolutionary socialists we recognise, indeed we must never forget, that the main enemy is at home.

- Hands off Iraq!
- No confidence in the UN!
- Demand that Labour and the TUC break with the Tories and mobilise the working class to defeat the war!
- Oppose all attempts to whip up 'anti-Islamic' racism and chauvinism!
- Down with the blockade!
- Full support for Kurdish self-determination and for the Iraqi working class against the Ba'athist regime!
- Turn the Iraqi struggle into a genuine anti-imperialist struggle led by the working class. Nationalise all imperialist assets under workers' control!
- For a United Socialist States of the Middle East!
- For the defeat of British and American imperialism and all other interventionist forces!
- For the victory of Iraq!

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Imperialist forces out of the Gulf!



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I would like to join/have more information about the WIL.

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Send to: Workers International League  
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### Revolutionary History

Vol. 3, No. 2  
Autumn 1990 issue

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## LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

# Left offers no challenge to Kinnock leadership

LABOUR'S Blackpool conference showed the real nature of reformism, as well as its centrist parasites.

The Labour leaders succeeded in their two main objectives of demonstrating their absolute loyalty to restoring the bosses' profits and stifling the voice of the working class within the party.

Kinnock promised almost nothing. Of the industries privatised by Thatcher, only electricity and water are to be brought back under state ownership. Key anti-union measures – banning the closed shop and secondary picketing – are to be retained. (Even NGA leader Tony Dubbins pointed out that there would still be 'Warringtons and Wappings under these proposals'.) The millions-strong anti-poll tax movement was refused support.

Kinnock and his lackeys repeatedly said they would 'not spend more than the economy could afford'. The union leaders, led by Ron Todd of the T&GWU, meekly agreed to base wage demands under Labour on what the bosses can afford. Behind the scenes, Tony Blair, the shadow employment secretary, is working to reach agreement on plans to synchronise all pay bargaining at the beginning of the year following discussions between a Labour government, the TUC and the CBI.

To silence opposition to these class-collaborationist policies, the Labour leaders pushed through internal changes. Mandatory reselec-

By Colin Harrison

tion of MPs was dropped. All individual members are to be balloted to elect conference delegates and NEC representatives. The trade union block vote at conference was cut from 90 per cent to 70 per cent and will be cut further if individual membership rises. Policy will in future be decided by a policy commission, reducing the annual conference to what one delegate called 'a clapping machine'.

The sharpest test of a workers' party is posed by war, and Labour failed miserably. The only challenge to Kinnock's unqualified support for US and British imperialism's aggression against Iraq was an unsuccessful Fire Brigades Union resolution, pathetically appealing for no military action unless sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

This display of cap-in-hand servility to the ruling class also revealed the bankruptcy of those 'revolutionary' organisations which base themselves on the rapidly diminishing left wing of social democracy.

The *Militant* group found solace in the platform's defeats on defence spending (a cut to the average west European level) and on pensions (the restoration of the link with wages). It claimed that these minor victories were 'a warning to a future Labour government', even though Kinnock immediately repudiated both decisions. The Socialist Workers Party played a similar tune, approvingly quoting in its pap-



We'll keep the white flag flying here: Hattersley, Castle and the Kinnocks at the close of the Labour Party Conference

er Tony Benn's claim that 'we are only going along with the presentation of policy because there is an election on the way'.

Both of these centrist organisations, incapable of breaking from reformism, look forward with longing to its revival. *Militant* can't get its feet out of the social democratic swamp, while the SWP keeps

falling back into it.

The degeneration of reformism shows that the working class needs its own revolutionary party. This cannot be built by pandering to parliamentary illusions like *Militant*, or by

running after the dwindling Bennite left like the SWP. Revolutionary leadership will only be forged in irreconcilable struggle against the class treachery of both the Kinnocks and the Benns.

## AGAINST VIOLENCE AND SLANDERS IN THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT!

### FOR A WORKERS' ENQUIRY INTO THE PHIL PENN CASE

THE JUNE 23, 1990, edition of *Workers Press*, the weekly paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party, attempted to relaunch a slander campaign against the Workers International League over the case of WRP member Phil Penn.

Penn, a former Central Committee member of the WRP/*Workers Press*, was convicted on a charge of grievous bodily harm in February 1987, after carrying out a brutal assault on WRP/*News Line* supporter Eric Rogers following a demonstration at Wapping on May 3, 1986.

*Workers Press* then ran an 11-week campaign claiming that Penn had himself been attacked by four members of the *News Line* group, and that he had been shopped to the police and subsequently framed in court.

During the course of the campaign, a group of WRP/*News Line* members (including Richard Price, against whom many of Penn's lies were directed) broke with that organisation and established the Workers International League. The first edition of *Workers News* in

April 1987 carried an article refuting in detail Penn's claims, which *Workers Press* failed to respond to for three years and two months.

*Workers Press* argues that political differences should not be resolved in bourgeois courts, and that those who appeared as witnesses against Penn were 'crossing class lines'. For this reason, they claim it is impossible to take part in an enquiry into the affair.

The WIL does not recognise that beating up a political opponent in the labour movement, and seriously damaging his eyesight, is a legitimate means of expressing 'political differences'. The accusation is, therefore, entirely bogus. It was Penn who 'crossed class lines'. Nevertheless, the WIL repeats its call to the WRP/*Workers Press* for the dispute to be settled by a workers' commission of enquiry. The following individuals and organisations have supported this call:

Workers Power; Revolutionary Internationalist League; Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (Belgium/Germany); Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo

(Argentina); Ben, Vusi, Jimmy, Mtshana and Theresa (South African Trotskyists); Al Richardson; Barry Buitekant; Arthur Shute; Peter Farrell (treasurer, Kentish Town and Hampstead UCATT, former WRP CC member); Gary Hollingsbee; Mick Byrne (ex-WRP CC/ex-ICP CC); Linda Byrne (ex-WRP Western Region Committee/ex-ICP). In a personal capacity: Ellis Hillman (Labour councillor, Barnet); Clive Boutle (former Labour councillor, Haringey); Steve King (former Labour leader, Haringey Council); Hal MacDermot, Alton Williams, Bob Russell (branch secretary) (all NUR Willesden No.1 Branch); Paul Flewers (RCP supporter/*Revolutionary History* editorial board); Andy Fletcher (secretary, Tower Hamlets Health Branch, NALGO); Jim Mansfield (secretary, Hampstead Health Branch, NALGO); John Pestle (secretary, City and Hackney Health Branch, NALGO); Paul Duployen (chair, Bloomsbury Health Branch, NALGO).  
● For further information, write to: WIL, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE.

## ERM heralds blitz on wages and jobs

By David Lewis

THE ADMISSION fee for British entry to the European Exchange Rate Mechanism will be paid by the working class, in the form of job losses and pay cuts.

ERM links member currencies to the Deutschmark. Since the mark is a much stronger currency than the pound, the main effect on the British economy will be a forced deflation. Predictions of an increase in unemployment of between 300,000 and 400,000 are being made by both academic and City of London economists. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Major, made it clear that this was his expectation during the weekend following the announcement of ERM entry.

Speaking on the ITV Walden programme, Major ruled out the possibility of economic growth, emphasising that his objective was to combat inflation. His political objective is transparent: to prepare the way for a snap general election around the middle of next year. This is the point at which it is predicted that being in the ERM will have brought inflation down to an acceptable level and interest rate cuts will have taken the sting out of high mortgage levels. In this

way the Tories hope to patch up relations with the sections of the middle class that have deserted them over the past year.

The economy, already on the brink of recession, will be squeezed even harder. Manufacturing industry, already uncompetitive, with a recent CBI survey showing exports falling, will be hit hard by the deliberately high exchange rate at which the pound entered the ERM. Most job losses will be in this sector.

While the squeeze on the economy has a more or less automatic character, holding down pay does not. ERM entry therefore signals a stepping up of the class struggle. The working class has regained the confidence to fight as a result of the pick-up in the economy over the last couple of years; the employers on the other hand will be forced to try and cut back on pay settlements. Behind them stands an unholy alliance of German bankers, *Guardian* editorial writers and Geoffrey Howe who are all urging pay restraint. In the case of *The Guardian*, they are calling for

a pay freeze!

The City euphoria which greeted the ERM announcement quickly evaporated and, within two trading days, the share index had fallen back to its pre-ERM level. This reflects the judgement of the financial markets that ERM entry will have a transitory effect and cannot remedy the basic sickness of the British economy. This sickness expresses itself in the highest level of inflation for eight years. The reduction of interest rates that accompanied the ERM announcement will not alleviate that particular problem. In fact, the opposite effect must be expected. The lower interest rates will encourage higher borrowing and higher spending, and therefore tend to push inflation upwards.

The response of the Labour leadership has, understandably, been rather low key since entry to ERM was the cornerstone of their 'alternative' economic policy. For workers, the lesson must be noted – that the attacks on pay and conditions which will be unleashed over the next few months would have been visited upon them by Labour the moment they got into power.

# GORBACHEV CROSSES THE RUBICON

AT A recent plenum meeting of the Central Committee, an increasingly desperate Mikhail Gorbachev declared that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which has lost over 336,000 members in the first half of this year alone, was prepared to enter into coalition with 'progressive, patriotic forces'.

In truth, this merely reflects what has already come to pass. The deteriorating economic situation has led to the virtual collapse of the union, with republics either declaring themselves independent or the precedence of their own laws over those of the CPSU. This has effected a sharp lurch to the right on the part of Gorbachev and the rest of the Stalinist bureaucracy over the past few months. Gorbachev has been in discussion with the president of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, who quit the CPSU at its 28th Congress last July, over the finer points of the plan for economic 'recovery'. This particular 'progressive patriot' is a right-wing demagogue and a Great Russian chauvinist.

The Shatalin Plan, named after one of Yeltsin's economic advisers, Stanislav Shatalin, seeks to introduce a market economy in the Soviet Union over a period of 500 days. In the first 100 days, swathes of state and party property will be sold off, state and collective farms smashed up and the land privatised, and the budget slashed. In the next 150 days will come so-called price 'reform', as subsidies are removed on most goods. At the same time, 1,500 share companies will be created and foreign investors invited in. During days 251 to 400, between 40 and 60 per cent of all sectors of the economy will be sold off and a stock exchange and currency market, complete with commercial banking system, set up. The last 100 days will be set aside purely for further privatisation and asset stripping.

The plan differs from the bureaucracy's current policy - championed by Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and, until recently, by its author, Gorbachev - in its short time-scale and its call for the sale rather than the leasing of land.

Gorbachev was forced to distance himself from his own preferred option and align himself, albeit critically, to Shatalin's plan by the fact that Yeltsin had named October 1 as the date he would enact it in the Russian Republic, whatever the attitude of the Soviet authorities. Gorbachev is worried on the one hand that the bureaucracy could lose everything in the transfer to a market economy if it doesn't appear to address the concerns of millions of Soviet workers about unemployment and rising prices, and on the other that it could be sidelined by the blatant restorationists in the Yeltsin camp.

By Daniel Evans

The Gorbachev regime's significant shift towards an openly pro-capitalist position at home is reflected in its complete capitulation to imperialist interests abroad. In the last month alone it has:

□ Bent over backwards to assist the imperialist war-drive in the Middle East;

□ Welcomed the takeover of the GDR by West Germany;

□ Agreed to hand over, within the next few years, two of the disputed Kurile islands claimed by Japan, in exchange for closer economic ties with Tokyo and the signing of a peace treaty to formally end the Second World War;

□ Continued the process of rapprochement with Israel. Gorbachev met two of the most right-wing members of the Israeli cabinet in September. One of them, Yuval Ne'eman, represents the small Tehiya party which wants to annexe the Occupied Territories and advocates the shooting of Palestinian stone throwers;

□ Cancelled a scheduled four-day visit by the African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in what the South African press has described as

an historic snub. The Shatalin Plan contains a populist and reactionary proposal to cut foreign aid by 75 per cent and, as the economic problems of the Soviet Union get worse, Gorbachev feels that a meeting with Mandela would only accelerate his decline in popularity.

The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy has already abandoned any pretence of defending the gains of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution but, even so, the discussions over the Shatalin Plan mark a major step down the road to counter-revolution.

The working class, meanwhile, though finding its voice in a growing number of strikes and disputes, is led by militant syndicalists at best and is considerably under the sway of free-marketters and nationalists. To fight the Shatalin Plan, the working class must have a consciously prepared programme to defend the nationalised property relations by overthrowing the Stalinist bureaucracy - which is acting as the main agency for the restoration of capitalism. A Soviet Trotskyist party is an urgent necessity to prepare and fight for such a programme in the working class.



The bodies of two Azeris lying in the street after the Soviet army entered Baku on January 20

## Once more on Soviet troops in Azerbaijan

FRESH EVIDENCE of the brutal role played by Soviet troops in Baku, Azerbaijan, in January this year. Excerpts from a detailed report by the soldiers' rights group, *Shield*, were published by *Moscow News* in August.

It accuses the Soviet army of a 'pre-planned massacre', and confirms that the army chiefs and the local KGB made no efforts to defend Armenians from the bloody pogroms which took place from January 13-15. Instead, they waited until most Armenians had been evacuated, and proceeded to mount a punitive

expedition into Baku on January 20.

The report uncovered strong evidence that the massacre had been prepared by a 'dirty tricks' operation, involving snipers firing blank rounds at soldiers. In the subsequent slaughter, 121 Azeris were killed and over 700 wounded. There are no grounds for believing that those shot were identified as pogromists. On the contrary, the report concludes that the shootings were random. Old people, children and passengers on a bus were among the victims. A block of flats was fired on by rocket launchers, cars were rammed by tanks, ambulances attacked

and corpses robbed.

In September, *Moscow News* reported receiving numerous letters supporting the investigation, and published a letter from *Shield* representatives providing further evidence that the army had done nothing to prevent the anti-Armenian pogroms, detailing further atrocities against Azeris and demanding action against those responsible. Together, these reports provide eloquent confirmation of the correctness of the Workers News demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and for independent Soviet republics of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

### US ECONOMY

# Fundamentally unsound

THE ASSUMPTION that the American economy would grow forever on the basis of President Reagan's 1980s fiscal 'revolution' is finally being put to rest by the federal budget-setting debacle in Washington of the last few weeks.

Congress rejected a federal budget package championed by President George Bush which sought to slash \$500 million off the deficit over the next five years. Democrats opposed the extent of the welfare cuts, and Republicans the new taxes.

Thousands of government employees faced short-time working as automatic cuts under the 1985 Gramm-Rudman legislation came into force following the failure to set the 1991 budget. Even with the proposed cut of \$40 billion in the first year of the new package, the 1991 deficit could still reach \$300 billion, particularly with the escalating cost of the Gulf war preparations.

The Reagan administration blamed the stagnation of the 1970s on the welfare state, 'liberalism' and restrictive trade union practices. Driving up unemployment to push down wages, reducing basic-rate tax on workers as an incentive to work more overtime and on big business to encourage investment, ridding capital of regulations which inhibited its free movement and running up an enormous budget deficit were all sup-

posed to set the economy back on its feet. The budget deficit would be financed by the booming economy and, though the rate of tax would be lower, the volume collected would be greater because of spectacular profits.

But although the economy has grown every year since 1982, during that time America has become a nation which imports more than it exports, and has accumulated the biggest debt in the world. Reagan's policies halted America's economic decline on paper, only to prepare it for an even greater explosion.

George Bush succeeded Reagan as the Republican president in 1989 on the campaign slogan 'Read my lips - no new taxes', which was aimed at undermining support for the Democrats. The burgeoning budget deficit was still not seen as a problem since the economy remained in growth and it was felt that the country could afford it. During Reagan's tenancy in the White House, criticism of running a budget deficit was tantamount to blasphemy, and as vice-president, Bush was also a fundamentalist when it came to economics. However, since Bush's election, all agree that the economy is heading towards recession. Under these circumstances the deficit has become America's biggest liability.

The budget crisis finally

came to a head this year. The deficit had been wildly underestimated. All workers pay a tax, separate from income tax, into a social security pension trust fund which is then used to finance pensions. This tax has been rising over the last ten years and the surplus has been used to finance the budget deficit. Not only has the working class been hardest hit by this additional tax burden but it has been paying to keep the 'boom' economy afloat. But what was thought to be a 'surplus' in the social security fund is actually nothing more than a pile of IOUs in the name of the Inland Revenue. Thousands of other examples of 'creative accountancy' from the Reagan years are being revealed every day as the auditors and inspectors who were sacked in the 1980s are re-hired to sort out the mess. For example, the federal agency involved in farm credit claimed its losses at \$860 million until an audit showed them at \$4.2 billion.

Another major factor bringing the crisis to a head is the collapse of the savings and loans banks (building societies). This illustrates the nature of the 1980s speculative boom better than anything. Following the banking collapse in the 1930s, the Federal government set up the S&Ls and insured savings for a nominal fee to restore confidence in the system. All went

well throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s as the S&Ls dished out cheap mortgages at interest rates fixed by law. However, in the 1970s, interest rates began to rise and banks now offered higher rates to depositors. This attracted savers away from the S&Ls which, nevertheless, were saddled with millions of fixed-rate mortgages.



By the late 1970s, 75 per cent of the S&Ls were effectively bankrupt. But rather than cutting the government's losses and paying out to cover the insured deposits, Reagan 'de-regulated' the industry. The S&Ls could now offer variable rate mortgages, lend all their assets without making

provision for bad debt, count debts as part of assets and so lend the same money twice or three times, and invest in short-term, high-yield, high-risk projects. The property boom ensued which encouraged the S&Ls to offer ever-higher interest rates to attract more Federally-insured deposits. With the slump in the property market came the complete collapse of the S&Ls, leaving the Federal government to pick up the tab, currently estimated at \$500 billion and rising.

The choice is stark for the US ruling class: if the deficit is not reduced, interest rates will have to rise to continue to attract foreign investors, particularly the Japanese and Germans who have been the real financiers of the debt for the past ten years. If interest rates soar, thousands of debt-laden American corporations will go bankrupt and the predicted recession will be more profound.

As Karl Marx noted in 'Capital': 'The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of modern peoples is - their national debt.' The argument between Republican President Bush and the Democrat-controlled Congress, which has to approve the 1991 budget, is just how much of the debt different sections of the people will 'possess'.

# Romania – the unfinished revolution

In the second of two articles on Romania, Ian Harrison looks at the role played by the National Salvation Front in opening the door for capitalist restoration

## Iliescu – host to reaction

WITH THE establishment of the National Salvation Front government and the militarisation of the economy, the remnants of the old party bureaucracy grouped around Iliescu were able to squash any independent initiatives taken by the working class and peasants. Dissident intellectuals representing liberal and ethnic interests were encouraged to join the NSF's self-styled caretaker regime in the capital.

In the main, the working class was taken off guard by Iliescu's constant reference to the 'people's revolution' which was being 'safeguarded' by the NSF. The concessions won by workers – food, medicine and fuel for heating – were said to be jeopardised by the critical state of the economy. Reports given to the press and media by army officers stated that the food and fuel supplies were only adequate for ten days in some areas of the country. Thus they appealed to workers to report to the factories for work and leave the NSF to worry about politics.

Iliescu was portrayed as the archetypal reformed man, the conscience of the December revolution. He stressed that the overthrow of Ceausescu had put an end to political parties in Romania. The NSF, he claimed, was better than any political party. Within days, however, his regime legalised the establishment of capitalist parties, whose leaders returned from exile determined to secure the restoration of capitalism at the earliest possible date. By January 9, a pro-monarchist National Peasants Party and National Liberal Party set up shop in Bucharest. The National Christian Peasants Party, soon to merge with the NPP and espousing openly fascist aims, emerged to give interviews with the foreign press. In spite of their anti-Semitic attacks on figures in the government close to Iliescu, particularly Silviu Brukan and Petre Roman, echoed in part by the NPP, nothing was done by Iliescu.

To some extent, their calls for the restoration of capitalism and monarchy were used by Iliescu to divert the attention of workers and peasants from the real questions of the day: Who controls the economy and the state, and in whose interests? Iliescu openly courted 'dialogue' on the television and in the press with the capitalist party leaders, who made no secret of their intentions. He and the old Romanian Communist Party members bear the main responsibility for introducing reaction to workers, students, peasants and dissident intellectuals. Behind the scenes, the anti-Ceausescu Stalinists were driving wedges between the component parts of the December revolution, the better to secure their own control over the source of their privileges and safeguard their own skins.

While workers and peasants had won some immediate concessions from the overthrow of Ceausescu, the central demands of the students remain unmet. On the campuses in



Unity in reaction: NSF Prime Minister Petre Roman (left) and opposition NPCDP president Ion Ratiu find something to smile about during parliamentary proceedings

Bucharest, students published demands calling for the removal of academics compromised by past association with Ceausescu. In some universities up to 80 per cent of the academics fell into this category. The students continued to demand a purge of the old party bureaucrats and the restoration of the death penalty for the Securitate.

Concerned that local groups were taking matters into their own hands when they received reports of Securitate members being lynched in the provinces, the NSF leaders called for the first state trial of a Securitate officer, Major Ion Bonda. Quickly found guilty of murdering civilians during the December events, he was sentenced to a mere nine years imprisonment. But Ceausescu's brother and son, the members of his politburo, and the majority of Securitate and army officers were not brought to trial for months, and even then their trials were subject to constant 'technical' delays. The reason for these delays is not hard to fathom. They were used by the NSF regime to work out a formula for lenient sentencing in exchange for the suppression of any damaging revelations which would expose Iliescu and his cronies for their complicity in Ceausescu's crimes.

On January 23, Iliescu announced a revised date for elections – May 20. Contrary to previous statements the NSF would, he said, stand candidates. Vice-president Mazilu resigned from the NSF, together with leading liberals, in protest at the 'Stalinisation' of the NSF. Iliescu sacked the Minister of Education for 'exceeding his brief' by introducing Hungarian text books into schools in Transylvania. Thus, Iliescu gave the lie to his claims to be leading a caretaker government, which was the defender of all the Romanian people's interests. In the weeks that followed, the National Peasants Christian Democratic Party (formerly the NPP), the NLP and reactionary fascist groups succeeded in mobilising numbers of students, intellectuals and workers against the NSF. A mass emigration of ethnic gyp-

sies and Germans to Germany was followed by a similar exodus of Hungarians, and by substantial numbers of Jews who departed for Israel, in fear of a fascist pogrom.

## From reaction to gangrene

Shaken by the growth of public opposition and the mobilisation of workers and students by the capitalist parties, the NSF was forced to make concessions to the NPCDP, NLP and workers and students. On February 9, a coalition government was formed, the Provisional Council of National Unity. The NSF reserved 90 of the 180 seats in the council for itself.

In order to appease workers, students and soldiers demanding a purge of Stalinists in the NSF and armed forces, Brukan and Minister of Defence General Militaru were obliged to resign, together with a number of senior army officers. The real victors of these concessions, however, were the pro-monarchist/capitalist parties. The new government promptly turned on its supporters among workers and students by issuing a proclamation banning mass demonstrations. In a further gesture to the NPCDP/NLP, the NSF voted to legalise small-scale private ownership and devalue the currency.

In March, tensions between the ethnic Hungarian community and Romanians living in Transylvania led to a series of bloody armed clashes. Responsibility for generating these tensions rests firmly with the Stalinists in Romania and Hungary. The sacking of the Minister of Education in January, a representative of the Hungarian minority, and the resignation of Laszlo Tokes from the NSF, raised genuine fears among Hungarians in Transylvania as to their future safety – fears that the Stalinists in Hungary were quick to exploit. The Romanian and Hungarian Stalinists used the clashes to unite their respective nations behind them and divert attention away from the economic crises engulfing both countries. While leading representatives of both communi-

ties in Transylvania pointed to the role played by Vatra Romaniasca, a fascist organisation, in fomenting the clashes, there can be no doubts that Iliescu's regime gained from them.

Iliescu milked the tensions for all they were worth in the run-up to the May elections. In the event, the NSF won a massive victory and Iliescu was elected to a Gorbachev-style presidency.

Ion Ratiu, presidential candidate of the NPCDP, declared the elections a fraud, while his Tory backers in London, represented by Edwina Currie, stated that the elections were conducted fairly. What the elections did show was that the party claiming to represent peasants had no such support. It polled 4.29 per cent of the nearly 15 million votes cast, mainly from petty-bourgeois elements in the city!



Iliescu

## Restoration or political revolution?

Following the elections, Prime Minister Petre Roman outlined his government's programme, pledging to demolish centralised planning, carry out privatisation and abolish state

subsidies to industry and agriculture. Roman called for a six-month moratorium on wage rises. In a clear warning to workers and peasants, he predicted rising inflation and unemployment, stating that the government was ready to meet any challenge to its programme. The president of the NLP, Radu Campeanu, confirmed the reactionary nature of the programme, declaring himself pleased with it because 'it borrowed a lot from our programme'.

In the wake of the election, the NSF, with a safe majority under its belt, proceeded to settle accounts with continuing public opposition from students, intellectuals and workers demonstrating in University Square. The events which took place on June 14, when workers loyal to the NSF invaded and occupied the square and surrounding neighbourhoods, arresting hundreds

of protesters and leaving five dead and 100 injured, have polarised left groups in Britain. Some, like *Militant*, the Spartacists, Workers Power and the WRP/News Line, supported the NSF's actions, citing the NSF's warning of the danger of a 'fascist coup' on June 13. There is much that is still

not clear about the events of June 13, when the headquarters of the secret police and army buildings were attacked and set on fire. It must be asked why fascists would launch a coup in the wake of an election where the most right-wing party, incorporating fascists, the NPCDP, received less votes than the ecology parties? And with hundreds of 'rioters' arrested by the NSF, why hasn't there been a trial to expose their plans and punish them? Of the student leaders interviewed by the foreign press during and after the June events, not one accepted the NSF's version of a 'fascist coup'. They have stated that the attacks on police, army and television headquarters were not the work of genuine student protesters. Some have stated that known Securitate agents were identified among the attackers. Finally, is it likely that students who had been engaged in hunger strike tactics reminiscent of those adopted by Chinese students a year earlier would have been likely recruits for a fascist coup?

That the 'fascist coup' was, in part or in whole, organised from behind the scenes by the NSF to create a pretext for dealing with protesters and dissident soldiers must be a possibility. Every serious worker and student in Romania knows the history of Communist Party provocations, and that the RCP recruited fascist Iron Guard elements in the mid-1940s to strengthen itself in the struggle for power. Under the circumstances, Trotskyists or workers' groups in Romania should have intervened at an early stage among the students and intellectuals taking part in the anti-government protests, and won the best elements to the fight for a political revolution.

The deepening economic and political crisis in Romania, now cut off from a major trading partner, Iraq, will force wider sections of the working class onto the road of struggle against the NSF's restorationist programme and its co-existence with reactionary capitalist parties.

Workers must establish factory committees to take control of production and purge workplaces of Stalinist bureaucrats. A workers' militia must be organised to deal with the growing fascist menace, defend the ethnic peoples and respond to provocations from the NSF. The workers' militia must protect the rights of students and intellectuals to demonstrate and fight for academic freedom. By these practical steps the working class must establish the difference between bourgeois and workers' democracy. The road taken by the NSF and the freedoms it has granted to reactionary forces will not save the NSF from a real fascist coup. Only the organised working class can guarantee the defence of the gains made since the overthrow of capitalism, and of the concessions won since the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime. Part of that struggle must be for agitation among the soldiers for the establishment of rank-and-file committees to carry out a purge of the armed forces and counter fascist propaganda. Above all, no confidence can be placed by workers in the NSF, which has played host to reaction. A Trotskyist party must be built as a matter of urgency to complete the unfinished business of Romania's revolution.

## EDITORIAL

# Civil war, negotiation or revolution?

ONLY EIGHT months have passed since Nelson Mandela was released and the African National Congress unbanned. The tumultuous events since then have unleashed decades of pent-up contradictions. Mass illusions in a peaceful transition have been replaced by bloody conflict.

De Klerk's aim is to dissipate the revolutionary energies of the masses by playing off rival class forces against one another. By alternating concessions and repression, De Klerk hopes to negotiate a safe passage for South African capitalism. He knows that any settlement that did not have the ANC's seal of approval would break down before the ink was dry. The ANC leaders' response, therefore, holds the greatest dangers for South African workers if they are to rid themselves not only of apartheid, but of capitalism.

The release of Nelson Mandela has knocked on the head any lingering claims that he represented a militant alternative to the moderation of Oliver Tambo. Mandela has emerged from prison as the advocate not of revolution, but of reformed capitalism. His contradictory statements on 'armed struggle' and the role of the state simply underline that he is riding a tiger.

Within the camp of the ANC/UDF/SACP, two processes are at work. Workers and youth are flocking into the new legal structures, establishing new branches and eagerly anticipating the advent of majority rule.

At the same time, the most advanced layers, particularly among the youth, have already become deeply disillusioned with the ANC leadership, hostile to its concessions to the regime and alerted to the dangers of proceeding unarmed into a baited trap.

Mandela's release was carried out on the basis of a clear understanding with the National Party government. The ANC leadership has ingloriously striven to fulfil its side of the bargain, dropping any commitment to nationalisation and winding up the largely fictitious 'armed struggle'. The leadership of the main trade union confederation, COSATU, has faithfully tagged along, snuffing out the wave of strikes which broke out in the spring and arguing that 'the ANC can negotiate for us'.

From the moment that Mandela made the call to 'throw your weapons into the sea', tensions between the ANC's worker/youth base and its petty-bourgeois leadership sharpened. Faced with the regular incursions of state forces (under the guise of 'peacekeeping') and Inkatha thugs into the townships, youth have been repelled by the ANC leaders' reliance on the police and army. Factory workers in the Transvaal have voiced their anger at the ditching of armed struggle and the meetings with big business. The South African Youth Congress was moved to call for defiance of curfew restrictions in the townships, while the ANC leaders preached passivity.

The limited but definite growth of the Pan Africanist Congress, after years of stagnation, is indicative not of the correctness of the PAC's radical-sounding nationalist rhetoric, but of the rising discontent of those whose voice has been silenced. The role of the South African Communist Party has been to provide a 'socialist' cover to the projected settlement. Into the SACP have flowed many of the syndicalist trade union leaders, whose political limitations led them into a blind alley after the 1984-86 upsurge, and who have retreated ever since.

The dramatic escalation of Inkatha's attacks upon workers and youth in Natal and the spread of the township war to the rest of South Africa have added a further dangerous ingredient to the situation. The vicious attacks which left 800 dead in the course of August and September, together with Inkatha's attempt to break out of its Kwa Zulu base and become a national party, are designed to strengthen Chief Buthelezi's hand at the negotiating table, and have the ill-concealed support of the state forces. So, while one arm of the state is on 'peacekeeping' duties, the other is fomenting a limited civil war.

Why, then, does De Klerk go out of his way to woo the ANC, whilst at the same time using Inkatha to attack it? The answer lies in the particular stage De Klerk's balancing act has reached. In order to protect South African finance capital it is necessary to enrol the ANC into the status quo – even to the extent of an ANC-led majority government. But at the same time it is necessary to reassure big business, the farmers and the white middle class by clipping the ANC's wings – forcing it to make one concession after another. Just as the bogus discovery of a 'communist plot' earlier this year was designed to muzzle the left SACP current, so the shooting of SAYC general secretary Rapu Molekane during a police raid on his home in September was aimed against the youth.

The handling of the Stompie Moeketsi affair is another illustration of how De Klerk is calling the tune. Jerry Richardson remains on death row, while Winnie Mandela has had her trial – arising from related charges – postponed until February. The first action is directed against those who have expressed reservations about giving up the 'armed struggle', the second leaves the door open to the Mandelas themselves.

Despite the widespread hatred of her arrogant and brutal behaviour, black workers must oppose any state trial of Winnie Mandela. Only a workers' tribunal can be allowed to pass judgement on her.

Events have reached a decisive point. Both tribalist reaction and a negotiated settlement hang like nooses over the South African revolution. All negotiations with the government and Inkatha must be broken off. Workers' demands for arms must be answered. Street committees must be co-ordinated, with the perspective of building soviets, and the trade unions reconquered as class struggle organisations. The future of the working class hinges on the struggle for these demands, and depends upon the building of Trotskyist leadership.

During his recent visit to Britain, Prins Rajasooriya, a veteran of the Trotskyist movement in Sri Lanka, spoke to Bob Pitt.

Comrade Prins joined the Lanka Sama Samaja Party during the 1947 general strike, and subsequently became secretary of the Ceylon Federation of Labour and edited the party's English language paper *Samasamajist*. In 1964, when the LSSP voted in favour of joining a coalition government with the bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party, led by Mrs Bandaranaike, Prins was one of the revolutionary minority who broke from the LSSP. He is now the secretary of the Socialist League of Sri Lanka.

Comrade Prins's account sheds light on important aspects of the movement's history, and corrects some points of detail and interpretation in our own published study of the LSSP (see *Workers News*, Nos. 17 and 18). He takes up the story in 1960, a crucial year in the LSSP's descent into popular frontism and coalition politics.

In 1960 there were two elections. And there is one incident which is very clear in my mind. Just after the first election there was a party conference, and N.M. Perera presented a political resolution. Now the conference adopted NM's political line, but the oppositionists were elected to the Central Committee, and NM held a minority in the CC.

*His argument was that the LSSP should form a coalition government with the SLFP?*

We were in a majority, those in the Central Committee who opposed that. And we decided to get all those party members who were opposed to NM's line to a meeting. And they met at Osmund Jayaratne's house. At that meeting, Colvin de Silva presided, Leslie Goonewardene acted as secretary. Now we proposed that it was more important to save the party than to have some false sense of democracy. We had been elected to the majority in the leadership, we were not going to implement a political line which would ruin the party. We proposed that we should capture all the committees of the party, then we should defy the party line. And immediately it was Colvin who said, 'What nonsense. The party has decided, now you have to carry out the party line'. Now therefore by 1960 I think Colvin had already decided that if NM goes, he was going the same way.

*In the second general election that year, the SLFP secured such a big majority that it was not necessary for them to do a coalition deal with the LSSP, so N.M. Perera's policy became null and void in immediate practical terms.*

But already the perspective of forming a coalition government with the Bandaranaikes was in the mind of Dr Perera.

*There is no evidence that the International Secretariat of the Fourth International took this up. Here was one of their sections, the only one with a mass base, voting for a coalition with a bourgeois party. Surely this required a very, very sharp intervention?*

A very peculiar situation existed where the International was concerned. The whole thing was left in the hands of Leslie Goonewardene. I can't remember whether correspondence with the International was even tabled at the Politburo or Central Committee meetings. To that extent, they had shifted away and had begun to think of themselves as a national grouping, and not as part of the international working class. It was only if someone in the Central Committee raised the question of correspondence with the International that it was tabled and read out, and some decision taken. Otherwise it was usually Leslie who replied to international correspondence.

The International, too, right up to the time of the split of 1964, I say is guilty of serious dereliction of duty as an international leadership, which it claimed to be. It should have seen the coming shadows on the wall. The fact that the party was moving towards a People's Front and coalition with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party should have been seen by the international leadership. But right up to the 1964 party conference there was no attempt made to intervene actively, to ask the party: 'Where are you going? Have you discussed these things? Have you discussed the literature that is available on this question of the People's Front in the party? What have you done to start a debate in the party, so that the rank and file is aware of where you are going?' If I was in the international leadership, I would have looked at it in that way. But nothing was done.

*The United Secretariat (as it had become) did give its support to the United Left Front, which the LSSP formed with the Communist Party and Philip Gunawardena's party in 1963. At the time, Edmund Samarakkody wrote a document bitterly opposing it. How would you evaluate the ULF?*

The United Left Front was objected to by all of us, for a number of reasons. You don't get together just to wave your flags together, and to smile at each other, and say we are all good fellows. You get together with certain political objectives in mind. This ULF was formed as a tactical step towards the forthcoming elections. Now what was the election programme? Or was it merely to divide up the parliamentary seats?

Now clearly there were political differences between Philip's organisation, the Communist Party and the LSSP. In 1956 Philip had formed the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna – People's United Front – with [SLFP leader] S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. And Philip was the author, as far as my memory goes, of a slogan which summarised the forces which were to be got together to form this People's United Front. His slogan was *Sanga, Veda, Guru, Govi, Kamkaru* – 'Priests, doctors, teachers, farmers, workers' – and he placed the working class last! A completely un-Marxist, opportunistic slogan. Philip was the first among the leading Trotskyists who went over to bourgeois nationalist politics. Also Philip was showing hostility on the Tamil minority question.

*This pact with a popular frontist, Sinhala chauvinist grouping like Philip's clearly cut across the 21 demands movement, a workers' united front which drew its power from the fact that it involved the Tamil plantation workers' unions.*

That's right. The 21 demands question was the time that I was sent to China. I know that

this movement held one of the biggest meetings on Galle Face Green, like the Hartal meeting. There were three occasions – the assassination of Ghandi, the Great Hartal and the 21 demands question – when there were enormous meetings on Galle Face. But at that meeting I was not in the country, even though I was one of the joint secretaries of the 21 demands movement.

*So your evaluation of the ULF would be thoroughly negative?*

Oh yes. It was arrived at in an unprincipled way, in a clearly opportunistic way.

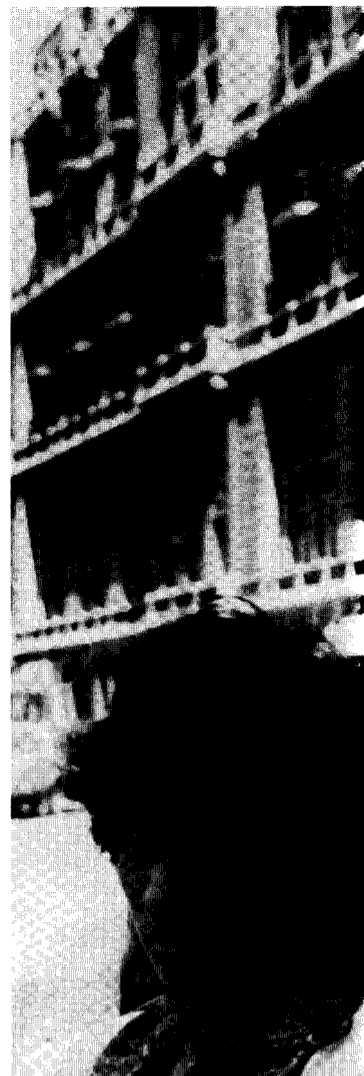
*Could I ask you about your relations with one G. Healy? In an article published in 'Spartacist', Edmund*

*Samarakkody states that you were part of a 'Healyite' group which existed in the LSSP prior to the 1964 split. Is there any truth in that?*

I have always had cordial relations with Edmund, in spite of our political differences, but I must say that this is a totally unwarranted and completely untrue statement that Edmund made about me in *Spartacist*. I can describe what happened.

You see in 1964 I was still secretary of the LSSP trade union bureau. I was sent to Yugoslavia to represent the Federation of Labour at May Day. My sister telephoned me from here and sent me the fare to come to London. Now when I came here I met Mike Banda and Tony, who were in school with us. I knew that they were with Healy. I think they had their headquarters in Clapham, and I was taken there. And Healy tried his level best to keep me back in Britain to get me to join his political organisation, promising all kinds of things. In the last week before I left, I remember, Healy wanted me to address 23 meetings all over the country. But I don't take political decisions in that way, just because somebody is cordial and kind or speaks to me civilly. Political matters are very serious matters, and you have to give serious thought to them, analyse them and come to conclusions on your own. So I went back, and the 1964 party conference of the LSSP was approaching.

Before I left, Healy told me he was coming to Sri Lanka and he would come to the conference. And he wanted



A demonstration in London in July against

# Sri Lanka for

me first of all to get him into a good hotel. Because he was in fear of what might happen to him in Sri Lanka. You see, by that time Anil Moonesinghe, who was part of one of the state-capitalist organisations here, had come back there, and Healy was very, very anxious and suspicious about Anil Moonesinghe.

*Healy had tried, unsuccessfully, to have him expelled from the British section in 1950, because of his state-capitalist views.*

So Healy told me that Anil Moonesinghe might get the police to kidnap him, and therefore he was very anxious! So I met him at the airport and took him to a hotel, Galle Face Hotel, and left him there. He came to the conference and he wanted me to get him in, which I could not do, and in any case would not do. The party conference was not my private property, for me to smuggle somebody in. Now I don't know how anybody could interpret that to say that I therefore helped Healy to form a group of his own in Sri Lanka.

*Regarding Healy's role – there was no political preparation for his intervention at the conference, he just parachuted in?*

Yes. He had no contacts there. Nor did Mike and Tony Banda make any attempt to contact anybody there. They didn't write to the LSSP and ask permission to come to the conference. Nothing.

*It does seem like just an attempt to gatecrash the conference. If Healy and the International*



attacks by government troops on the Tamil population. The civil war in Sri Lanka is the tragic legacy of the LSSP betrayal

# nkka: the fight Trotskyism

**Committee had taken their international obligations seriously, they would have intervened long before 1964.**

Nothing was done. I know this for a fact. Healy did send his publications. These were available. The documents concerning the Left Opposition in Russia, they were in an edition published by Healy. I don't know whether they came direct through the party or whether they came to [R.S.] Bhagavan.

**What about Pierre Frank, who spoke on behalf of the United Secretariat at the 1964 conference. Did he make any impact at all?**

Pierre Frank was a rather ineffectual individual. Not a good speaker, and by that time he was an old man. I don't think that had much of an impact. I don't think it turned a single person in the hall.

**I believe Pierre Frank called for a ULF government, which was supported by none of the tendencies in the LSSP. So that proposal must have fallen on stony ground.**

In any case, there was no practical basis for the formation of a ULF government. In 1964 there was Mrs Bandaranaike in power. And she said: 'My government is being throttled by the Samasamajists. Day in and day out strikes. We must get the co-operation of these people, get them to come and help us in our march towards socialism.' Those are the words she used. Philip Gunawardena was nowhere in sight. Not in the government. Pierre Frank's formula had no

basis. No general election was due. So how were you going to form a ULF government?

**When the conference voted in favour of coalition, and the minority marched out to form the LSSP (Revolutionary), what forces were you able to take with you?**

You see when the split became inevitable, and we saw they were going through with this, we looked upon Edmund as the senior politician to give the lead. But, looking back, I'm sorry to say that the lead was not forthcoming. It was very clear as to how the party was going to develop, but no attempt was made to get the opposition together, and there was a lot of confusion. When we broke, you might say that those who broke were divided into two. Edmund had a group around him at that time, which later functioned as an unofficial faction after the split. But people like us were not included in that group. A suggestion was made that we form a faction. Now thinking back, it might have been a good thing if long before the conference we had decided to act as a faction. We might have been able to influence matters very much more. But proposals to form a faction were opposed.

Now we 159 broke, and there were political differences between those who broke. The only thing in common was that everybody was against the LSSP forming a coalition government. So we came out, and for two years Edmund was the party secretary, and there was hardly anything done. So, it was inevitable, during those two years Osmund Jayaratne

went back, some of the good types who came with us went back to the LSSP. Martinus, who was secretary of the Postal Union, a young comrade, very good Sinhala speaker, very convincing – and he was one of them. He went back because he said nothing was happening. So Karlo [V. Karalasingham], Martinus, Osmund Jayaratne – people began to go back.

Then inside the formation that split away, it became very clear that Edmund had a faction which was functioning as a faction. And the members of his faction were Edmund, Meryl Fernando, D.S. Mallawarachchi, Karlo (until he and Edmund had differences) and Dharmasena. Now if Edmund wanted to have a faction there was nothing objectionable about it, but he should have discussed it openly, and had a decision made that he and the others were going to function as a faction. The time came when it was not possible to pass the minutes of the Central Committee; arguments went on for hours and hours!

**How would you evaluate the effect of the episode later in 1964, when the two LSSP(R) MPs, Edmund Samarakkody and Meryl Fernando, voted with the right wing against a proposal to nationalise the Lake House newspaper group, and thus brought down the coalition government?**

Our view which we held at that time, and which I think was correct even now, was that it was better for Lake House to be owned by a single capitalist rather than to be owned by the

bourgeois government. But where Edmund erred was in voting to bring down the coalition government. Because in that vote, they were with the Right. They were not going right in politics, but at that voting time they voted with the Right. I think that vote in parliament placed a nail in the coffin of the LSSP(R). Edmund had missed the target. He was thinking of the LSSP as the main target of attack – not the bourgeois party, not the bourgeois press, not the bourgeoisie. And it was that vote which was the fatal blow to the LSSP(R).

**I've heard it suggested that before the Lake House episode the LSSP(R) had maintained good relations with many of the LSSP rank and file, but that afterwards you found it impossible to get a hearing.**

I think that may be a bit of an exaggeration. There was very great resentment in the ranks of the LSSP at the time of the split. Because nobody believed that there would be a split. Most of the people who split knew that they were going to do so, but they had not met as a group and decided. And therefore it was not generally known that we were going to split. I think that the leadership succeeded in getting a whisper about this. While the conference was on, Colvin came to where we were in the hall and asked me 'What is happening? Are you all going to split?' I think that if we had announced that there was going to be a split, things might have been different. But that is how we split. And there

was great resentment in the rank and file. Because those who split were people who were doing very important work in the party. And I can remember one person describing the split in this way: 'The backbone has left the party.'

I cannot say that the rank and file was cordial to the entire LSSP(R). So you can't generalise in that way. But it is true that after the Lake House episode there was a lot of bad feeling, particularly against Edmund and Meryl, the two MPs who voted to bring down the coalition government.

**Your organisation underwent a further split in 1968 between Edmund and Bala Tampoe, the secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union. What was the basis of that?**

I don't have the documents now, but there was a conference, and there were two resolutions. Tampoe, and the group to which I belonged at that time, put forward a particular political line. Edmund put forward another line. Now Edmund's group lost at that conference. And he forced a split. He walked out. The moment he was defeated, he and those who followed him walked out of the conference.

**You remained in Tampoe's group?**

We remained behind and Tampoe was elected secretary of the group, and then we found the following. In fact there was no group. Everything was being done, even political decisions were being taken, inside the Mercantile Union. And we were being informed that such and such a statement had been made, or such and such a thing had been decided, until we began to protest. I was the assistant secretary of the LSSP(R), which was the official FI section at that time. And we had informed them of this situation, but they took no action. So we found that the group existed only in name. All its political decisions were taken in the trade union. We were informed afterwards.

Any attempt to build a group was obstructed by Tampoe. Even the recommendations of the FI were ignored by Tampoe. I think it is in one of Karlo's books that Mandel states, in the introduction, that the LSSP(R) contained the mighty Mercantile Union. They seemed to be more interested in numbers than in the principles that were being followed. When our conference came along, it was a very heated conference – Tampoe called me a police spy, a police spy of Felix Diaz Bandaranaike!

In between there were a lot of things. We were publishing a paper in Sinhala. This was at the time that the JVP was just beginning to come out into the open. One day I came for an editorial board meeting in the party office, and I found everybody coming down, including Tampoe. I said where are you going? 'Oh, the JVP is having a public meeting. We're going to that.' I said: 'Our meeting is more important than the JVP meeting, we are having an editorial board meeting, we are going to meet.' Now, normally, editorial board meetings were subjected to long harangues by Tampoe. He would start speaking and talk about everything under the sun. Well, this meeting didn't last 15 minutes! And they rushed off to the JVP meeting.

So the time came when it was impossible. After I came out of my detention – I was arrested during the 1971 JVP uprising and detained for six months – when I came out I found all the youth leagues we had formed, 14 youth leagues, had been dissolved by Tampoe. So there seemed to be no

point in remaining there. We weren't going to be camp followers of Tampoe, standard bearers for him. His idea was that the political group should be the political department of the Mercantile Union, supplying it with information, with articles on various things. It was an empty shell, and it still remains an empty shell. All decisions are taken in the union, because there nobody challenges Tampoe, nobody denies what he says, nobody contradicts him.

We informed the FI people of a whole series of incidents. But we are not the mighty Mercantile Union, and so we received no reply. None at all.

**So that was the point where you broke with the United Secretariat?**

That is right.

**How do you see the way forward for Trotskyists in Sri Lanka today?**

In Sri Lanka, the working class is splintered into a multiplicity of trade unions and organisations. For any kind of struggle, it is absolutely essential that the working class should move forward towards establishing a single trade union centre. In the political field, what passes for an opposition is completely ineffective and it is necessary to rebuild the political movement virtually from the grassroots. Because, as a result of JVP activity, many rights within the existing system, which the LSSP won through struggle, have disappeared under the UNP government. Therefore, today I would say there is no scope for the kind of activity undertaken by the LSSP in the past. Once the class is united, the chances are that the question of power will arise – there will be no intermediate stage.

For this, a new political leadership is absolutely necessary. The building of such a leadership requires the raising of the relevant political questions, and for these to be debated openly before the class in competition with the existing political leaderships. With the Communist Party, which has done nothing to examine what is happening in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. With the old LSSP, which pretends that it has gone forward since the day it began, without any kind of problem – there has never been any reassessment of what has happened. These things have to be raised and discussed so that young workers have the material with which to achieve a political maturity in their thinking. To assist this process, we have begun the publication of some of Trotsky's works. Before I left Sri Lanka, Trotsky's pamphlet on the bankruptcy of terrorism, which was published after the 1905 revolution in Russia, was being translated into Sinhala and Tamil.

As for the creation of a new political organisation, what form it will ultimately take, what name, this will be decided in practice. Our own organisation is called the Socialist League, but we are not treating that as some final or absolute quantity. We are quite prepared to have fraternal relations with other groups, and to work with them towards a common goal. Nor do we think that the ideas we ourselves put forward are sacred. We also are prepared to go forward as part of the working class, in co-operation with others, testing our views in the fire of experience. And we have plenty of fire in Sri Lanka at the moment!

**Comrade Prins concluded by stressing the need to establish relations with Trotskyists internationally, as part of the struggle to rebuild a revolutionary International.**

# DISCUSSION ARTICLE

The last issue of Workers News contained an article by Richard Price called 'How to rebuild the Fourth International—and how not to'. Below, we are pleased to publish a contribution to the discussion by **Al Richardson**. Although the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board, we hope they will stimulate further debate not only on historical questions, but also on what steps are necessary to rebuild a Trotskyist International. Comrade Richardson is the editor of the journal *Revolutionary History* and co-author with the late Sam Bornstein of two volumes on the history of British Trotskyism, 'Against the Stream' and 'War and the International'.

## Fourth International? What Fourth International?

Two chants from the Sorbonne, May 1968:

'Create One, Two, Three, Many Vietnams!'

—Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (Frank-Mandel group)

'Create One, Two, Three, Many Fourth Internationals!'

—French anarchist students.

A MONTH ago an article with the engaging title of 'US Socialist Workers Party Leaves Fourth International' appeared in *International Viewpoint*, the fortnightly journal of the Mandel current. The questions that immediately spring to mind from this are: What Socialist Workers Party? And what Fourth International?

The first is a transparent humbug, easily disposed of not only by the majority of the Trotskyists, but by time itself in the not-too-distant future. It had no longer anything in common but the name with the organisation of 1938, being a Stalinist dictator cult rising from that mixture of Third World guilt complex and romantic escapism that is so attractive to the more privileged layers of North American society. There are few historical problems about how an organisation that was once regarded as the epitome of Trotskyism became a branch office of the Cuban Tourist Board. But what reality still lies—or ever did—behind the other label? Here we are faced with not one obvious answer, but a large number of mutually contradictory ones.

Anyone who asks 'Will the real Fourth International please step forward?' should make sure he is not doing it in a crowded room, for many will respond and long and involved will be their answers. For we have not only two Fourth Internationals, Mandeliste and Posadist, but three International Committees of it, one International Trotskyist Committee, one Workers International to rebuild it, one International Workers League of it, one International Communist League, one League for a Revolutionary Communist International, one International Bureau for it, and an International Centre for Reconstructing it. As can be gathered from this catalogue, there is considerable doubt about whether the Fourth International exists or not, and even more doubt as to who represents it even if it does. But some things are not without any doubt. The few of these organisations that have any base among the working class have gained it as a result of syndicalist, Stalinist or Social Democratic politics, and their leaders have no authority among the other organisations, and often little inside their own. In this context, a comparison of the leadership of the International Left Opposition in the thirties and of the Fourth International after the war is most instructive. Whereas the former had not only the immense authority and prestige of Trotsky himself, and of four comrades who had been general secretaries of Communist Parties with experience of mass work (Chen Duxiu, Andreu Nin, Albert Treint and Pouliopoulos), and figures such as Jean Van Heijenoort, Pierre Naville, Alfred Rosmer, Ta Thu Thau, Felix Morrow, Walter Held and Franz Jakubowski, the post-war leadership was on an infinitely lower level. Maitan, Healy, Pablo and Lambert were the new generation, the best of whom was Mandel, and those that were left over from before the war

(Frank, Vereeken) had by no means played a constructive role in the formation of the Fourth International. None of these, or of any of their successors, has shown from his record of leadership within the working class movement that he is entitled to the leading role he assumes for himself. How are we to understand this most complicated development, especially as each of these organisations has its own potted little history of how it came about? We are not much better informed if we lay these accounts side by side, for we are left with deep doubts as to whether they are talking about the same subject at all.

Nor does chronology provide us with much of a clue. Even if we agree that Trotsky's international no longer exists, we are then left with the problem of when it ceased to do so. Here again, a multitude of answers are provided—1951, 1952, 1953, 1963, etc. . . . They all leave us dissatisfied and more confused. But one thing does stand out very clearly. The fact that we have such heated conflicts as to whether something exists or not, and if it does not, when it ceased to do so, shows that we are here concerned with mythology and not history. And this is the real question to which analysis should address itself. When did the Fourth International cease to be real and become only apparent?

Hegel explained long ago that for something to exist, it was necessary that it should exist. But the reverse can also be true. When something ceases to exist, the necessity for its existence has also gone. The argument advanced in this contribution is that the Fourth International was founded for a specific world crisis, that of 1939-45; that it was meant to regroup and rearm the revolutionary vanguard to maintain working class internationalism in the conditions of world war, and to take advantage of the revolutionary upsurge that would necessarily take place towards its end; that it was founded on a short-term perspective, and had no expectation of lingering on for over 50 years of capitalist boom; and that in the event the International was proclaimed, but never built, and that it did not, in fact, emerge from the Second World War. In order to remove cause for misunderstanding, it should be said at this point that this does not mean that I think that since the conditions for its expansion did not come about, and the developments of the last 52 years were unforeseen, that there is no longer any necessity for it. The need of the world working class for an international party to confront the bourgeoisie in every country is no less necessary, nor less pressing, than it ever was during the lifetime of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Internationals. But I do not think that any real contribution can be made to building it by claiming that it exists already, either in full or in embryo. The method adopted, that of a self-proclamation by a 'revolutionary leadership', cannot carry any conviction among anybody else for the simple reason that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky had behind them that unique authority that comes from revolutionary struggle when they formed the internationals associated with them, and it is precisely in this connection that their would-be followers have yet to prove themselves. As Trotsky himself once remarked, 'the new international cannot be created by means of encyclicals'.<sup>1</sup>

It is wise in this connection to remind ourselves of the context in

which the Fourth International came to be proclaimed. An increasing note of urgency creeps into Trotsky's writings from the mid-1930s onwards, precisely on this question of the Fourth International. Two years before it was launched, Trotsky regretted the failure of his movement to assume that name at its conference in 1936 (the so-called 'Geneva' Conference) in place of the more cumbersome 'Movement for the Fourth International'.<sup>2</sup> We should remember that Trotsky not only predicted the date of the declaration of the Second World War two years before it happened, but even the form that this would take when he affirmed that it would be British imperialism that would declare it.<sup>3</sup>

Trotsky was, of course, fully conversant with the arguments of those in his movement who opposed the proclamation of the new International, on the grounds that its predecessors had been set up against a background of rising class struggle, and had major forces of the working class of some countries already behind them.<sup>4</sup> Nor was he under any illusions as to the size, character and quality of the sections that would make up the new venture, at least to begin with.<sup>5</sup> But we should not forget in this context that it was Trotsky who had drafted the *Manifesto* of the Zimmerwald Conference of 1915, the delegates to which had been few enough to fit into four stagecoaches, but which was to lay the political basis for the Third International formed after the war. If we examine his concepts at the time we shall see that they form a necessary background to his thinking in 1938:

'We do not give in to despair over the fact that the War broke up the (2nd) International. History had already disposed of the International.'

'The revolutionary epoch will create new forms of organisation out of the inexhaustible resources of proletarian socialism, new forms that will be equal to the greatness of the new tasks. . . the day after tomorrow, millions will rise up under our banner.'<sup>6</sup>

This perspective took only four years to be realised with the founding of the Third International in 1919, and there can be little doubt that this formed the basis of Trotsky's thinking in 1938 when he claimed that 'during the next ten years the programme of the Fourth International will become the guide of millions'.<sup>7</sup> Thus Trotsky's programme deserves its description as 'Transitional', not only because of the methodology it employs—and we will come back to that—but because he believed that the war would create a transitional epoch which would inevitably pose the question of revolutionary power:

'I do not doubt that the new world war will provoke with absolute inevitability the world revolution and the collapse of the imperialist system. The imperialist governments of all countries are doing all that is possible to accelerate this collapse. It is only necessary that the world proletariat be not again taken unawares by the great events.'

'The task that the Fourth International puts before itself, I note in passing, is precisely the revolutionary preparation of the vanguard.'<sup>8</sup>

The perspective for the Fourth International, then, was a short-term one, and did not at all envisage a period going on for decades, but a world revolutionary opportunity springing from the conditions of war and arising at the end of it. A deep-going radicalisation did, of course, be-

gin with the fall of Mussolini in 1943, but the shattered sections of the Fourth International were hardly placed to take advantage of it, and by that time, as we shall see, they had already abandoned the essence of Trotsky's politics in any case.

Two points should be made about the programme of the Fourth International. Considerable space in it is devoted to the part played by Stalinism in the preparation of the world catastrophe, allowing us to consider Trotskyism as the Marxist critique of Stalinism, in the same way as Lenin's Marxism was a critique of mainstream social democracy. The other major feature is the elaboration of a system of 'transitional demands', demands posed in terms of the workers' consciousness, but which allow the posing of the question of power. These are couched in terms of organisations that already exist, and yet map out the revolutionary strategy necessary to deal with the crisis. They are crowned by the slogan of the workers' government:

'The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership—'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!'—is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals.'<sup>9</sup>

There is no sectarian ultimatum here, no standing aside from the mass organisations hoping to destroy them by denunciation alone, no posing of revolution in terms of hoped-for but not yet existing institutions, and no posing of small groups as an alternative to mass working class parties. Both of these propositions had been abandoned by the leadership of the Fourth International before it emerged from the war.

The first to go was the apparatus of leadership set up at the founding conference. In spite of the original decision to place the International centre in Europe, it was very quickly shifted to New York. When the war broke out the International Executive Committee was paralysed, and ceased to function during the struggle between the partisans of Cannon and Shachtman in the American section, as a majority of those upon it declared in favour of Shachtman.<sup>10</sup> On the initiative of the US, Canadian and Mexican sections, an emergency congress was convened on May 19-26, 1940, which accepted a thesis by Trotsky, 'Imperialist War and the World Proletarian Revolution'. Sam Gordon functioned as International Secretary during this emergency, to be replaced after a time by Jean Van Heijenoort. Only four programmatic documents were issued before the American landings on the continent, and the Secretariat became a sort of postbox attached to the SWP. As Natalia Trotsky observed, 'the IS and the IEC, which had been designated at the Emergency Conference of 1940, had only a vegetative political existence and led an almost non-existent organic activity during the whole war'.<sup>11</sup> Whilst American sailors took considerable risks as merchant seamen to maintain contact with the sections abroad, the activity of its leading cadre was concentrated upon putting together 'unifications' of diametrically opposed groupings, which showed their basis by fall-

ing apart almost immediately. This tack was tried successively upon the Argentine, British, Italian and Greek sections, all with the same result. A year after the war ended the American SWP handed over the apparatus to the new leadership that had emerged in Europe, probably with a feeling of relief.

While there can be no doubt of its personal bravery, this European leadership had by no means distinguished itself politically during the war. The French section, the POI, collapsed at the start of the war, and many of its first-rank leadership left the movement. Then it was reconstituted as the 'Comite pour la IVe Internationale' under the leadership of Marcel Hic and Yvan Craipeau. In falling back on the formulation for the IVth International it showed that it had, in effect, accepted the arguments of those who opposed its proclamation in 1938:

'The principles of the Fourth International constitute the political basis of our organisation. It is that which we have wanted to signalise precisely in its very name. But the mere existence of these principles is not sufficient to create an international. Just as a revolutionary party cannot be made to exist by decree; on the contrary, the indispensable condition of its existence is to be organically tied up with the working class—so one can really speak of an international only to the degree that it is based on parties well rooted in the working class. Whether or not we approve the creation, in 1938, of the PMRS (IVth), we agree in noting the fact that, if the principles of the Fourth International have today proved themselves more correct than ever, the practical basis, on the contrary, of the existence of the International have been in the last period constantly shrinking.'<sup>12</sup>

During the German invasion and occupation the POI assumed a political stance with a distinctly social patriotic colouration, at a time when the French working class itself was in anything but a defensive mood, and was still opposing the war under the influence of the French Communist Party.<sup>13</sup>

The POI was also one of the main components of the European Secretariat founded in 1943, and carried over its opportunism into the new organisation. This was most clearly marked during the clandestine European conference convened by this body in 1944, when its resolution administered equal rebukes to both of the French organisations, even though the POI had been tainted with social patriotism and the CCI had resolutely opposed it.<sup>14</sup> Pablo's own position as head of the European Secretariat was in some doubt, since neither he nor Vitsoris, the other Greek participant in the founding conference of the Fourth International, had ever been officially delegated by any Greek Trotskyist organisation.<sup>15</sup>

Not that the leadership of the American-based International Secretariat was any better. It very early on began to show those pronounced pro-Stalinist traits that its later supporters were to associate with 'Pabloite revisionism'. As the Red Army passed through Eastern Europe the journals of the SWP began to describe it as 'Trotsky's Red Army', in spite of its very different behaviour, and when *The Militant* of August 19, 1944, came out in favour of the Warsaw uprising and condemned the refusal of Stalin to support it, Cannon wrote to change the line

to support for the Russian position, claiming that the paper's editor had been misled by right-wing anti-Soviet propaganda.<sup>16</sup> In spite of the repeated protests of Natalia Trotsky at this obvious capitulation to Stalinism, it was not until June 1946 that the International Executive Committee reversed its position and came out in favour of the withdrawal of the Red Army from the countries of Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> Along with these obvious concessions to Stalinism developed a most unhealthy leader cult inside the SWP itself, that of James P. Cannon.<sup>18</sup>

Having abandoned Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary, they moved with some speed to replace his transitional politics with empty ultra-leftist sloganism. The strategy for intervening in Europe took the form of a resolution passed by the 15th anniversary plenum of the SWP in November 1943. There was no mention of Trotsky's main governmental transitional slogan, addressed to the parties claiming to stand for the working class, that they break with the bourgeoisie and take the power into their own hands. Yet all over Europe partisans following Stalinist or Social Democratic parties were in arms, with the opportunity to take power upon the collapse of the Hitlerite system. Instead, the resolution gave itself up to empty hopes, 'that the revolutionary wave may be so overwhelming as to enable the workers to take power immediately following the collapse of the fascist dictatorship'. And in spite of the revival of illusions in bourgeois democracy that decades of fascism had nurtured, there was no real attempt to frame transitional slogans of the usual sort (ie, constituent assembly etc) to be able to deal with them. The nearest that the resolution got was the clumsy formulation that 'appearing before the masses with the fundamental slogans of the Socialist United States of Europe and All Power to the Workers' Councils, the Trotskyists must also show themselves as the most resolute fighters for democratic demands'.<sup>19</sup> Even this was an advance upon the resolution as drafted, which denied the possibility of a period of bourgeois democracy at all, since 'given free scope, given their democratic rights, the European working class will not require overly much time to organise its revolutionary party, and to overthrow all of its capitalist oppressors'.<sup>20</sup> When the SWP began to grow for a brief period after the end of the war, the slogan for an American Labour Party was also allowed to slip quietly into the background, as the party leaders were convinced that they could leap over this necessary stage and were en route to becoming a mass force in their own right.<sup>21</sup>

The abandonment of transitional politics in practice left theory to develop into ultra-leftism. Their first reaction to the end of the war was to deny that it had actually happened, as none of Trotsky's prognoses had been confirmed. As Cannon put it:

'Trotsky predicted that the fate of the Soviet Union would be decided in the war. That remains our firm conviction. Only we disagree with some people who carelessly think that the war is over. The war has only passed through one stage and is now in the process of regroupment and reorganisation for the second. The war is not over, and the revolution which we said



would issue from the war in Europe is not taken off the agenda. It has only been delayed and postponed, primarily for lack of leadership, for lack of a sufficiently strong revolutionary party.<sup>22</sup>

Thus they denied the possibility of any extended period of bourgeois democracy in Europe; claimed that, far from the possibility of a boom, the whole economy was on a precipice and was due for stagnation and slump; claimed that France was under continuous Bonapartism since 1934, and failed to come out of illegality for some time as a result of it; claimed that there was a danger of the rise of fascism in Europe again, years later even analysed McCarthyism as a variety of it in the USA; for nearly four years denied that capitalism had been replaced by workers' states in Eastern Europe; and crowned it all by proclaiming that the USSR, whose armies were holding them down, had entered the most critical phase of its existence and was weaker than ever before.<sup>23</sup> Objective circumstances, so they thought, would produce a revolutionary wave to the left, so compensating for the weakness of the sections of the Fourth International, as well as the obvious weaknesses of their own theory. They forgot that all prognoses, even those of Trotsky, have a provisional character, and have to be tested and modified in the light of events:

'Every historical prognosis is always conditional, and the more concrete the prognosis the more conditional it is. A prognosis is not a promissory note which can be cashed on a given date. Prognosis outlines only the definite trends of the development.'<sup>24</sup>

It was partly their own politics, of course, that ensured that some of these prognoses never be tested at all.

What had, in fact, happened was that the stalemate neither Lenin nor Trotsky expected in 1921 for the Soviet Union and the capitalist world had been repeated on a higher, world scale, in 1945. Capitalism had not been overthrown by the revolution, but neither had the Soviet Union been overthrown by the counter-revolution. And whilst the Soviet Union no longer faced potential enemies of equal weight, who could to an extent be manoeuvred against each other, by compensation she had extended her own base to half of Europe, and was able to resist the pressure of the USA by the further gains of her allies in the east.

Apart from in Ceylon and Bolivia, and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, the fortunes of war had battered the fledgling sections of the new international into fragments. Two groups existed throughout the war, or developed during it, in the German exile, Denmark, the USA, Austria, Ceylon, China, Chile, Mexico and elsewhere; there were three in Greece and four in France and Argentina, whilst the British section scored the world record by producing five. By 1945 violent disagreements existed over the class nature of the Soviet state, the theory and practice of revolutionary defeatism, whether support should be given to the restoration of bourgeois democracy, and whether the Trotskyist movement should have taken part in the resistance. Chauvinism, defencism, pacifism and abstentionism had affected a large number of sections, leaving an incredible kaleidoscope of political positions by the time contact was re-established between them and with the centre at the end of the war.

There was clearly the need for a careful reassessment on the plane of theory to create the basis for unity and to rearm the movement for the new situation. Instead, political reconstruction of the international took a purely organisational form. The American SWP put all its prestige behind the new secretary, Pablo, whose relationship to his own movement in Greece was at best an equivocal one. As Cannon admitted:

'Our relations with the lead-

ership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. Nobody had ever heard of them. We helped to publicise the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this, first, because we had general agreement, and second because we realised that they needed our support. They had yet to gain authority, not only here but throughout the world. And the fact that the SWP supported them up and down the line greatly reinforced their position and helped them to do their great work.'<sup>25</sup>

Insisting in strident terms upon their authority, an imposing apparatus of world congresses, plenums, a secretariat, an IEC, commissions, and later continental bureaux was erected, modelled upon the Comintern at the height of its influence, and the French UCI was even threatened with a lawsuit to remove its claim to the Fourth International from the masthead of its journal.<sup>26</sup> Other Comintern practices inspired by Zinoviev's example also came to be adopted, in the vote-rigging of conferences, demotion of sections, arbitrary setting aside of leaderships, and the encouragement of secret factions on no discernible, or principled, basis.<sup>27</sup> By the time of the 'Second World Congress' of 1948 this movement bore next to no relationship with the Fourth International of 1938, in structure, in internal democracy, or in politics. In that year it discarded the ultra-leftism of its wartime and immediate post-war period, and had begun to generalise the SWP's pro-Stalinism of 1941-46 to cover Stalin's later imitators, Tito, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Zedong to begin with, and later Fidel Castro and others.

When Hitler came to power in Germany without a blow being struck, and with next to no reaction from the Comintern or accounting for what had happened, Trotsky described this as the Comintern's 'Fourth of August', meaning that it had shown its utter bankruptcy in the same way as the Second International and its strongest section, the SPD, in 1914. The events of 1914 and of 1933 each illuminated the international working class movement like a flash of lightning, and showed the reality beneath a facade whose rottenness had been developing for some time. The 'Fourth of August' for this self-styled Fourth International came in Bolivia in 1952, when in the midst of a situation of dual power the Bolivian POR, the leading party of its working class, with a parliamentary group and substantial trade union support, threw its weight behind the government.<sup>28</sup> It even justified its policy in terms that were almost verbally identical with those of Stalin and Kamanev in March 1917.<sup>29</sup> The only protest against this capitulation came from a local group of less than a dozen in one of the sections of the world Trotskyist movement, which was about to split within a year into two international alignments blaming each other for sectarianism and 'Pabloite revisionism'. Neither of the sides in this dispute made the slightest allusion to the Bolivian events of the year before, mainly because each hoped to recruit the POR to its side, and this was also the case with the failure of the Ceylonese LSSP a year later to take advantage of the Great Hartal - a general strike.<sup>30</sup>

It is thus impossible to give any weight at all to the argument that the split of 1953 was a crucial stage in the development of the Fourth International. Nor was it in any recognisable sense a principled split. The groups that were to set up the International Committee had all accepted the 'War-Revolution' thesis of the 'Third World Congress' of 1951, with all that this involved in its accommodation to Stalinism on a world scale, and in proclaiming an open split were in fact rejecting the international democratic



The Second World Congress in 1948. From left to right: Marcel Bleibtreu, Sai Santen, Pierre Frank, Jock Haston, Colvin de Silva and Munis

centralism of the movement that they claimed had been the Fourth International.<sup>31</sup> The International Committee had no designated international leadership, no international democratic centralist discipline, no common international discussion bulletin, and only one world congress in 1958 before its largest component had rejoined the International Secretariat. After this date a fraud of unity was maintained when the British section claimed that the Fourth International was still continuing in the International Committee, whereas the French group argued that it had in fact been destroyed by 'Pabloism' and had to be rebuilt. Each of these groups had a number of smaller sections in its sphere of influence, governed by a sort of non-aggression pact, until an inevitable split loomed up when one of them threatened to upset the balance by recruiting new national groups to its position.

The International Secretariat's pretence at being a Fourth International was no more successful. Disputes over Portugal and guerrilla warfare tended to show that whereas the European sections tail-ended Stalinism, the North American ones did the same with Social Democracy, and in Angola they took opposing sides in a guerrilla war. By the seventies there could be as many as three sympathising groups of this organisation in any given country, as each of these power blocs formed factions within the sphere of influence of the other. A further power bloc that developed rapidly in Latin America shifted uneasily from one of these supposed Fourth Internationals to the other, until it felt confident enough to set up in business on its own.

The history of this Fourth International since 1945 has thus little in common with that of a Marxist organisation, and is more an illustration of the Christian teaching of life after death.

NOTES

- L.D. Trotsky, 'The Problem of the New International', October 11, 1938, in 'Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938-39', New York, 1974, p.81.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'For' the Fourth International? No! The Fourth International', May 31, 1938, in 'The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution', 1977, p.167.
- In London, there is now an inclination to believe that the most dangerous period will come to a close by 1939, when the British armed forces, intended for the preservation of "peace", will have risen to a sufficient degree - L.D. Trotsky, 'On the Threshold of a New World War', August 9, 1937, in 'Writings 1936-37', New York, 1978, p.385.
- Cf the argument of the Polish delegates at the founding conference - references given in *Revolutionary History*, Vol.III, No.1, Summer 1990, p.17, n.19; these arguments were, of course, echoes of those used by Rosa Luxemburg at the formation of the Third International in 1919.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'Fighting Against the Stream', April 1939, in 'Writings 1938-39', pp.254-5; cf 'In Defence of Marxism', London, 1966, pp.134-6; 'The Social Composition of the Party', October 10, 1937, in 'Writings 1936-37', pp.488-91, etc.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'War and the International' (1915), Sri Lanka, 1971, pp.76-77.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'The Founding of the Fourth International', October 18, 1938, in 'Writings 1938-39', p.87.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'Only Revolution Can End War', March 18, 1939, in 'Writings 1938-39', p.232. Cf also: 'A Fresh Lesson', October 10, 1938, op. cit., p.78; 'Answers to the Questions of Lloyd Tupling', August 12, 1938, in 'Writings 1937-38', New York, 1976, p.415; 'In Defence of Marxism', pp.10, 18, 39, etc.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International', in 'The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution', p.134.
- 'In Defence of Marxism', p.203, note. The resident IEC contained Shachtman, Gould, C.L.R. James and Mario Pedrosa, all supporters of the Workers Party in this dispute.
- N. Trotsky, G. Munis and B. Peret, 'The Fourth International in Danger', Internal Bulletin of the RCP, June 27, 1947, p.7.
- 'Report on France by M(arcel) H(ic) and Y(van) C(raipeau)', August 7, 1940, in the Internal Bulletin 'Information Service of the Fourth International', 'France - Information and Discussion', February 18, 1941, p.7, section 2. The IEC resident in the USA not surprisingly described this position as 'a capitulation to centrism' (op. cit., p.8) in November 1940.
- Lutte Ouvriere, 'A Constant Opportunism', in *Revolutionary History*, Vol.I, No.3, Autumn 1988, pp.37-8; J. Roussel, 'Les enfants du prophete', Paris, 1970, p.32. Cf 'The pretenses invoked in a Stalinist manner by the POI, whereby they blame their own faults upon the masses, must be rejected with disgust. It is typical from this point of view that the organisations of the POI and CCI should ascribe the collapse of the organisations of the IVth International in France to the outbreak of the war, which had isolated the vanguard from the masses. Any revolutionary who did his job during the "Phoney War" knows that this is pure fantasy; on the contrary, never has contact with the working masses been more easy (and not only with the working masses), never have the masses been more disposed to accept revolutionary propaganda' ('Problems of the World Party of the Revolution and the Reconstruction of the Fourth International', exposés du cercle Leon Trotsky, February 28, 1966, in 'Documents on the History of the Fourth International', No.1, London, 1977, p.7).
- Ed. Prager, 'L'Internationale dans la guerre (1940-1946)', Vol.II of 'Les congrès de la IVe Internationale', Paris, 1981, pp.242-3. Cf Pierre Frank, 'The Fourth International', London, 1979, pp.65-7, and Mandel, op. cit., pp.179-80.
- Loukas Carliadis, 'Trotskyists and ArcheioMarxists in the Concentration Camps of the Metaxas Dictatorship', Part I, Athens, n.d., p.18; Part II, p.23.
- Max Shachtman, 'From the Bureaucratic Jungle', in *The New Internationalist*, Vol.XI, No.2, March 1945, pp.48-9. On Cannon's subsequent attempt to cover this up, cf Albert Goldman, 'It Is New But Not True', Internal Bulletin of the SWP, Vol.VII, No.1, March 1945, p.31.
- 'Resolution Adopted Unanimously by the IEC, June 1946, On the Withdrawal of Occupying Troops'. For Natalia's attitude, cf op. cit., n.16 above, pp.49-50. It need hardly be added that both the Polish and the Russian governments have now admitted that Stalin's actions in halting his army to allow Hitler to drown the revolt in blood were a question of deliberate policy - which must have occurred to all but the blind at the time.
- Cf Joseph Hansen, 'How the Trotskyists Went to Jail', in 'Why We Are in Prison', March 1944, p.42, etc.
- 'Resolution of the 15th Anniversary plenum on Perspectives and Tasks of the Coming European Revolution', *Fourth International*, Vol.IV, No.11, December 1943, p.331.
- Felix Morrow, 'Report to the Plenum', October 1943 in the Internal Bulletin of the SWP, Vol.VI, No.4, September 1944, p.29.
- For the illusions entertained by the SWP at this time, cf Tim Wohlforth, 'The Struggle for Marxism in the United States', New York, 1971, pp.98-103. In his report on the American Theses of October 4, 1946, Cannon even toys with the idea that 'if the growth of a labor party is delayed too long and the SWP continues to grow and expand, another development is possible' - 'The Struggle for Socialism in the American Century', New York, 1977, p.280.
- Speech delivered at the 28th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, in *The Militant*, November 17, 1945. ('The Struggle for Socialism in the American Century', p.200.)
- These examples are mostly taken from 'War and the International', London, 1986, pp.172-5, 177, etc, where references are given. Cf also, Peter Jenkins, 'Where Trotskyism Got Lost', Nottingham, 1977.
- L.D. Trotsky, 'In Defence of Marxism', p.218.
- J.P. Cannon, 'Internationalism and the SWP', May 18, 1953, in 'Speeches to the Party', New York, 1973, p.73.
- Union Communiste, 'Problems of the World Party of the Revolution and the Reconstruction of the Fourth International', London, 1977, p.11.
- For but a few examples of these, cf 'War and the International', pp.215, 195-6 and 160, 197, etc., with references; Bob Pitt, 'The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy', in *Workers News*, Parts II, III, IV, etc.
- Cf Sam Ryan, 'Revolution Betrayed: Bolivia 1953' in the *International Bulletin of the Revolutionary Communist League*, No.III, Spring 1971, pp.9-24; 'Documents of the Vern-Ryan Tendency, 1950-1953', Communist Publishers, USA; 'Bolivia: The Revolution the "Fourth International" Betrayed', League for a Revolutionary Party, USA.
- 'The POR began by justifiably granting critical support to the MNR government . . . The POR limits its support and sharpens its criticism insofar as the government proves itself incapable of fulfilling the national-democratic programme of the revolution, insofar as it hesitates, capitulates, indirectly plays the game of imperialism and reaction, prepares to betray and for this reason tries to harry and deride the revolutionaries' - *Fourth International*, February 1953, p.16. Compare L.D. Trotsky, 'History of the Russian Revolution', London, 1965, p.305.
- Cf Colvin R. de Silva, 'Hartal', in *Revolutionary History*, Vol.II, No.I, pp.38-43.
- As was, in fact, pointed out by the other faction. Cf 'Letter from the Bureau of the International Secretariat to the Leaderships of All Sections', November 15, 1953, in 'Trotskyism Versus Revisionism', Vol.I, London, 1974, pp.357-62; 'In Defence of the Fourth International', adopted by the 14th Plenum of the IEC, December 1953.

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by Bob Pitt

## PART SIX

ALTHOUGH in 1953 the leaders of the US Socialist Workers Party put themselves forward as the defenders of 'orthodox Trotskyism' against 'Pabloite revisionism', the SWP had in fact already established a lengthy record of political support for Pablo. The American section had backed the turn towards Tito in 1948, endorsed with only minor reservations the decisions of the 1951 Third World Congress, and in 1952 had assisted Pablo in expelling the recalcitrant majority of the French section, against whom Cannon had defended Pablo's political positions as 'completely Trotskyist'.<sup>1</sup> It was only when a minority faction in the SWP, with the backing of the Paris-based International Secretariat, began to push for this pro-Stalinist line to be implemented in the United States that the party leaders moved into opposition.

If the SWP's resistance to Pablo had been minimal, Gerry Healy's had been non-existent. Yet, when the SWP leadership came into conflict with Pablo, Healy did not hesitate to align himself with the Americans. Healy's stand can only be explained as the result of organisational loyalty to the SWP, and to James P. Cannon in particular. It was, after all, the SWP leaders who had raised Healy from his position of ignominy within the Workers International League in 1943, and had guided his subsequent struggle for control of the British section. The publication of *Socialist Outlook*, which by 1952 had become a professional-looking weekly, would have been impossible without financial backing from the SWP.<sup>2</sup> Healy was even dependent on the US Trotskyist movement for his personal political style, which he had developed into a crude caricature of Cannon, complete with imitation American accent.

In aligning himself with the SWP majority, Healy performed his usual trick of simply shifting his political position without explanation or self-criticism. At the IEC Plenum of May 1953, during discussion of a draft resolution on Stalinism, Healy suddenly announced that it would be a mistake to become over-optimistic about developments in the Stalinist parties following Stalin's death, citing the example of Yugoslavia and the failure to anticipate Tito's capitulation to imperialism over the Korean war.<sup>3</sup> This mild criticism provoked an angry response from Pablo, who told Healy that he should refrain from expressing views which were contrary to the political line of the Interna-

tional. And at the end of the meeting the other British delegate, *Socialist Outlook* editor John Lawrence, was taken away by Pablo for a two-hour talk.<sup>4</sup> The method which had been used against Haston and Grant – adopting a member of the British section as the FI's 'man', and organising a faction around him against the established leadership – was now to be employed against Healy himself.

Healy, however, completely misjudged the intensity of the factional struggle which was about to erupt in the International. He saw no incompatibility between acting as an advocate for Cannon and maintaining comradely relations with Pablo, whose support for the SWP minority Healy explained as a consequence of political impatience, due to lack of experience in leading a national section. Healy was convinced that Pablo could be dissuaded from making 'serious errors' in relation to the SWP.<sup>5</sup> As for the British section, Healy envisaged that no trouble would arise – for, as he wrote with characteristic disregard for the facts, 'we have blasted conciliation to Stalinism here for some time now'.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after the May IEC Plenum, Healy nevertheless took the precaution of having the Executive Committee of the British section (now known as the 'Group') elect him as its representative on the IS, in place of Lawrence.<sup>7</sup> But Healy proved politically incapable of using this position to challenge the line of the International's leadership. In July, Healy agreed that 'The Rise and Decline of Stalinism', Pablo's draft document for the forthcoming Fourth World Congress, should be sent out to the sections in the name of the IS, and failed to record any differences with its political adaptation to 'liberalising' tendencies in the Stalinist bureaucracy.<sup>8</sup> And when Pablo's document was discussed by the Group's EC in August, Healy stated only that he would argue on the National Committee that certain changes were necessary in order to 'strengthen it'.<sup>9</sup>

As far as Pablo was concerned, even this represented an unacceptable display of independence on Healy's part, and in early September Healy was summoned to Paris, where he was put under heavy pressure to break with the SWP leadership. It was this experience, following as it did the emergence within the Group of an organised Pabloite faction headed by Lawrence, Hilda Lane, Fred Emmett and Audrey Wise, which brought

# The rise and fall of Gerry Healy



The editorial board of *Socialist Outlook*. From left to right: Gerry Healy, Tom Braddock, Jack Stanley and John Lawrence

home to Healy that a fight was unavoidable. Pablo, only yesterday a man whom Healy had felt 'extremely close to' and had 'grown to like considerably', was now found to embody 'all the old cominternist vices'. Pablo's methods, so Healy told Cannon, 'sickened me to the point that it almost made me physically unwell'. He complained bitterly that the FI leadership wanted 'an International of spineless creatures who will accept revisionism to the point where they become the left cover for Stalinism'.<sup>10</sup>

As this was precisely the role which Healy himself had performed over the past few years, his modest claim that he was 'engaged in the greatest struggle in the whole history of our movement to defend our basic principles'<sup>11</sup> scarcely carried much conviction. In the absence of a critical evaluation of his own contribution to the Fourth International's political degeneration, the fight which Healy proceeded to wage in the Group had the character of crude factional manoeuvring, devoid of political principle.

Thus, at the Group's NC meeting later in September, Healy used as a pretext for his attack on Pablo's supporters the publication in *Socialist Outlook* of an article arguing that a future world war would be 'an openly-declared war of ideologies. Communism against capitalism, with the world split into two warring camps'. This, the very same line which he himself had been instrumental in imposing on the British section, was now held up by Healy as evidence that the 'whole Pablo gang are capitulatory from top to bottom'.<sup>12</sup> And although Healy persuaded the NC to endorse a series of amendments to 'The Rise and Decline of Stalinism', one member of Healy's faction – Harry Ratner – recalls that he was 'at first sight rather impressed by Pablo's thinking' and 'was not at all convinced when Healy and others said it would open the road to Stalinism'.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that Healy found difficulty getting an NC majority for his organisational measures against the Pabloites. When he proposed to remove Emmett from his full-time post on the staff of *Socialist Outlook* and replace him with Bill Hunter, both Ratner and Bob Pennington indicated that they would vote against this, and Healy was forced to adjourn the meeting until the next day in order to bully his erring supporters into

accepting Emmett's sacking.<sup>14</sup>

While organising with characteristic belligerence in order to maintain his hold over the British section, Healy still believed that the dispute could be contained within a united International. The SWP leaders, however, had other ideas. Ignoring a succession of letters from Healy urging that they should campaign for an Emergency FI Conference rather than provoke a split,<sup>15</sup> in November 1953 the SWP issued the famous Open Letter, publicly denouncing Pablo for having betrayed the Trotskyist programme and declaring that 'no compromise is possible either politically or organisationally' with the FI leadership in Paris.<sup>16</sup> The split was formalised a week later with the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International, comprising the US, British and Swiss sections of the FI, together with the expelled majority of the French section.

Confronted with this *fait accompli* by the SWP, Healy moved quickly to carry out a purge in the Group. In this he was assisted by Pablo giving his British followers the International's authority to defy the discipline of the national section. On November 20, the NC suspended Lawrence, Emmett and four others from the organisation, and the following day the Pabloites announced the formation of a new 'official' section of the FI.<sup>17</sup> Healy and Pablo between them thus succeeded in imposing a split on the British Trotskyists before a conference was held or a discussion carried out in the ranks. The result was that many members took sides because of personal allegiances rather than on a political basis.<sup>18</sup>

The low political level of this struggle was reflected in *Socialist Outlook*. The not exactly world-historic issue around which the Healyites and Pabloites waged their initial public fight was Lawrence's proposal to launch a petition demanding that the Tory government resign.<sup>19</sup> Although Healy rightly rejected this idea on the grounds that 'You can't fight the Tories with bits of paper', and accused the Pabloites of capitulation to reformism,<sup>20</sup> he ignored his own role in generating reformist illusions among British Trotskyists. And the 'mass working class action' which Healy counterposed to the circulation of petitions was discredited by the familiar 'Healyite' practice of exagger-

ating the existing level of consciousness in the working class. 'Already many workers are asking,' Healy supporter Jim Allen insisted, 'not "will there be a general strike" but "when?"'.<sup>21</sup>

In March 1954, Lawrence utilised a review of Isaac Deutscher's Trotsky biography to push a classically Pabloite line on the Chinese revolution. The theory of permanent revolution, Lawrence asserted, had found 'confirmation in China where the Communist Party is . . . compelled to undertake a *socialist revolution* in order to solve the bourgeois tasks of national independence and freedom from landlordism'. Mao Tse-tung, according to Lawrence, was acting – 'although not consciously' – as a Trotskyist.<sup>22</sup> Yet, instead of Healy's faction taking the opportunity to publicly lash this manifestation of 'Pabloite revisionism', it was left to Mike Kidron of the state-capitalist Socialist Review Group to expose Mao's record as a butcher of Trotskyists.<sup>23</sup> Healy's silence was understandable. At the IEC Eleventh Plenum of April 1952, he himself had argued vigorously for a resolution on the Chinese revolution which incorporated an identical analysis to that now put forward by Lawrence.<sup>24</sup>

If any clear political differences emerged during the course of the dispute, this was largely because of the Pabloites' speedy evolution towards openly Stalinist positions. Thus Healy was able to make some correct points against Lawrence's attitude towards the popular frontist Vienna Peace Congress.<sup>25</sup> But such political questions took second place to the organisational battle for control of *Socialist Outlook*, which involved winning a majority among the shareholders of the Labour Publishing Society, the paper's legal owner. At the LPS annual general meeting in May 1954, the Healy faction were able to defeat the Pabloites and take over the management committee and editorial board.<sup>26</sup> This victory, which is presented in Healyite mythology as a major political triumph over Pabloism,<sup>27</sup> is put into perspective by Harry Ratner, who points out that the result 'did not necessarily reflect the real measure of support for the respective camps . . . . It just happened that we were better organised, worked harder and got round to more people'.<sup>28</sup>

During the struggle of 1953-

54, not a single political document against 'Pabloism' was produced by the British section. Nor was any attempt made to analyse the origins of the Fourth International's political crisis. Indeed, throughout the fight with Pablo, Healy – following his mentors in the SWP – continued to protest his adherence to the very Third World Congress decisions on which the Pabloites' policies were so evidently based. In the face of such confusion and downright political dishonesty, the 1953 split in the International, far from upholding the continuity of Trotskyism, could serve only to deepen the political disorientation of the movement.

## To be continued

### Notes

- International Committee Documents, SWP, 1974, p.24.
- The SWP reportedly put up the then considerable sum of £5,000 to finance the paper: Charles Van Gelderen, interviewed by Al Richardson, October 4, 1979. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
- Not that Healy accepted any responsibility for the FI's adaptation to Titoism. According to him, it was all the fault of the French and the IS. In Britain, by complete contrast, the policy had been carried out 'on the basis of traditional Bolshevik experience': IC Documents, p.63.
- Ibid., p.60, 170.
- 'Pablo suffers badly from isolation in Paris,' Healy explained to Cannon. 'It really is impossible to hold an international centre together when you have no national section to help it.' Healy was apparently oblivious to the fact that Pablo's 'isolation' was due to his having expelled, with Healy's support, the majority of French Trotskyists from the FI: *ibid.*, p.51.
- Ibid., p.52.
- Ibid., pp.60-1.
- Ibid., p.100.
- Ibid., p.102.
- Ibid., pp.51, 108-9.
- Ibid., p.109.
- Ibid., p.110.
- Harry Ratner, interviewed by Sam Bornstein, February 4, 1987. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
- Ibid.
- Healy's letters of November 9, 12 and 13, 1953, have never been published. For the SWP's reply, see *ibid.*, pp.125-7.
- Ibid., p.137.
- Ibid., p.176.
- This point is underlined by Lawrence supporter Alex Acheson, interviewed by Al Richardson, June 12, 1986. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
- This resulted in the immortal headline: 'The Tories Must Resign, Let's Have a Petition to Get 'Em Out!': *Socialist Outlook*, November 27, 1953.
- Ratner interview.
- Socialist Outlook*, January 8, 1954.
- Ibid., March 12, 1954.
- Ibid., March 26, 1954.
- 'Tasks of the Fourth International', May 1990, pp.25-6; Peng Shu-tse, 'The Chinese Communist Party in Power', *Pathfinder*, 1980, p.138.
- Socialist Outlook*, April 9, 1954.
- Ibid., May 21, 1954.
- Cf Bill Hunter's article in *Labour Review*, December 1983.
- Ratner interview.

## FUNDS

Most workers in what was formerly East Germany did not take any part in the 'unification' celebrations of October 2-3. With good reason: one in five of them are now either unemployed, on short time or laid off as a direct result of the capitalist restoration programme. The flag-waving ceremony and firework display outside the Reichstag in Berlin took place behind a heavy cordon of riot police, who later battled with anarchists opposed to the takeover of the GDR on the grounds that 'only the rich would benefit'. There is clearly an urgent need for Trotskyists to intervene in the situation in Germany and throughout eastern Europe.

The Workers International

League has already made important links with Trotskyists in other countries. Our work in Europe and elsewhere is directed towards constructing a democratic centralist international Trotskyist tendency, the basis for the rebuilding of the Fourth International. But in order to carry out this important aspect of our work, we need money. Please make the largest donation possible to the **£10,000 Building Fund**, which stands at £1,966.40, as well as supporting the **£300 Monthly Fund** for our day-to-day expenses in bringing out *Workers News*. Post to:

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# The bizarre and the banal

**Materialist Dialectics and the Political Revolution**  
by G Healy. The Marxist Publishing Co-operative, £6.95

**Communist Society and Marxist Theory**  
by Cyril Smith. Index Books, £4.95

Review by Charlie Cook

THE RECENT posthumous publication of a new book of T.G. Healy's 'philosophical' writings is not a major event – but it does allow us to see how the fragments of the once powerful Workers Revolutionary Party are now riding its old hobby horse.

The WRP was known for a curious obsession with the role of 'Marxist Philosophy' in the 'building of revolutionary leadership'. Judging by these two titles, little has changed.

The late Mr Healy's book is, to those who read his pieces in *News Line*, more of the same incomprehensible claptrap designed to reassure his followers that they alone have the key to understanding the world. Provided, that is, they give their allegiance to their leader.

But it would be churlish to deny Healy any claim to distinction. Plagiarism is common enough, but it is a rare bird who plagiarises so openly as to defuse the charge of dishonesty. And it is unusual to lift passages from other works but to get their meaning wrong. Turn, for example, to page 91:

'It is the tradition that on the first Sunday at the opening of the annual Labour Party Conference, the reformist leaders always arrange to be photographed attending church: whilst the "lefts" will wait to do "their own thing" at mid-morning meetings when the church service is over. Thus the method of subjective idealist neo-Kantianism relates to neo-Thomism. Thomas Aquinas, founder of neo-Thomism, developed the theological form containing a subjective idealist content. Neo-Thomists regard "God" as the prime cause of the supernatural forces which govern all individual behaviour. Any influence by the practical activity of men and women in changing the world is resolutely excluded.' (Punctuation in original, emphasis added.)

Note the non-sequitur concealed with 'Thus'. For the

moment, live with the fact that Thomas Aquinas died in 1274 (his doctrine being called Thomism) but that the revival of his philosophy (Neo-Thomism) took place in the late nineteenth century.

After 600 years of sanctity, even good St Tommy had lost interest in founding philosophical movements. Turn instead to the Progress Publishers' *Dictionary of Philosophy* and skim the entry under 'Neo-Thomism'. Do not be baffled by their reference to it as objective idealism: you will feel on safer ground further down:

'The neo-Thomist speculative constructions result in recognising *God as the prime cause of being* and the prime foundation of philosophical categories . . . the process of history depends upon *supernatural forces, which govern every individual's behaviour. By this any possibility of man's active influence on world history is actually excluded.*' (My emphasis.)

Suffice it to say that this is typical. The book is reactionary rubbish which will repel any serious student from Marxism, from philosophy or from both. Unlike Kant, Healy's writings have not been proscribed by the Catholic Church.

Your suspicious reviewer has found that chunks of the Stalinist 'Dictionary' are lifted from Bertrand Russell's 'History of Western Philosophy'. The laudatory introduction to Healy's book by Ms V. Redgrave repeats the old lie about Healy as a Comintern courier. Redgrave was on the Committee of 100 with Russell in the 1950s . . . Russell was plagiarised by the Stalinists . . . who were plagiarised by former Comintern man Healy . . . It's a small world.

Healy was possibly the first philosopher since Plato to have had built for him, if not an academy, then at least a college for him to propound



Abandon your senses, all ye who enter here – the WRP's College of 'Marxist' Education

his nonsense. It seems reasonable therefore that those who apologised for him over the years should make some kind of reckoning in a book on philosophy.

No need it seems. Beyond a couple of newspaper articles in 1985 by people who no longer feature in their ranks, the WRP/Workers Press has published nothing on this topic. Cyril Smith's essay written in 1987 can be reasonably regarded therefore as 'State of the Art'. He opens by stating clearly his central point:

'The argument of this essay might appear either obvious or paradoxical. It is that Marx's conception of the possibility and necessity of a communist society is central to the whole body of Marxism.'

That's not an argument, by the way, it's a proposition. Cyril Smith's arguments proving the proposition are either good or original but not both.

You get the usual bunch of howlers which feature in books written to flatter or reassure rather than elucidate. Turn to page three:

'The various brands of latter-day Stalinism identify ownership by a bureaucratic state apparatus . . . with "socialism" (which is a funny definition of the Soviet Union from an opponent of state capitalist theories).

Then go to page 105 where he summarises the 'conception of the continuity of bolshevism to which we have been working':

'The struggle for the emancipation of the working class, culminating in the smashing of the bourgeois state and the establishment of workers' states, is the struggle for the emancipation of the whole of society from the power of capital, but this truth is hidden by the ruling ideology.'

The various brands of latter-day Stalinism are not the only ones to confuse a state with the withering away of a state, it seems. My advice is that if you want to contradict yourself, do so at either end of a long book – it's harder to spot.

Or go to page 88: 'The bourgeoisie . . . brought into being the proletariat, its own gravediggers. (Those days have long gone, of course. In the twentieth century there is no part of the world, however backward, where the capitalist class can

perform such a role.)'

The working class grows every day (Korea, South Africa, Latin America, Indonesia, etc). If the bourgeoisie is not bringing these proletarians 'into being', who is?

But these gaffs probably reflect a ducking round disputes within his group, so perhaps we should ignore them.

How does he argue his central point? He doesn't. He makes a string of assertions that have no connection, and states his proposition so many times that you might just miss that he doesn't argue it at all.

'The contradictions of capitalism, so often talked about by Marxists, must therefore never be seen as anything other than the birth pangs of communism.' (Page 38.)

'The history of the past few thousand years is indeed "the history of class struggle". But this can only be comprehended when that history, with all its oppression and exploitation, reveals itself to have been progressively preparing the ground for communism – the negation of class antagonism.' (Page 87.)

'The way to human freedom – communism – is through the necessity of the proletarian revolution.' (Page 86.)

And now we bring you (drum roll, stage left) the new translation.

The problem is, apparently, that Marx was never, in certain crucial passages, correctly translated into English. Here is a real problem! Engels, Samuel Moore, Aveling and Marx's daughter – not to mention later translators – got it all wrong. Cyril Smith – not known outside his family as a translator – puts it all to right. High Anglican Marxism is rescued.

If you find this hard to credit, skim the footnotes at the chapter ends. If you are thorough, you will go back to the originals and find that Cyril Smith has added nothing new.

So we have the gaff, the non-sequitur and the mis-translation. Apart from that, as they say, how did you enjoy the rest of the book?

The third of the four chapters is called 'Four Problems of Philosophy'. I want to add a fifth – the ignorance and banality of many 'Marxist' commentators. There is no space for – and probably little

interest in – a detailed refutation of Smith's nonsense.

But perhaps this little review will sting a reply stating that I have attacked 'the whole basis of Marxism' and your editor will ask me back.

In summary, Healy's book is more of the same, Smith's is superficially more serious. But at its best it does no more than ineptly retread over old ground for the benefit of a few friends. When dealing with

philosophy, it is only one more volume that misrepresents and mystifies this important subject.

If you take out half a dozen lines in over 100 pages of discussion on proletarian revolution in general, you would be hard put to discover that there had been a revolution this century. To do a little plagiarising of my own: 'Armed with Marxism, who needs facts?'

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## Pablo's man

To the Editor,  
Workers News

In your well-researched assessment of Gerry Healy in the period leading up to the 1953 split, not enough emphasis is given to the central fact that Healy, far from having opposed Pablo and 'Pabloism' (ie, the International Secretariat and the International Executive Committee elected by the Third World Congress of 1951) was, in fact, its most vociferous and energetic supporter.

Healy was Pablo's principal lieutenant in Britain right up to February 1953, and played an active, not a passive, part in expelling the PCI French majority led by Lambert. This did not 'prevent' him from following an unprincipled alliance with the very people he had been instrumental in expelling after the 1953 split.

More significant still is the deafening silence of the 'warriors against Pabloism' before the split in the columns of the *Socialist Outlook*. Not a single critical word is to be found from any member of the 'quadrumvi-

rate' (Healy, Hunter, Banda, Mercer) – who took over the editorial board of the *Socialist Outlook* after the split – on the subject of the Stalinist trials in Eastern Europe and the Soviet bloc. These were described in the columns of the journal as 'the socialist states' (where Pablo had more modestly labelled them 'non-capitalist states' (see 'Capitalism or socialism – the coming world showdown' by M. Pablo, advertised in the *Socialist Outlook*). Far from denouncing the mounting crescendo of Stalinist frame-up trials, they remained curiously silent. The first mention of the Slansky trials of November 1952 came in a damning indictment of the frame-up character of these show trials in an article written not by Healy but by John Lawrence!

The historical record has been turned on its head by the Healyite school of falsification. The correction of this record is a necessary element in rearming our comrades for the tasks ahead. Carry on the good work!

Ellis Hillman



## SUPPORT TRAFALGAR SQUARE DEFENDANTS

SEVEN MONTHS after the Battle of Trafalgar Square, the leadership of the Labour movement has continued to turn its back on more than 500 demonstrators arrested and over 30 imprisoned after the police onslaught.

Those who were present on the 200,000 strong All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation demonstration on March 31 know that marchers were subjected to a catalogue of police brutality. This has been confirmed by the Channel 4 documentary *Battle of Trafalgar*, shown in September. The conditions for the police to launch their attack were created by the Labour leadership's condemnation in advance of the demonstration. Scarcely more principled has been the role of *Militant* supporters Tommy Sheridan and Steve Nally, Chair and Secretary of the All Britain Federation and Wally Kennedy, chief steward on the day. They denounced demonstrators for defending themselves, and offered to 'name names' to the police. We fully agree with the angry response of labour movement bodies such as Tameside Trade Union Council, which wrote to Sheridan and Nally deploring 'the response and position taken by yourselves when dealing with the media/press'.

By Richard Price

Not surprisingly, *Militant* has not lifted a finger to defend those arrested on the day and in the major police operation mounted in the months that followed. When the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign proposed a demonstration from the Square, *Militant* leaders of the Federation opposed it. When the campaign tried to accommodate the Federation by calling a feeder march from Horseferry Road (well away from the scene of the March 31 clashes) to join up with the Federation's 'People's March' on October 20, *Militant* supporters found fresh excuses not to support it, describing it as a 'diversion'. In fact, it is the Federation's 'People's March' which is a diversion. It was produced like a rabbit out of a hat at the Federation's trade union conference in June to scuttle demands for lobbies of both the Labour and TUC conferences, and thus avoid a confrontation with the bureaucracy. Handfuls of carefully screened *Militant*-friendly marchers — so few in the case of the Welsh leg that it had to be cancelled — were put on the road with the sole aim of boosting *Militant*'s flagging credibility.

ity. *Militant*'s role at Trafalgar Square and its bureaucratic practices within the Federation have alienated many sincere activists. This is underlined yet again by the arrangements for the Federation's second annual conference in Manchester on November 25. The National Committee has ruled motions to conference out of order in advance. Like the Socialist Movement (see story below), it has produced its own series of statements, which are to form the basis of debate. These carry a flavour of *Militant*'s perspectives for the coming year:

- 'Forcing Councils to at least make sure procedures are scrupulously followed!'
  - 'We are totally dissatisfied with Patten's miserable package of "extra help".'
  - 'The local authorities and courts are falling out.'
  - 'Occupations are a necessary weapon in our arsenal. They however should be carried out peacefully!'
  - 'The cost involved in processing huge numbers of [income support] appeals is likely to deter councils from ordering a massive number of deductions.'
- Missing entirely from *Militant*'s self-congratulatory tripe, which breeds illusions in councils and hopes for inefficiency in the state bureaucracy, is any serious



Police charge into Trafalgar Square

programme of action. Every committed anti-poll tax fighter must recognise that, under its present leadership, the movement is in danger. Not only is its claim of 14 million non-payers exaggerated, but the longer it

obstructs joining non-payment with the aim of class-wide strike action against the tax and in defence of jobs threatened in their tens of thousands, the more dangerous the situation becomes. The example of boroughs such as

the Tory flagship of Wandsworth, where huge cuts in jobs and services are being made, must lead to a sober evaluation of what is necessary. Mass non-payment? Yes, but linked to mass strike action.

## Newcastle under the hammer

By Terry McGinity

CAPPED local authorities up and down the country are now dutifully carrying out the cuts in expenditure demanded by the Tory government. On September 4, the ruling Labour group of Newcastle City Council voted to cut £15 million from next year's budget in line with the government's requirement that it reduce the amount of poll tax. The city treasurer has also ordered summonses to be prepared for 30,000 non-payers of the tax, and bailiffs have been instructed to prepare for the seizure of household goods.

The proposed cuts, the severest to date, come on top of the £25 million already cut in recent years as a result of the withholding of essential grants by the government. Council leader Jeremy Beecham said: 'These reductions mark the culmination of the government's sustained campaign to force councils to reduce services by a mixture of deliberately under-funding local authorities, refusing to recognise real levels of inflation and imposing legal controls.' However, Beecham's prescription is to wield the axe on behalf of the Tories.

Education will be the worst

affected with a steep rise in the cost of school dinners, the closure of some schools and a reduction in the number of teachers and ancillary workers employed. Social services will also be hit with, for example, charges for home helps being increased. Recreation and leisure provisions will be cut by up to £3 million, which will mean the closure of swimming pools, branch libraries and a children's play centre.

Fifteen Labour councillors have been barred from any future decision-making for opposing the scrapping of a sports hall. The Labour group, which has 57 of the 60 council seats, is now faced with a split which may widen as the cuts come into effect.

● More shenanigans in the North-East. The deputy Labour leader of Sunderland Council has been forced to resign after admitting that he accepted 'hospitality' from local businessmen. John Donnelly — who won't go short since he is also chairman of the company that runs Newcastle airport and a director of Sunderland Football Club — failed to disclose his connections with the owners of two firms that carry out work for the council.

## Strike campaign rejected

By Ian Harrison

THE CONFERENCE for trade union activists organised by the Socialist Movement in Sheffield on September 8 marked a small step forward for the struggle to defeat the poll tax.

The Socialist Movement had originally offered to co-organise the event with the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. However, the *Militant* tendency, which dominates the national committee of the ABAPTF, rejected the Socialist Movement's offer in line with its policy of limiting the campaign against the poll tax to a call for individual non-payment.

In the event, the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee used the Sheffield conference to endorse its own very limited perspective of linking industrial action by trade unionists with the campaign of individual non-payment organised by local anti-poll tax groups. An opportunity to rally all those trade unionists opposed to *Militant*'s sectarianism was squandered in favour of the Socialist Move-

ment's aim of adapting to left trade union bureaucrats and Labour MPs.

In a move designed to squash a real discussion on the strategy necessary to defeat the Tory poll tax, the conference organisers issued a statement for amendment by the conference, while refusing to accept motions from trade union branches. Further obstacles were placed in the way of delegates who sought to amend the statement by breaking the conference up into workshops and caucuses where amendments had to be endorsed before being voted on at a plenary session.

The Socialist Movement's main supporters, the ISG, who dominated the conference, not infrequently make correct points in relation to the building of a healthy broad left and rank-and-file movement in Britain. Their publications, including *Socialist Outlook*, identify the sectarianism of *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party as obstacles to organising that movement. But it must be said that although they stand half a pace to the left of *Militant* and the SWP, their own brand of sectarianism cuts right across their stated aim of forcing the

TUC and Labour Party leaders to the forefront of a mass campaign against the Tory government and the poll tax.

Amendments to the conference statement which called for 'conscious preparation and organisation of mass strike action aimed at defeating the government', the formation of trade union committees in every borough to link the struggles of organised workers with local APTUs, and preparation for 'a national combine of shop stewards' committees to co-ordinate action in defence of jobs and services' were roundly attacked by members of the ISG and supporters of *Socialist Organiser* for being 'too prescriptive'. By the end of the conference it became clear that the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, and its main block of supporters in the ISG and *Socialist Organiser*, are opposed to the preparation of a conscious strategy to develop a campaign of industrial action against the poll tax, such is their desperation to form links with left TUC and Labour Party bureaucrats. Behind all their talk of preparing a real strategy to organise industrial action, this is the unstated reality.

On the day, *Socialist Out-*

*look* and *Socialist Organiser* supporters were happy to hide behind the SWP's vehement opposition to calls for preparing a campaign. Any delegates who came to the conference looking for a lead in the development of industrial action and a strike strategy will have been left in no doubt that the SWP are now gripped by a deep and profound pessimism. At a time when TUC and Labour Party leaders are helping the Tories to impose the poll tax on the working class, creating an opening for a revolutionary socialist perspective to win the leadership of the masses, the SWP in characteristic fashion blames the masses for its own refusal to organise a fight. The SWP stands reality on its head when it states that 'workers lack the confidence to fight'. The truth is that the SWP cannot win the confidence of the masses when it refuses to put forward a revolutionary socialist perspective. Tomorrow's victories must be prepared in the teeth of today's difficulties. The debate at the conference, however, found the SWP in headlong retreat, while *Socialist Outlook* supporters kept their heads down, hoping for better days.