

# Workers News



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## Victorian values at work

# TORY ONSLAUGHT ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

FEW OF the original dogmas that the Tories came to power with in 1979 remain in place. Thatcherism was supposed to stand for tight control of public spending and the money supply. But the Tories have presided over a record budget deficit and spiralling credit. They claimed to defend the value of the pound, only to carry out a major devaluation with the crisis of the ERM.

Their promises were no more reliable. They pledged to get central government off people's backs, then gave themselves dictatorial control over local councils. They campaigned on the slogan 'Labour isn't working' – and proceeded to double unemployment. They guaranteed that the NHS was safe in their hands, while plotting to hack it to pieces, and insisted there would be no increase in VAT, only to put it on fuel.

But in their determination to wage the class struggle, the Tories have shown a rare consistency. In spite of their frequent policy U-turns, their main project has remained to open Britain up to the discipline of sharpened international competition.

The aim is a low-wage economy in which job security is abolished, part-time working and temporary contracts are rife, overtime is compulsory, trade unions are derecognised, and individual performance pay is used as a stick to beat people in work with the ever-present threat of a huge dole queue outside.

Unlike their main European competitors, the Tories don't see any purpose in maintaining basic minimum levels of social provision. If you've already got away with blue murder, why not carry on? Nor do they have any old-fashioned fetish about domestic manufacturing. They have accepted the decline of British imperialism as an accomplished fact, and now vie with the weakest European countries in providing a pool of cheap labour for the multinationals. Despite all their efforts to talk up the economy, the Tories' claims of recovery are largely

By Richard Price

fraudulent, and industrial employment is still plunging.

Central to their strategy are the twin prongs of privatisation and deregulation. Having ridden out last winter's coal crisis, the Tories are proceeding with the shock therapy. On the privatisation front, almost everything which remains nationalised is up for grabs. Only three of the 31 pits threatened in October 1992, and only 30 overall, remain open. The final total may well be as low as 12, and the bill in the pipeline will sell off what remains by early 1995.

Market testing in the civil service aims to privatise the jobs of all but a few thousand 'policy makers'. Talks are under way on the privatisation of London Underground, which is seen as a drain on the Treasury. Like British Rail, it is planned to break it up into separate companies operating on a franchise basis. The planned East London line extension is currently at risk due to lack of investment.

The Post Office, hovering on the brink of being sold off, is meanwhile being looted by the Treasury, which has tripled its contribution to central funds from £66 million to £181 million in one year. Council housing is set to be further undermined by a white paper proposal to privatise the management of such areas as letting, rent collection, repairs and maintenance.

The Queen's Speech in November announced a Deregulation and Contracting Out bill. It seeks to smooth the path of devolving functions performed by



Health workers at the rally in Trafalgar Square after the TUC demonstration on November 20

civil servants to the private sector and abolishing hundreds of regulations governing health and safety conditions and other standards. A so-called Henry VIII clause will enable ministers to proceed without reference to parliament.

Under the guise of reducing bureaucracy, the bill will give employers a virtually free hand to operate workplaces as they choose. Rules covering everything from minimum temperatures in offices and eye tests of VDU operators to the provision of protective clothing, soap and toilet rolls will be removed. Insulation standards in new homes along with 'burdens on business' in agriculture and transport go out of the window. Companies will be allowed to inspect their own air and water pollution.

So it's self-provision in social services and self-regulation in industry. Britain has become a nation of sweat-shop keepers.

Set along side the already grim safety record of British capitalism, it is clear that a drastic attack on working conditions is under way. According to the Health and Safety Commission's annual report for 1992-93, 430 workers died in accidents at work last year; there were 28,018 major injuries and 140,365 other accidents involving more than three days off work. But even this represents a big underestimate of the dangers at work. The National Hazards Campaign estimates that 20,000 people die each year from industrial diseases.

Faced with such a range of attacks, workers must learn the lessons of last winter's missed opportunities. We don't need lobbies of Tory MPs, letter writing campaigns, candle-lit vigils, fancy dress stunts, lunchtime protests, appeals to the government to defend the national interest, or the

rest of the trade union leaders' bag of tricks. We need mass action to defend jobs and working conditions, to defeat privatisation and prevent the jungle of deregulation.

In British Rail, the Underground, the civil service, the NHS, the Post Office and the mines, emergency union conferences are needed to draw up plans for all-out national strikes, with inter-union rank-and-file committees established to co-ordinate and control the action.

Millions of workers are looking for a focus for their anger and frustration. The coal strike, and before it the poll tax, briefly provided the channel for mass discontent, only for the Labour and TUC leaders to divert it. Next time it must be the real thing. We can't wait for a general election. The Tories must be brought down and Labour forced to reverse every attack that the Tories have made.

The largest strike for a decade took place in the civil service on November 5 against market testing. Workers News spoke to **Rod Bacon**, branch secretary of Hackney and Tower Hamlets DHSS CPSA, who has been a prominent left-wing activist in the union for many years

# The fight against market testing

## Can you explain what market testing means?

It's another name for privatisation. Circles within government have made it clear that their objective is to reduce the civil service to 10,000 policy makers and privatise everything else. Market testing puts each civil service function up for outside bidding. Existing functions can make in-house bids, with the final decision as to who wins the contract being made by the minister or his deputies. After three years the contract comes up for renewal, and bids start again. Consequently, all workers involved are in effect reduced to three-year contracts. It is being introduced in stages across departments throughout the civil service.

## How big a threat does it pose?

It removes job security for workers in the civil service, although there are some regulations which protect pay and conditions for one year. But even these can be changed and

disregarded after a year or, if employees agree to changes in their conditions within a year – for example, higher overtime rates – their contracts no longer apply. Market testing also threatens to replace public services with private employers out to make profits from functions like the payment of benefits.

## November 5 saw a one-day strike of 200,000 civil servants. What do you think of the 'strategy' of the union leaders?

The first thing to say is that the leaders of the civil service unions were forced to take some action because of the pressure from below. Before November 5, the CPSA leadership was advising workers to co-operate and to rely on in-house bids to secure contracts. This line was clearly unacceptable to members. The strike was very successful in the DHSS, the Home Office and the Department of Environment,

and showed that members were prepared to take action and force the NEC's hand. Despite the November 5 success, the leadership's strategy remains the same – they don't know how to fight and they are reluctant to call industrial action. Their strategy consists of dishing out leaflets, lobbying Tory MPs, calling a day of action in April – without any mention of strike action – and vaguely calling for an alliance in the public sector.

## The one-day strike in the DHSS on July 2 gained a huge response. What has been the experience since then?

It was the most successful one-day strike in recent DHSS history. It was forced upon the Section Executive Committee. The market testing exercise had already been up and running for months and workers wanted to fight. Both the SEC and the NEC were surprised at the response. Since then there has been virtually no action.

## The DHSS Section Executive Committee is dominated by Militant. What role has it played?

Militant doesn't have a strategy which is aimed at defeating market testing. The only grouping in the union which raised it at the 1992 conference was Socialist Caucus, which also ran a presidential candidate [Mark Serwotka] on the issue in the elections this year. The motion on market testing at this year's conference from the Broad Left and BL84 was so bland that even the general secretary and the NEC voted for it! In reality, Militant has not supported a policy of non-co-operation with market testing teams in the DHSS, and has given advice on how to co-operate with in-house bids. Under pressure, the Broad Left has called for industrial action, but it falls far short of what is necessary – a national civil service strike. Instead it relies on some undefined form of selective action next year. It has no faith in workers voting for a national strike, and at meetings of activists and on the SEC, Militant supporters have voted down motions calling for national strike action and non-co-operation. Non-co-operation is fundamental to any strategy of opposition to market testing. In-house bids can undermine jobs and working conditions

as effectively as outside contractors. Locally we have encouraged a policy of non-co-operation, and we have requested a ballot for action if any member is disciplined. But obviously we cannot stop market testing in one branch.

## How does the role of Militant and the Broad Left relate to the unity talks with BL84?

Mark Serwotka won 40 per cent of the left vote this year on a platform of all-out opposition to market testing. The platforms of the Broad Left and BL84 were deliberately fudged. Now Broad Left is talking about selective action, but if BL84 doesn't like it, Militant will probably water it down to keep the coalition going. Militant's main priority is to get a Broad Left/BL84 NEC elected, but there is no point in getting a left-wing NEC elected if it doesn't oppose market testing.

## How do you see the way forward?

If the objective is to stop market testing, then the only way is to build up to national action. If it's not, the aim becomes building protest action to get slightly better conditions in the privatisation process or to swing support behind in-house bids. We have to build up rank-and-file strength on the office floors to force the leadership to adopt a strategy to defeat market testing.

## Lessons of Welling

### COMMENT

THE UNITY demonstration on October 16 was the biggest show of strength yet from the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement. At least 40,000 people took part in the march, which was jointly organised by the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe, to demand the closure of the British National Party's headquarters. The day began with a massive and enthusiastic turnout of predominantly young people. It ended with a sustained attack by police on the marchers, with many injured and the aim of the demonstration as far away as ever.

In the aftermath, a massive witch-hunt of those who took part was mounted by press, television and politicians. Our solidarity is entirely on the side of those who came to confront fascists and were set upon by police. Those on the left (including most of the ex-WRP groups) who boycotted the event deserve nothing but contempt. Even worse was the Revolutionary Communist Party, which mounted a national mobilisation to hawk its paper, *the next step* (headline: 'Fight racism, not fascism'), and attempt to persuade people that they were wasting their time.

But the ferocity of the police response and the vicious bias of the capitalist media must not blind activists from making a balance sheet of October 16. By far the largest contingent on the demo was organised by the Socialist Workers Party. In every other respect, however, the SWP's attitude was irresponsible. It reluctantly participated in a unity committee prior to the demo, but it refused to discuss joint stewarding until the morning of October 16 itself. SWP stewards gave totally contradictory advice on the march,



Welling, October 16: the march comes to a halt in front of police lines

and when the police got stuck in, proved to be hopelessly ill-prepared.

There was no plan to defend the march, and there were no hard hats for stewards – apparently the SWP considered this too militaristic. And this from an organisation which considers that it is *the* revolutionary leadership. Clearly, the SWP has begun to believe its own rhetoric about mass party building and achieving 'hegemony' on the left – it doesn't need to worry about such details.

In comparison, YRE's stewards, although fewer in number, performed creditably, forming a defensive wall at the rear of the march while police continued to go on the rampage. All the more reason for members of YRE to be concerned at the decisions of its first conference held on December 4-5. By substantial majorities, the conference voted against motions calling for a united anti-racist/anti-fascist movement, and for troops out of Ireland, while it voted in favour of one of Militant's old favourites – 'democratic control' of the police.

In addition to showing that Militant's alleged left turn is only skin deep, this also shows that the problems of the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement are not simply organisational. While YRE is considerably more democratic than the ANL, its leaders are just as concerned to preserve their own independence, rather than pursue a genuine united front policy.

A fight for unity must be taken up within YRE in particular, but also in the ANL, ARA and other campaigns. In the mean time, joint action aimed at building defence groups in areas where they don't exist, and strengthening them where they do, must become a priority. The fact that at Welling 40,000 people were unable to defend themselves effectively was possible because the march lacked any authoritative leadership. Future anti-BNP marches will be met with blanket bans and, if they attempt to proceed, with increased state violence to protect the fascists. Unless the defence of such events is taken seriously, many who don't consider themselves streetfighters will be deterred from taking part.

## Greek workers prepare for attack from PASOK

By V.N. Gelis

PASOK's victory in the October 10 general elections in Greece would have been much greater if it had acted as a real opposition when New Democracy was in power. Despite three and a half years of austerity measures, Constantine Mitsotakis's conservatives still managed to gain 39 per cent of the votes.

Failure to give a lead to workers' struggles against the Mitsotakis government also explains the collapse of Sinasmos and the Communist Party (KKE). Their poor showing at the polls will do nothing to stop their downward spiral – if anything, it will accelerate it. Sinasmos failed to reach the three per cent threshold needed to get representation in parliament, and the KKE achieved only 4.5 per cent, a sharp drop from the ten or 12 per cent it was getting not too long ago.

Those who voted for PASOK did so not so much for its 'socialist' facade as for their hatred of New Democracy's austerity programme. A popular slogan among Athens busworkers during their dispute was 'Down with the Mitsotakis cholera!' Despite assurances from PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou that the buses will be re-nationalised in some form or other, thousands of sacked busworkers have already made it clear that they intend to start protest action.

Public-sector workers who escaped having their jobs privatised by Mitsotakis now face Papandreou, who has already declared that he is not against privatisations in general, only ones that are 'uncontrolled'!

How far Papandreou goes down this road will surely determine the nature of the coming period, especially since the once iron grip of Greek Stalinism on the workers' movement has loosened. The KKE will no longer be in such a good position to betray the struggles that break out.

### FUNDS

Unlike some of our rivals, the **Workers News £10,000 Building Fund** is not poured down a bottomless hole of running costs. It is what it says it is – a strictly allocated fund for improving our work. So far we have been able to complete the transition to new technology and buy other vital pieces of equipment. Currently it stands at **£4,852.09**. Please also support our **£300 Monthly Fund**. Every donation, large or small, counts.

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## ITALY

# The collapse of the centre

By Richard Price

ENGULFED by corruption scandals, Italy's traditional governing parties continue to implode. With 210 MPs currently under criminal investigation, and with the Christian Democrats, reformists and liberals unable to command more than 20 per cent of the electorate between them in November's local elections, a political chasm has opened up under the Mr Fix-its who have dominated Italy's unending chain of coalition governments.

Chief beneficiaries in the elections were the fascist MSI in the south and centre of the country, the ultra-right Northern League in the north and the ex-'communist' Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) nationally. The Christian Democrats – in government continuously since 1945 – suffered spectacular losses, including Palermo in Sicily, where they were routed by a former member standing on an anti-Mafia and anti-corruption ticket.

Evidence of deepening polarisation was underlined by the strong vote gained by the Party of Communist Refoundation in such cities as Naples, Rome (where it beat the Christian Democrats) and Genoa.

In the second round of mayoral elections on December 5, PDS-led alliance candidates won in Rome, Naples, Genoa, Venice, Trieste and in many smaller towns throughout the country, limiting the advance of both the MSI and the Northern League. But in Rome the alliance candidate was Green Party MP Francesco Rutelli, and in Trieste the PDS formed a coalition with the Christian Democrats.



Running down the flag: PDS general secretary Achille Occhetto (left) unveiling the party's new oak tree logo to the press

The elections took place in the wake of a four-hour general strike on October 28 against cuts in public expenditure and closures in state industries. The 14 million workers who took part were joined by 300,000 soldiers and police demanding trade union rights.

Unemployment is currently over ten per cent. As the ruling class desperately tries to regroup and dump the burden of the worsening economic situation upon workers, the contrast with the looting and bribery carried out by the bosses of state and private industries, civil servants and the entire political establishment could not be starker.

Duilio Poggiolini, the official responsible for the licensing of medical drugs, was recently found to have £150 million in gold and bank bonds, together with paintings by Picasso and Modigliani, in

his house. These almost certainly represent bribes for licensing dubious medicines. Alessandro Voci, the police chief and prefect of Rome, resigned in November after admitting that he had known about a slush fund used by the secret service to bribe politicians, journalists and civil servants.

And so the list goes on. But the combination of cover-up, parliamentary immunity and bureaucratic inertia has meant that very few cases of corruption have come to court. Italy's leaders aren't keen to justify themselves in public, but behind the scenes they are working overtime to frustrate any settling of accounts and restore business as usual.

As economic, social and regional pressures increase, at least the old order has one ally to its left in the shape of the PDS. The PDS has abandoned any claim to represent communism and portrays itself as a social democratic alternative to the scandal-ridden Socialists. In response to the currency crisis after the first round of the elections, PDS general secretary Achille Occhetto said that his party would do nothing to undermine the Christian Democrat-led coalition government until it had passed an emergency package to defend the lira.

The PDS is set to reprise the role its forerunner the PCI played in the 1970s when, with 35 per cent of the popular vote, it propped up the Christian Democrats in the infamous 'historic compromise'. This time round, Occhetto and his second-in-command, Massimo D'Alema, are looking to build an 'Alliance for Progress' – a coalition with liberals, Greens and disaffected Christian Democrats. In order to get this, Occhetto has wooed what he calls 'the enlightened sections of the bourgeoisie' by backing plans for privatisation, redundancies and cuts in public spending.

Faced with such an acute crisis, the need for a genuinely revolutionary party of the Italian working class could not be greater.

## Inside the PRC

After the split in the Italian Communist Party in 1991, the minority formed the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), regrouping not only those Stalinists who wanted to retain the title 'communist', but tens of thousands of militant workers who refused to accept that socialism was dead after the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Many other forces on the Italian left, including libertarians and Trotskyists, joined the new party. Luciano Dondero, managing editor of the new journal *Proposta*, reports on developments within the PRC.

THE PRC was formed from a split in the Italian Communist Party (PCI) led by forces opposed to the Occhetto-D'Alema leadership. These included the so-called 'Afghans' led by Armando Cossutta and a PCI grouping led by Sergio Garavini, which had supported the late general secretary, Enrico Berlinguer. To these were subsequently added another ex-PCI faction – the PDUP grouping around Magri and Castellina – together with much of what remained of the New Left in Italy and most of Democrazia Proletaria (DP), including the Fourth International Association (AQI, the Italian section of the United Secretariat).

Within the PRC the process of regroupment has continued. For instance, when a big dispute flared up in June and July between the party's general secretary, Garavini, and its chairman, Cossutta, the initial components of the PRC divided along new lines. A temporary 'new majority', which never really coalesced, came into existence in July. Since then another majority has been set up, with the centre led by Cossutta in a bloc with the right-wing PDUP faction against the right-centre around Garavini. This majority is supported by most of the trade union wing of the party, and has been strengthened by the arrival of forces from the left-wing current within the CGIL trade union confederation, Essere Sindacato (literally 'to be a trade union'). The leader of Essere Sindacato, Bertinotti, is due to become the next general secretary of the PRC.

To the left of the leadership stands an organised but very timid current of ex-PCI leftists and ex-DP members, which is strong in some of the major cities in the country. Further to the left, *Proposta* has regrouped the left wing of AQI with some former PCI and DP leftists. The right wing of AQI, led by Maitan and Turigliatto, is very mixed. Although it includes some militant trade unionists from Milan who are active in the COBAS movement in Fiat, it is mainly oriented towards an alliance with 'spontaneist' elements from the old right wing of DP.

The PRC is preparing for its second national congress, to be held in late January/early February. The supporters of *Proposta* intend to participate at every level from local to national, defending the views put forward in the journal. The majority bloc is trying to introduce into its documents for the congress explicitly reformist and anti-revolutionary formulations which are the hallmark of the PDUP faction, carried over from the PCI. The left grouping would like to prevent this, but are prisoners of the logic of their own position of 'fighting within the apparatus' and consequently unable to put forward a real opposition. As a result, much of the rank-and-file opposition to the leadership could find itself unrepresented, and we aim to make *Proposta* a weapon in this fight.

For the time being, the situation

in the party remains fluid. There is nothing formally to prevent the publication of different journals by groups of PRC members, and the statutes of the party allow for the establishment of 'temporary groupings' in the run-up to the congress. However, the possibilities of a real debate are severely hampered by the mass of practical activities in which the most militant members of the party are constantly engaged, and by the lack of experience of serious political debate, as opposed to faction fights to gain positions in the apparatus.

In local elections held in November, the PRC did very well in the north of the country, winning 11 per cent of the vote in Milan, 14 per cent in Turin, and even more in some smaller towns. It emerged as the leading party of the left in the north, outpolling the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), and finishing second overall behind the right-wing Northern League, which won the mayoral election in Milan.

The PDS has retained the entire bureaucratic structure of the PCI, including all its property, and still has a large parliamentary group. But many former PCI members are today unaffiliated. A strong and vocal minority has joined the PRC, while most of the bureaucrats are in the PDS. CGIL's general secretary Trentin and most secretaries of CGIL-affiliated unions are in the PDS, some are with the hugely discredited Socialist Party, and none with the PRC.

*Proposta*'s supporters have an influence beyond their numbers. This reflects their orientation to the Refoundation movement from the outset in 1991. In some parts of the country, where these comrades had been playing an active role in the trade unions and in DP, they were among the founding core of the new organisation, and, as a result, became a component part of its leadership. This was in sharp contrast to the attitude of the AQI majority, which up to the last moment tried to prevent DP from joining the Refoundation movement, and obtained leading positions only as a result of a deal struck between ex-PCI and ex-DP groupings in the apparatus.

*Proposta* was launched at a mass demonstration in Rome on September 25 called by the PRC and a number of factory councils, and sold 500 copies. Three members of the editorial board of *Proposta* are also members of the PRC's National Political Committee, and another member attends its meetings as a leading CGIL trade unionist. The journal's editor and its main spokesperson within the party, Marco Ferrando, is also secretary of the PRC federation in Savona, an industrial town near Genoa. Most comrades occupy leading positions in their workplaces, in the unions and in the party, on a local or city-wide basis.

● *Proposta* can be obtained from: Casella postale 3043, 16100 Genova Ferrovia, Italy.

### Workers International League

The WIL is the British section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. Together with comrades in South Africa, Belgium and Germany, we fight to rebuild Trotsky's Fourth International. We are for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a worldwide federation of workers' states, based on workers' democracy and planned economy. Only by workers taking power can the unemployment, poverty, starvation and war bred by capitalism be ended.

In Britain, it is necessary for revolutionaries to fight within the mass organisations of the labour movement, as well as participate in the struggles of all those oppressed by capitalism. We aim to build rank-and-file opposition to the trade union and Labour bureaucrats who stand in the way of any serious struggle to defeat the Tories. Only in this way will a genuine revolutionary party, rather than a sect, be built.

We support all struggles against imperialism, without endorsing the politics of any nationalist leaderships. In wars waged by imperialist powers such as Britain against oppressed countries, and in inter-imperialist wars, we are for the defeat of our own ruling class.

In the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which are no longer deformed/degenerated workers' states, we are for the defence of those gains of the working class that still exist. The remaining deformed workers' states in Cuba and Asia must be defended against imperialism, and the Stalinist bureaucracies overthrown before they too open the door to capitalist restoration.

For more information about the Workers International League and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, write to: WIL, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE



## EDITORIAL

# Militant mood sweeps Europe

ONE YEAR ago, in a Workers News editorial, we noted a modest revival in the class struggle in Europe. No great achievement perhaps, except that every year since 1985-86 saw the class struggle moving in the opposite direction.

Many on the left became demoralised. Others closed their eyes, blocked their ears, and elaborated bold perspectives, each more radical than the last. The reality was quite different. Trade union membership and strikes fell steadily in most countries. Social Democratic parties dropped the pretence of socialism and embraced market economics, while revolutionary forces grew weaker. One by one, nationalist guerrilla movements in other continents were defeated and domesticated.

The eighties closed and the nineties opened to a fanfare of ideological reaction: the end of history, the new world order, neo-liberalism, post-modernism and post-feminism. The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe gave a renewed impulse to the growth of far right, populist and fascist parties. Marxism, and indeed any sort of collectivist consciousness, was ridiculed and relegated to the museum.

But the triumphant Western allies hadn't finished pounding Iraq before new problems arrived to spoil the party. The deepest recession since the 1930s gripped the world economy. The response of the bourgeoisie was to go on the offensive. The problem lay not in the system but in a crisis of expectations – workers had been taking too much out of the system and putting too little in. Working conditions and rights built up over decades were put under ever greater pressure. Welfare and social security spending was highlighted as wasteful. Privatisation and deregulation were absolutely necessary in order to assert the laws of the market.

Workers were encouraged by their 'socialist' parliamentary and trade union leaders to believe that sacrifices and adjustments would restore prosperity – a wage claim and a union agreement here, a tea break and a holiday there. Some positions were lost after a fight; others were surrendered without a fight.

Nearly four years on and it is clear that a turn in the situation is taking place. Workers are seething with anger and the popularity of governments is at an all-time low. In country after country the feeling is 'enough is enough'. In Italy, the political establishment has spectacularly crashed, while New Democracy in Greece and the Canadian Tories have suffered stunning election defeats. But it is on the industrial rather than the political front that this turn has made itself most clearly felt.

Belgium, where the class struggle had declined for years, today stands at the head of the list. On October 29, 70,000 workers demonstrated against the Christian Democrat-Socialist coalition's austerity programme to reduce the budget deficit. This has been followed by partial general strikes called by the Socialist and Christian trade union federations on November 15, 24 and 26, and December 10.

In France, the new right-wing administration has been met by fierce opposition. The strike at Air France in October was compared by many observers to the atmosphere of May-June 1968. Large-scale strikes and demonstrations of public-sector workers against privatisation took place on October 12 and November 18, 22, 24 and 26, while in late November clashes took place between miners and police in the north-east of the country. Unrest has also grown among students and there have been numerous demonstrations and occupations.

Germany has also seen action by miners – in the Ruhr – and on October 28, 120,000 building workers marched through Bonn in defence of cold weather payments. The political crisis gripping Italy was fuelled by a general strike on October 28 supported by 14 million workers.

In Spain, the government is attempting to reverse the decline in the economy by deregulating the labour market and introducing wage controls. Three general strikes have already taken place and a fourth is likely. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated in Madrid and Barcelona on November 25 against plans to make the hiring and firing of workers easier. They were joined by students protesting at cuts in education.

For the governments of the European Union, all this is a serious obstacle to integrating the 12 economies following the Maastricht Treaty. Budget deficits have to be controlled. Industry, no longer protected behind national tariff barriers, has to compete or die. The recession and the cost of German reunification have made the task even more difficult. In Britain the Tories have spent nearly 14 years chipping away at workers' rights; the governments in mainland Europe are only just getting into their stride.

Indeed, the move to reduce the 'social costs' of production – statutory obligations on the employer in areas such as health insurance, pensions, redundancy payments, maternity leave, holiday and sick pay, etc – has helped fuel the current wave of protest. The other main factors are fear of unemployment and increasing financial hardship. According to official statistics, there are 18 million people out of work in the EU and the number is expected to rise, while the rate of increase in wages is at an all-time low.

The new mood of resistance is a very positive development, but the movement lacks any clear perspective. The danger is that by organising a few demonstrations and days of action union leaders will be able to convince workers that they are leading the fight. In fact, the only thing they're leading is the retreat – across Europe the trend is towards union-agreed social pacts to hold down wages and raise productivity.

Will this militancy spread to Britain? The answer is... not automatically – strike activity here is at a historically low ebb. But October 1992, when workers flooded onto the streets to protest at the destruction of miners' jobs, showed that apathy can give way to anger almost overnight. There is enormous latent hatred for the Tories. Revolutionaries must seek every means to give it expression.

# PALESTINIAN

## Statement by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency on the Israel-PLO accord

THE IMPERIALISTS, the Zionists and the PLO leadership around Yasser Arafat have hailed the Israel-PLO agreement as a decisive step towards a durable peace in the Middle East. The PLO leadership portrays the granting of limited autonomy in, initially, the Gaza Strip and Jericho as the first stage in the building of a new Palestinian state. For the first time, the PLO has recognised Israel's right to exist 'within secure borders' – in effect, it has signed a non-aggression pact with the Zionist state.

### A victory for imperialism

It is a duty of revolutionaries to call things by their real names. The PLO's recognition of the 'legitimacy' of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine represents a significant political victory for the Israeli leaders and their imperialist backers. If it succeeds, the accord will, in the short to medium term, further stabilise the position of Israel and imperialism in the strategically important Middle East.

The fact that an agreement has been reached now is largely the result of a changed relationship of forces internationally (although the Israeli leadership is faced with a worsening economic crisis at home and mounting resistance to its policies among the Jewish population). The collapse of the Soviet Union has severely limited the ability of so-called progressive Arab nationalist regimes (eg, Syria, Iraq and Libya) to continue pursuing 'independent' foreign and domestic policies. Almost overnight, imperialism's main rival for influence over the region disappeared, making it possible for the US to assemble such a broad coalition for its war against Iraq.

The effect of the Gulf war was to strengthen imperialist control over the Middle East and further isolate the PLO (which had supported Iraq in the conflict). Arab regimes withdrew vital financial support from the PLO; an estimated 400,000 Palestinian workers were expelled from the Gulf oil states; and the practice of collecting taxes from Palestinians on the PLO's behalf was stopped.

### The retreat of the PLO leadership

But the agreement is not just the outcome of factors beyond the PLO's control; it marks a new stage in the betrayal of the Palestinian masses by their leadership. If the Zionists and imperialists are able to dictate the terms of a Middle East 'settlement', it is in no small measure due to the petty-bourgeois PLO leadership – which long ago subordinated guerrilla warfare to 'pressure politics' and international diplomacy.

Since the formation of the PLO, a systematic campaign to liquidate its cadres has been conducted by Mossad, the Israeli secret service. Leading militants who helped establish the

PLO and were closely associated with Arafat, including Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, have been assassinated. Today, Arafat's closest advisers include many bourgeois elements – academics, businessmen, etc – who have never engaged in armed struggle.

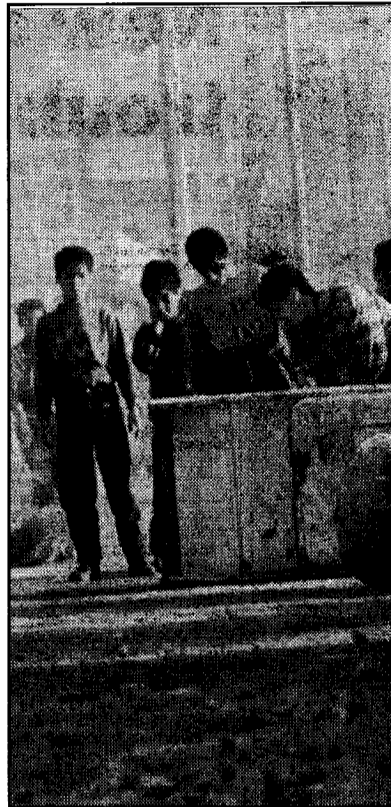
Since 1974, the PLO leadership has pursued the creation of a Palestinian mini-state in the West Bank and Gaza. In 1988, it recognised de facto the state of Israel. As the PLO leadership retreated, so its position in the refugee camps in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories was eroded. One of the main factors behind this development in the camps was the PLO's rush to cut spending on its welfare programme in order to rescue its cash-starved apparatus. New forces came forward to lead the militant struggle against Zionism. The Intifada – the uprising by the Palestinian masses in the Occupied Territories, launched independently of the PLO leadership – has had more impact on the Zionists than almost all previous fedayeen actions taken together. Today, Hamas commands majority support in Gaza.

The rise of fundamentalism has played a major role in pushing both Israel and the PLO to the conference table, and the PLO leaders are now looking to imperialism and Zionism to help them counter its influence. Under the agreement they have received just that: the maintenance of law and order in Gaza and Jericho will be in the hands of Arafat's new police force. This will be used to put down any further uprisings among the youth and deter political opposition to the PLO, whether from Hamas or from the left. Already, the Israeli government has stepped up its campaign against Hamas, assassinating Imad Aqel, a military commander in Gaza, on November 24, and shooting at least 37 Hamas supporters the following day.

### The betrayal of Palestinian self-determination

The signing of the accord by the PLO was a declaration of the bankruptcy of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Palestinian nationalism. Limited autonomy in Gaza and Jericho offers no solution for the millions of Palestinian refugees created by the formation of Israel in 1948, who represent an important, but stateless, component of the Arab working class. They still populate the refugee camps of the Lebanon and elsewhere, or are part of the Palestinian diaspora, having lived for decades without rights in other Arab countries.

Even if some form of Palestinian state were to be granted in the Occupied Territories, the problem would remain. Such a state would have no prospect of an independent socio-economic development. Even if Arafat were able to convince a considerable part of the Palestinian bourgeoisie living in Jordan and (to a lesser extent) Lebanon to resettle in the West



Protest by young Palestinians in Gaza on 1

Bank, their capital would be dwarfed by that of the Israelis, who would dominate commercial developments. It would be a puppet state, dependent on Israel and imperialism – a kind of 'Palestinian bantustan'.

The growth of mass unemployment among Palestinians as their homes, farmlands and water supplies are seized by Zionist settlers will not be resolved by a new 'Marshall Plan'. In any case, it should be noted that imperialist offers of assistance are not aimed at constructing a Palestinian

# HAITI

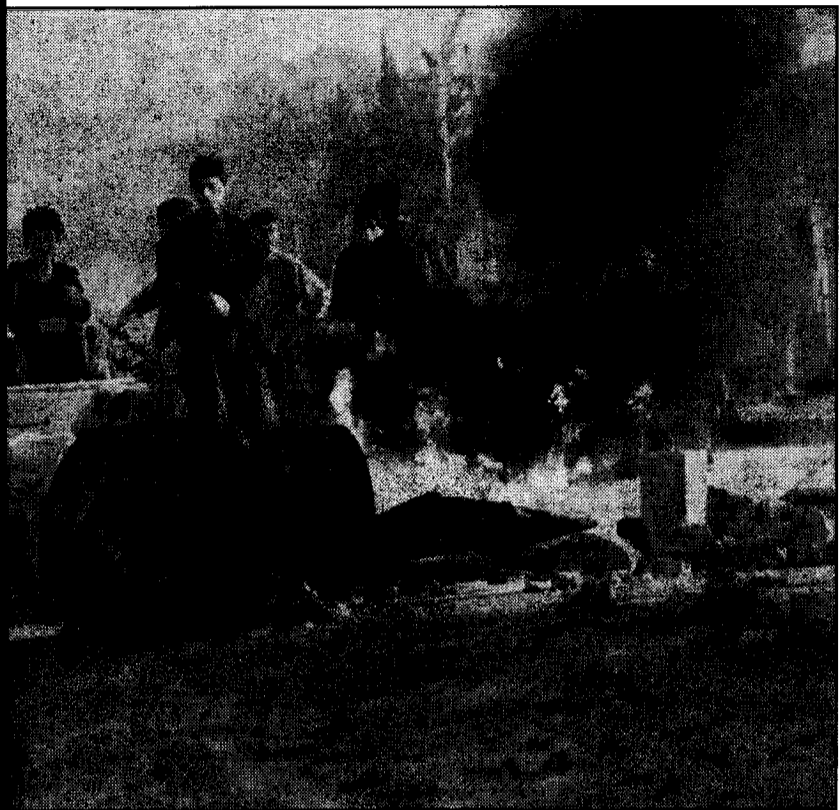
By Jim Dye

TO LOOK at Haiti is to see the horrid barbarism of world capitalism at work. Haiti's long line of dictators has ruled the world's poorest nation with sometimes unimaginable cruelty. The latest, General Raoul Cedras, appears by comparison to previous figures – like the notorious 'Papa Doc' Duvalier – to be a pathetic figure. But this apparent weakness merely reflects the country's continuing decline.

Meanwhile, the UN, with the United States at the helm, in an attempt to reinstate the ousted elected president Fr Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is content to blockade Haiti – leading to an increasing number of deaths from starvation – rather than risk another involvement like Somalia.

To explain how Haiti has become a byword for poverty and terror we need to look at its history. Since 1492, when Christopher Columbus discovered it, it was formally called Saint-Domingo, as it was formally called the jewel in the French colonial world. It had grown rich through the production of sugar, coffee and indigo, but this was dependent on the barbarity of slavery. Alongside the class division of slave and owner stood the racial division; and this was not simply a division between black and white, but one where the regime recognized 128 'degrees' of blackness on the basis of the inter-mixing of seven generations. Those of more

# THE MASSES BETRAYED



November 26, 1993, two days after Israeli troops had killed Hamas leader Imad Aqel

economy, but at enabling Arafat to build a strong state apparatus in order to pacify workers and peasants whose social problems will be resolved neither by limited political autonomy, nor by the creation of a rump state.

## A new political leadership is needed

Arafat's act of treason underlines the need to build a revolutionary leadership in Israel/Palestine. The wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, and the

various military interventions by Israel into Lebanon, have demonstrated that the surrounding Arab regimes are incapable of defeating Zionism, or coping with the social consequences for the Palestinian masses of the Zionist colonisation. Even less are they willing to fight against imperialism, whose support they need against their own masses. Their betrayal of the diaspora Palestinians, who despite all pan-Arab and Arab socialist rhetoric are treated as foreigners, has been tolerated (to a greater or lesser extent)

by all PLO factions. In the name of the national struggle, the PLO leaders have always subordinated the social demands of Palestinian workers and peasants to the political requirements of that section of the Arab bourgeoisie with whom they have an alliance.

The petty-bourgeois nationalist strategy of the PLO, which based itself on a largely mythical guerrilla war waged by the fedayeen and the glorification of isolated armed attacks from outside Israel, was doomed to failure from the start. It depended on the co-operation of the so-called front-line states, and renounced mass mobilisations of workers, peasants and refugees both inside and outside Israel. While we defend the right of all Palestinian factions to mount military operations against the Zionists, it has to be said that, under petty-bourgeois or fundamentalist leadership, these actions have generally assisted the Zionists' propaganda war, enabling them to maintain the political support of the Jewish working class in Israel and large numbers of workers in the imperialist countries.

The PLO failed to mobilise Arabs who remained within the borders of Israel, and ignored the potential of the Palestinians who constitute over 50 per cent of the population of Jordan. From its inception, the PLO compromised with all the Arab regimes and was consequently unable to mobilise the Arab masses to overthrow these false friends of the Palestinian cause.

The new 'rejection front' – the 'National, Democratic and Islamic Front' – offers no real alternative to the PLO. Its component bodies did oppose Arafat's course, partly because they base themselves on the diaspora Pal-

estinians whose interests are largely ignored by the accords, partly because they are under pressure from the most radicalised layers of workers and youth who took part in the Intifada. But all they have to offer is a continuation of the old policy of the PLO, which found its logical conclusion in the present agreement. And there are already signs that the Iranians will cave in to US insistence that they cut off all support to Hamas as a condition for reintegrating Iran into the world market and the political processes in the Middle East.

## For a revolutionary programme!

Only the working class, in an alliance with the poor peasants, can wage a consistent struggle against imperialism and Zionism, avoid rotten compromises at the expense of sections of the masses, and realise the democratic aims of the Palestinian revolution. This will necessitate a radical break with imperialism, Zionism, all variants of Palestinian and Arab nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and the remnants of Stalinism (which bears historic responsibility for splitting the Palestine Communist Party along nationalist lines). The aims of the national-democratic revolution can only be achieved through the fight for socialist revolution, for the united socialist states of the Near and Middle East.

A new revolutionary alliance of the working class must be forged. Trade unions must organise Arab and Jewish workers, including the unemployed, throughout Israel and all the Occupied Territories. Arab and Jew-

ish workers must campaign for full democratic rights for all sections of the population and for a democratic agrarian reform. They must oppose the imperialist-enforced 'balkanisation' of the region which the present state of Israel represents, and fight for the dismantling of nuclear weapons and the facilities that produce them. A democratic and transitional programme of demands must be fought for to advance the social interests of the working class, as well as those of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie (in so far as these are compatible with proletarian interests).

The Arab working class has a duty to support the right of the oppressed Kurdish nation for self-determination. The Jewish working class must wage an energetic fight for full and equal rights for Palestinian and Israeli Arabs, including the right of return; for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and for the closing down of all Zionist settlements in the Occupied Territories. This alone offers a perspective for overcoming national divisions among workers and establishing their revolutionary unity; a principled position on the national question will facilitate the defeat of reaction throughout the region.

The fight for this perspective needs a special instrument – a rebuilt Fourth International with sections in all the states of the Middle East.

- Solidarity with the fight for Palestinian liberation!
- For the united socialist states of the Near and Middle East!
- Rebuild the Fourth International!

November 27, 1993

# FROM REVOLUTION TO REACTION

race were called mulattos, many of whom were freemen and themselves slave owners. To this day, the ruling elite of Haiti is of mixed race.

Against the background of the unfolding French Revolution, San Domingo experienced its own struggle against the old order, although the institution of slavery was not challenged. This situation changed when, in August 1791, the black slaves rebelled. It was a struggle that lasted until 1804 when the world's only successful slave revolt ended in the establishment of Haiti. Central to the revolt was the figure of Toussaint L'Ouverture, whose political and military genius played a crucial role in defeating first the slave owners, and then the invading French and British troops who tried to re-colonise the country.

Many radicals in France supported the revolt, linking it to the goals of the French Revolution, and Toussaint was himself eager to maintain a connection with revolutionary France in order to gain from its material and cultural wealth. However, the political reaction that developed in France, first under the Thermidor and then Napoleon Bonaparte's dictatorship, put an end to any hope of fraternal links. Ultimately, this isolation was the reason for Haiti's decline into poverty and political instability.

Haiti remained an inspiration to other oppressed blacks throughout the

world, but it was a broken nation, riven by racial and class injustice. Torn apart by civil war between rival factions, Haiti was invaded by the US in 1915 as part of the latter's emerging imperialist expansionism. The occupation lasted until 1934, enforced by marines who put down a general strike in 1929 against US rule.

By this time the influence of Africa on Haitians was far greater than that of France. The old religion of the slaves, voodoo, and the quest for a national identity by Haiti's black intellectuals was combined into a powerful version of West Indian black nationalism that was given the name of 'negritude' by Jean-Paul Sartre. In Haiti in the 1930s, this cultural and political movement was called 'Les Giraots', one of its leaders being François Duvalier. The Haitian Communist Party, formed in 1930, was a rival to this movement, but its inability to move from being a group of mainly mixed race intellectuals to a party based on the black masses, combined with the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern, led to its early destruction.

The Giraots, basing themselves at that time on the black masses, grew in power, leading to the election of Duvalier as president in 1957. Already in control of the army, Duvalier created the 'Tonton Macoutes' in 1958, the armed force on which his later bonapartist dictatorship as 'Papa

Doc' was to rest. Drawn from the declassed black poor, the Tonton Macoutes terrorised Haiti's business elite as well as the working class (the trade unions were broken during this period).

The reign of terror continued after the death of Papa Doc in 1971, when his son Jean-Claude ('Baby Doc') became president. After the overthrow of Baby Doc in 1986, the Haitian masses sought out members of the Tonton Macoutes and took their revenge, showing that they have the potential to deal with their oppressors. But moderates like Aristide have proved incapable of containing the army or the Tonton Macoutes.

In the US, the CIA was quite happy to see the back of Aristide (a CIA document even accused him of being mentally unstable). In part, this is a result of close links between Haiti's military leaders and Miami-based business interests that rest on the profitable trade in Colombian cocaine through Haiti to the US and Europe. That the US plays a dubious and hypocritical role here is amply illustrated by the fact that the amount of cocaine imported into the US from Panama since the US invasion has increased many times over.

Socialists must oppose the continued involvement of the US and the UN in the affairs of Haiti, and call for the lifting of the blockade. The San Domingo Revolution of 1791-1804

succeeded because its leaders looked to the most progressive ideology of the time – that of revolutionary France – assimilating it for their own emancipation. Today, the oppressed masses of Haiti will only be certain of finally breaking out of their own enslavement by looking to the ideas of Marxism and the experiences of the October Revolution. In linking their movement to that of workers across the

globe they can, in the process of ending imperialist oppression, finally put an end to divisions of race and class as well. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution will continue to be vital to this process.

- The best account of the San Domingo Revolution remains C.L.R. James's classic book *The Black Jacobins*, first published in 1938.

## Workers Voice

Sri Lankan Trotskyist paper

*Workers Voice* is a monthly Trotskyist paper containing articles in Sinhala and English. Its regular appearance is a tribute to the political dedication of the group of comrades responsible for publishing it, who are working with very small resources. *Workers News* is therefore issuing an appeal to our readers for financial support for *Workers Voice*. This would enable the comrades in Sri Lanka to expand the paper's coverage, and to publish translations into Tamil. Given the long-established roots which Trotskyism has in the Sri Lankan workers' movement, we believe it is particularly important for socialists internationally to assist those who are fighting to rebuild the revolutionary tradition in that country.

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

## PART TWENTY-THREE

IN 1985 the WRP plunged into terminal crisis. Within a matter of months, this most monolithic of far-left groups split into two rival organisations which themselves promptly broke up into further fragments, while the WRP's International Committee fractured along similar lines. Healy himself, whose domination of the organisation had seemed total, swiftly found himself isolated and politically discredited, with the majority of his hitherto loyal followers supporting his expulsion. What caused this sudden disintegration of the Healyite movement?

One factor was the shattering of the WRP's perspectives with the defeat of the miners' strike. Of course, this was not exactly the first time that Healy's fantasies had wrecked themselves against reality. But now, perhaps because of old age – he was showing distinct signs of senility – he had lost his old ability to pragmatically shift his political line, and was unable to reorient his demoralised followers.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Healy seems to have become thoroughly demoralised himself. Convinced that police-military dictatorship was imminent, he had £20,000 in cash and a BMW car secretly stashed away in order to flee the country in the event of a fascist coup?<sup>2</sup>

On top of this, the WRP was faced with a massive financial crisis, the primary cause of which was Healy's megalomaniac insistence that the organisation should behave as though it were a mass party. Not only had he purchased huge quantities of printing and other equipment, far in excess of the WRP's needs, but he had also acquired a bloated apparatus of some 90 full-timers – in a 'party' whose active membership didn't even reach four figures. The situation was aggravated by a severe reduction in the WRP's income resulting from the slump in *News Line* sales which followed the miners' defeat. Healy's own refusal to consider any evidence that contradicted claims about the party's growing size and influence prevented the deteriorating situation being addressed by the WRP leadership until the organisation was on the point of bankruptcy.

The final nail in Healy's political coffin was the eruption of a sexual scandal centring on his corrupt relations with women comrades. Again, there was nothing new in this. Back in the early 1950s, Healy had been in trouble after propositioning the daughter of a prominent figure in the Fourth International.<sup>3</sup> In 1964 an SLL control commission had been held over Healy's relationship with a leader of the Young Socialists.<sup>4</sup> And one of the background issues to the 1974 split in the WRP was the rejection of Healy's advances by a woman supporter of Thornett.<sup>5</sup> All of this, however, had been kept from the membership, the majority of whom reacted with shock and outrage after Healy's corruption

# The rise and fall of Gerry Healy



Healy (left) looks on as Mike Banda addresses the Trotsky anniversary meeting on August 18, 1985

was exposed in a letter by his long-time secretary Aileen Jennings.

What form did this sexual abuse take? It was later stated that the women Healy pressured into having sexual relations with him 'mistakenly believed that the revolution – in the form of the "greatest" leader – demanded this, the most personal sacrifice of all. They were not coerced... physically, but every pressure was brought to bear on them as revolutionaries'. The situation was 'not so much rape but... sexual abuse by someone in a position of power and trust'.<sup>6</sup> It was, Dave Bruce comments, 'wholesale sexual corruption in a manner analogous to these religious sects. There's a very close parallel'.<sup>7</sup>

The initial form the WRP's crisis took was the outbreak in the spring of 1985 of a fierce conflict between Healy and WRP assistant general secretary Sheila Torrance. In contrast to Healy's deeply pessimistic conclusions concerning the outcome of the miners' strike, Torrance clung to the view that the miners were undefeated and that Britain was on the verge of a revolution. Healy, for his part, needed a scapegoat for the failure of these perspectives to materialise, and Torrance, with her falsified *News Line* circulation figures and empty claims of 10,000 members, was an obvious target.

Healy threatened to have Torrance suspended or moved to the provinces, and viciously attacked those among the party activists and the youth who defended her. At a Central Committee meeting on April 27, Stuart Carter was beaten up by Healy for opposing the witch-hunt against Torrance, and subsequently expelled. Richard Price, the secretary of the London district committee, which Healy considered a nest of Torrance supporters, was publicly criticised by Healy while chairing the WRP's May Day rally.<sup>8</sup> For a while, the situation seemed to be heading for a split. Torrance was overheard screaming at Healy before a Political Committee meeting in June: 'You're twisted, this time you're going to come unstuck, I'll take it to conference and then you'll see'.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, an opposition grouping had developed at the party centre in Clapham. As Dave Bruce recalls: 'There was Dot Gibson, myself, Robert Harris became involved in it, Charlie Brandt, Torrance for a while – although she didn't half rat on us in the end... There were four or

five of us who quite consciously were organising in opposition to Healy... We bugged his premises so we knew what he was doing... We felt that, if you couldn't fight corruption in your own movement, why call yourself a Trotskyist?'<sup>10</sup>

It was at Bruce's instigation that Aileen Jennings – who was about to leave the party and disappear – wrote her letter exposing Healy's sexual activities and naming 26 of the women involved. This bombshell was consciously timed to go off when it would be least expected – the day after the apparently successful rally at the end of the march to free the jailed miners. 'It was also bloody obvious that if we didn't do something we'd be expelled,' Bruce points out, 'because that had happened to everybody else. We'd studied the Thornett experience, and the mistakes that Thornett made, and how he got out-manoeuvred, so we weren't going to make the same mistakes'.<sup>11</sup>

When Jennings' letter was read to a Political Committee meeting on July 1, it produced the anticipated explosion. 'Vanessa Redgrave was screeching at the top of her voice that this was the work of the Black Hundreds,' Richard Price recounts. 'That's a memory I cherish. And Banda gave this bizarre rambling speech about how all sorts of great leaders had had little vices... that Tito had been a bit of a womaniser and Mao as well... You had one wing of the Healyites saying this is lies, lies, lies, and another wing – Banda in particular, and to some extent Mitchell – working out excuses. And the weirdest thing of all was Healy himself, because at one point he was saying "This is a provocation", and at another point, like a harpooned whale, he spread his hands and said, "Well, I have many friends!"'<sup>12</sup>

Although Torrance was among those PC members who voted for a resolution rejecting the Jennings letter as a provocation (there were four votes against and one abstention), she was not averse to using the situation to undermine Healy. A week later, at her insistence, Healy was forced to sign an agreement to 'cease immediately my personal [sic] relations with the youth'.<sup>13</sup> Price argues that 'this was a body blow Healy never recovered from. He tried to keep up the pretence of being in charge, but effectively he'd been holed below the water-line. But this was

carried out as a PC manoeuvre, behind the back of the CC. Of course, this was in fact how the WRP had always operated. The CC was always subordinate to the PC, never mind what it said in the constitution... The deal was struck behind the scenes... Clearly what was envisaged was that there would be a bloodless transfer of power to... Banda and Torrance, who would be the new leadership'.<sup>14</sup>

Banda's initial support for Healy quickly crumbled, Price recalls. 'It seems that he switched sides having had discussions with parents of some of the youth mentioned in Aileen Jennings' letter... All I know is that he completely flipped from one side to the other within a short period of time. Even at that [July 1] PC meeting – knowing how aggressive and hot-tempered he could be – already he seemed punctured. After all, Banda had spent a lot of the miners' strike in the coalfields. I think probably he knew deep down that the line that had been peddled was nonsense. Or at least this was coming home to him. I think Banda over a whole period of time had consciously covered up for Healy, on many fronts, including his relations with women. There was an element of political shipwreck and remorse'.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout this period, there had been increasing demands by the YS leadership and Dave Hyland, a full-timer in Yorkshire, for a control commission into Healy's sexual abuse. Banda apparently tried to pressurise the parents of Healy's victims into withdrawing this demand, while Torrance used the WRP's warped version of democratic centralism to obstruct discussion of the subject outside of the PC.<sup>16</sup> In an attempt to deflect calls for a control commission, on September 6 Banda and Torrance decided to retire Healy, supposedly on the grounds of age and ill-health. The agreement they reached with Healy was that his retirement would not reflect adversely on his 49 years in the movement. Indeed, it was intended to hold a public meeting to celebrate his political career.<sup>17</sup>

'Torrance really believed that they would have the bloodless transfer of power,' Price observes. 'Banda would be able to speechify, but essentially she would run the show, and would inherit the mantle of Healy. She thought this heritage had great stock... What about her attitude to Healy's

abuse of women? Well I would say Torrance probably did want it to stop, but only really because she knew it had gone too far. Because I'm convinced through having talked to people subsequently that she knew all about this anyway, for years and years and years. So you can see why on the one hand she wanted to ease him aside, but on the other hand she didn't want Pandora's box opened... She wanted a kind-of tamed Healy'.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, a sharp discussion had developed over the WRP's political line. Torrance herself was critical of Healy's unprincipled relations with trade union bureaucrats and Labour lefts, and even began to develop the theory that there had been a political degeneration, albeit of recent origin, in the WRP.<sup>19</sup> At a CC meeting in August she, Price and Bruce attacked the party's cover-up for Ken Livingstone. However, while she could criticise the party's opportunism, she was entirely uncritical of its ultra-leftism.

It was Dave Bruce, in a discussion document circulated in early September, who launched an attack on the WRP's sectarianism. Rejecting the view that the working class had broken with its existing reformist leadership, Bruce emphasised that the WRP had to pursue united front tactics in order to win the majority of the class. The weakness of Bruce's document was its failure to break sufficiently from the established ultra-leftist line. It upheld the view that the Thatcher government had 'failed to inflict a single decisive defeat on any section of the organised working class', and put forward the slogan 'Demand the TUC organise the general strike'.<sup>20</sup>

For Torrance, however, this represented a right-opportunist deviation of monstrous proportions! A document replying to Bruce, which appeared on September 21 in Torrance's name but was probably written by her partner Paddy O'Regan, was an exercise in pure Healyite gibberish. According to Torrance, Britain was in a 'revolutionary situation... which is deepening continually'. Healy's retirement, she asserted, had given the green light to 'conservative, unprepared and sceptical sections of the party leadership', who 'have become intense focal points of bourgeois pressure, are turning towards Left Reformism and are in a frenzy to turn the party to the Right'. Significantly, Torrance's document also featured a fervent tribute to Healy, claiming that his 'greatest contribution to the building of the party has been to pioneer the struggle for dialectical logic, the dialectical method and to emphasise the importance of abstract thought'.<sup>21</sup>

## To be continued

### NOTES

1. 'Healy... remains very much a pragmatist,' it was pointed out years earlier. 'He is every inch a sectarian, but he is quite willing to use any means to build up his organisation. Were it not for Healy's periodic adjustments, the SLL would long ago have cracked up.' (IMG internal document, 1968.)
2. *Workers Press*, January 4, 1986.
3. Information from Jim Higgins.
4. This was revealed in Aileen Jennings' letter, published in *News Line*, October 30, 1985.
5. Tim Wohlforth, *Memoirs*, unpublished ms.
6. *Workers Press*, December 6, 1986.
7. Interview with Dave Bruce, October 6, 1993.
8. *Workers News*, April 1987.
9. *News Line*, November 8, 1985.
10. Bruce interview.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Interview with Richard Price, November 22, 1993.
13. *News Line*, October 31, 1985. Healy cynically complained that the term 'youth' was too vague. 'It should say "Under 25". As it is it'll ruin my lifestyle.' (*News Line*, November 6, 1985.)
14. Price interview.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Gerry Downing, *WRP Explosion*, RIL, 1991, p.5; Price interview.
17. *Workers News*, April 1987; Downing, op.cit., p.6.
18. Price interview.
19. Downing, op.cit., p.5; Price interview.
20. *News Line*, October 31, November 1, 1985.
21. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1985.

## CRITIQUE CONFERENCE

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# Set-back for Bosnia aid campaign

By Ian Harrison

THE CONFERENCE in Manchester on October 30, 1993, marked a step backwards in the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign. What should have been an opportunity to assess how far it had succeeded in rooting itself in the broad trade union and Labour movement was transformed into a display of sectarianism which only served to undermine the campaign's best efforts.

Central responsibility for this rests with the WRP/Workers Press, but *Socialist Outlook* supporters of the USec cannot escape without criticism.

The conference should have received reports from participants in the campaign, discussed a number of motions, and then resolved on a way forward. In the event, it didn't even succeed in carrying out a sober assessment of the campaign thus far.

The pattern for the whole conference was established by the tone and content of the opening speeches delivered by platform speakers. WRP members and supporters set out to prove that they alone had

initiated the campaign, they alone represented the interests of workers in Bosnia, and they alone had the answers to the problem of developing an international campaign. They held *Socialist Outlook* up to ridicule, misrepresented its contribution and attacked support groups in Denmark and Sweden – all in the name of the WRP's Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

Any honest observer who had attended the weekly meetings in London organised by those jointly responsible for calling the conference – the WRP, *Socialist Outlook*, the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe and Workers Power – would have been forced to recognise that a sectarian struggle for outright control of the campaign had been launched by the WRP long before events in Manchester took place.

A resolution adopted at the London meetings, submitted by *Socialist Outlook* supporters, emphasised the need for the campaign to root itself in the trade union and Labour movement and establish a democratic structure of delegates accountable to rank-and-file members of trade unions and other workers'

organisations. WRP members and supporters responded to the passage of this resolution with weekly attempts to overturn it. Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* and members of CAFE, Workers Power and the Workers International League were placed under constant pressure to rescind the resolution and adopt instead a campaign which would only be accountable to the WRP and those in agreement with it.

WRP members argued for rejection of the resolution on the grounds that *Socialist Outlook* was trying to impose a straitjacket on participants in the campaign, and particularly on the rights of speakers in discussions. Anyone who has attended a conference organised by *Socialist Outlook* will recognise that there exists an element of truth in this line of argument. The group organises its public conferences in such a way that it is almost impossible for anyone but its own supporters to speak.

Tensions in the pre-conference meetings were made worse by open threats from a leading *Socialist Outlook* supporter to split the campaign. But any hope of holding a productive conference was definitively undermined by WRP mem-

bers when they sabotaged arrangements by packing the organising meetings. A mail-out to trade union and Labour movement bodies throughout the country, which the WRP agreed to be responsible for, was only carried out very selectively.

In Manchester, only a handful of copies of the motions presented to the conference for discussion were available for up to 300 people who attended. No adequate arrangements for the translation of contributions was made, with the result that the approximately 80 Bosnians who attended could not follow the proceedings and had to rely on leading WRP member Dot Gibson telling them that 'this is the motion that the Tuzla Centre supports'. (Yet the WRP prides itself on its internationalism!) A call for support from the USec-led section of the convoy which eventually reached Tuzla was not even brought to the attention of the conference.

A number of *Socialist Outlook* supporters resorted to baiting the WRP with accusations of 'Healyism', to which WRP members responded with counter-accusations of 'Pabloism'. In one such

exchange, WRP member Tony Myers left his seat and threatened the offending member of CAFE with physical violence. No-one from the WRP apologised for this behaviour, or issued a call for restraint.

The day after the conference a pre-arranged meeting of international delegates took place, which the WRP refused to recognise. The campaign effectively split in two at this point. The meeting adopted the tasks abandoned by the WRP, together with a democratic structure. A programme of work was agreed which included a Europe-wide day of action on December 11 to raise the demand 'Let Bosnia Live – Open Tuzla Airport Now!'. Meanwhile, the WRP campaign has adopted the Bosnian government position of calling on the UN to open the northern route to Tuzla. In such heavily fought-over territory, this would only be possible through imperialist military intervention.

The WIL now participates in the International Workers Aid campaign launched at the delegate meeting on October 31. The work of basing this campaign in the trade union and Labour movement across Europe remains to be achieved.

## Hot air and hard facts

**Fighting the Nazi Threat Today**  
Anti-Nazi League; 50p  
**How To Beat the Racists**  
Socialist Organiser; 95p

WHILE setting out to explain the nature of fascism and encourage opposition to racist and fascist attacks, *Fighting the Nazi Threat Today* reflects most clearly the nature of the Anti-Nazi League as a liberal, popular-frontist organisation with little interest in the development of a broad labour movement-based body to smash the fascists.

It describes itself as 'an educational pack produced and written by Anti-Nazi teachers' and contains not a single reference to the Socialist Workers Party. But since everyone knows that the ANL is first and foremost an SWP front organisation, our anti-Nazi teachers are, to say the least, somewhat disingenuous.

It is thoroughly liberal in tone and completely avoids any attempt at a class analysis of racism and fascism and how to fight them. It starts with the question: what is fascism? The Nazis are then characterised as primarily anti-Jewish thugs who incidentally locked up left-wingers and banned trade unions once they got into power because they were 'totally against democ-

racy', and didn't believe in free speech, political parties or trade unions. The fact that the Nazis were funded by the big German industrialists precisely to smash the organisations of the German working class doesn't even rate a mention.

While the pamphlet does document in some detail the incidence of racist attacks and the growth of the BNP, these are treated as the result of declining economic and social conditions which are unfortunately made worse by politicians such as Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Germany, Interior Minister Charles Pasqua in France and Winston Churchill MP in Britain. All reference to their party membership is omitted. Are the Tories left out because it's an 'educational' publication? Or perhaps because the 'kids' wouldn't know about such things? Or maybe the ANL has a secret Tory following! Certainly there is little in this pamphlet to upset any but the most rabid right-winger.

Similarly, 'racist myths and widespread reports in the media about "floods" of immigrants' are countered with simple statements of fact about immigrant numbers from which the reader is left to draw the (racist?) conclusion that such fears are unfounded. Not much militant

anti-racism here. No demands for the right of workers to live where they choose or for the repeal of the racist acts restricting immigration. Indeed, the legislation is not even referred to as racist.

The focus on fascists means that the broader racist character of capitalist society and its state is virtually ignored. To sum up, this pamphlet is educationally dubious and politically worthless.

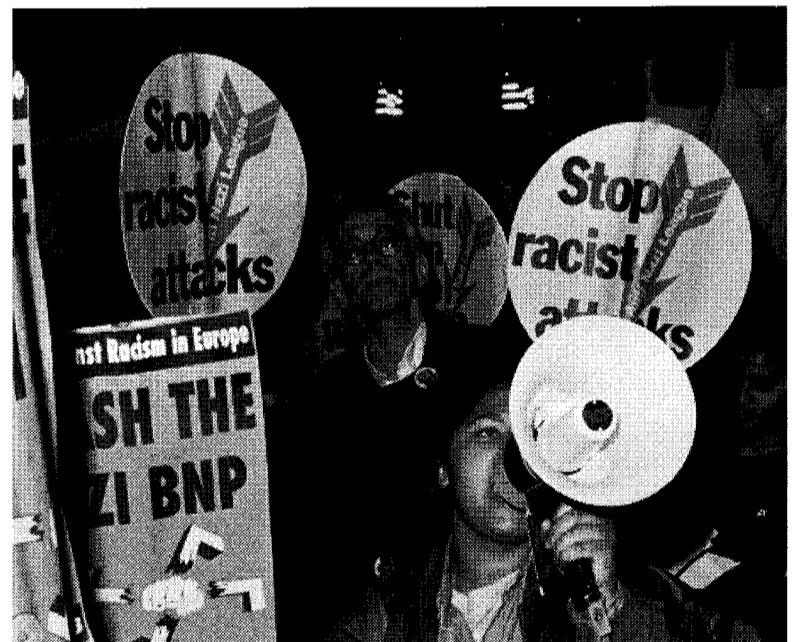
In contrast with the ANL pamphlet, *How To Beat the Racists* merits serious study. It is a collection of signed and unsigned articles which, while aimed at youth and the rank and file of the labour movement, does not patronise but on the contrary sets out to be thought-provoking. It presents itself as the product of a revolutionary Trotskyist position firmly rooted in a class analysis.

Emphasis is placed on the central role of the labour movement in dealing with fascism and racism, and arguments are put forward for a unified anti-racist movement. At the same time, the need for black self-defence and workers' defence squads is stressed. The existence of racism within the labour movement is recognised but the effect of united class action is also recognised as a force for its elimination. The cross-class character and other negative features of the original ANL are criticised.

The racist character of British immigration laws is clearly shown, as is the racism of the police. However, the call for 'elected bodies to control the police' sows illusions about the nature of the state. The origins of racism are traced and there is a significant contribution to the discussion on black separatism.

The idiosyncratic position of *Socialist Organiser* on Zionism is given some space, mixing undoubtedly accurate criticisms of the left with patently false reasoning. Nevertheless, this is clearly the better buy.

David Lewis  
Andrew Mills



Tower Hamlets, November 10: Anti-Nazi League leader Paul Holborow (centre, with glasses) joins a demonstration outside the first meeting attended by the British National Party councillor for Millwall, Derek Beakon

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## Sinn Féin abandons fight for united Ireland

# REJECT THE SELL-OUT!

By Dan Gallagher

THE JOINT declaration by the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and John Major on December 15 is a trap for the whole Irish working class. The proposals will be imposed from above with the aid of British imperialism, its loyalist allies and Irish capitalism. Like the 1922 Treaty, which established partition, they will leave the nationalist working class with nothing after 25 years of heroic struggle.

As one west Belfast woman put it in an interview with an *Irish Times* reporter the same day: 'They're not offering us anything new. People haven't died, rotted in jail and borne the full brunt of this conflict for empty phrases. They talk of the right of the Irish people to national self-determination. Albert Reynolds may waffle all he likes about accommodating unionists but he doesn't have to live with them. If Gerry Adams accepts this document as it stands, without any major concessions, he'll do so on his own. The lads around here won't be running round to Woodbourne [RUC station] to hand in the Semtex.'

The only concessions made by Major are to the southern capitalists. Whilst continuing to uphold the loyalist veto, the declaration concedes that 'it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.' Of course this is not self-determination at all, but it might be enough to win the referendum to overturn Articles Two and Three of the Irish Constitution, which claim sovereignty for Dublin over the whole island. It might also oblige Gerry Adams and the IRA to enter negotiations. Adams has backed himself into a corner by his entire approach up to now. According to the leader of Republican Sinn Féin, Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh, Adams is 'in no man's land', facing 'a split behind and not much there in front.'

Sinn Féin now wants peace at any price. Adams and fellow Sinn Féin leader Martin McGuinness,

who always speaks for the IRA, have indicated that they are willing to concede on British withdrawal and whatever else is demanded to secure it. In an interview in *The Guardian* on September 18, McGuinness said: 'The key is the British government. If it was prepared to be radical, to learn from South Africa and Israel, then it is conceivable to us that things could move rapidly. We could see a solution within six to 12 months.' Adams and McGuinness have apparently been pushing for a permanent cease-fire by the IRA since the end of last year. The Army Council, the IRA's leading body, has given its backing to the Adams-Hume initiative and is now likely to call a general army convention to decide on the Major-Reynolds joint proposals. This body has only met twice in the present conflict, in 1970 and 1986.

The Adams-Hume talks were clearly about the terms of a cease-fire and places at the negotiating table. Republican Sinn Féin's paper immediately cried 'New Sell-Out' (*Saoirse* No.78, October 1993). It is significant that Republican Sinn Féin likens Yasser Arafat to Michael Collins, leader of the pro-Treaty, pro-British wing of Sinn Féin in the 1922-23 civil war, whereas Sinn Féin itself puts forward the road of Arafat and Nelson Mandela as the one to achieve peace.

The last cease-fire, in 1974-75, was disastrous for the IRA. The relaxation of the struggle led to demoralisation which left the IRA open to attack. There was a huge increase in assassinations carried out by loyalist paramilitaries in collusion with the RUC and the army. The IRA was obliged to respond, and the cease-fire came to an end. When Roy Mason, the Labour Northern Ireland Secretary, introduced the shoot-to-kill policy and began the torture of suspects in Castlereagh in 1976 the organisation was on its last legs. This scenario could well be repeated.

There are many conflicting interests. Clearly a section of the British ruling class and Labour bureaucracy (the pro-European Heathites, the McNamara wing of the Labour Party, some trade union leaders) are willing to do a deal on the basis of joint sovereignty. Major is in an

electoral pact with James Molyneaux, the leader of the Ulster Unionists (UUP), who is supported by the Protestant middle class and who represents the multi-national industrialists and the big farmers. The London-Dublin initiative is a watered down variant of the joint sovereignty option.

The right wing of the ruling class is closest to the military and therefore to the more reactionary section of the unionists: the loyalist death squads and Paisley's Democratic Unionists (DUP). They are effectively being boosted by a growing section of the Labour Party organised by Vauxhall MP and ex-International Marxist Group member Kate Hoey. Her 'Democracy Now' group campaigns for the Labour Party to organise in the north of Ireland on a pro-unionist platform. It now claims the support of 30 Labour MPs.

The division in the British ruling class is recognised in the joint sovereignty document from Kevin McNamara, Labour's spokesman on Northern Ireland, and the calls from Irish Labour Party leader and Foreign Minister Dick Spring for a settlement over the heads of the unionists and later for talks to resume in the absence of the DUP. It is also apparent in the (very) conditional acceptance of the possibility of talking to Sinn Féin by Molyneaux and the Reverend Martin Smyth, a UUP MP and head of the Orange Order.

There is nothing in this deal for the loyalists and perhaps much to lose. The right to discriminate in favour of Protestants is under threat. These are the factors that motivate the killer squads of the Ulster Defence Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Ulster Volunteer Force, who have begun to kill nationalists and Protestants indiscriminately in mixed bars like the one at Greysteel as a form of ethnic cleansing. Assassinations carried out by loyalists have increased steadily over the past two years. There is ample circumstantial and material evidence to show that the RUC and the British Army are co-operating closely with the killers.

The loyalist paramilitaries are the bitterest opponents of any concessions to the nationalists. They



Gerry Adams and John Hume: nothing for the loyalist or nationalist working class

have always understood that their privileges rest on the maintenance of the six-county state, and they now feel the ground moving from under their feet. Demographic changes mean that nationalists are approaching 45 per cent of the population. Sixty-five per cent of primary school children and 60 per cent of the students at Queen's University are Catholic, and 30 per cent of marriages are mixed. Moreover, the official unionists are now showing signs of being willing to betray them and do a deal.

All this may well indicate that a pogrom is being prepared to physically drive nationalists out of the loyalist workplaces and neighbourhoods—the traditional plebeian loyalist response to the threatened loss of marginal privilege.

The entire capitalist media concentrates on the IRA 'atrocities', but the IRA has not responded to loyalist violence with tit-for-tat killings. It has, in the main, attempted to execute the leaders of the death squads, or shoot members of the security forces or collaborators. The Shankill bombing was a desperate attempt by the IRA to wipe out a group of loyalist paramilitary leaders that went tragically wrong.

The unions at Harland and Wolff shipyard refused to support the Protestant peace campaigners who organised a 1,000-strong pray-in after the murder of Catholic worker Joe Reynolds inside Short's Dee Street factory gate, on the basis that he was not one of their members. However, after the IRA bomb went off in the fish shop, the unions at both Short's and Harland and Wolff ordered the downing of tools and organised a march to the Shankill. The dead were not their members, but they were Protestants.

The Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) serves as a bastion of loyalist reaction and all British-based trade unions should withdraw from it. Irish trade unionists and activists should campaign for their unions to do the same. British-based trade unions should cease organising in Ireland, period.

The ICTU plays a despicable role in the national struggle, with its acquiescence to loyalist discrimination, via the NIC, within its own

ranks. This is in keeping with its betrayal of the social and economic struggles of all Irish workers. It is currently selling out long-running strikes at Pat the Baker in Dublin and Nolan Transport in Wexford by keeping them isolated, using the anti-union laws as an excuse.

Resisting this treachery is the starting point for the struggle against the bureaucracy. However, unless revolutionaries combine this with a fight against the bureaucracy's pro-imperialism, there is no prospect of mobilising mass action. In practice, the ICTU defends the partition of Ireland. It has collaborated for eight years in the corporatist PNR/PESP 'national recovery' plans. These have driven unemployment in southern Ireland up to almost 300,000, slashed wages—particularly in the private sector—cut welfare benefits and public spending on hospitals and schools, and allowed at least £3 billion in profits alone to be 'repatriated' by multi-nationals every year. In fact, a section of the Irish ruling class now feels that this is the time to end such agreements, as they have served their purpose in demobilising the working class.

Clearly, the IRA/Sinn Féin leadership is now prepared to sell-out the entire struggle for Irish self-determination. The need to build a new revolutionary Trotskyist leadership has never been posed more starkly. It will have to prepare for the national and social revolution by elaborating a programme based on an understanding of permanent revolution. The immediate task is to build militant, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist rank-and-file groups in all Irish workplaces, north and south of the border.

### BLOODY SUNDAY

Saturday January 29

Assemble Hyde Park 12.00 for annual commemoration march

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