

# Workers power

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

# SOVIET CRISIS DEEPENS

**THE SOVIET Union is fast approaching a revolutionary crisis. It is facing an economic impasse so large that in arguing for his panic price increases Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov told parliament, "We have no more money. We have no more gold to buy grain".**

The ruling bureaucracy is so torn by internal strife that it cannot agree on a coherent strategy to deal with the economic chaos. The working class, exasperated at the economic hardships and lack of political direction, is expressing its frustration through strikes and demonstrations.

There were more strike days in the first four months this year inside the USSR than in the whole of 1989. In May the first mass independent workers' organisation since the triumph of Stalin was founded.

### Dramatic

If the proposed dramatic price rises are pushed through there will be massive resistance, mainly from working class women already struggling with food shortages and endless queueing.

In short the rulers cannot go on ruling in the old way, the workers will not go on suffering in the old way. Yet the economy demands decisive and immediate action.

The bureaucrats are deeply divided about the solution to their troubles. On one side stand the bureaucratic conservatives determined to maintain the USSR's inefficient planning mechanisms. On the other side stand the pro-capitalist "radicals" of the Democratic Platform. Led by Boris Yeltsin they want a rapid structural reform of the Soviet economy to pave the way for the reintroduction of the profit system.

Between them stands Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership—determined to shake up the bureaucracy but equally determined to maintain its grip on economic and political power.

The failure of Gorbachev's *perestroika*—reinvigorating bureaucratic planning through market reforms and streamlining the bureaucracy—comes as no surprise



to real, revolutionary, communists. The lifeblood of efficient planning and economic progress in a country where the profit motive has been eradicated is the democratic involvement of the mass of producers and consumers in decision making at every level of the economy. But

to the privileged bureaucracy this democracy of producers and consumers is like a cross to a vampire.

Instead it is toying with the idea of a referendum: the time honoured trick of doomed dictators. Instead of active participation in the economy the Soviet work-

ers will be offered a one-off chance to say yes or no to price rises, unemployment and sharp cuts in living standards. They will be offered the choice—Gorbachev's drastic package or chaos.

The imperialists are backing Gorbachev's gamble. Having "won" the Cold War and helped reduce the Soviet economy to chaos they are still reliant on the Soviet leaders to deliver the USSR on a plate to the profiteers. Now they fear that mass working class resistance to Gorbachev's economic plans, combined with the national break up of the Soviet Union will plunge the whole world into turmoil.

The imperialists are terrified at the prospect of the collapse of the world order they erected with the Stalinists over the dead bodies of millions of workers after World War Two. Yet they are not certain that they are strong or united enough to replace it with a stable new order of their own.

### Service

It falls to the workers to perform that service for humanity. If the Soviet working class can find a revolutionary leadership, build fighting militias and democratic workers' councils, like those which overthrew Tsarism, they can rid the USSR of its bureaucracy and open the road to genuine socialism.

But the Soviet workers lack a coherent strategy and leadership to resolve the crisis in their interests. If they do not find one then the outcome of the deepening economic crisis will be either the restoration of capitalism, creating the potential for a major strengthening of imperialism on a world scale, or a drastic retrenchment by the conservative bureaucrats in the USSR through repression.

"Bread is socialism. You can't raise the prices", one Soviet MP told Ryzhkov. No doubt his words reminded the Soviet parliament that Lenin, whose statue towers over their proceedings, led the Russian workers and peasants to power in a struggle for bread, peace and land.

But socialism is not just bread. It is real freedom from poverty, unemployment, ignorance and tyranny. And the collapse of fake socialism in the USSR gives the workers another historic chance to build the real thing—a chance they must seize with both hands. ■

## For a workers' political revolution

# IN brief

## Perk-estroika

THE ARCHITECT of *perestroika* has not spared his wage packet from a bit of economic restructuring—upwards!

While the Soviet masses confront ever increasing hardships Gorbachev is lining his pockets. His annual wage has been put up to £48,080—a threefold rise. It puts him on a salary around twenty times higher than the average Soviet worker. He has also landed a couple of official "holiday homes".

This charlatan is fond of quoting Lenin, when it suits him. Workers would do well to recall that Lenin insisted Soviet officials be paid only the average wage of a skilled worker as a safeguard against bureaucratism. Let's get back to Lenin—down with the bureaucracy and its perks. Forward to political revolution! ■

## Reinstate the PNL 7

THE ADMINISTRATION at the Polytechnic of North London (PNL) has railroaded through the expulsions of two students and suspended five others for periods ranging from two weeks to five months.

All seven are victims of an anti-left witch-hunt launched by PNL director, Leslie Wagner, in the wake of an occupation at the college's Kentish Town site in mid-March. More than 100 students joined the protest in line with an official NUS call for action against the Tory loans scheme. Management identified a total of twenty students, some not even involved in the action, as ringleaders.

The college's bosses have clearly targeted the Kentish Town site because of its support for lecturers during the recent NATFHE dispute and the effective shutdown of the campus during the 30 January ambulance workers' day of action. The campaign to defend the victimised has so far gained the official support of the NUS leadership, though it has initiated no action. NALGO members in both Islington and Camden have passed resolutions. ■

## Caring council

COVENTRY'S LABOUR Council is currently implementing the Poll Tax... but with a "human face".

A recent resolution to Coventry South East Labour Party asked the council to issue guidelines to bailiffs not to remove cookers, bedding, fridges etc. It went on to say: "This measure will still allow the council to act within the law", i.e. it will still be able to snatch videos, TVs, stereos and so on.

The movers of the resolution? Leading supporters of *Militant*, "The paper that fights the Poll Tax", including one Dave Nellist, MP. ■

## PRIDE '90

# Celebrate and organise!

BY IAN HACKETT

THE REBIRTH of a radical lesbian and gay movement can be dated to the summer of 1969. A routine police raid on a gay bar in New York led to the Stonewall riots.

Inspired by the huge street demonstrations of the mass campaign in the USA against the Vietnam War, by the street battles of students in France and Germany, and sick of incessant police harassment, gays fought back with a vengeance.

For three days and nights gay men battled with the cops. Their action set rolling a whole new movement.

This month tens of thousands will march through London to celebrate the event. We will be doing so in a climate of anti-gay bigotry and homophobia that has changed little since 1969. According to official police records the number of sex offences (sic) involving consenting gay men in London and throughout the country are going through the roof.

In England and Wales in 1989 police recorded 2,022 "offences" of "indecently between males". This is the third highest figure this century. GALOP (Gay London Police Monitoring Group) has also identified seven other laws that are frequently used to prosecute gay men. If these are taken into account, well over 3,000 gay men are being prosecuted for consensual sexual activity every year.

In addition there has been a massive rise in "queerbashing" (physical assaults on lesbians and

gay men). The case of Michael Boothe beaten to death in a west London "cottage" (a toilet men frequent to have sex with other men) was a gruesome example of the climate we live in. His beating was so severe a doctor said his injuries were "the most horrific I have ever seen".

With twelve unsolved murders in the south east alone since 1987, all linked to anti-gay attacks, it is not difficult to see the hatred and bigotry that lesbians and gay men still have to suffer.

At the same time the Tories have renewed their ideological onslaught. At a press conference in Conservative Central Office Kenneth Baker attacked Manchester Council for spending £47,000 on a gay centre and £33,000 on a lesbian phone service. The fact that they carry out valuable counselling and community support work does not cut any ice with Baker the bigot.

In Ealing the local NALGO branch reports the recently elected Tory council is embarking on "a discriminatory, bigoted and vindictive campaign against minority groups". One of the first acts of the new administration was to declare that it would sack 200 workers in the race, police, women's and lesbian and gay units. It stated "the lesbians and gays have had it from now on".

This offensive by the Tories has fuelled a hate campaign. The race unit office was shot at by someone

with an air rifle. Threatening phone calls to the lesbian and gay unit demanded that "niggers" and "queers" get out.

Faced with this what should lesbian and gay men be doing? The impasse of many campaigns since Section 28 was implemented is a symptom of the crisis of direction and organisation for the lesbian and gay community. The Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) has called an emergency general meeting to discuss whether it should continue!

**DEMONSTRATE  
PRIDE '90  
SATURDAY 30 JUNE  
Assemble Embankment**

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights has had some success in pressing the Labour Party into commitments for a future Labour Government. The policy review has promised to repeal Section 28 and prohibit discrimination in law on the grounds of sexuality. However Hattersley has stated that this will be left to a conscience vote in a future parliament!

ACT-UP (Aids Coalition for the Unleashing of Power) has recently set up branches in Manchester, London and other parts of the country. Its strategy follows that of its US counterpart. It relies on stunts like "zapping". That is targeting an anti-gay organisations and conducting sit-ins, lobbies and jamming switch-boards to high-

light its policies.

The anger expressed by lesbians and gay men involved in such actions is entirely understandable. But whilst stunts can play a subordinate role in any campaign for lesbian and gay rights they do not answer the central question of how lesbians and gay men should fight their oppression on a day to day basis.

The systematic oppression of lesbians and gay men is a product of capitalist society. It is rooted in the isolated family unit that capitalism needs to reproduce and sustain labour power. Sexuality that does not conform to this model family role is stigmatised as abnormal and dealt with through repression.

The fight for lesbian and gay rights, the fight for real liberation, is a class question. The tasks of the day are to fight inside the working class as a whole for a commitment to support lesbian and gay rights. This has to involve building caucuses of lesbians and gay men in the unions.

We must organise campaigns through the unions to defend those victimised for their sexuality, like the teacher recently sacked because he was entrapped by the police in a cottage. The rise in arrests means that many such campaigns will be needed in many unions.

We need to build united front campaigns against the insidious effects of the current wave of moral reaction, against the councils that try to ditch our units. We must build defence squads, and demand labour movement for support for them, to deal with the queerbashers.

All of these forms of activity, all of these campaigns need to be unified, co-ordinated, through a working class lesbian and gay movement committed to our liberation and the destruction of the capitalist society that stands in its way.

● Celebrate and organise!  
● For a working class lesbian and gay movement!

AT A hotel in Norfolk during April forty NHS administrators locked themselves away. They carried out the first simulation game to test out the likely effects of the internal market if introduced into the health service.

It did not work. In the "third year" the whole system collapsed in crisis!

There is no need to play games based in the future to see that the NHS is facing yet another cash crisis now. Beds and wards are being cut and whole hospitals closed to routine admissions over the summer months in order to save millions of pounds at the expense of patient care. If a health workers' strike threatened to reduce the service to emergencies only for two months there would be an outcry. But the managers get away with it scot free.

The Tories are fond of pointing out how much money they have invested in the NHS, and how they have made great improvements in the efficiency and management of the service. But anyone who works in the NHS or has had cause to use it recently will have seen through these Tory lies.

Take waiting lists. A guide from the College of Health published in March this year revealed that more than a million people are on hospital waiting lists in the UK, and 26% of patients in England wait over a year for treatment. Waiting lists for the year ending in March 1989 grew by 4.2% on the previous year, reaching an all time high.

It is not only the time spent waiting for treatment that is growing. The quality of care is being eroded by a starvation of funds and staff shortages due to low pay and poor conditions. A new survey from the pressure group London Health

# Playing games with our health!

Emergency describes the drastic cutbacks which have occurred in London's maternity, family planning and gynaecological services over recent years. They suggest that having a baby in an NHS hospital in London can now be "an experience that borders on the dangerous".

At a time when the government is claiming to be promoting patient choice within the health service, the options for patients are being systematically narrowed. Family planning clinics are being closed and cuts in maternity services have shut community maternity hospitals in some areas, forcing women to use the high tech maternity services of the larger hospitals.

The Tories create more problems for health authorities by instructing them to carry out screening programmes, such as the recently launched one for breast cancer. The government provided initial funding for setting up the mammography service. But they ignored the fact that the services available to those women who are found to need further investigation or treatment are inadequate. Kings College Hospital, for example, is likely to cut ten beds on its surgical unit—those which would be used by women referred from the recently established breast screening clinic.

This picture of cuts and poor quality services is the backdrop for the introduction of the health service reforms outlined in the White

Paper "Working for Patients". These changes, due to be forced upon the NHS next year, amount to the most radical restructuring of the service since its creation. The Tories—and many managers in the NHS—claim that they will lead to improvements. Cynics might be tempted to say that things could hardly get much worse, so why worry.

In fact the plans will intensify the current problems and, centrally, increase the inequalities in the NHS. The Tories may well plough some more money into to NHS to try and smooth the introduction of the reforms. But the changes are such that however big the Tory sweeteners are, they will not mask the fundamental attacks.

Hospitals are being encouraged to opt out of Health Authority control and become self-governing trusts. They will then have to sell their services to Districts and GPs. This is supposed to increase incentives for an efficient and competitive service, thereby improving patient services. It will do no such thing: it will lead to corner cutting and minimal standards in order to under-cut competitors in nearby hospitals. As with all "market" systems it will tend to decrease choice, not widen it as claimed. And it will be the district health authority and the GP who make even this choice, not the patient.

Take tonsillectomy for example. A hospital that specialises in taking

tonsils out will be able to do this "in bulk" and so provide a cheaper service than other hospitals in the district. These other hospitals will not win contracts for tonsillectomy, and thus stop offering it at all. Patients will then be forced to go longer distances to reach the only hospital in the area which will remove their tonsils at a competitive price.

The Tory restructuring of the NHS will make the present chaotic and often inefficient service much worse. The administrative changes alone will lead to increased paper work as each department sends bills to each GP for every service performed on a patient. The whole thing could very well fall apart administratively even without any opposition from health services workers and users!

All this does not exhaust the list of damaging elements in the white paper proposals. Most importantly for those of us who work in the health service is the breaking up of nationally negotiated pay and conditions, allowing each self-governing hospital to set wages. Just like the privatisation of ancillary services, this will lead to the lowering of wages, worsening conditions and a weakening of trade unionism in the NHS.

But that will happen only if we let it. We have it in our power to resist, to make good the damage inflicted so far and stop the other proposal dead in their tracks. ■

## EDITORIAL

## Labour's loyal left

SOCIALISM ONLY warrants one mention in Labour's latest version of the Policy Review, *Looking to the Future*. Given the real content of this pre-election manifesto this is probably one too many.

Labour is set to consolidate much of what Thatcher has done. They promise to stimulate competition, strengthen industry and stabilise financial policy by retaining Thatcher's economic "reforms". These include widespread de-nationalisation, free rein for the City to shift fortunes across the globe at will and a workforce hamstrung by anti-union laws. Justice, equality, a redistribution of wealth? None of these phrases get a look in. Even by reformist standards this marks a new low in servility by Labour.

Of course, the document contains a number of soothing promises to Labour's working class supporters. There will be improvements in health, education and welfare provision. But before anyone heaves a sigh of relief John Smith, the Labour Shadow Chancellor, is warning in advance that there can be no definite time set for when these promises will be fulfilled:

"But it must be clear at the outset that advance towards our objectives will necessary depend on achieving that growth [in the economy as whole]. We will not spend, nor will we promise to spend, more than Britain can afford."

According to Kinnock this means they will spend about £3.2 billion—around the same amount Thatcher is promising to use to sweeten the Poll Tax. In other words, peanuts!

Trade unionists have been at the sharp end of the Tory offensive. Through the courts unions have been denied the right to strike or picket. Their funds have been seized. On the picket lines they have been battered by well armed riot police. Under Labour, apart from a limited right to take secondary action, every one of these nakedly anti-working class legal provisions is to stay.

It is the obligation of socialists inside and outside the Labour Party to wage a fight now against La-

bour's Bosses' Charter. Yet the signs are that the left in the party is not prepared to engage in such a fight. The left reformists and their "Trotskyist" supporters are in disarray.

Last month two conferences were called, nominal to organise resistance to Kinnock's right wing drift. In Sheffield the Bennites held a conference to set up Labour Party Socialists (LPS). In London, the following week Labour Left Liaison (LLL) convened in London to launch a "broad coalition" of the left. Only the latter had the franchise of the Campaign Group of MPs. They castigated the Bennites for their lack of realism, never having forgiven Benn and Heffer for standing against Kinnock in the leadership contest of 1988.

Regardless of these factional considerations—behind which lies a split between the "Trotskyists" of *Labour Briefing* who love Benn, and those of *Socialist Action*, who are thick as thieves with Livingstone—neither the LPS nor the LLL are advancing any sort of campaign that will cause Kinnock to lose sleep.

Tony Benn himself told the Sheffield conference: "What we are trying to do is not something you could call: 'Left's bitter assault on Kinnock.' It is about discussion. There must be some space in it for socialist analysis."

Quite what the policies of LPS are to be is not yet clear. A further conference is planned to decide them in Sheffield. The signs are, if *Socialist Organiser* (SO) is anything to go by, that wrangling for position between their supporters and those of *Labour Briefing* will be accorded greater importance than any campaign against Kinnock. SO inform us that "the balance of influence on the committee is still uncertain". They didn't tell anybody what issues they planned to fight on now!

But if the LPS is hidebound by internal strife and Benn's sentimentalism, the LLL have a much clearer idea of what they want. They represent the "new realists" of the Labour left and their attitude is

summed up by Ken Livingstone. In his paper to the conference in May he stated:

"At the risk of controversy in some quarters of the left it should be stated bluntly that the next Labour government will not confront the alternative between creating a socialist society or not . . . to criticise a Labour government for not introducing socialism, is therefore to place oneself outside the possible."

Possible for whom, Mr Livingstone? A Labour government could, very easily pledge itself to re-nationalising the privatised industries. It won't, not because this isn't possible, but because it does not want to upset the bosses. And by refusing to raise this call and fight for it Ken Livingstone is doing Kinnock's dirty work for him, telling the left that such demands are unrealistic. The same goes for a whole host of policies that Labour is reneging on.

Both wings of the Labour left are demonstrating their inability to utilise the working class struggles to fight Kinnock. Workers mobilised in direct action, fighting for their rights, resisting the Poll Tax, can be given a political direction that will thwart Kinnock and Smith's plans to become the new business managers of UK Ltd. The anger and militancy that exists can be directed into a powerful campaign to demand that Labour meets working class needs. In so doing it will weaken the right and prepare the way for their exposure.

Such an approach, however, requires a revolutionary outlook, a preparedness to fight against the stream inside the Labour Party, a preparedness to recognise that what is "possible" is never decided in advance of a struggle for what is necessary.

Workers Power will certainly fight amongst the left reformist milieu to win adherents to this perspective, just as we will fight in every arena of the class struggle that we can. But in so doing we recognise that we will also have to fight the left reformists and centrists of the LPS and LLL for whom "socialist discussion" and the "art of the possible" have become more important than the class war. ■

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## Fight job losses

SO IT has come to an end. Four years ago this month unemployment stood at a record 3.5 million. Then the economic recovery, fake training schemes, harassment of claimants and statistical fiddles combined to reduce it month by month . . . until April.

The British economic recession is upon us and part time working has given way to factory closures. At the Ravenscraig steel works in Clydeside 770 jobs are to go by the end of the year and the whole plant could close by 1992. In North Wales the Brymbo steel mill is to shut.

The CBI expect their members

to sack about 54,000 factory workers over the next three months, involving a third of all companies.

This may not yet be the 55,000 job losses each week that hit the headlines in the 1980-82 period but the effect is the same for those who are sacked. And the methods needed to fight back are the same too: occupations, solidarity strikes at factories under the same ownership. As before the aim must be to make the bosses pay by sharing out the available work at no loss of pay!

The fight must start now. Defend Ravenscraig. ■

Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc

## Hear the voice of the Soviet miners

A delegation of miners from the newly formed Confederation of Labour of the USSR will be touring Britain in June. They want to meet rank and file trade unionists and workers, particularly from the NUM.

If you can organise a workplace, union or trades council meeting, or can set up a meeting at any of the conferences and galas that are happening in June, please contact the organisers.

The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) is sponsoring the tour. A democratic organising committee sponsoring labour movement body.

Donations are urgently requested to help cover the costs of the tour. Exact details of dates and venues of meetings from:

The Voice of the Soviet Miners  
c/o CSWEB  
56 Kevan House  
Wyndham Road  
London SE5  
Phone CSWEB 071 637 2348



THIS IS what the police are calling "the defensive weapon of the 90s" Last month's Police Federation annual conference "overwhelmingly backed" the introduction of the new baton. Based on a martial arts weapon (the kind police are constantly urging sports shops not to stock) the stick is "an impact weapon" which is four times as effective as an ordinary truncheon. It can be used to arm lock victims as well as club them. Not yet approved by Whitehall, the Police Federation is urging ministers to introduce it in "experimental areas". Fortunately Poll Tax protesters and pickets, who have been on the receiving end of traditional truncheons too long, don't need to wait for Home Office approval. The stick is available, at around £14.99, from your local martial arts dealer. It could save your bacon! ■

**T**HE 23 June Trade Union conference called by the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation has one task—to rally workers to a programme of action that can smash the Poll Tax once and for all.

Massive anger against the tax exists. Labour and trade union leaders are busy trying to divert this anger into passive protests and a two year general election campaign. This won't beat the tax. It will give the Tories a much needed breathing space. We must not let it happen.

What we need from the conference is an alternative based on mobilising workers for direct action now. There are clear signals from every quarter of the working class that thousands are ready to take such action.

Non-payment, already widespread in Scotland, is growing in England and Wales. Rallies, demonstrations and meetings against the tax continue to attract large numbers. Most important of all, workers are striking against the effects of the tax all over the country.

### On strike

In Greenwich, Manchester, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Camden and Sunderland workers—mainly those involved in aspects of administering the tax—have gone on strike to defend their wages and conditions. The councils want to push the Poll Tax through on the cheap. They want workers to add its implementation to all of the other areas of work without increasing the staffing levels. They want council workers to bear the cost of the tax through job cuts.

Every delegate to the 23 June conference must take both the possibilities and the problems presented by this wave of strikes as their starting point for a fighting strategy.

The strikes show that action in the workplaces can be built and can thwart the implementation of the tax. More than that, the 2000 who struck in solidarity with the Greenwich workers (see interview opposite) did so because they were against the Poll Tax itself. We should be optimistic about the possibility of building on this spirit of resistance, of spreading the action beyond the few thousand now involved to many thousands of other workers.

But there are problems with the current struggles that we cannot ignore. Because each and every one is against the effect of the Poll Tax on a particular set of workers there is a real danger that they will remain fragmented, sectional struggles. Most are centred on the question of improving the conditions under which workers can administer the tax. We must face up to the question—what happens when those particular issues are resolved? What happens if either

# How to smash the Poll Tax



Burning the forms in Bristol

John Harris

the strikers get worn down and defeated, or if they win the extra staff to carry through the jobs?

In both cases the answer is, the Poll Tax will still be in place. It will still be inflicting misery on countless working class families. Look at what David Norwood, the NALGO branch secretary in Greenwich, said about the strike he is currently involved in:

"All the council has to do is to withdraw the suspensions and we are prepared to go back to work tomorrow."

This is why Workers Power argues that the strategy we need is one that unifies the strikes, spreads them and turns them into action not simply against the effects of the Poll Tax but for the

smashing of the tax itself. We need a general strike of the whole working class to repulse an attack that is directed at the whole working class.

Of course declaring in favour of a general strike is not enough. We need to build for it. We can do this by linking the existing struggles to the non-payment campaign. We can do it by building workplace Anti-Poll Tax Unions (APTUs), by fighting to commit council workers to refuse to implement the tax no matter how good their working conditions, to commit every worker in every factory to striking against the tax because it is an attack on their living standards and the remnants of local government democracy and services.

None of this is counterposed to non-payment. By transforming the APTUs into city wide councils, open to delegates from every working class organisation and community, we can forge a lasting and fighting unity. Councils of action along these lines can become campaigning bodies capable of organising the physical defence of all those non-payers threatened by the bailiffs or sheriffs.

They can organise solidarity with strikers and put the case for general strike action in every workplace. Days of action, city wide one day general strikes, massive demonstrations in every town can all raise the fighting confidence of workers and take us a step nearer to the day when a full scale general strike can be forced on the slumbering leaders of the labour movement.

There will be countless openings for putting the arguments for such action. Workers already under attack provide an immediate one. Attachment of earnings orders provide another. The victimisation of workers who refuse to implement the tax is yet another.

But only if we are committed to using each and every one of these openings will we be able to go beyond piecemeal battles against the effects of the tax towards an offensive struggle to destroy it.

To win this perspective at the June conference, however, we must overcome the opposition of the Federation leadership to the call for a general strike and a campaign of action to get one. Supporters of *Militant*, the majority on the Federation's executive, have always emphasised non-payment as the way to win. As part of a fightback this is essential. But on its own it is not enough. It risks leaving the struggles now taking place isolated, prey to being bought off or smashed.

True, *Militant* supporters have said they favour industrial action at some point. But if the remarks of the Federation leadership at a recent press conference are anything to go by, they see it in very limited terms. They were quoted by the *Financial Times* as saying the conference will be:

"aimed at people who work in the courts and for the Department of Social Security. The conference will be devoted to developing a system of non co-operation with Poll Tax administration."

And in *Militant* itself, Rob Sewell argued that the purpose of building links between APTUs and the workplaces was centrally aimed at:

"extending the resistance on the estates and in the communities to develop the maximum level of non-payment".

This whole approach is too narrow. It underestimates the dangers that confront minorities of workers involved in the administration of the tax getting isolated and broken. It accepts that the tax can be fought by industrial guerrilla warfare as an adjunct to community resistance.

### Anger

All of this is a recipe for missing the best opportunity to beat the tax. It is time to push for a clear perspective based on combining every element of the struggle against the Poll Tax into a class wide offensive. The anger is there. The strikes are growing.

This is no time to say, let's put all our efforts into a "Long March" from Glasgow to London in October. It is no time to lull workers to sleep by preaching non-payment as a panacea. It is no time to start trying to exclude delegates from genuine workplace APTUs from the 23 June conference, as the *Militant* leadership now appear to be doing. It is the time to strike.

We call on every delegate to support the resolution we are fighting for (see next column). It is a clear programme of action that can win.

Fought for in the working class it can lead to the broadside we need to sink Thatcher's already listing flagship. ■

## Hackney witch hunt

**ANDY MURPHY**, the Class War member suspended by Hackney Council, is still under attack. His crime—speaking out in defence of anti-Poll Tax demonstrators after the Trafalgar Square police riot.

Following a strike threat by Hackney Nalگو workers the council reinstated Andy rather than risk disruption to the local government elections on 3 May. But this was just a cynical manoeuvre. As soon as the elections were out of the way he was immediately disciplined.

His membership of Class War apparently constitutes sufficient cause for getting the sack. The Nalگو branch and local APTU activists lobbied the Labour Party Borough Conference. It passed a reso-

lution demanding the right of council workers to be members of any political organisations except the fascists.

A mass meeting called by Nalگو on 22 May was well attended and passed a resolution supporting Andy and calling for strike action. Unfortunately, though, local and national bureaucrats have got their hooks firmly into the dispute and the inevitable ballot is unlikely to take place until the end of June.

This threatens the chance of successful action being taken. The workforce should not wait. If Nalگو members do not take action now they are in danger of conceding to the witch-hunting council the right to politically vet its workforce. ■

Get  
delegated

All Britain anti-Poll  
Tax Federation  
Trade Union  
Conference

11am Sunday 23 June  
Central Hall, Renshaw  
Street, Liverpool

Up to three delegates per union  
branch, workplace group etc: £5  
per delegate

Credentials from and  
resolutions to:  
PO Box 764, London E5 9SX  
by 15 June

Pass this  
resolution

MODEL RESOLUTION TO  
ALL BRITAIN ANTI-POLL  
TAX FEDERATION TRADE  
UNION CONFERENCE

This conference:

- 1) Calls on every trade unionist to join the campaign of mass non-payment against the Poll Tax.
- 2) Urges all workers involved in the implementation of the Poll Tax to boycott all work on the tax and to strike against any attempt to victimise workers who refuse to implement the Tax.
- 3) Calls on every trade union branch and workplace organisation to organise strike action against any attempt to deduct the Poll Tax from the wages of those refusing to pay.
- 4) Calls on local anti-Poll Tax organisations to organise the physical defence of non-payers against the bailiffs and workers' demonstrations against police attack. We need organised and disciplined workers' defence teams under the democratic control of the anti-Poll Tax movement.
- 5) Commits itself to organising the widest possible mass strike action against the Poll Tax. Only strike action can guarantee the success of mass non-payment and non-implementation. Only mass, generalised strike action can ensure that the Tories do not use the police and anti-union laws to take on and defeat the anti-Poll Tax movement section by section. We need a general strike to smash the Poll Tax.
- 6) Calls on workers in every town and city to form delegate councils of action to smash the Poll Tax. The Federations must be transformed into delegate councils of action, representing every workplace and estate in struggle against the Poll Tax, able to organise united action around the strategy outlined above.
- 7) Commits itself to campaigning for these aims at every level of the trade union movement including the call on the trade union leaders and the TUC to organise and support mass non-payment, non-implementation and strike action against the Poll Tax.

ONE HUNDRED and sixty-nine council workers from the Estates section of Greenwich Council are on strike. They walked out after eleven cashiers were suspended for refusing to do extra work on the Poll Tax. They want more staff, higher grades, a proper new technology agreement and ten minutes per hour break from their VDUs.

In May a one day strike of Greenwich Council workers brought 2,000 out in support of the strikers. *Workers Power* talked to Tanya Archibald, Tracey Zimmerman and Maggie Morgan, three of the Greenwich strikers.

#### WP: How did the strike start?

**Maggie:** Six months before the Poll Tax was coming, the unions were asking questions of management; what are you going to do when it comes in—are you expecting the staff to collect and if so under what conditions?

**Tracey:** I don't think housing management took the negotiations too seriously to start with because they thought that the cashiers were not a strong group and are not known to take strike action. They thought we would just start taking the money and negotiate the terms and conditions afterwards.

But once you start taking the Poll Tax then it's harder to go back afterwards and say that you're not taking it any more. They hoped we would see the Poll Tax as an important income for the council and that we wouldn't be able to stop it. I think they were quite surprised at how the cashiers actually reacted.

**Tanya:** It revolves around more staff in the local offices and the existing cashiers getting a break. You need a ten minute break every hour to do the Poll Tax work.

**Tracey:** So it started off with things like that. The cashiers would be quite happy with getting a Scale 5 to start with and go back to work on that. On health and safety they're willing to negotiate when we go back to work.

**Maggie:** I don't think initially it was about people worrying about collecting a Tory tax but I think people are beginning to think about that and question it more widely.

## GREENWICH

# "We are a test case"

#### WP: What kind of support are you getting?

**Tanya:** We've had support for petitions, people have been organising levies in the various shops and collections. We've raised £6,000 and we've had a spread of support from Nalگو members throughout the country. People walking along the street are sympathetic to us especially if you work face to face with tenants and you're someone they know.

**Maggie:** They couldn't actually believe it's happened in a Labour authority—that they've actually suspended staff.

**WP: Have you thought about developing the strike into one aimed directly at non-implementation of the Poll Tax? If the strike was won you would still end up collecting the tax.**

**Maggie:** I think some people have and have raised it although not formally within a mass meeting. At the moment people are concerned about their job conditions and people want to get back to work. But I think people are beginning to ask that

question. This strike has reaffirmed for me my own personal choice not to pay the Poll Tax and I think there are a lot of people in this strike that have adopted the same position.

**Tracey:** Because it's affected their work so much it's made them think about the Poll Tax.

**Maggie:** I think the ground is set for that to be on the agenda at some point. One of the reasons why there has been resistance to that is there's the feeling of "how can we as workers take a strong stand on this when our own Labour politicians are telling us to implement this with a gun to our heads and if you don't you are in breach of contract and will be suspended".

It's actually very difficult unless you've spread the word a lot wider than this strike. You've got the public aware of what's going on and I think that is beginning to happen slowly. We know people are going to get behind us, with alliances with tenants' associations etc, to ensure the word is spread and make sure the workforce is not left vulnerable. At the moment the issue is about getting these workers back to work but it's a Catch 22 because they don't want to collect the Poll Tax. The extra work is estimated at three times their normal work.

**Tracey:** Nalگو nationally are quite non-committal and that's one of the problems as well.

**Maggie:** I feel that workers are putting money in the buckets because we are taking a stand on the Poll Tax, not because workers' jobs and services are on the line. And we've got a petition with 4,200 signatures which is from the community because we have got residents support.

**Tracey:** We are lobbying NALGO about strike pay. We are only getting 50% and we want 60%. It's one of the things that makes it difficult to keep people out. Not that people have changed their mind about the dispute, but we are all lower paid workers and money is a problem.

I think a lot of councils are looking at the Greenwich dispute and the outcome will determine how they implement the cuts in their own councils. We are a test case.

## Postal ballots: fake democracy

ONE CRITICISM that Margaret Thatcher need never fear is that she has been too soft on Britain's unions. Nowhere is this assessment of Thatcher by *The Economist* more true than in relation to the anti-union laws.

Over the last eleven years law after law has been passed outlawing almost every form of effective rank and file trade union action. In their most blatant form these laws have given scabs legal license to ignore any democratic decision to strike by a majority of the members. They have given judges the power to seize union funds, almost at will.

But the Tories have tried to cover up these profoundly undemocratic attacks with propaganda about "handing the unions back to the members". Tebbit and Fowler have laughably claimed to be the defenders of ordinary rank and file workers.

Part of this anti-union offensive has been the introduction of postal ballots for union elections. The 1988 Employment Act made these compulsory for all unions. The argument the government used was that workplace ballots were undemocratic because they only in-

involved a minority of those eligible to vote. Better, they said, to impose postal ballots so as to ensure maximum participation.

In reality the aim of the Tories was to weaken workplace democracy. At work there is at least the chance of collective discussion of the issues with the people directly involved prior to voting. Mass meetings give the militants a chance to democratically influence the outcome. They give those opposed to, or worried about taking action the chance to openly put their point of view. The postal ballot deprives workers of this living, active democracy.

The Tories know that isolated in the home, cut off from the arguments of the militants and influenced and deceived by the strike-hating pro-Tory mass media there is a greater chance of the right result, as far as they are concerned.

In reality postal balloting since 1988 has proved that democracy has not been the winner as a result of the Tories' interference in the unions' internal affairs. In Coalse, Natfhe, Nalگو and Tass (before it fused with ASTMS to become MSF) the participation rate in postal ballots has been lower than in

earlier workplace ballots. In May 1989 the turnout in elections for a new Natfhe General Secretary was 22%.

In March this year the largest postal ballot so far organised (for the TGWU National Executive elections) confirmed the trend. The TGWU turnout was a mere 17% of the 1.1 million members who were sent ballot papers. This compares with a 39% turnout in the workplace ballot for the same elections in 1988.

The truth is that postal balloting cannot overcome the apathy that many union members feel about their own union. For many hundreds of thousands of trade unionists membership is formal. No attempt is made to involve them in the business of the union. On the contrary, they are often put off doing anything.

Revolutionaries favour those forms of union democracy best suited to turning the union into a fighting union. A union that fights for and wins concessions, that succeeds in defending members' wages and conditions is a union the membership care about. And that, not postal ballots, is what will convince the membership to participate and to influence its direction and leadership.

Workplace votes are best because they reinforce the sense of collective solidarity that is the life-blood of the working class; they allow it to identify itself as a class and thus aid the struggle against its mortal enemies, the bosses. ■



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

### An orgy of privatisation

UGLY WORDS befit an ugly world. "Privatisation" is no beauty in the English language but in the 1980s it did more than enter the dictionary. By the end of the decade it became an almost universal instrument of economic policy in the capitalist world; from Thatcher's Britain to Latin American and Asian semi-colonies.

The de-nationalisation of industries has reversed a post-war trend which by the end of the 1960s saw a massive number of state controlled or state owned enterprises.

Historically, the role of the state in capitalist economies was to assume the costs and management of unprofitable enterprises or services that it was necessary to maintain for the sake of the capitalist class as a whole: transport, communications and some utilities, for example.

In some cases this may involve subsidies to private industries, or providing finance for projects when sufficient funds could not be found internal to the corporation or within the banking sector. In others it involves direct state ownership and management.

In the semi-colonial world many states in Africa and Asia gained their political independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of them had a weak or entirely absent national business class. Financing for the huge industrial or infrastructural projects could only be achieved by concentrating a great deal of the scattered capital resources in the hands of the state.

While for the imperialist countries privatisation was part of a counter-inflationary strategy, it had a different impetus in the semi-colonies.

The late 1970s to early 1980s saw a mushrooming debt crisis of the semi-colonial world. As a way of recovering from the first major post-war world recession in 1973-75 the imperialist governments and commercial banks had encouraged Third World states to borrow money in order to create renewed demand for the goods of the developed west.

By the time of the great world recession in 1980-82 all this had succeeded in doing was to saddle the debtor nations with huge interest payments at a time of plunging export income. The world's commercial banks were rocked by a debt crisis that threatened to bankrupt the major banks. Since 1982, therefore, the banks, the IMF and the imperialist governments have virtually stopped new lending to many Latin American and Asian countries and insisted that they impose savage austerity programmes on the workers and peasants of their respective countries in order to find the money to pay the interest on old loans.

By 1985 the USA and Britain were insisting that new capital for investment in the semi-colonies be, by and large, internally generated. In Latin America domestically sourced investment was lower in 1984 than a decade earlier. In Argentina, for example, it was down from 24% of GDP in 1980 to 16% in 1985. But raising the finance for investment (or paying off debt charges) could only be done if the governments sold off their state-owned assets to raise the capital.

And in the last six years this has happened in a big way. In Nigeria there has been a three year pro-

gramme since 1988 to sell off 120 state owned businesses. The process began even earlier in Turkey which is shedding state assets which at one time stood at half the fixed productive capital of the country. Even in a country as developed as New Zealand the Labour Government has gone on a privatisation binge in order to reduce the level of overseas debt.

There is hardly a single country in the "Third World" which has been immune from this orgy of privatisation in the last five years. But what has it achieved?

Quite simply, it has deepened the grip of imperialism on these nations. To begin with most of these countries' economies are far too small and impoverished to absorb the new shares on offer within the domestic population and specifically the national business class.

As a result the governments are forced to allow foreign multinationals to buy up these assets and thus increase their control of the economic life of the semi-colonies. And, of course, these companies do not buy for the sake of it, but only if the price is right and the industries in question are profitable. So Nigeria's oil and flour mills get snapped up as does the lucrative Tunisian cement industries. Last October the British multinational Unilever bought the best part of Mexico's biggest food production and distribution company—Conasupo.

In addition the fact that many of these privatisation launches are taking place at the same time across the world has given rise to a "crowding out" effect in the world's stock markets which has underlined the tendencies to underpricing of the value of the assets. A recent UN report concluded that "state owned enterprises have been sold at prices far below their real value" leading to "the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few".

The other main way that privatisation has been used to strengthen the stranglehold of imperialism has been by swapping debt for shares in the privatised companies. In Argentina, for example, a 60% stake in ENTel (the huge telecommunications company) has been offered in return for wiping out a minimum of \$3.5 billion of Argentine debt (about 5% of the total).

The effects of privatisation on employment and working practices are well known in Britain and it is the same everywhere else. In New Zealand 110,000 jobs have been eliminated in the ex-public sector between 1986 and 1989 as a consequence of the "discipline" of the market. In the "Third World" the effect has been worse.

Is the process irreversible, have we seen the end of nationalisation for good? Hardly. This process of "unbundling the state", as the *Financial Times* dubs it, has coincided with (and partly reinforced) the long post-1982 world economic recovery of the imperialist countries. But when it ends and major multi-nationals are threatened with extinction (with terrible destabilising consequences for the rest of the economy) you can be assured that the pressure on the state to intervene to prop them up will be irresistible.

Ideology follows the needs of the economy and the merits of state intervention into economic life will no doubt be rediscovered when the time comes. ■



# TROTSKY Dealing with Labour

*The Labour Party's latest policy review has led to more talk by its left wing of a betrayal of Labour's "socialist" past. But as Arthur Merton explains we have been here before. Leon Trotsky's analysis of British reformism in the 1920s and 1930s—its ideological baggage, its divisions between left and right—remains key to understanding Kinnock's New Model Party today.*

**B**Y THE early 1920s the British Labour Party had established itself as the only viable parliamentary opposition to the Tories. Workers had increasingly shifted their allegiance from the openly capitalist Liberal Party to what they saw as their own political party.

From Moscow the revolutionary communist, Leon Trotsky, analysed these developments and explained the nature and dangers of the Labour Party to workers who looked to it. His book *Where is Britain Going?* showed that the Labour Party represented two conflicting forces.

On the one hand it was led by reformists, inspired by the doctrine of "gradualness", by the belief in social harmony and by an abhorrence for the class struggle. These essentially liberal views were propagated by the Fabian Society of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. They represented the self-satisfied petit bourgeois outlook of the trade union bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy it was based on. MacDonald and Thomas were the Labour politicians who turned this outlook into practical pro-capitalist policies.

On the other hand the Labour Party from its formation was a party of the trade unions, representing the progressive aspirations of the great majority of workers. For them the creation of the Labour Party, even though led by thinly disguised liberals, was a step towards political independence from the bosses.

Clearly the Labour Party embodied a contradiction, a pro-bourgeois leadership and a working class trade union base. It was, in short, a bourgeois workers' party.

Trotsky argued that revolutionaries' first task with regard to the Labour Party was to struggle against the principal tenets of its reformist practice and to fight against its ideological underpinnings.

The preachings of MacDonald, Thomas and Snowden bear an uncanny resemblance to those of Neil Kinnock. Their favourite sermon tried to convince the workers that they should obey bourgeois law and foreswear the use of force for political ends. MacDonald wrote that socialism "by its very nature must repudiate force with horror". That horror is displayed by Kinnock and Hattersley today every time they repudiate the violence that erupts in the Poll Tax struggle.

## Force

Yet, as Trotsky demonstrated with regard to MacDonald, the reformists do not repudiate all force. Of the first Labour government Trotsky pointed out:

"... during that period the police force was not disbanded, the courts were not abolished, the prisons were not demolished and warships were not scuttled. . . . And, insofar as I am any judge, the police, the courts, the prisons, the army and the navy are organs of force."

The reformists were, and are, only against the violence of the oppressed and the exploited. They jealously safeguard the instruments of violence at the disposal of the capitalist state. And they are always ready to use them against the working class.

Like today's leadership, MacDonald wanted to do away with the class basis of the Labour Party and distance it from being associated only or specifically with the working class. He denounced the "old school of socialism" which failed to take account of new developments and harked on about class. In place of class consciousness MacDonald wanted to base the party on "social solidarity". In

many ways this represents the essence of reformism. In place of the class struggle it advocates class collaboration. And Kinnock is merely the latest in a long line of Labour leaders to dress up this very old idea in clothes suitable to his time. He has replaced "social solidarity" with phrases like "caring capitalism" and "social market".

Trotsky uncovered the meaning behind such sonorous phrases. The class struggle exists, irrespective of the pious wishes of the reformists. It manifests itself in countless strikes, demonstrations,

ideology and practice is only the beginning of wisdom. How can we break the mass of workers from the Labour Party?

The natural inclination for advanced reformist workers is to seek to replace the right wing leaders with left-wing aspirants, to seek to "renew" the party or "return the party to its roots". In 1926 the General Strike had exposed the hollowness of the official "left" reformist wing's claim to be an alternative to right wing reformism. Against any form of opportunist capitulation to the lefts, Trotsky insisted that an impla-

capable of power; and if, in the course of events power got into their hands, they would hasten to hand it over to their elder brothers on the right. They would act in the government in exactly the same way as they do now in the party."

The key thing was not to place faith in a change of faces at the top but to apply a range of tactics that could erode the influence of reformism and strengthen the revolutionaries. These would involve, at different times, work in the trade unions directed at the Labour Party, fraction (or total entry) work inside the Labour Party by revolutionary forces, and advancing critical support for Labour at election times.

For Trotsky the question of entry work, fraction work and open work were not—as today's SWP on the one hand and Militant on the other claim—principled questions. They are tactics, dictated by circumstance; "a question of actual possibilities", as he said. None should be renounced, none turned into a fetish.

In deploying tactics in the battle to defeat reformism in practice opportunism and capitulation to the lefts, was not the only danger facing British revolutionaries. In the 1930s Trotsky was obliged to warn against the sectarian danger of turning your back on the Labour Party. This too remains a danger

**"It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform . . . For us — yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour."**

pickets and in the counter-measures of the bosses: lock-outs, sackings, attacks on wages and physical assaults on workers' picket lines. To invoke "social solidarity" in the face of this means, in practice, to take sides with the class enemy.

The willingness of MacDonald and Kinnock to display, at every opportunity, their solidarity with the exploiters, confirms Trotsky's point. MacDonald was soon to propose slashing the meagre unemployment benefits paid out to capitalism's victims. Neil Kinnock has made his own pledge to the bosses that Labour will not seek to repair the damage inflicted by Thatcher during the last ten years.

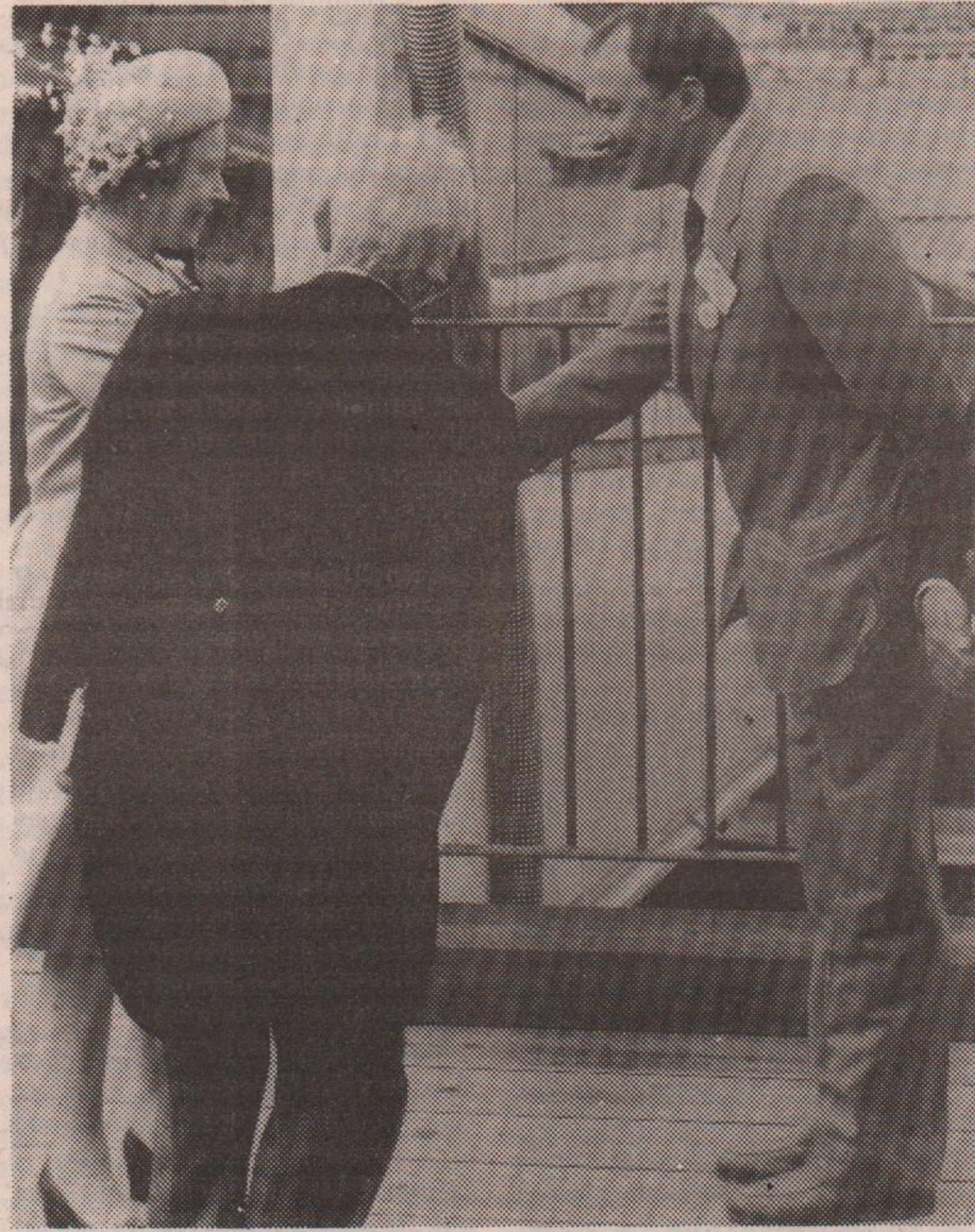
For Trotsky such solidarity with the class enemy exposed the myth that the Labour leaders were, in any way, socialists. Quite the reverse. They are the agents of the bosses within the ranks of the labour movement. They are, along with the trade union bureaucrats, a fifth column of traitors. Their main concern is to satisfy the demands of their paymaster. In words that could easily be applied to John Smith—the Labour Shadow Chancellor who manages 35 to 40 appointments a week, not with tenants in run down estates, but with city slickers—Trotsky wrote of Snowden:

"For Snowden's budget to please the City it is necessary for Snowden himself both in his way of life and his morality to stand closer to the bigwigs of the banks than the miners of Wales."

But to develop a revolutionary communist critique of reformism's

cable fight against them had to be waged. On the eve of the General Strike he warned against peddling illusions in the "lefts" because they were, in essence, no different from the right-wing:

"The left wing muddlers are not



Livingstone and the queen—one of Labour's "liveried footmen of the bourgeoisie"

today. Impatient "revolutionaries" mistake their own understanding of Kinnock's pro-capitalist perfidy for the "exposure" of Kinnock in front of millions of workers. Sadly, there are millions of workers who, through their votes for Labour, express their illusions in Kinnock. Trotsky's word of caution in the 1930s are as apposite today as when they were written:

"It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform . . . For us—yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour."

## Vanguard

Since today the opinion polls indicate that up to 16 million are prepared to vote Labour in a general election it would be doubly foolish to mistake the understanding of the revolutionary vanguard for the spontaneous sentiments of the masses.

Trotsky fully understood that only an advanced minority of workers would take stock of the fine print of Labour's "reactionary platform". Most would simply accept that they were supporting "their party". And if we are seriously talking about revolution it is necessary to arm the advanced minority with tactics that can win over the more passive and backward masses. At election times, when the communist forces were too weak to contest Labour for office, the tactic of critical support for Labour could be used. Trotsky, demonstrating how to approach the problem pedagogically, put it like this:

"What is dangerous . . . is the sectarian approach to the Labour Party . . . I would say to British workers, 'you refuse to accept my point of view. Well perhaps I did not explain it well enough. Perhaps you are stupid. Anyway I have failed. But now you believe in your party. Why allow Chamberlain to hold the power? Put your party in power. I will help you all I can. I know they will not do what you think, but as you don't agree with me and we are small, I will help you put them in.'"

## Labour

Putting Labour to the test of governmental office in a state which is fundamentally alien to the interests of the workers that the party claims to represent is the whole purpose of the tactic. Once in office the pressure of the judiciary, the civil service and the military high command will force the worthy bourgeois politicians who head Labour to betray their promises in the name of prudence. Armed with their history of criticism and warnings, respected because of their practical work for progressive goals, the revolutionaries will then stand to gain at the expense of reformism.

Despite the many changes that have occurred since Trotsky gave this advice (1939), it holds true for revolutionaries today. Provided we maintain all of the components of Trotsky's approach—merciless criticism of the leadership and of its "left" wing and a tactical compromise with the masses who look to Labour—we can avoid opportunism and sectarianism.

We will not turn our backs on Labour's crimes or on the masses who look to it in hope. And this way we will bring nearer the day when workers can see through the "self-satisfied pedants, driving eclectics, sentimental careerists and liveried footmen of the bourgeoisie". Discrediting such people will be, as Trotsky said, "a supreme service to historical progress". ■

# From black power to Stalinism

"For me, revolution was never an interim 'thing-to-do' before settling down; it was no fashionable club with newly-minted jargon . . . Revolution is a serious thing, the most serious thing about a revolutionary's life. When one commits oneself to the struggle it must be for a lifetime." **Angela Davis**

RACISM IN the USA is on the rise. From Boston to New York City, Chicago to Cleveland, trigger-happy cops gun down black youth in the streets. In Beaconhurst, New York, on 23 August 1989 a racist lynch-mob murdered black teenager Yusef Hawkins. In Los Angeles a group of black youth playing ball were met by the Los Angeles Police waving 12 bore shotguns and telling them "Just because that nigger Mandela got out, that does not give you guys the right to go anywhere you want".

In this climate the re-publication of Angela Davis' testimony of struggle and resistance could not be more timely. When Angela Davis was four years old her family moved into a white neighbourhood in Birmingham, Alabama. She recounts a history of systematic abuse of blacks, from enforced segregation to physical assault and murder: "Almost immediately after we moved there the white

people got together and decided on a border line between them and us . . . If we ever crossed over to their side, war would be declared. Guns were hidden in our house and vigilance was constant."

In the mid-1960s, having graduated from the ghettos of black America Angela Davis went on to succeed as a student at a "white" university. Later while studying at Frankfurt she became involved in the campaign to end US involvement in Vietnam. She read the *Communist Manifesto*, and began to piece together an understanding of class, race and sexual oppression which would inform her struggles against the American state.

In 1967, on her way back to the USA, she visited London to hear Stokely Carmichael speak:

"As I listened to Stokely's words, cutting like a switchblade, accusing the enemy as I had never heard him accused before, I admit I felt



Black Panthers—Davis ended up in jail because of her defence of them

the cathartic power of his speech. But I also wanted to know where to go from here . . . It was clear to me that this movement must push in the direction of socialism."

Back in California, she and other black women played a leading role in the branch of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC). At the same time she was fired from her teaching post in California for being a supporter of the Communist Party (USA). It was her experience in the CP(USA) and SNCC which gave her anger a political coherence, but at the same

time imposed severe limitations on her development.

The SNCC's founding statement of principles commenced: "We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of non-violence". But it was not long before the SNCC came up short against the revolutionary logic of the struggle against black oppression. Oppression cannot be overcome through the institutions of bourgeois democracy nor through establishing formal, legal equality.

Real and lasting social equality was and is only realisable through a massive redistribution of wealth. In the 1960s this wealth was sweated out of the terrorised sharecroppers and day labourers of the Southern "black belt" and the last hired/first fired labour of the squalid ghettos of the North. But this kind of redistribution required the smashing of the political power of the US bosses which guaranteed exploitation and oppression.

The realisation that simple legal equality for blacks left the worst part of oppression untouched ruptured the non-aggression pact between liberals and black radicals in the SNCC. The belief in the possibility of "non-violence" as a medium for change died for many of Davis's generation in the riots of Harlem in the summer of 1964 and at Watts a year later.

With the move away from liberal pacifism came the first steps towards the organisation of the black community in its own defence. For her work in this Angela Davis was jailed in 1970 on false charges of murder, kidnapping and conspiracy and detained for 14 months with the threat of the gas chamber hanging over her.

The militants in the SNCC knew what they were against. But in the absence of a revolutionary alternative their anger was increasingly translated into black nationalism and Stalinism. The black power nationalists were the only force on the ground with a programme which appeared to offer a coherent alternative to the pacifism of leaders like Martin Luther King. When militants like Angela Davis and Bobby Seale embraced the ideology of nationalism, they believed they were cutting themselves off from the corrupting influence of the "white es-

tablishment". But in fact they only succeeded in cutting themselves off from the white working class. Through her membership of the CP Davis was wedded to seeking progress for black people through alliances with racist union bureaucrats such as Walter Reuther, head of the AFL-CIO.

This meant that the historic opportunity to link the struggles of black and white workers through a programme of revolutionary integrationism was lost.

The logical end-point of the "Black Power" movement was back where the struggles of the SNCC began: the black wing of the Democratic Party. In her introduction to the reprint she writes:

"As a direct result of grassroots activism, there are more progressive black elected officials than ever before. And even though he did not win the Democratic Party presidential nomination, Jesse Jackson conducted a truly triumphant campaign, one that confirmed and further nurtured progressive thought patterns among the people of our country."

Yet in New York City it is a black Democratic mayor David Dinkins who oversees the cutbacks in services which drive down yet further the living standards of New York's black and hispanic poor!

At a time when black militants are again being forced to defend the ghettos from police and racist attack, we salute Angela Davis' courage and commitment, even though we cannot agree with her black nationalism.

The rise of black militancy in the USA demands a clear programme: key immediate elements of this involve cops out of the ghettos, building black and worker defence squads and a programme of public works under workers' control that can bring decent jobs and housing to the blighted ghettos.

The struggle needs also the revolutionary fortitude of class fighters such as Angela Davis before she made her peace with the likes of Jesse Jackson. ■

Angela Davis:  
an autobiography.  
The Women's Press £6.95  
Reviewed by Nick Stone

## As hard as Flint

GENERAL MOTORS (GM) know a good thing when they see one. In the wake of the election of pro-capitalist governments in Eastern Europe, Roger Smith, chief executive of the world's largest car manufacturer, announced in late May that they planned to step up production there by 25% and open 200 new sales outlets. The makers of the famous Buick stand to make a fast buck.

And the ruthless consequences of making a buck or rather billions of them by making cars is what *Roger and Me* is all about.

Roger of the title is none other than Mr Smith. He is the prime architect of GM's corporate restructuring plan. Doggedly pursuing him throughout the film is crusading journalist, and director of the film, Michael Moore.

His mission? To persuade Roger to come to Moore's home town of Flint, Michigan and see the economic and social devastation wrought by GM's decision to abandon its birthplace in Flint in the mid to late 1980s.

*Roger and Me* is an offbeat documentary, by turns cynical and heart-rending, surreal and naive. The film is both painfully funny and fiercely angry as it charts the impact of the bosses' drive for a higher rate of return on a city long synonymous with car manufacturing.

Over the course of three years GM shut eleven plants and axed nearly 30,000 jobs in Flint, leaving in its wake an industrial wasteland where the rat population rapidly outstripped the human one.

By 1987 Flint had the highest unemployment and murder rates of

*Roger and Me*  
directed by M Moore  
Reviewed by G R McCol

any US city.

The film's strength is the stream of characters that Moore presents us with: the Flint ex-car worker turned bailiff who resignedly evicts redundant car workers; former Flint assembly line man, now prison officer guarding the steady stream of offenders caused by the disintegrating social fabric of Flint; the public relations advisor to GM who, shorn of any trace of cant brilliantly communicates the morality of the ledger-sheet.

Underneath the wry and eccentric humour of Moore's narrative there is a caustic bitterness. The film is at its best when the local bosses are simply allowed to speak for themselves. Their insults, arrogance and callous greed are plain for all to hear and see. In one sequence Moore visits the annual "Great Gatsby" garden party where the city's wealthiest hire the local jobless to pose statue-like in period costumes! The camera mercilessly records the inane vacuity of washed-up celebrities like anti-gay bigot, Anita Bryant, and all-American boy next-door, Pat Boone, paid in part by GM to act like opium for Flint's middle-aged residents.

In short, there is much in this film and the reality of Flint itself to make the blood of any class conscious worker boil.

*Roger and Me* is, however, vulnerable to political criticism on several counts. It is ambivalent at best about the anti-Japanese back-

lash created by corporate executives and union bureaucrats in response to the failures of the domestic car industry. At times Moore's battery acid cynicism overpowers his genuine sympathy for the apparently helpless victims of GM. On the day the last plant closed only four workers turn up to demonstrate.

This film could lead an audience to despair of the US working classes' ability to defend itself, never mind achieve a social revolution. Moore can offer us little understanding of why Flint's workers mounted next to no resistance to the massacre of jobs. And yet this was the city which witnessed an historic victory in a 44 day sit-down strike in 1937 that gave birth to the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Only briefly does Moore allow us to see that the UAW officials are now hand in glove with GM. As one worker said: "The union officials got too friendly with the management" before adding cryptically that "... some people know what time it is and some people don't".

In spite of its weaknesses Moore and friends have crafted a powerful piece of anti-capitalist propaganda that lasts down to the very last credit. Complete with sub-titles in Czech, Hungarian and German, prints of the film should be rushed to Eastern Europe.

Capital acknowledges neither its social responsibilities to its origins nor to wherever it may pass through on its endless search for profit. The Flint-hearted executives of GM will deal as ruthlessly with ex-Trabant and Skoda workers in their turn unless the working class deals with multinationals like GM first. ■

ON 10 May the Jewish cemetery at Carpentras, home to France's oldest Jewish community, was systematically desecrated. Thirty-four graves were opened, tombstones smashed and daubed with Nazi slogans. In a final horrific act the anti-Semites dug up and impaled the body of a recently buried Jewish man.

This was no isolated incident. It came after a concerted campaign of anti-Semitic graffiti and cemetery desecration. And it came after a protracted period of racist hysteria against France's black community.

At the same time as the cemetery came under attack fascist leader Jean Marie Le Pen was on French TV putting forward his well known view that the deportation of French Jews to Nazi death camps was a "minor detail" of World War Two.

Whilst mainstream politicians rushed to condemn the cemetery attack, Le Pen confined himself to speculation that North African Muslims and "professional anti-racists" were to blame. One week later three racist skinheads were arrested whilst desecrating a Catholic cemetery in Nantes. They daubed graves with Stars of David in an effort to make it look like a Jewish revenge attack.

All the mainstream parties took part in a 200,000 strong demonstration in Paris against the Carpentras outrage. They congratulated each other on this show of "national unity" against racism. Then, with characteristic hypocrisy, they returned to the racist business-as-usual of French politics.

### Shot

Two weeks after Carpentras, Paris was the site of a racist attack in which two black women were shot. One died, the other was wounded. This is the everyday activity of the French far right, to which desecrating Jewish cemeteries is, as yet, only a sideline.

France's 2.1 million legally resident African and Arab immigrants suffer vicious racist attacks week in week out. The most consistent and vicious harassment comes from the police—ranging from beatings through to murder.

On virtually every occasion the police go free. The most symbolic recent example was the trial of the police who killed Malik Ousseine during the December 1986 student events. The case took three years to bring to court and ended with the two convicted killers receiving a suspended sentence.

Anti-Arab and anti-black racism has been on the increase throughout the 1980s. With high unemployment and a decline in real living standards Le Pen sensed that he could use racism as a way of building a mass organisation which he could then transform into an openly fascist party, the National Front (FN).

Like the British fascists Le Pen's electoral fortunes have gone up or down in line with the French government's willingness to take on board parts of his racist programme. So whilst the FN vote slumped in the French general election, by last year they were able to win a spectacular by-election victory in Dreux. They now control over thirty local councils and are once again registering 12% in the opinion polls.

### Adapting

In response every party has tried to stem the FN's gains by adapting to its racism. The Gaullist right has talked about its shared "common values" with the FN, and indeed shares power with it in several councils.

The French Communist Party (PCF) itself has a history of capitulating to racist sentiment. In 1980 the PCF Mayor of Vitry led a bulldozer attack on a black worker's hostel. This year,

## FRANCE

# "Beyond the threshold of tolerance"

following a massive outcry, the PCF has been forced to expel another mayor. Andre Dechamps, from the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois who responded to the growth of the local FN by trying to ban immigrants from renting shops or accommodation in the town centre. In the week following the Carpentras desecration Clichy was the site of one of the many copycat attacks on Jewish graves.

The "Socialist" government has shown equal willingness to play the racist card. It was President Mitterrand who announced that the number of immigrants had "passed the threshold of tolerance". He has dropped the Socialist Party's vague promise to give immigrants the vote. Meanwhile the Socialist Party Prime Minister, Rocard, has launched a massive campaign to round up illegal immigrants and points to his "fine record" of catching twice as many as his right wing predecessor Chirac. The result on the streets is random police harassment and midnight raids in black neighbourhoods.

This is the record of racism which makes the French establishment's united condemnation of Carpentras nothing more than a sickening act of hypocrisy.

Whilst anti-Semitism has not so far been the main issue around which the FN has grown, it has deep roots in French society. The fact that the bourgeoisie is implicated in France's long and unpleasant history of anti-Semitism, from the Dreyfuss affair to the collaboration with the Nazis in their rounding up of Jews during the occupation, is conveniently forgotten in displays of "national unity" around Carpentras.

### Cross-party

Ironically the cross-party unity on Carpentras has also been used by Rocard to corral the right wing parties into all-party talks on how to deal with immigration (i.e. how to stop it), with the aim of depriving any party from gaining a specific electoral advantage through playing the racist card.

When Le Pen hit the headlines after the 1984 European elections forces close to the Socialist Party set up "SOS Racisme". This mobilised thousands of youth but frittered away the potential for a mass anti-racist movement in a series of annual rock concerts.

The result is that Le Pen has been able to march his Nazi thugs and their mass racist base through the streets of the major towns of France unhindered, including a defiant march through Paris on May Day which the workers' movement left unopposed.

For this the forces to the left of the PCF and the SP bear a major responsibility. The main centrist groups, Lutte Ouvriere, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (French section of the USFI), Pierre Lamberts PCI, with many thousands of militants between them, have refused to actively take up the question of building a mass, working class based anti-racist and anti-fascist movement. This remains a burning necessity. Le Pen's momentary unpopularity following Carpentras will not last. And it has stopped neither racist attacks nor anti-Semitic outrages in the

weeks since Carpentras.

French workers must be ready to meet the menace of growing racist and fascist violence with a mass movement committed to stopping the fascists wherever they try to march and to defending the black, Arab and Jewish communities by any means necessary.

- Workers must support black self-defence against racist attacks from the state and the far right
- No platform for fascists!
- Build a workers' united front to drive them off the streets!

# Europe: racism on the march

The attack on the Jewish cemetery in France last month highlighted the growth of racism and the far right throughout Europe. It is no accident that this is happening precisely at the time when the European ruling classes are set on turning Europe into a fortress against black immigration. Colin Lloyd explains the bosses anti-immigration plans. Emile Gallet (Pouvoir Ouvrier) charts the rise of racism in France and Italy.

## ITALY

# Racism unmasked

FLORENCE IS meant to be the cradle of modern Italian civilisation. In the past months it has become a cauldron of Italian racism.

In response to a steep rise in immigration since 1986 the Italian government has brought forward harsh new immigration laws.

At street level this has led to the rapid growth of racist attacks. White youth in Florence used the cover of the city's masked carnival to launch a night of assaults on black workers and street traders.

Meanwhile the city's shopkeepers organised a 4,000 strong demonstration against the growing black presence in the city. The Socialist Party Mayor then unleashed a violent police crackdown on black street traders.

Events in Florence are a symptom of growing racism in Italy, fostered by the demands of the EC to crack down on immigration. Since the mid-1980s the immigrant population of Italy has doubled. Poverty in Africa and a shortage of cheap labour in the booming Italian economy have propelled 1.3 million black migrants into Italy, at least 800,000 of them illegally. The influx has been encouraged by organised crime in Italy which provides desperate African youth with the means to enter the country and then sets



Anti-racist demonstration, Rome, 7 October 1989

them to work as street traders selling fake merchandise in the tourist centres.

The Italian government's immigration crackdown was combined with a four month amnesty and the offer of residency rights for all immigrants who registered before June. This only served to inflame the fascists and the far right. A series of beatings, firebombings and graffiti campaigns took place in the run up to last month's council elections.

But the racists have not had it all their own way. One hundred Senegalese street traders occupied

## 1992 Fortress

workers drawn in by West Germany, Switzerland and France were not given citizenship rights. So by the end of the post war boom there were millions of migrant workers and their families in Western Europe—all second class citizens without nationality or voting rights, subject to super-exploitation as cheap labour and to constant racist attacks.

Whilst the migrant labour boom tailed off with the slump of the mid-1970s, the economic recovery of the mid 1980s fuelled another influx of migrant labour. Spain, Italy and France have all experienced a growth in immigration.

This is the background to the rise in racist attacks and electoral support for the far right. The German Republican Party polled over two million votes in the June 1989



# Europe

Euro Elections. In France Le Pen's fascist National Front experienced a renewed surge of electoral support winning the Dreux by-election with 60% of the vote last year. In May the right wing regionalist Liga Lombarda scooped up to 20% of the vote in the local elections in parts of Northern Italy. Everywhere the racist message is the same: repatriate the migrants, give their jobs to whites, terrorise their communities. The result has been a concerted international crack-down on immigration across Europe.

The Single European Act, which forms the legal framework for 1992 guarantees the free movement of labour within Europe. In theory this means that a black worker granted citizenship or residency rights in one part of Europe could move unhindered to another part.

As a result the ruling class parties of every European country are working overtime to make sure that "Fortress Europe" becomes a fortress against "foreign" workers. They are tightening the immigration laws in countries which have proved weak links in the racist chain around Europe.

## Rise

The rise in racist attacks in Italy was fuelled by a government inspired furore over immigration. The Italian ruling class was refused membership of a cross border travel agreement by Germany and France and told to get its act together over illegal immigration from Africa. In response Italy launched an immigration crack-down. It declared a four month amnesty for illegal immigrants combined with a ban on new immigration. The army and navy were deployed around the coast of Southern Italy to prevent illegal entry.

Combined with tightening of immigration laws, the European governments are "harmonising" entry regulations. Whilst Britain's immigration controls are the strictest in Europe, it only requires entry visas from a few countries. By contrast France requires visas from many. So the EC ministers have set about drawing up a list of "negative countries" whose citizens will need visas to visit any EEC country after 1992.

Not surprisingly at the top of the list appear Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey—countries whose economies and labour markets are being drawn inexorably into the vortex of the Single European Market but which are being denied full membership of the EC. While at present citizens of 59 countries require visas for the EC countries, the so-called "harmonisation" will increase the number to 115!

Likewise with the relaxation of internal border controls the domestic methods of immigration control practised in Germany and France—where police and employers constantly harass black people with demands to "see their papers"—will become widespread. Already a series of shadowy groups, involving ministers, civil servants, police and security services, have been set up within the EC, to look at the supposed threat this poses.

The Schengen Group is organising a computerised information exchange network to police immigration across the countries involved. The so-called TREVI Group, has been set up to co-ordi-

nate measures against "terrorism, violence and drug trafficking". In 1986 it suddenly increased its remit to cover the access of non-EC nations to the Community. An insight into the nature of its secret discussions was given recently when a British Home Office spokesperson described its agenda as covering "terrorists, immigrants and other undesirables and a common refugee policy"! The results of the "common refugee policy" are already clear. At the start of the 1980's about 70% of requests for political asylum were granted by EC countries. Now it is down to less than 15%.

The unashamed racism of the immigration laws of the Single Europe is shown by the blatant inequality in the right to migrate. Five million EC citizens and their families have migrated to other European countries where they have equal access to social benefits, employment and family unity. But the millions of immigrant workers who live in the EC completely legally have no such rights. For most it is made virtually impossible to gain citizenship rights even if they were born in the country. In Germany 15% of all so-called "foreigners" were born there! If a real European labour market opens up after 1992 these workers will have no part of it. The "inner city ghetto" phenomenon will be repeated on a European scale with immigrant workers left to rot in areas of high unemployment whilst white workers will be able to migrate to new

in as second class citizens, subject to harassment and lack of political rights.

In Britain the argument that there is "no room" for any more immigrants must be exposed for what it is—a racist lie. No serious ruling class politician has ever suggested an end to the free immigration of workers from Eire and yet tens of thousands come every year.

Where was the hue and cry about the potential "threat" of tens of thousands of white South Africans arriving who have right of abode in Britain? Compared with the Hong Kong Chinese who were a "threat to the British way of life"! To go along with the argument that immigration controls need to be tightened, as the Labour and trade union leaders are doing, is to play into the hands of the racists.

## Instead

Instead of leading a struggle against the EC plans to restrict immigrant workers rights and tighten immigration laws, the British TUC is contenting itself with calling for the implementation of the European Social Charter provisions on race equality through legislation—an extension of the Race Relations Act to Europe.

While no one would oppose the demand to make the toothless Social Charter provisions against racial discrimination effective (in Germany for instance it is still



Demonstration in Paris called in response to fascist desecration of Jewish graves

centres of production much more freely.

The European Socialist and Social Democratic Parties have been wringing their hands at the upsurge of racist violence in Europe while doing nothing to counteract it. Their answer has been, in fact, to pour oil on the fire, adding their voices to the chorus to stem immigration. Roy Hattersley's 1960s slogan "no integration without immigration control" has become the watchword of the European Social Democrats.

The trade union leaders have followed suit. A recent statement by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) accepted that "the abolition of controls at inter-community frontiers will require measures to tighten up controls at external Community frontiers".

## Against

Against this, revolutionary socialists and internationalists must struggle within the working class to put forward their own alternative: the abolition of all immigration controls and the free movement of labour within and outside of the EC. It is impossible to combat racism effectively without demanding an end to all immigration controls. These controls have always been racist to the core, designed to control the influx of non-white workers and to keep those immigrant workers allowed

quite legal to deny non-Germans accommodation on racial grounds) the operation of the Race Relations Act in this country has proved that legislation provides no effective answer to racism, especially where it is accompanied by racist immigration controls.

In capitalist Europe the contrast between the freedom of capital and the unfreedom of labour is striking. The bosses' money roves the stock markets of the world virtually unhindered. Unlike the workers who generate the wealth capital faces no immigration controls, no colour bars. As long as there is an international economy but workers are chained behind national borders, forced to abandon their families and their civil rights in return for the right to work in another country, the bosses will be able to exploit cheap labour and keep the workers divided through racist bigotry. Workers must demand

- Repeal all immigration laws. Stop all forced repatriations. An immediate amnesty for all unauthorised workers in Europe. Scrap all visas and internal immigration checks
- For the right of immigrant workers to organise politically without restrictions. Every worker to have the right of residence, citizenship, family unity, voting and equal access to social benefits in the country where they work.

# IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



## Racism and anti-Semitism

**WHAT DO racism and anti-Semitism share in common? Nothing, if we are to believe black separatists and Zionists alike.**

For Zionists the history of Jews is one of centuries of oppression of their religion and culture which has been treated as alien in every society in every period of history. Yet black nationalists and separatists believe their colour has singled them out for the most vicious form of oppression.

The actual experience of individual black and Jewish communities can be used to confirm either side. New York's recently deposed Jewish mayor Ed Koch was a crude and open racist. In response, black leaders like Louis Farrakhan and even Jesse Jackson have pandered to anti-Semitism amongst black Americans.

But for Marxists these forms of oppression do share something in common, despite the specific experience of the individual communities of the oppressed. They are products of one of the fundamental contradictions of modern capitalist society: the existence of a world economy which is divided into competing national states.

Fear of outsiders and prejudice against them were features of every form of society in history. But specific ethnic groups were not the targets. There were black generals in Mediaeval armies leading Italians from one city against Italians from another. Systematic anti-Semitism did not exist at all times in all places.

It was with the development of merchant and banking capital in Europe from the thirteenth to fifteenth century that Jews were restricted more and more to money lending. The impoverishment of the peasantry and the petty nobility as feudalism broke down in Eastern Europe led to vicious pogroms against the Jews. The Jews' role as usurers, shopkeepers and landlords' bailiffs made them the target of successive peasant revolts.

Systematic racism against black people grew as the result of the slave trade—one of the key sources of wealth for the West European merchant capitalists. In order to trade black people on the market like cattle, a whole ideology was generated to try and "prove" that blacks were sub-human.

The bourgeois revolutions in England, Holland, the USA and France liberated the Jews from the systematic legal discrimination and ghettoisation they suffered. This laid the basis for the destruction of the specific economic role played by Jews in late Mediaeval society. The bourgeois revolutions also abolished slavery—albeit reluctantly and in piecemeal stages.

In mid-nineteenth century Western Europe Jews were being assimilated into the other classes of capitalist society. In the immediate period following the American Civil War it seemed that US blacks, too, would become members of all classes.

But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century things changed radically for Jews, black Americans and every national or ethnic minority. The reason was the onset of the imperialist epoch.

Capitalism had replaced the feudal patchwork of city states with the nation state; a much larger area generally united by a common language, culture, borders, taxes and laws. The bourgeois nation was the ideal unit for

industrial capitalism to flourish within and as such it was a necessary and progressive step for humanity. But in place of the old local and petty antagonisms it erected national antagonisms: the hatred of foreign nationals without and the hatred of alien and foreign communities within.

Capitalism had created a world economy but it remained divided between competing nation states. The bourgeois nation was no longer a progressive phenomenon. It became a fetter on the development of humanity's productive forces. And as the world began to writhe in agony at this contradiction, plunging humanity into wars unprecedented in their killing power, so racism and anti-Semitism took their systematic modern forms.

Beginning in Eastern Europe, where the desperate aristocratic ruling classes had refused to allow Jewish assimilation, despite the growth of industrial capitalism, a wave of anti-Semitism swept Europe. It infected the decaying middle classes of the developed capitalist countries and anti-Semitism was exploited by the bourgeoisie to bolster a reactionary mass electoral base.

Black people in the USA likewise found their freedoms cut short in the late nineteenth century as US imperialism began to subject them to systematic legal and economic discrimination as a corollary to using them as a super-exploited workforce.

The experience of racism in Europe today reveals the validity of the Marxist analysis. Theories of racism which see it as caused by slavery or colour, and therefore experienced only by Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, break down as soon as they are applied to the experience of the racially oppressed in Europe. It does not explain why the Turks, Kurds and Yugoslavs in Germany suffer racial oppression just as bad as that of Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in Britain. Likewise, it does not explain why the Jewish community, which regards itself as completely separate from France's black minorities, should suddenly be attacked by the very same far right racists and fascists who launch daily assaults on black people.

Capitalism in post-war Europe has created an international labour market within the framework of national states. It has sucked in millions of non-European workers to meet the needs of the profit system, only to brand them systematically as outsiders, aliens with second class rights and to subject them to systematic racist brutality.

After colluding in the slaughter of six million Jews in the Holocaust the European capitalists have toned down but not eliminated anti-Semitism since the war. But paralleling the recent unleashing of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe a revival of such ideas has occurred in the west. This is being fuelled by the far right and the fascists whose targets in their populist racism include not only the impoverished immigrant masses but also establishment Jewish figures.

In the struggle against rising racism and anti-Semitism it is vital to understand these links. All racially oppressed minorities experience features of their oppression which are specific and historically defined and draw strength from their specific tradition of struggle. But their oppression has a common source—decaying capitalism. ■

## USSR

## Ryzhkov: "We are broke"

SIX WEEKS ago the Economist was telling potential investors in the Soviet Union; "Keep your fingers crossed". Then it looked like the radical pro-capitalist wing of the Soviet bureaucracy had persuaded Gorbachev to make a breakneck dash for the market.

Now the Western capitalists are telling each other "brace yourselves". Instead of a dash to privatise the Soviet economy the bureaucracy has seemingly embarked upon a reckless ride to self destruction.

Instead of the bold programme of structural reforms and privatisation advocated by the capitalists and their fans in the bureaucracy, Gorbachev has opted to attack the workers now and leave capitalism until later.

On 25 May he sent Prime Minister Ryzhkov to the Soviet parliament

to announce that bread prices would be tripled from 1 July; meat, fish, milk and cooking oil prices are to be doubled in January and industrial prices massively increased after that.

The reason for this drastic move is clear. The USSR is broke. It has spent 3 billion roubles on grain imports in the last four months. Ryzhkov and Gorbachev staked everything on the bureaucracy being able to plan its way out of the crisis by centrally co-ordinating an increase in the supply of consumer goods. Only to find that the bureaucratically planned economy was incapable of supplying the most basic consumer good of all—bread.

The restorationist wing of the bureaucracy has so far refused to push forward its programme for a Polish style, short, sharp shock to the economy because, in the words of economist Nikolai Petrakoff,

"there is no Soviet Solidarnosc".

When Petrakoff uttered these mournful words in April he meant that there was no trusted workers' leadership that could be used to sell capitalism to the workers in the manner of Walesa and co. in Poland.

As the price rises begin to hurt all sections of the bureaucracy realise they could well see a Soviet Solidarnosc born, but not the kind they want. The inter-factory strike committees which formed the impetus for Solidarnosc in 1980 came into being as a result of exactly the same kind of price rises announced by Ryzhkov.

Whether or not the new independent workers organisations go the way of their Polish predecessors or find a revolutionary marxist leadership is now the life and death question facing the Soviet workers. ■



## A Soviet Solidarnosc?

ON 30 April delegates from seventy independent workers committees gathered in the Siberian mining town of Novokuznetsk. They celebrated May Day by forming the Confederation of Labour of the USSR.

This was an event of potentially earth shattering significance. Not since the triumph of Stalin's counter-revolution has there been a mass legal independent workers' organisation in the USSR. The importance of the Congress and the paralysis of the bureaucracy was reflected in the fact that accredited observers were sent by the Supreme Soviet, the Central Committee of the state run unions, the Council of Ministers, and the Central Committees of the CPSU and the Young Communist League.

But, despite the revolutionary potential of the fledgling Soviet workers' movement, the political strategies on offer at the Congress were at best inadequate to the tasks facing Soviet workers. At worst they were dangerous and reactionary.

While delegations came primarily from Russian workers' organisations, there were also delegations present from the Union of Workers of Lithuania, from the Ukraine and from Latvia. Shield, the independent soldiers union, sent delegates. Guests included representatives of Polish Solidarnosc and Labour MP Terry Fields.

In a display of real proletarian internationalism the delegates marked May Day itself with a resolution in support of Lithuania. Only three delegates voted against. The resolution declared that: "Based on the principle of workers solidarity and social justice the congress demands the immediate end to the economic and political blockades".

In a call to Soviet workers it argued: "Only our solidarity with the people of Lithuania can create freedom both for Lithuania and for other peoples of our country". It called on workers to bust Gorbachev's blockade through "work collectives who have economic links with Lithuania, to continue and deepen those links on the basis of direct trade relations".

However the strategy adopted to meet the growing crisis of the Soviet economy was deeply contradictory.

Speaker after speaker saw the task of the Confederation as being the defence of workers' interests and the independence of their organisations. The founding declaration announced the confederation's aims as:

"Actively defending the rights, freedom and interests of the toilers, for the transformation of society on the road to democracy, humanism and social justice."

In a resolution on relations with the government, Congress called for "the subordination of interests of the party state bureaucracy to dialogue with the working class".

But this commitment to the defence of workers' interests and an independent working class voice stands in sharp contradiction to the dominant economic programme voiced by keynote speakers.

The majority accepted that a transition to the market economy was both necessary and inevitable, but that the enterprises within this market economy should be managed by the workers' committees themselves.

In his introductory speech the President of the Kemerovsk oblast committee of the Kuzbass workers' committee—Vyacheslav Golikov—argued that Gorbachev's "revolution from above" had only thrown Soviet society into deeper crisis. It was

meeting massive resistance from the conservative apparatus. Hence the need for initiative "from below". But the goal of this initiative should be to bring in the market relations that the authorities cannot guarantee, he argued.

Many Soviet workers have illusions in a market economy, which they believe they can run themselves because there are no native capitalists able to buy up their enterprises. In the name of "democracy" and "self management" many now embrace a system whose logic is mass unemployment, cuts in real wages and already inadequate social services. They do so in the belief that strong independent workers' organisations can stave off the worst effects of the market and regulate it in the interests of social justice and improved conditions for workers.

The Congress itself rightly recognised:

"If our country proceeds along the road to a market economy the need to fight for the conditions and the rights of the workers will be sharply posed."

It correctly argued that if the workers were not independently organised and prepared to struggle "the entire burden of the inevitable reforms in the economy will fall on the workers' shoulders".

Tiananmen Square  
one year on

One year after the massacre of students and workers in Beijing, China's Stalinist rulers remain divided over economic and political priorities.

Since the massacre and the countrywide repression which followed it, production has plummeted in most sectors of the industrial economy. The dominance of the "hardline" Stalinists around Chen Yun, who favour a return to bureaucratic centralised planning and were allied to the army leaders who undertook the massacre, will prove more apparent than real. Their failure

is already strengthening the hands of the "marketisers" who are no less anti-democratic but can rely on support from a huge layer of management in China and, more importantly, from the West. On the anniversary of 3-4 June they fully expect to be celebrating the decision of President Bush to maintain China's Most Favoured Nation status.

The marketisers correctly believe that continued foreign capitalist investment and trade will be a powerful solvent of the power of their bureaucratic rivals. They hope that the fear instilled by the

massacre will ensure that they will be able to take advantage of this without the intervention of the masses.

The drop in industrial production, however, tells a different story. Repression can silence even China's many millions, but it cannot enthuse and mobilise them. They are reluctant and they are resentful. Their Stalinist enemies remain divided. We cannot know when they will rise again, we know only that they will. They have not forgotten the massacre at the Square of Tiananmen. Neither should we. ■

But it also embodied the living contradiction between the Soviet workers' illusions in the market and their determination not to bear the burden of its reintroduction: "We are in favour of the development of regularised market relations as long as they are attainable within a broad social programme for the defence and improvement of workers living conditions."

In opposition to this illusory answer revolutionary Marxists argue that the new confederation must set full course to take the planned economy of the USSR into the hands of the workers themselves. The bureaucratic plan must be replaced by democratic planning at every level of production and consumption; from the factory floor and committees of consumers to the state planning agencies.

Many voices against such a perspective were raised at the Con-

gress. The new Social Democratic Association was represented by Rummyantsev who is an open marketeer. The voice of the new "Peoples' Democratic Party of Russia" was also heard in favour of Russian separatism. More ominously an organisation called the National Toilers Union (NTS)—a Mussolini-ite group which collaborated with the Nazi occupation during the war—had a vociferous minority at the congress.

June is set to be a long hot month in the USSR. The government has issued the challenge with sweeping price rises. On 11 June miners representatives from every coalfield in the USSR will meet to discuss a proposal to form an independent miners' union. They will now also be discussing a proposal for strike action against the price increases. On 20 June the confederation meets again in Donetsk at a time of mounting working class hostility to the government.

Ten years ago the reborn independent workers' organisations in Poland formed Solidarnosc and committed it to the contradictory strategy of defending the workers and supporting the market. Ten years later it has led Polish workers down the path of capitalist restoration at the cost of a massive attack on their living standards.

Revolutionary internationalists must do everything in their power to prevent the Confederation of Labour following the path of Solidarnosc. Right now that means building active solidarity with the new independent Soviet workers' organisations to prove that their only real allies are the international working class, not the Eric Hammonds and the Margaret Thatchers. And it means a revolutionary intervention to win the argument against the social democrats and right wing nationalists who would lead the reborn workers' movement to disaster. ■

# Deflation: a knife at the throat of the workers

*The conversion of the Latin American bourgeoisie to neo-liberal economic policies continues. Having devastated the Bolivian workers in the mid-1980s anti-inflation measures have now become central to the continent's two largest economies—Brazil and Argentina. John McKee explains the fatal attraction and the effects of the current deflationary programmes.*

**W**HEN PRESIDENT Fernando Collor de Mello announced his economic plans on 16 March he gave voice to probably the most dramatic and recessionary package in Brazil's recent history.

Collor froze the bulk of all savings in the country, including up to 80% of private individuals' and private enterprises' bank accounts, and imposed ceilings on the amount of money that could be withdrawn. This dramatic cutting of the money supply had an immediate effect throughout industry. Many companies failed to pay workers their March salaries for lack of funds. Mass lay-offs started immediately as the economy went into recession.

By April the construction industry had laid off 380,000 of its two million workforce. Car sales slumped by 42% in March while almost 80% of orders for steel that month were cancelled. By the second week of April in the heartland of Brazil's industry, Sao Paulo, 43% of all metalworkers, one of the most powerful trade union groups, had been either dismissed or sent home. Others held onto their jobs only by accepting wage cuts.

This measure had the desired effect on inflation. Prices of non-essential goods were slashed as firms were desperate to raise cash by any means. By April Collor was declaring victory and "zero inflation" for the month. As wages are indexed by law to inflation this allowed the government to declare no wage increases that month, despite the fact that other research institutes put inflation in April at between 6% and 24%.

## Inflation

When Collor's plan was announced opinion polls showed over 70% of the population supported it. Collor had won the December 1989 general election, beating the Workers Party (PT) candidate Luis da Silva (Lula), by offering a combination of Thatcherite measures to combat inflation together with populist promises to attack bureaucracy and waste. Inflation running as high as 2,000% last year was a burning issue in Brazil as the wages and savings of workers and the petit bourgeoisie were constantly eroded.

Collor has also launched an attack on the state bureaucracy which is renowned for being stuffed with tens of thousands of party appointees doing little work but drawing fat salaries. Collor has used this to demand massive redundancies in the state sector. Starting with a demand that 25% (400,000 out of 1.6 million) of state employees be fired, he has finally issued an ultimatum to his ministers to get rid of 350,000 civil servants by the middle of June.

At the same time he has demanded ministries get rid of "surplus" assets, ministerial mansions, over 100 aeroplanes, 11,000 apartments in Brasilia etc. He aims by these measures both to boost his reputation as a populist and achieve a "zero state deficit".

But the real targets of Collor's "anti-bureaucratic" measures are the state enterprises themselves. Brazil has always been a highly statified economy, using state capitalist enterprises to direct the development of the economy. This policy is an anathema to the neo-liberals who want to sell off these industries to private capitalists, Brazilian or foreign, as quickly as possible.

There are over 188 state run enterprises in Brazil, some highly profitable. The majority, bloated with military and political appointees, are not. Their total debt stands at over \$62 billion! Collor plans a wave of privatisations which will result in further job losses.

Collor's plans and the Brazilian bourgeoisie's dilemma was accurately summed up by Trotsky over fifty years ago in relation to the French bourgeoisie:

"To try to emerge from the chaos in which it has plunged the country, the French bourgeoisie must first resolve the monetary problem. One section wants to do this by inflation, i.e. the issuing of paper money, the depreciation of wages, the raising of the cost of living... the other by deflation, i.e. retrenchment on the backs of the workers [lowering of salaries and wages], extension of unemployment..."

As the results of Collor's shock deflation therapy become clear to the Brazilian masses so his popularity dwindles. A few weeks after

the plan was introduced, support for it was down to 50%. It was becoming apparent that it was the workers and the poorest sections of the community who were paying the price of halting inflation, while the bosses and the rich were already well on their way to getting around the government restrictions. Promises of wealth taxes and redistribution of wealth remained just that—promises.

## Struggles

Although there were a number of spontaneous struggles against lay-offs and wage cuts, (bank, transport workers, coal and bauxite miners all took action) the militant union federation, (the CUT) and the PT did little to mobilise the workers to resist. Lula issued a joint statement with the bourgeois nationalist Lionel Brizola denouncing the "IMF measures", while the CUT told its members to strike "only as a last resort" because of the threat to jobs!

But Collor is unlikely to have it all his own way. The Brazilian working class has shown itself to be capable of long and militant struggles.

At the moment the ruling class and the middle sectors of Brazilian society are united behind the President's plan. But already there are signs of disquiet among sectors of the bosses.

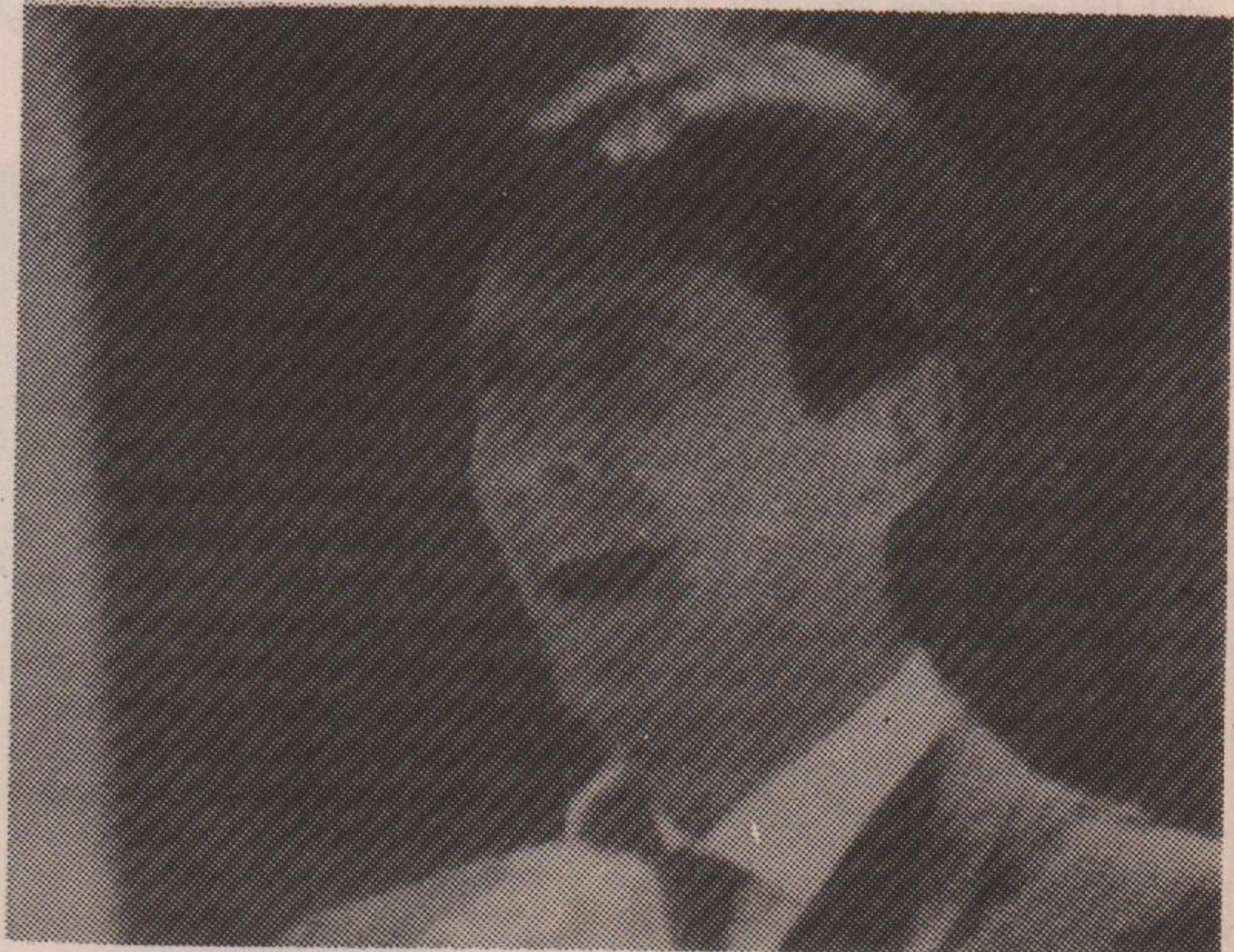
Many economists fear that Collor's measures will provoke a major recession. The most optimistic are predicting a 1% contraction in the economy, while others think a 5% - 10% contraction this year is more likely. This could make managing the massive Brazilian debt and the \$5 billion arrears even more difficult.

## Recession

After years of pursuing inflationary policies to rob the workers the imperialists have forced the ruling class in Brazil to attack the working class by deflation. But prolonged and damaging recession could force a change back towards inflation. Yet as Trotsky observed:

"Either alternative [i.e. inflation or deflation] means increased misery for the exploited. To choose between these two capitalist methods would be to choose between two instruments with which the exploiters are preparing to cut the throats of the workers."

The task facing the workers is to exploit any divisions in the ruling class, to take the knife at the throat of the workers and plunge it into the heart of the capitalist class. ■



President Fernando Collor de Mello

**A**RGINA'S PRESIDENT, Carlos Menem, faces an even more serious economic crisis than President Collor of Brazil. By March this year inflation had reached 95% a month. The previous twelve months had seen cumulative inflation reach 12,000%!

This hyper-inflation had led to a dramatic erosion of real wages, pensions and living standards. Since 1986 it has been estimated that state employees' real wages have fallen by 45%, construction workers by 48% and bank workers by 52%. Pensions had collapsed in value by 54% averaging about \$30 a month. It is little wonder that previously comfortably off state employees on pensions can now be found scavenging for food in Buenos Aires' dustbins.

Carlos Menem, as the Presidential candidate of the Justicialista Party, the Peronists, with strong links to the trade unions, has had more difficulty than Collor in fulfilling the requirements of the IMF. They demanded a dramatic reduction of the huge state deficit, which now runs at \$5 billion. In February the IMF blocked a \$1.4 standby loan because measures to cut the deficit were not considered sufficient.

Menem's response has been to push ahead with a whole series of austerity measures. All new investment in state industries was frozen, plans were announced to sell off "surplus" state assets, 80,000 civil servants were compulsorily "retired" and plans to sell more than forty state enterprises were brought forward.

The result has been to an intensification of the recessionary spiral. Over 40% of the labour force is now unemployed. A third of all shops in Buenos Aires have shut as sales of food and consumer goods has plummeted. As a result inflation is now falling.

While US Vice President Quayle declared himself "impressed" by the measures, it has led to growing opposition within the trade unions. In March and early April teachers, railway workers and telephone employees struck. The capital's phone links with the outside world were cut for days. On 21 March a one day strike called by the Association of State Employees culminated in a rally of 60,000 against

privatisation and the austerity measures.

This rally was organised by the "rebel" CGT, the major trade union federation linked to the Peronists, led by Saul Ubaldini. Ubaldini has rejected Menem's calls for a "social truce" and has backed an alternative economic programme which calls for an end to the privatisations and job cuts, the introduction of exchange controls and wage increases. Ubaldini has also developed links with sections of the military, in particular with Colonel Mohamed Ali Seineldin who led a reactionary military revolt against the previous Radical Party government of Alfonsin.

Ubaldini's CGT-Azopardo has however led no serious struggle against the attacks. Rather than mobilising the growing opposition to the government into general strike action it has limited its members to sectional strikes and days of action. Ubaldini has spent his time hawking his alternative programme around the opposition bourgeois parties like the Christian Democrats and even Alfonsin's Radical Party.

For his part Menem has adopted a "get tough with the unions" policy. He is already taking action to "de-register", (i.e. remove legal recognition from) four railway unions for taking strike action. He is demanding that the Congress endorse his proposals for making strikes in the "essential services" illegal or he will pass them by decree. He has also stuffed the supreme court with new judges just in case legal obstructions are put in his way.

The growing trade union opposition to Menem combined with the divisions within Peronism open up the possibility of achieving a real hearing within the working class for the building of a revolutionary workers' party independent of all forms of bourgeois nationalism, of Peronism.

But the workers can only be won from leaders such as Ubaldini by a combination of united action with and in the CGT, in all struggles against privatisation and austerity, and intransigent criticism of the vacillations and collaboration with the military by the opposition. To carry this policy out requires the urgent building of an authentic Trotskyist party in Argentina. ■



Sao Paulo shanty dwelling



# the LRCI

REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST TENDENCY

## Fraternal relations declared with US group

During the period 30.4.90 and 8.5.90 a number of discussions were held between a representative of the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (RTT) and the LRCI. They focused on the LRCI's *Trotskyist Manifesto*, and a number of other documents from both tendencies.

On the basis of these discussions the LRCI and RTT were able to reach agreement on the following declaration of fraternal relations on 8 May.

"In 1988 the MRCI (now LRCI) began systematic discussions with the comrades who now constitute the RTT. At that time the comrades had broken from the Bolshevik Tendency, characterising it as still tied to many of the fundamental politics of the Spartacists. The MRCI recognised this break, centering as it did on the question of Poland and the Trotskyist attitude towards the political revolution, as a healthy break. For their part the comrades of the RTT prioritised relations with the LRCI and began a two year process of discussion commenced.

The principal differences between the LRCI and the comrades of the RTT (then MTT) were on the questions of reformism and the tactic of electoral critical support, the anti-imperialist united front and the question of permanent revolution, the attitude of Marxists towards rank and file movements in the unions and towards movements of the oppressed. The comrades also disagreed with the MRCI slogan of "For the refoundation of a Leninist-Trotskyist International", arguing instead for the slogan of the "Refoundation of the Fourth International".

The basis for continuing discussions between the LRCI and RTT was that despite these differences on Stalinism, on our attitude towards the centrist fragments of the "Fourth International", on our attitude towards the political revolution, we discovered substantial agreement.

In November 1989 and May 1990 intensive discussions were held between representatives of the LRCI and RTT with the clear objective of establishing fraternal relations. As a result of these discussions we have achieved extensive agreement on most of the key questions. The RTT recognised the *Trotskyist Manifesto* as a revolutionary programme and have tabled a series of amendments to it. Differences on the anti-imperialist united front, tactics in the unions and amongst the oppressed and over the question of critical support for reformists were narrowed. On the major question facing the international working class, the death agony of Stalinism, the LRCI and the RTT had fundamental agreement. We concluded that the remaining differences were essentially tactical ones that could be discussed and resolved within the framework of fraternal relations.

The areas of discussion still to be resolved between our organisations include revolutionary tactics in the Iran/Iraq war, specific circumstances under which revolutionaries would not apply critical support to reformists, the question of the Fourth International slogan, tactics of revolutionaries in the capitalist countries in their solidarity with the oppressed republics inside the workers' states in the present crisis and some aspects in applying revolutionary tactics towards the SAF in Afghanistan.

However, on the basis of our general agreement around the *Trotskyist Manifesto*, our programme for the political revolution, our characterisation of the centrist organisations who masquerade as Trotskyists and our assessment of the tasks now facing revolutionaries we are confident that there is sufficient agreement between our tendencies to establish fraternal relations with a perspective of entry of the RTT into the LRCI as a section in the next period after final discussions, clarification and common experience in working together as fraternal organisations."

### BOLIVIA

## Eleuterio Gutierrez is free!

ON 4 MAY comrade Eleuterio Gutierrez was released from prison, only two months before he would have finished his 4 year 8 month sentence. Eleuterio was arrested in September 1985 and falsely charged with stealing equipment from the mining office where he worked.

Eleuterio wrote from prison:

"The bourgeoisie of the COMIBOL (the state mining sector of Bolivia) prepared very well in advance a plan to frame me, for the simple reason that I was one of the consistent agitators during the miners' strike, mobilisations and marches . . ." (7.4.87)

He was centrally involved in the general strike of 1985 and the miners' march to the capital city of La Paz. In the past he was an activist in the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) and was on their list in the parliamentary elections.

During his detention Eleuterio was loyally supported by local trade unionists but the reformist bureaucrats of the Bolivian Miners' Federation not only denied Eleuterio support but actively obstructed the campaign for his release.

We welcome Eleuterio's release and are confident that he will take his place again in the fight against capitalism and reformism.

### The LRCI

Arbeiter/Innenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)

Poder Obrero (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section. The Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) has fraternal relations with the LRCI.

## EAST GERMANY

# What gains for women?

*In Eastern Europe and the USSR the equality of women was said to have been achieved long ago. Yet as they hurry home from their tiring, repetitive, unskilled and low paid jobs to do the shopping, women must wonder whether there is any basis to the claim that women have made gains in Eastern Europe. Ruth Bergen of the newspaper Arbeitermacht (GDR) tests that claim against the reality of life for women in East Germany.*

FROM THE very beginning, the Stalinist Socialist Unity Party's (SED) programme for women was aimed at meeting the needs of the regime, not women. The principle concern was to draw women into the workforce without disturbing women's central role in holding together the family, a role inherited from bourgeois society.

The founding of the GDR in 1949, and the decision to impose on it Stalin's system of bureaucratic planning, made great demands on the workforce. Not only had an entire industrial infrastructure to be built, but huge reparations also had to be paid to the Soviet Union.

At that time women constituted the only available new pool of labour. The 1949 Constitution enshrined equal pay and equal rights but also identified the nuclear family as the basic cell of society. The state's need for more labour lay behind the introduction of a new abortion law which removed the possibility of abortion on social grounds, something that had been granted two years earlier.

For women to be liberated it is essential first to ensure the full and equal participation of women in social production. But this in turn demands another major measure; namely, the socialisation of domestic labour.

Behind this grand phrase lies a simple truth: without collective responsibility for all the tasks currently performed by women in each individual family women cannot find their proper place in the labour force.

### Liberation

Neither of these measures found their way into the SED programme. Rather they betrayed the Marxist position on women, just as Stalin had done in the USSR. They used women as cheap, and generally unskilled, labour whilst denying them concrete reforms which could have socialised domestic labour and challenged the sexual division of labour in the factory and the home. Nor did the SED do anything to promote the self-organisation and mobilisation of women so necessary if women are to take an active part in their own liberation.

By the end of the 1950s the major problem facing the SED government was not simply a lack of workers but the flight of skilled labour to the west. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 put a stop to the exodus, but special measures were required to replace the skilled workers already lost to the west. Once again, women were the only available source.

But the contradictions between a woman's responsibility as mother and as a worker were increasingly felt. The state had to respond by providing increased nursery and creche places. To deal with the skill shortages they developed plans for the training of skilled women workers. Women, with or without children, were allowed to be released from existing jobs in order to be re-trained on condition

that their work unit maintained production quotas.

The 1960s, however, also saw a move to re-assert the social control role of the family over each of its members. A new divorce law required a court to be satisfied that a marriage had not only lost its meaning for the couple involved but also for the children and society in general.

Similarly a new Family Law in 1965 specified the fundamental role of the family and its value as an educator of children. Whereas in the 1950s the provision of services had been presented as a step towards the socialisation of domestic labour, the new trend was towards social measures which allowed women to combine both a job and their traditional role and duties.

The state took steps to halt the falling birth rate, but having failed to do this by mere propaganda stressing the virtues of the family and by restricting abortion rights, in the 1970s they improved maternity rights and child benefits.

In 1972 they even liberalised the abortion law granting abortion on demand in the following terms:

"The equality of women in education and vocation, in marriage and family makes it necessary to leave it to the discretion of women themselves to decide whether and when to have a child . . . Women have the right to decide on their own responsibility on the number and timing of children they bear and shall be able to decide this through a termination of pregnancy."

At first sight this appears to contradict the state's desire to increase population growth. But by the 1970s the numbers of illegal abortions were becoming a source of social grievance for millions of women that the regime was dependent upon. The bureaucracy felt that if they gave women choice and increased social provision for mothers then more women would choose to have children.

The result of these policies has been a dramatic change in the position of women in the GDR when compared with West Germany. Far more women are in paid employment and women have made some inroads into jobs and professions which were previously, and remain in the west, largely male dominated.

By 1986 81% of children under three were in day care, 89% of 3-6 year olds were in kindergartens and 84% of 6-10 year olds were in professional after-school care to allow parents to have full time jobs. Maternity leave is guaranteed for one year on full pay after the baby is born, and extended up to a maximum of three years if the mother is a single parent and she cannot find a place in a day centre for her child. Her job must be kept open during this leave. Child benefits were increased by over 100% for the first child and by 500% for the second child in 1987.

But these gains for women are contradictory. Although 91% of

women are employed, one third of these are in part time work and average pay for women is lower than for men because of the continued existence of "women's jobs" where no comparison can easily be made with "male" pay rates.

Although women are eligible for skills training to try and improve their position in the workforce, family responsibilities generally prevent them from taking up these "equal opportunities". Women remain concentrated in lower skilled jobs, and although a few women are in "top" jobs a considerable sexual division of labour remains in the workplace and at home.

### Traditional

Men have not moved into the traditional female jobs as unskilled manufacturing or agricultural workers, nor have they taken on much of the domestic chores in the home—a survey back in 1970 revealed that women did an average of forty hours domestic labour in addition to their full time job. The lack of availability of consumer goods which ease the work in the home, and the poor quality of those that are available, combine to make the domestic responsibilities of women in the GDR even more onerous than those of many women in Western Europe.

Neither is the high level of child-care simply seen as a gain by women—the quality of care is poor leading to many women, if given a choice, to prefer looking after their children at home. In the 1980s this desire, particularly by women who had themselves attended state-child care centres, led to a trend away from using these centres—the proportion of children in them actually fell.

Despite the constant propaganda for equality and liberation of the past forty years women remain decidedly unequal in the GDR, as in the rest of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Mass women's organisations exist but have been consistently subordinated to the rule of the Stalinists in the party and the unions. Women remain very under-represented in political, state and enterprise top jobs.

Today, all the gains of the working class, however meagre and contradictory, are under threat from the Federal Republic in the process of reunification. Bonn's representatives have targeted the abortion law, the laws against anti-gay and lesbian discrimination, extended job protection for single parents and free access to all education and training.

There are great opportunities for a united struggle by women workers throughout Germany to extend the positive provisions of the GDR on maternity pay, child-care and abortion to the whole of a united Germany.

Within the GDR women should be fighting the reversal of any gains whilst at the same time organising to transform the child-care, the social provisions and their role at work through taking them under the direct management of the working class. A mass movement of working class women in East Germany, building links with similar organisations throughout Germany, is needed to defend and extend existing gains, and begin the struggle for a truly revolutionary society and the complete liberation of women. ■

THE ROMANIAN revolution of last December gave birth to a paradox. The hated Stalinist Ceausescu dictatorship was overthrown only after bloody and bitter street fighting; the workers and students were armed, the army came over to their side.

But when the smoke lifted above the battle-scarred buildings of Bucharest and the dictator and his wife lay dead in a provincial courtyard, the Stalinists could still be seen holding the key levers of power. The most violent of the East European revolutions ended up doing less than anywhere else to dislodge the old Communist Party members from the state machine.

"They stole the revolution!" has been the charge of many, especially the students and academics, levelled against the National Salvation Front (NSF) which has governed since late December 1989. But reality was not as simple as this, as the massive electoral endorsement of the NSF on 20 May showed.

It is certainly true that those who today run the new government of the NSF were one time officials under Ceausescu who were disgraced during the 1970s and 1980s. At least five ministers of the pre-election NSF government were deputy ministers under the old regime; four others were Central Committee members. President Iliescu himself was a CC secretary in the 1970s.

## Street battles

These details were not lost on many who had fought in the street battles. From mid-January through to mid-February the NSF came under attack. Big demonstrations demanded the restoration of the death penalty for those guilty of crimes under Ceausescu and for a clearing out of the "reform communists". The crowds did indeed get several suspect ministry officials to resign and their biggest prize was the resignation of the Minister of the Interior and the demise of General Militaru, the Minister of Defence, who tried to bring back old retired generals.

In these early months the NSF was on the defensive but the tide turned during mid-February. On 18 February 1,000 demonstrators stormed the NSF HQ and momentarily "arrested" the Vice-President. But the next day 3,000 miners turned up in Bucharest to defend the NSF and terrorise the opposition.

These two demonstrations symbolised the impasse facing the Romanian revolution after December. On the one side were the students and a small number of workers who wanted to push on and oust all the Stalinists, even at the cost of installing reactionary right wing parties. On the other side stood the mass of industrial workers and the peasantry for whom democracy and political revolution were now secondary questions, as they concerned themselves with consolidating social and economic reforms.

Those forces for whom the political democracy was decisive suffered from two major weaknesses which inevitably prevented them coming to the head of the mass of workers in a fight against the NSF. The first flaw was their purely bureaucratic conception of how to deal with the Stalinists still in power. In Article 8 of the Timisoara Declaration drawn up by intellectuals on 11 March they insisted that the electoral law should "forbid former RCP activists and Securitate officers from running as candidates on any electoral lists during the first three consecutive legislatures".

In contrast the NSF-led provi-

*The election of the National Salvation Front Government in Romania runs counter to the victories of openly rightist parties in other Eastern European countries. But, as Mark Abram explains, the workers and peasants have no grounds for expecting this government to meet their needs*

# Romania after the elections



Demonstrators during the elections

sional government draft on electoral laws itself deemed ineligible any "person who abused their political, juridical or administrative position, who disregarded the fundamental human rights, or who organised or were instrumental in repression as a part of the former Securitate, former police or militia forces".

## Organisation

In this context the key task was to organise the working class in the factories, where committees had sprung up in the revolution; to fight above all else to prevent these organisations of workers' control from being disbanded and disarmed. They should not have placed their trust in the old factory managers or party officials; but their distrust of the opposition's motives could only have been countered by arguing that the factory committees should have set up workers' tribunals to investigate the revolutionary credentials or counter-revolutionary deeds of all those in leading posts in the NSF.

The second, fatal, flaw in the resistance of the students and intellectuals was to line up behind the National Peasants Party (NPP) and the National Liberal Party (NLP). Their reappearance in Romania after a 43 year absence was rightly understood by the workers to herald the return of landlordism and of naked pro-imperialist interests.

The NPP's election campaign was headed by Raitu. He is a millionaire and has lived the last forty years in London. Tim Bell, a one time Thatcher adviser, ran the NPP campaign!

It was no surprise then that the NPP and NLP between them polled less than 15% of the vote on 20

May in elections that even polling booth observer, Tory MP Edwina Currie, had to describe as "chaotic but fair".

There can be no doubt, however, that the NSF's consolidation of political power would have been more difficult if it had not been for a whole series of reforms that made the working class mistakenly look upon the NSF as "their" party.

In the first few months of this year sales of consumer goods went up 18%, including a 244% increase in milk and dairy purchases; fresh meat and meat products' sales shot up 31%. Wages have gone up and the miners' public display of loyalty on 19 February no doubt had something to do with the considerable pay rise they received.

The reasons for the huge vote for the NSF, then, is not hard to find. It was well summed up by one industrial worker quoted in the Financial Times:

"I'm off to vote for Mr Iliescu. It's because of the food. I used to queue six hours for bread, twenty hours for eggs. Now there's no problem. We have everything."

In addition the NSF have, for the moment, also pacified the peasants, who make up 30% of the population, with land reforms. They can now own (but not sell) up to 5,000 square metres of land, rather than 200 as under Ceausescu, and prices for their produce have risen. Even the 2.5 million gypsy population was brought behind the NSF through the return of their gold coins which had been confiscated by the old regime.

For the time being the NSF has secured mass support. In no sense could this have justified revolutionaries giving them critical support in the May elections. In Eastern Europe the Stalinist parties that remain in power, weakened

as they are, are enmeshed in the whole state apparatus which it is the object of the political revolution to destroy. Putting such a party in office will not lead to potential destabilisation between the state and the government that the working class can utilise. On the contrary, any vote for the NSF would only have served to give them a democratic mandate that they lacked before.

The question now, post-election, is how long can this honeymoon between the NSF and the masses last?

The actual state of the Romania economy is dire; the reforms and the electoral victory have been bought at the cost of using up the country's meagre reserves. Industrial production has slumped by a staggering 81%. Romania is the most backward degenerate workers' state in Eastern Europe apart from Albania.

## Technology

Its metallurgical and chemical factories are using 1940s technology and the energy sector relies upon pre-war equipment. For the whole of the 1980s Ceausescu allowed no technology imports at all!

A major economic crisis cannot long be postponed and the workers' illusions in the NSF will then be sorely tested. It is already quite clear which direction the new government will take Romania in and at whose expense.

This can only mean that, having brought the country to ruin and forced the workers to pay the price of bureaucratic planning for forty years, the workers are now to rescue their overlords by enduring the cost of restoring capitalism. In April the pre-election government published a Draft Strategy of Tran-

sition and one of its authors concluded: "In three years, not more, the mechanisms for the market economy will be in place."

This can only mean massive unemployment. It can only mean, in the context of poor state revenues, an end to the meagre social security and welfare apparatus. Wages will not be able to compensate since they will have to stay very low if Romania is to be an attractive site for capital when there are better bets in other parts of Eastern Europe.

The alternative to being reduced to a semi-colony of imperialism, ruled on its behalf by some variant of a military Bonaparte, is for the Romanian workers to take up their revolutionary tasks again and extend the political revolution into the more developed East European neighbours. A federation of workers' states in East Europe, having overthrown the Stalinist caste and prevented the return to capitalism could begin to raise the most backward countries out of stagnation without returning them to the fold of imperialist super-exploitation.

The Romanian revolution did not finish when the last Securitate officer escaped the sewers of Bucharest and melted away into the administration or army. Its most decisive phase lies ahead.

## Vanguard

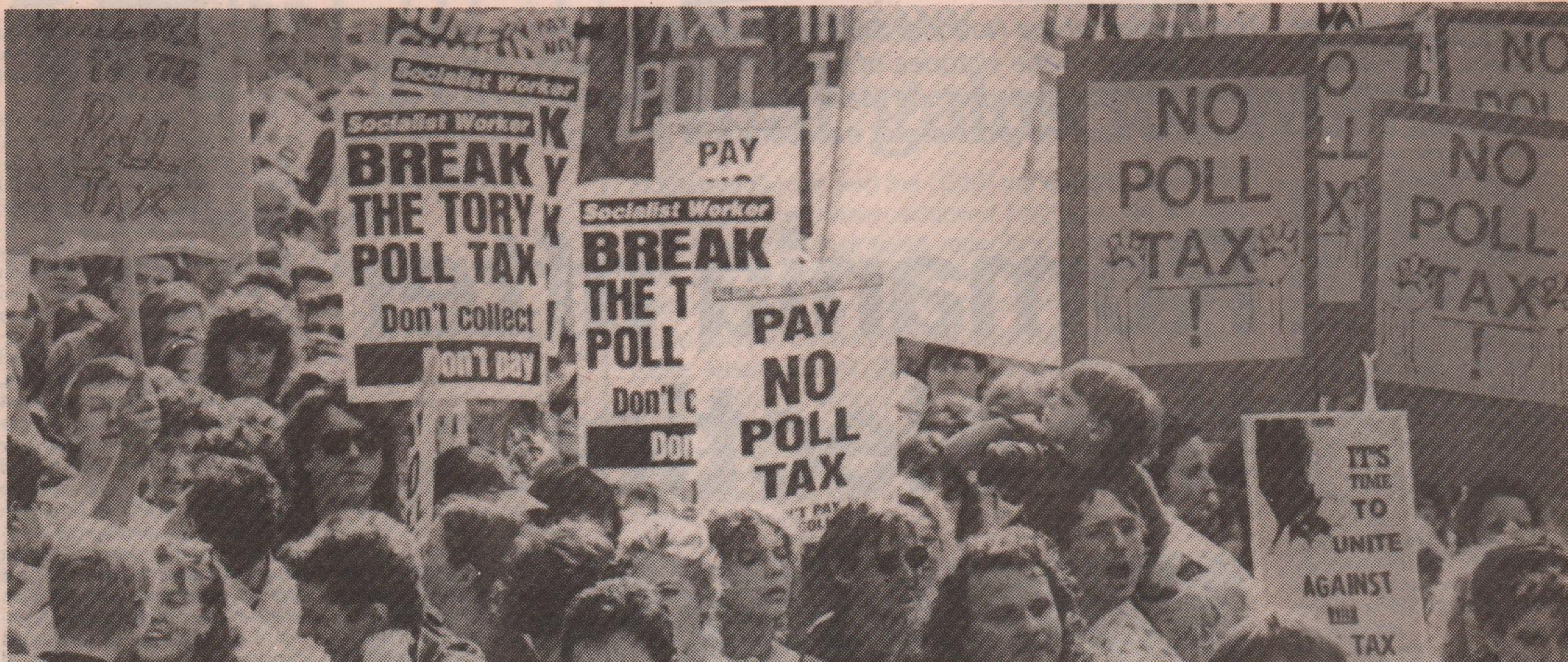
If the Romanian workers and poor peasants are to triumph then the democratic vanguard must turn its back on the pro-imperialist restorationists who wish to sell off the country to the west and build up a Romanian national bourgeoisie. The working class vanguard must overcome its political apathy towards democracy and refuse to allow the right to conquer the high ground of democratic slogans. The working class can win the best elements of the petit bourgeoisie away from reaction only by putting itself at the head of the fight for democracy.

Such a fight starts with deepening and safeguarding the gains already achieved such as independent trade unions and the right to form political parties. It involves taking all the media under workers' management so that equal access can be had to the television channels for all progressive forces. The NSF is increasingly manipulating the media, which played such an important role in the December events, to serve its own ends. Workers' tribunals would serve to allay the fears of the students and intelligentsia that the NSF is merely a "safe house" for those with much to hide.

In the aftermath of the revolution the old official RCP apparatus of the trade unions revamped itself into the National Provisional Committee for Organising Free Trade Unions. But they have far from conquered all the independent organisations born in last winter's struggle against despotism. Other federations include *Brotherhood, Justice, and Miscarea* *Noviembre 15*.

It is these organisations that must draw up an emergency workers' national plan to take stock of the national wealth, defend it from privatisation and establish a democratic plan for industrial reconstruction under the management of the working class. It is these forces that must quickly rediscover the self-organisation of last December and unearth the arms they quietly buried "for another day".

That day will soon arrive. And when it does the streets of Bucharest, Brasov and Timisoara must resound to the demands of the proletarian political revolution! ■



## SWP AND THE TORY CRISIS

# No strategy to win

"WE LIVE in exciting times" *Socialist Worker* told its members in a report of the party's May national delegate meeting. True enough. But in exciting times it is the duty of revolutionary Marxists to give a sober assessment of the situation and point the way forward for the working class.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has once again proved it can do neither.

Its response to the Tory crisis, the Poll Tax struggle and the renewed fight over wages and conditions has been a classic demonstration of the method of economism.

Economism is based on the idea that workers' economic struggles spontaneously generate a revolutionary political consciousness. It absolves revolutionaries from having to fight for demands consciously aimed at transforming workers' struggles from sectional struggles against one boss or one ruling class attack into a generalised struggle against capitalism as a whole.

### Demands

Instead economism puts forward a programme based on "what is possible" determined by the existing level of workers' consciousness and tails the demands and tactics generated spontaneously by workers and struggle. Economism simply reflects the existing optimism or pessimism of the workers involved.

The Poll tax struggle has been at the centre of the new mood of resistance to Thatcherism. We agree with the SWP when they say that it marks a new stage in the Tory offensive because it is a generalised attack:

"Now their generalised attacks have provoked a generalised response." (*Socialist Worker Review*, April 1990)

But the whole question boils down to this—how can we transform a generalised response into a conscious, generalised struggle against the Tories? It is a question the SWP ignores because it be-

lieves this transformation will happen spontaneously.

So at the same time as it spreads the message "We can win" *Socialist Worker* consistently fails to answer the question: how?

### Mass

Within the Anti-Poll Tax campaign the SWP has long been aware of the limitations of a passive mass non-payment campaign. It has fought correctly for non-implementation by council workers.

But neither mass non-payment nor non-collection on their own have the power to beat the Poll Tax. If successful they will immediately come up against the courts, the police, the bailiffs.

Faced with this the workers involved will need to generalise the action by calling for mass political strike action.

But instead of a strategy to overcome the limitations of non-payment and non-collection the SWP only emphasises one over the other.

It emphasises non-collection on the basis that workers are strongest in the workplace. Correct. That means that the workplace is the place where we must aim to generalise the struggle, with demands aimed at the biggest possible mass strike action against the tax.

But the SWP's focus on the workplace leads in the opposite direction. In place of the general strike we get a call for non-implementation by NALGO members. Instead of a generalising demand the SWP put forward the idea that a relatively small section of council workers are the key to sinking Thatcher's flagship.

"The workers who collect the Poll Tax have the power to smash it." (SW 19 May)

The SWP has wrongly treated Council workers' action against new working conditions created by the tax as if they were struggles against the tax itself.

The Greenwich strike for better pay and conditions by Poll Tax collectors offers an excellent opportunity to argue that the work-

ers involved should refuse to collect the tax, even if they win on pay and conditions. Instead the SWP has insisted that the strike is in fact already an anti-Poll Tax strike. But whatever the support workers are receiving from non-payers, however much the strikers hate the tax individually, the interview with strikers on p5 of this paper shows that the strike could be settled if managers give in to the limited demands of the Greenwich workers.

But you will find nothing in the pages of *Socialist Worker* warning of this danger, arguing for a strategy to turn Greenwich and other strikes into strikes against the tax itself. Instead it simply cheers on the workers: "Greenwich shows the way"

### Anger

To link the anger that exists against the Poll Tax with workers' struggles for better wages stimulated by big mortgage and Poll Tax bills we need to overcome the sectional, economic limits lodged within all of these spheres of struggle.

We need to focus the anger of each into a conscious campaign against the Poll Tax itself. The SWP thinks so too:

"The coming wages struggles must be turned into a generalised political fightback against the Tories" (SW 7 April)

"Take every opportunity to link wage demands with the Poll Tax, rent and mortgage rate rises" (SW 14 April)

The problem is that they consistently refuse to fight for a strategy that can bring this about.

In workplaces and union branches the spontaneous way many workers "link" these attacks is to say: "I'm paying my Poll Tax, my rent/mortgage has gone up so I need a pay rise". Up and down the country the SWP has been echoing these arguments, rather than trying to replace them with revolutionary arguments and tactics.

Concretely the way to link pay and Poll Tax struggles is to build

organisations that can link workers in the workplace with those on the estates.

We need to fight for councils of action, as the means of co-ordinating and linking the separate struggles. We need to build defence squads to protect the non-payers and workers' demonstrations from the state. We need to fuse the struggles around the demand for a general strike against the Poll Tax itself.

The SWP clearly realises the potential for a generalised counter-offensive to drive the Tories from office:

"If the anger over the Poll Tax is linked with the rising determination to fight over wages and conditions not only will workers win decent pay rises but they can sweep the Tories away"

How? By winning decent pay rises all at once? Clearly not. The answer, as any revolutionary socialist should know, is by launching a general strike which links pay, conditions, Poll Tax, benefit cuts, unemployment together, and which brings into being delegate councils of action representing every section of the working class.

But for economism this is much too far in advance of the workers' present consciousness. So for all the SWP's excitement we are never told just how the potential to drive the Tories from office can be realised.

### Pay off

The deliberate pay off workers have been given by whole number of employers, with settlements above the rate of inflation, shoots a hole through the whole argument that fighting hard on every sectional front of struggle spontaneously leads to generalisation. And the SWP, in the face of such settlements, is left with nothing to say to power workers, rail workers, engineers, retail workers and construction workers who have all recently settled.

Finally the SWP's economism has led them to a hopelessly one-sided view of the Tory crisis. Just

as in the "downturn" they thought it was impossible for workers to win major class battles, now it seems impossible for them to lose. The Tories have "no obvious way out of their immediate difficulties" claims the May issue of *Socialist Worker Review*.

The Tories certainly do face a severe crisis. But to suggest that it is inescapable leaves workers disoriented when the limitations of the spontaneous struggles against the Tories lead to partial retreats and reverses.

On the eve of the council elections *Socialist Worker* told its readers:

"This week was Thatcher's worst ever, but next week will be worse. After the local elections comes the likelihood of official inflation topping 10%."

### Swings

One week later Thatcher had limited the electoral damage with big Tory swings in London, staved off an immediate leadership challenge, quieted Tory calls to scrap the tax and gone on the offensive against high spending Labour councils. And inflation failed to reach 10%.

*Socialist Worker* urged workers "Don't let her off the hook". But for the moment, because of the inadequacy of the spontaneously generated tactics the misleadership of the Labour and trade union leaders struggle, they already had.

Buoyed by the certainty that Thatcher's days are numbered, the SWP has refused to advocate a strategy that could really generalise the fightback. Its revolutionary sounding calls to "Get the Tories out" become empty rhetoric for the benefit of the SWP members, not a fighting strategy for millions of workers.

"Thatcher's policies are in ruins, her government in disarray. We don't need to wait for Kinnock to replace her. We can do that right away." (SW, 5.5.90)

But still this begs the question—how? *Socialist Worker* has no coherent answer. ■

# THE BANKRUPTCY OF THE "BRITISH ROAD"

Dear comrades,  
After its congress the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has finally got around to publishing its version of the "British Road to Socialism" (BRS).

This tired old programme was first touted around in 1951 and the present edition continues to peddle the same reformist message as its predecessors.

Its current "strategy for socialism" centres around a series of short term demands, collectively known as the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy. However, the programme cannot take the class struggle beyond the fight for reform because it rejects a Leninist approach to the question of the state.

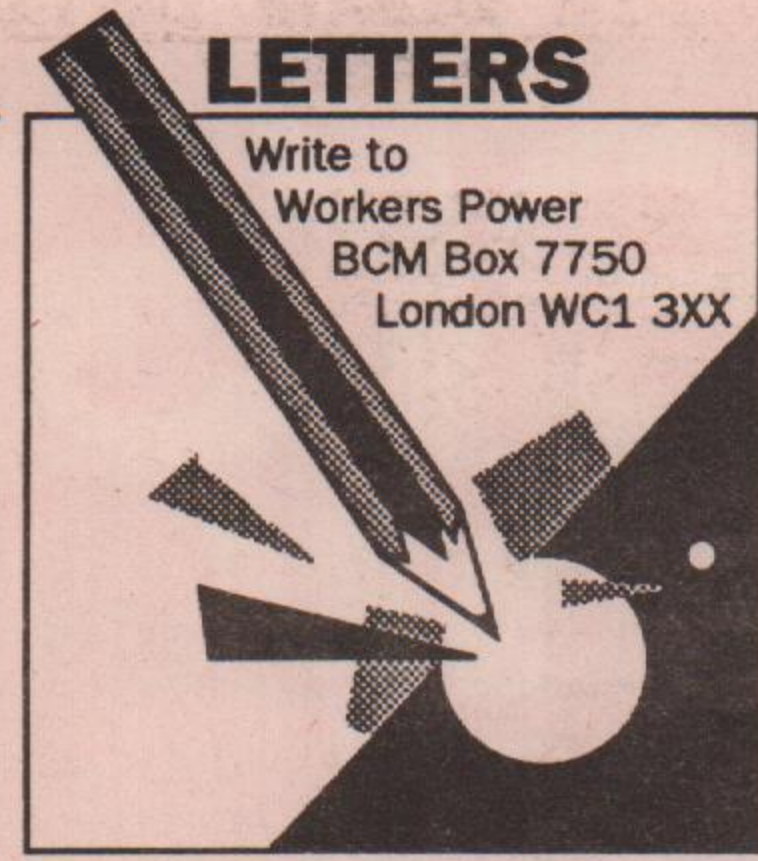
Instead, the BRS envisages the "democratisation of key sectors of the state" and its transformation into an instrument for the enforcement of working class policies. This formulation is not simply "weak" as some in the CPB would argue. It's dangerous. The experience of the

Popular Unity government in Chile demonstrated only too clearly the bankruptcy of this concept and its dire consequences for the working class.

The programme's false promise of a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism flatly contradicts the Leninist theory upon which it claims to be based. And its appallingly chauvinistic assertion that there is a peculiarly British road to socialism is coupled with a total failure to analyse the realities of "real socialism".

The BRS' conclusion proclaims: "The socialist society for which we are working in Britain will draw inspiration from the experiences of socialism everywhere. It will have essential features in common with other socialist societies but it will be built by British people..."

But it is precisely the experience of "socialism" that has roused the masses of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and brought down the ruling parties in many of those



# Foot's soldiers

Dear Comrades,

The NUJ member who wrote in defending Paul Foot's refusal to attack Maxwell in his *Mirror* column, is a good example of "professional pleading". In a factory, if you publish something attacking your boss you risk getting sacked. This is what happened to Derek Robinson when he signed a pamphlet attacking the then British Leyland boss, Michael Edwardes. Attacking your boss—wherever you do it—brings with it the risk of victimisation. Why doesn't Foot take that risk?

Paul Foot attacking Maxwell through the NUJ chapel would not cause a ripple. Paul Foot attacking Maxwell in his column would cause a storm because it would reach millions of people. Moreover, given that Maxwell (hypocritically) insists his journalists are free to write what they like, he would have a very good case should his boss move against him.

Over and above all of these considerations there is a more fundamental principle at stake. Paul Foot claims to be revolutionary socialist. It is unprincipled for a revolutionary socialist journalist to tolerate witch-hunts against the working class, especially ones as serious as that launched against Scargill.

His silence equals toleration. It should be condemned. Worse, he won't put his name to attacks on Maxwell that appear in *Socialist Worker* for fear of losing his extremely well paid job.

Why can't Foot be as principled as John Pilger was and openly challenge Maxwell? Pilger, the liberal, showed more courage than Foot, the "revolutionary", when he refused to work for Maxwell.

Pilger knew he could walk into other work. So could "journalist of the year" Foot. It's not even as though, in demanding he take a stand, we are calling on him to sacrifice the "Hampstead socialist" lifestyle to which he's accustomed.

Down with "professional pleading". Foot must take the same risks as the numerous militants over the last ten years who, by openly attacking their bosses in their workplaces, according to your NUJ member, "deliberately seek the sack".

Communist greetings  
Arthur Merton, South London

countries.

CPB members who believed that these countries were socialist need to make an honest reappraisal of their politics—and that must include an examination of Trotskyism.

They should read the *Trotskyist Manifesto* of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International and compare it with their own programme. And they should contrast the politics advanced by Workers Power with those of the CPB and the Morning Star.

There is no *British* road to socialism and there is no future for the working class in the reformist programme and practice of the Communist Party of Britain.

Yours in comradeship  
Bernard Harper, Leicester

*of Lithuania to secede is being threatened by the economic blockade. We call for aid with no strings precisely to prevent the imperialists gaining a foothold.*

*We would oppose the provision of any aid which was linked to future investment and trade by the imperialists because we recognise that the only way to real independence for the workers of Lithuania is through an independent workers' state which means workers resisting the re-introduction of capitalism.*

*As to the question of arms supplies we stated quite clearly that "We oppose the use of force to break the blockade". Any military conflict between imperialism and the USSR would oblige us to defend the latter unconditionally. We do not call for arms to be supplied to Lithuania—they are not being requested and we are not advocating a Lithuanian insurrection against the USSR. However, in the situation of the Lithuanian working class defending their independence arms in hand against the tanks of the SAF then we could not oppose the sending or receipt of such arms.*

strengthens imperialism. What reason could the imperialists have in breaking the embargo if not to aid the forces of restoration and create a base to launch themselves at the heart of the Soviet Union?

We should be opposed to imperialists breaking the embargo, and we should call on Lithuanian workers not to call on the western governments to break the embargo, because to do so is to grant imperialism an entry into the region as a whole.

Yours  
David Holt

We reply:

*The position of Workers Power and the LRCI is quite clear. We are in favour of the international working class, led by the workers of the USSR, breaking the Moscow blockade. As we wrote "it is the workers' movement that must give solidarity to Lithuania".*

*We do not call on the imperialists to "break the blockade", but call for aid without strings to be given in a situation where the right*

# Arms and Lithuania

Dear Workers Power,

In your last paper the article on Lithuania mistakenly calls on the British government to "... supply goods requested by Lithuania without conditions."

Firstly, at a time when Russia is blockading Lithuania this call must be a demand on the imperialists to break the blockade. Secondly any goods without conditions must be presumed to include arms as the government has declared its intention of setting up its own standing army.

This mistake stems from treating the right of Lithuania to independence in the abstract. Of course revolutionaries should support Lithuania's right of secession on its own terms and at its own pace, but simultaneously and most importantly this means fighting to prevent this happening on the basis of the restoration of capitalism. First and foremost demands should be placed on the international working class.

Demanding the imperialists break the Russian blockade

# workers power

## Chris Brind & Workers Power

**CARDIFF**  
Public Meeting  
*The Poll Tax and how to fight it*  
7-30 Thursday 14 June  
Hotel Diplomat, nr Central Station

**MANCHESTER**  
Debate with Socialist Organiser  
*The crisis of Stalinism and the tasks of revolutionaries*  
7-30 Thursday 14 June  
Town Hall

## Meetings this month

**SHEFFIELD**  
Debate with Socialist Organiser  
*The crisis of Stalinism and the tasks of revolutionaries*  
7-30 Wednesday 13 June  
See seller for venue

**CENTRAL LONDON**  
Public Meeting  
*What is the USSR?: Trotskyism versus bureaucratic collectivism*  
7-30 Friday 8 June  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, nr Holborn Tube

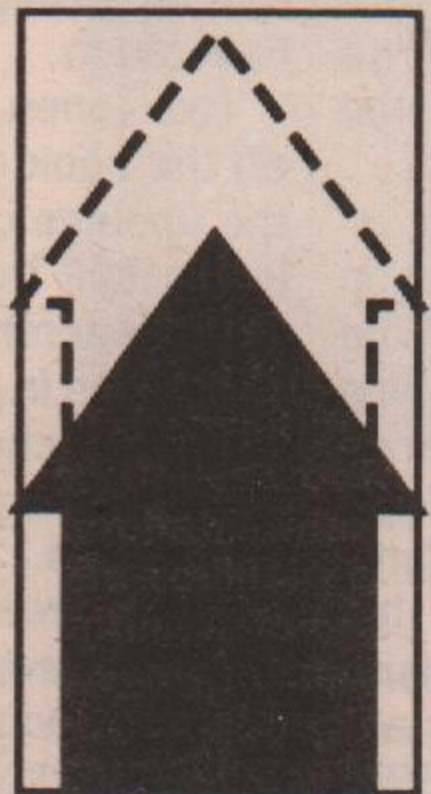
WORKERS POWER has severed all political links with Chris Brind, a former supporter of our organisation in Manchester. We are taking the unusual step of publicising our exclusion of him from the ranks of our supporters because of the actions he has taken against us.

First, he engaged in a malicious slander campaign against us; second he deserted other Workers Power supporters in the midst of a witch-hunt against them by the Labour bureaucracy; third, to add injury to insult, he has refused to return a word processor entrusted to his care, which is the property of Workers Power supporters in Manchester.

We have no "political differences" with Brind nor he with us. Rather, what has separated us is his breach of elementary working class solidarity in the face of a right wing attack and of working class morality, namely his theft of the collectively owned property of our supporters

Workers Power Political C'ttee

## Fighting Fund



**£18,881**

Thanks this month to a Sheffield supporter £100, a Derbyshire miner £10, South London reader £200, back pay from a Birmingham supporter £150, North London reader £5, and £20 from a Leicester reader.

## SUBSCRIBE!

Make sure you get your copy of Workers Power each month. Take out a subscription now. Other English language publications of the LRCI are available on subscription too.

I would like to subscribe to	
Workers Power	£6 for 12 issues (UK) Europe £8-60, outside Europe £10
Class Struggle	£8 for 10 issues
Permanent Revolution	£6 for 3 issues
Trotskyist International	£3 for 3 issues

I would like to know more about the Workers Power Group and the LRCI

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:  
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX

Name: .....

Address: .....

..... Trade union .....

# WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

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

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Workers power

## INSIDE

- Women in East Germany
- Trotsky on the Labour Party
- Poll Tax conference

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

# TURN THE HEAT ON THE TORIES

**THE TORIES and their servile press claim Thatcher has turned the corner. Gone is the talk of mid-term blues. Heseltine's leadership challenge appears to have been put on ice. Thatcher is back on course for a fourth general election victory.**

To "prove" that this rosy picture bears some resemblance to reality Kenneth Baker, the new minister for slime, pointed to the local election results. Because the Tories didn't get hammered quite as badly as some polls predicted the press decided Thatcher had "won".

Following this came a new round of polls showing a reduction of Labour's lead to around 15%. This is being touted as the basis for a big Tory recovery—big enough to win a snap general election in June 1991. Best expressed in Murdoch's *Sunday Times*, this scenario is a piece of pure media hype designed to launch Baker's "Summer Heat on Labour" campaign.

The basis for these Tory dreams of a Thatcher recovery is her decision to allow Britain to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in early summer and to grant concessions on the Poll Tax. Joining the ERM is supposed to curb inflation, allow interest rates to fall, soften the impact of the Poll Tax and thus win back the home owners to the Tory fold.

But all the signals are that no magical improvement in economic conditions is going to pull the Tories' coals out of the fire.

Inflation will certainly cross the 10% barrier by the autumn. There is no prospect of pulling down interest rates in the foreseeable future. Unemployment is not only rising again but spreading to the south east as service industries, construction and retailing are hit by the credit squeeze.

Even if the Tories dish out £3 billion on Poll Tax sweet-

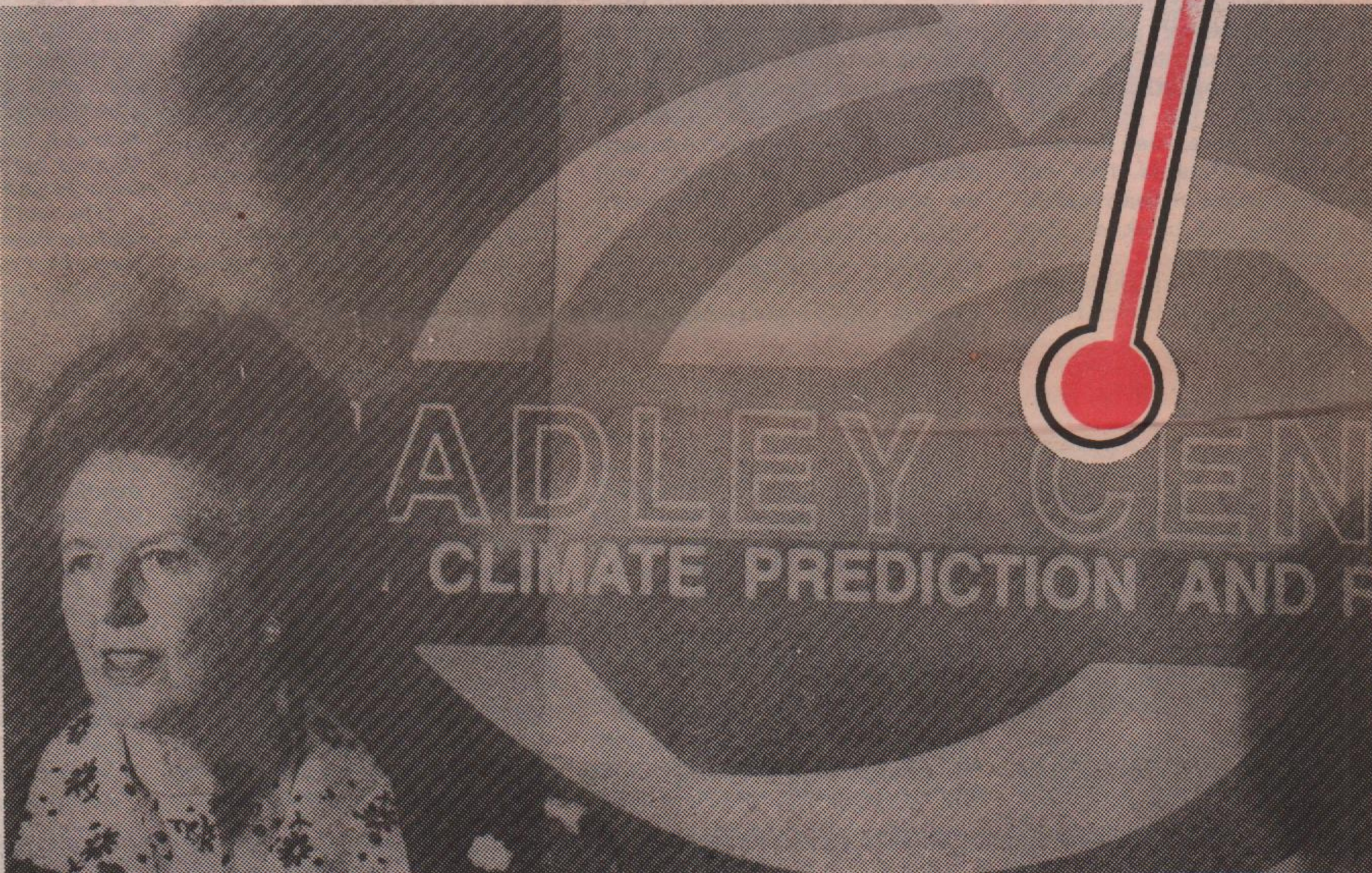
eners the pain of the Poll Tax will not be so easily soothed for traditional Tory voters. And if Thatcher spends all available resources on the Poll Tax she will have no leeway for any expenditure on health, education, the infrastructure, the environment or income tax cuts.

The Tories' economic dol-drums are rooted in the failure of the whole neo-liberal Thatcherite project to rejuvenate the British economy. Whilst industry has become leaner and fitter, the leanness remains while the fitness is only a passing phase. The recent slowing down in the rate of growth of Britain's manufacturing exports and a growing surge in imports signals the underlying weakness of the British economy.

Thatcher's room for manoeuvre is still very limited. What really lies behind the new bravado from Baker is that, having staved off Heseltine's challenge, the Tories can now divert attention from their own difficulties towards what they see as Labour's weaknesses. A direct fight with Labour is now on.

To meet this challenge Labour has adopted a set of policies that owes more to the old Owenite SDP programme and Heseltine's one nation Toryism than to any brand of "socialism". The new pre-election manifesto is aimed at winning back the skilled workers and lower middle-class who voted Tory in the last three elections.

Surely, many socialists and



militants will say, Labour will not attract working class votes for such a vacuous programme. Yet the opinion polls, the council elections and the Bootle by-election signal otherwise.

Millions of workers identify with Labour as their party, linked, despite the recent downplaying of this, to the unions and likely to protect or extend the basic conquests they have made.

Due to the defeats of the Thatcher years most workers do not expect a massive or even a significant batch of reforms from a Labour government. Rather they hope for an end to the Tory attacks on local government, union rights, the health and education services.

Basic anti-Tory feeling, fuelled by the Poll Tax, inflation and mortgage rises which have all eaten up the tax cuts, is mounting. This has spread to sections of the

working class and middle class that deserted Labour in 1978-79 and stayed with Thatcher through the 1980s.

The Poll Tax struggle was the lightning conductor which brought down all this resentment on the Tories' heads.

But this was not thanks to Labour's pathetic campaign. The official labour movement did next to nothing as the Tories drove through the tax. Only the mass non-payment campaign and the militant street demonstrations against the tax focused the mass hatred.

It was this momentary rebirth of mass direct action and the fear of worse to come that had the whole ruling class in a panic. It opened the road to Heseltine's leadership move in the Tory Party. It forced Thatcher and her inner circle into promising major changes in the tax and imminent entry into the ERM. For a week or two the Tories

tottered. But they recovered. How? Thanks to the outright treachery or the weakness of the leaders of the official labour movement.

The Labour leadership responded to the mass demonstrations of anger by turning its fire not on the Tories but on the anti-Poll Tax activists. Kinnock's witch-hunting Organisation Committee warned all party members against having anything to do with the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

The Tories have been let off the hook once again. Yet the upsurge of anti-Tory feeling is still there. With decisive leadership it could be unleashed in a raging torrent of mass action, defiance of the Poll Tax, demonstrations and strikes.

This torrent could sweep the Tories away. Any triumphs for mass action—a humiliating climb-down on the Poll Tax, the premature retirement

of Thatcher, a forced general election—would strengthen the forces in the workers' movement who want to fight capitalism rather than collaborate with it.

Given the present leadership of the labour movement this is not the most likely outcome.

But a "hot summer" for Thatcher would at one and the same time put paid to all hopes of a Tory recovery and re-educate the ranks of the labour movement so that it will be difficult for Kinnock to continue with his job of stifling all working class demands and aspirations.

A Labour government brought to power on the crest of a wave of class struggle would be far more open to exposure for its betrayals. The wretched reformist leadership would be vulnerable in the extreme.

For all these reasons the task this summer is not to bow down before Kinnock's electioneering, but to turn the heat on the Tories. ■

## DON'T WAIT FOR LABOUR!