

[illegible]

A black and white photograph capturing a large-scale student demonstration. In the foreground, a young man stands on the left, shouting through a megaphone. Behind him, a dense crowd of students holds up a long, prominent banner that reads "CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EDUCATION" and "STOP TUITION FEES". The banner features the logo of the Campaign for Free Education (cfe) on the right side. Above the main banner, many individuals hold smaller protest signs. These signs carry various messages such as "Stop tuition fees!", "End Student Debt!", "Education needs funding!", "USSF", "AXE THE GRAD TAX", "STUFF TUTION FEES", and "FOR ALL". Some signs also mention "CAMPUS FOR DAY". The background shows a city street with multi-story buildings featuring numerous windows. The overall atmosphere is one of active civil disobedience or public expression of dissent against higher education costs.

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Who will stop Blair?

IT'S not just student grants and tuition fees. Blair is continuing or worsening Tory policies on everything essential — on trade union rights, on the health service, on education, on privatisation, on welfare. New Labour's only significant promise of anything better than the Tories — the minimum wage — has become a dim, loophole-filled, low-level prospect for some years in the future.

Some Labour and trade union activists are still willing to forgive all this and hope for better from the government. After 18 years of battering from the Tories, they like to feel they are "on the winning side". Tony Blair is on the winning side, for now: but the working class is not, and will not be until the trade unions stop shelving or trashing their own policies in deference to Blair.

When Blair does what the Tories dared not do, who will stop him? What will it take to turn things round?

Sooner or later — with more or less clarity and urgency, depending on what socialists do now — rank and file workers will push the unions to assert themselves politically, to fight for the policies they already have (on the welfare state, on the minimum wage, on renationalisation), to hammer out new policies in workers' interests, and to get working-class representatives into Parliament.

Stalin famously asked, during World War 2: "How many divisions has the Pope?" Tony Blair is the "infallible" Pope of the labour movement for now, but the hard core of convinced Blairites is very small. He has few "divisions" of well-drilled troops. As soon as the ranks of the working class move on a large scale, the government will be seen to be much more vulnerable to pressure — from our side as well as from the City and Rupert Murdoch — than it appears now.

That is why Blair wants to insulate New Labour from trade-union pressure. He has turned the row about the £1 million donation from Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone to his advantage, by using it to boost his plans for state finance for political parties and legal limits on party spending — plans which would enable New Labour to distance itself further from union cash and union influence.

Blair, like Thatcher, depends on imposing the idea that There Is No Alternative — no alternative to capitalist market economics, no alternative to cuts, no alternative to an increased squeeze on labour to make profits. Yet there is an alternative. Production can be organised for need, not profit. Social wealth can be owned and controlled democratically, not by a handful of profiteers and speculators. Health care, education, and homes for all can be made the

priority, rather than extra luxuries for the rich.

The polls show 93% approval for Blair; but they also show that 76% believe there is a class struggle in Britain, 87% think the gap between rich and poor is too wide, and 72% want better public services even if that means paying more taxes (the poll didn't allow the option of taxing only the rich). Workers have not become enthusiasts for the Thatcher-Blairite line of Profit Before All Else!

Socialists can help the revival of working-class struggle come more quickly and sharply by arguing the case *for a workers' government*. The workers are the majority: we need not and should not limit our aims to petitioning a "pro-business" government for concessions. The trade unions should assert themselves politically and fight for labour representation.

When the unions are roused from their present defeatism, they could launch a Labour Representation movement, an organised power bloc within the Labour

Party. If "New Labour" leaders nevertheless stay on a Tory course, that Labour Representation movement could be the core of a new workers' party based on the trade unions. The first step is a determined struggle inside the existing labour movement.

The fight is starting around issues like the Emergency Plan to Rebuild the Welfare State; for tax-

ing the rich; for free trade unions; for free education; and around broad campaigns like the Welfare State Network, the Campaign for Free Trade Unions, and the Campaign for Free Education. The job of a Marxist organisation like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is to make the links between those immediate demands, the general approach of fighting to impose "the political economy of the working class" against the priorities of profit, and the political aim of a workers' government.

"Socialists can help the revival of working-class struggle come more quickly and sharply by arguing the case for a workers' government."

Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser



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Ireland's peace process

THESE ARE early days yet, but, the fact that "peace talks" over the future of Northern Ireland are happening at all is greatly encouraging. Even the split in the IRA/Sinn Féin is encouraging. It is evidence that the people around Gerry Adams are seriously trying to find a way to call off the war they launched 26 years ago. An IRA/Sinn Féin split, if the leaders went for "peace", was a certainty. The only thing in question was how big a split, and what effect its animosities would have on the prospects for peace.

It is unlikely that the splintering process is at an end. More patient people, who will nevertheless not, at the end of the day, accept a peace settlement short of a united Ireland, wait to see what happens.

Therein lies the danger. For Adams and his friends will not be able to negotiate a deal that will give them any of the fundamental things they have fought for. What they can hope for was formulated in the February 1995 London-Dublin consultation document: restored Belfast self rule — it was abolished after 50 years in March 1972 — but this time with Catholic-Protestant powersharing; and a Council of Ireland to link the Dublin and Belfast Parliaments.

If the IRA/Sinn Féin leaders settle for this, there will be a new hard-line Republican backlash against them, and probably a sizeable one. At some point, the Adams group will have to decide to go one way or the other, and, if they opt for peace, face a major split.

Thus the so-called "peace process" is a fragile thing that could break down suddenly. Its essential business is to organise the political surrender of the IRA.

Adams and his friends entered the first ceasefire in August 1994 with delusions that US and European Union pressure on Britain could be mobilised by Irish nationalists in Dublin, Belfast, Derry, and Washington so that Britain would coerce the Protestants into accepting the fundamental demands of the IRA. That was a pipe-dream, as Adams and others quickly found out. They can have no such illusions now. They deserve respect for having the courage to try, nonetheless, to find a negotiated way out of the political and military blind alley.

The Northern Ireland entity is untenable because of the massive Catholic-Nationalist-Republican minority it contains. In some key categories of young people, Catholics are already a majority. It is only a matter of time — and not much time — before there is a Catholic majority. Yet even when the Protestants have become the minority in the Six Counties, the Catholic-Protestant, Irish-British conflict of identity will still be there. It will, of course, be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Six Counties and Partition — a Unionist sub-state with a Catholic-Nationalist majority! But anybody who thinks the Protestant-Catholic conflict can then be laughed out of existence does not know Irish reality.

To pretend that the issues in Northern Ireland — no matter which community is the majority in the Six Counties and which the minority — can be reduced to the question of mere undifferentiated head-counting, is to ignore what is fundamental to the conflict there. Northern Ireland can not be made to work according to the majority/minority model of states where the citizens share a common national identity. It never worked according to that pattern. For 50 years it was a one-party Protestant sectarian dictatorship. Then it broke down.

Twenty-six years ago, the Provisional IRA launched a military campaign whose basic premise was the gross delusion that Northern Ireland was nothing more than "British-occupied Ireland". Hiding from themselves the reality that one million Irish people in Ireland were implacable opponents of Irish unity, they launched a war "against Britain" that inexorably turned into war on the Protestant Irish. Only the British Army has held the six-counties unit under one rule. Without that, intra-Irish civil war would have redrawn the political map of Ireland in blood.

The early Provos were an archaic hybrid political sect in the grip of many peculiar dogmas — "physical force" on principle to "drive out the British Crown forces", abstention from politics, and boycott, on principle, of the London, Belfast and Dublin parliaments. They made a principle and a fetish out of the gun and the bomb, recognising no other road to salvation but bloodshed and self-sacrifice. They began by a mis-conceived war that has proved futile and counterproductive. It has worked above all else to destroy the possibility of working-class reconciliation across the communal divide. Some of them, Adams in the lead, have learned from this experience.

But what a comment their present course is on all that has gone before, and on the entire sorry history of the Provisionals as a political force! Everything the IRA did pointed not to a united Ireland, not to something better in Northern Ireland, but to sectarian civil war.

The idea that progress in Ireland can be won by murdering Protestants — and that was for many years, the main substance of the war inside Northern Ireland — is deeply hostile to genuine Irish Republicanism. The root of democratic Irish Republicanism, of secular Irish politics, is the idea that the whole people of Ireland, Catholics and Protestants alike, are equal. Nothing on this earth has been more foreign to the Provisional IRA in the last 25 years than that idea!

We advocate working-class unity, but we have no simple solution. Certain things are clear, however. The Six Counties statelet is untenable. A broader framework, all-Ireland at least, is needed. Closer collaboration and maybe closer formal links between the independent Irish state and Britain would help ease things in northern Ireland towards a solution.

A federal Ireland, with minority rights of self-government for the Protestant-majority areas, is the only possible framework that could replace the present failed Six Counties entity. It will not cease to be necessary when the Catholic Nationalists become a majority in the Six Counties. It will remain the only solution to the conflict of identities that is likely still to exist. It is the only "constitutional settlement" that both Catholic and Protestant workers in Ireland could subscribe to, respecting each others' rights, and building working-class unity in the process.

In the period ahead, the serious left will use the heightened interest generated by the peace talks to promote discussion on Ireland in the labour movement — on British capitalism's long-term and ultimate responsibility, on the necessity for a real solution based on consistent democracy, and on ways the British labour movement can help promote Protestant-Catholic working-class unity in Ireland.

What is Workers' Liberty?

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty organises to fight the class struggle on all levels — trade-union and social battles, politics, and the combat of ideas. We are active in workplaces, in trade unions, in the Labour Party, in single-issue campaigns, in student unions, and in debates and discussions on the left, aiming to integrate all these activities into a coherent effort for socialism.

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex." Karl Marx

If you want to know more about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Yes to Europe-wide workers' unity!

SHOULD Britain sign up for the "euro" — the single European money — in 1999, in 2001 or in 2002? That is, assuming the "euro" goes ahead: even a moderate disturbance in the rickety regime of world capitalism could wreck all the various governments' careful projections for 1998.

There is not much for workers on either side of this debate. Whether there is one money-unit in Europe, or ten, or twenty, the basic problem remains that the wealthy classes have lots of money and we have very little.

Governments across Europe, including the supposedly left-wing governments of France and Italy, are cutting social security, pensions, and health spending and saying that they do this in order to fit their countries for the single-currency criteria. The process of getting the single currency is not bringing any joy to workers. Fudged and botched as this monetary union looks likely to be, it may also contribute to destructive economic imbalances and crises in future.

The British government's wish to stay out of monetary union for now — although the bosses' organisation, the CBI, is broadly in favour of the euro, and the TUC is positively enthusiastic — probably has little to do with such a long-term assessment. More likely, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown do not want to offend Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch, the notorious union-buster and sleaze-merchant, has said he broadly approves of Blair but has doubts on one issue: Europe. Blair and Brown are scared of turning those doubts into open opposition.

Rupert Murdoch did not have a vote in the general election. But he has more say in what the government does than a million, or even ten million, voters... That is modern capitalist democracy. The voters chose a government and Big Money decides what the government does.

As you might expect from a choice pushed by Murdoch, New Labour's choice to say "not yet" to the euro has not lessened their zeal for "hard choices" at the expense of the poor. None of the main opponents of monetary union in Britain — neither the Europhobe wing of the Tory party, nor Rupert Murdoch's newspapers — represent anything better for the working class than the Euro-capitalists.

All other things being equal, a single European currency would represent some slight progress over different national currencies. In fact, the current process of creating a single currency, pushed through in the way it is now done by the people who are now doing it, cannot be supported by workers and socialists. Neither can the opposition to the process.

Let the bosses debate among themselves how many currencies they need. Whatever they decide, Europe-wide workers' unity will be indispensable for resisting them. This unity could be created around demands for social "levelling-up" across Europe, for a shorter working week without loss of pay and with new workers taken on when the hours are cut, for democracy in Europe (control of the European Union by an elected parliament), and for a European workers' government.

October is ours!

EIGHTY years ago the working class, the wage slaves of Russia, rose in rebellion and seized state power there. They decided to try and build a society free from exploitation, a society in which the full, free development of each and every individual would be possible — a socialist society.

Having seized power, they held it in a long conflict with the old possessing and exploiting classes and their foreign allies. No less than 14 states invaded. The Russian workers acted as they did in the belief that they were only going on ahead, and that the working people of the more advanced countries of Europe would soon do as they did.

A year later, the workers of Germany rose and threw out their emperor, the Kaiser. But right-wing socialist leaders held control of the situation. They made peace with German capitalism. They killed the Communist workers' leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Unwittingly they thus laid the foundations for the eventual rise of the Hitler fascists.

The victorious Russian workers were and would remain isolated in conditions too backward for socialism. A new bureaucracy, led by Stalin, seized power from the workers and, over time, set up a savage system of totalitarian slavery for the peoples of Russia. This for reasons of their own, they continued to call "socialism" and communism.

Their system was carried on Russian bayonets to the countries of Eastern Europe and duplicated by Stalinist-led peasant armies in China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries. A sort of Stalinism exists today in China, Cuba, Vietnam. It was overthrown in Russia and Eastern Europe almost a decade ago.

But, although Stalinism in Europe is dead and rotten as a sys-

tem, elements of Stalinism continue to exist: it is in the interests of our bourgeois ruling class that they should exist. What still exists of Russian Stalinism? The gross Stalinist lie that Stalinism was Bolshevism and that Stalinist Russia was socialism. The lies of the Stalinists, about themselves and about socialism, are today preserved in the anti-socialist propaganda and mythology of the bourgeoisie. Stalinism was socialism, they insist. Stalinism was Marxism come to life. Stalinism invalidates the case for socialism.

In point of historical fact, Stalinism was the opposite of Bolshevism and of socialism. Stalin's "Communist" gangsters killed more socialists, Communists and Marxists than did Hitler's fascist gangsters. Stalinism destroyed labour movements. Stalinism systematically falsified and bowdlerised the key ideas of Marxism.

Serious scholars know all this. But, like the Stalinists before them, the propagandists of capitalism — including New Labour's leaders, quite a few of whom are ex-Stalinists — are not interested in truth. The central truth about the Bolsheviks is that they led the greatest liberating, people-empowering revolution in all history. That the Bolsheviks were defeated, that they "failed", is a matter of history. That they bore any responsibility for Stalinism — which in its rise butchered nearly all of them — is a foul lie. Socialists who do not understand that and explain it to a new generation of socialists will never be able to get their political bearings in the post-Stalinist world.

For ourselves, as Marxists we evaluate everything, including ourselves, and the history of socialism and the working class, critically. But we are proud to affirm our commitment to the memory of the October revolution and proud to proclaim our affinity with those who made, led, and fought for it.



Ferment in France

Saturday 1 November: We meet a comrade from the new revolutionary group lately established in France, Voix des Travailleurs, to talk about the subjects up for discussion at VDT's general meeting on Sunday. The meeting will consider a draft of a programme for revolutionary unity. As usual in France, the discussion is in a cafe over cups of coffee. It's a different culture from the British chat-in-a-pub. We comment on the draft's call for, "a democratic government of the workers and their organisations," an idea not heard from the French revolutionary left for many years. Yes, the comrade says, we've been re-reading Trotsky's writings on France from the 1930s and re-thinking a lot of issues.

Sunday 2 November: To the VDT meeting. Cause again to reflect that British revolutionaries could learn a lot from the French in political culture and ways of doing things. Seven revolutionary groups (including the AWL) have been invited to send speakers. They all speak constructively and to the point, and the attention of the 150 activists packed into the meeting hall does not flag for the whole six hours of the meeting.

True, the three biggest French groups aren't there: the "mainstream" neo-Trotskyist LCR, Arlette Laguiller's organisation Lutte Ouvriere, and the "Lambertist" Parti des Travailleurs — though minorities from LO and LCR do attend. Yet the LCR and LO have a much better record of debating their ideas openly and honestly than do groups like the SWP and the Socialist Party/Militant in Britain, with their pretence that they alone are "the" socialists and that they need take no account of the ideas, activities, or even existence of other groups. Here, only the notoriously self-obsessed "Lambertists" have that approach.

The biggest debate at the meeting — as at so many other Trotskyist meetings for decades past! — is on the Russian Question. The draft is tentative on this question. "We have not found it necessary to modify the fundamental characterisation which Trotsky gave in his time of the state of Soviet society [as a "degenerated workers'

state"]... But the entry of Russia into the G7 (becoming G8) could well signify symbolically the liquidation of the little which may still survive from the transformations made by the revolution of 1917."

Some comrades are unhappy with the clear indication that VDT is on the way to dropping the "degenerated workers' state" position maintained for so many decades — and defended as an imperative "moral choice" — by Lutte Ouvriere, the movement from which the core of VDT was expelled earlier this year. Others, on the contrary, believe it is absurd to call Yeltsin's Russia any sort of workers' state. Both say that the "symbol" of G7 entry cannot be a decisive criterion. The meeting agrees to continue the discussion in writing.

The most interesting contribution, it seems to us, is from the minority faction of Lutte Ouvriere. Their speaker says that any proper revolutionary programme today must be based on analysis of three major developments since the classic works of Trotsky: the Second World War, the survival and expansion of Stalinism, and post-war capitalism.

Despite Lutte Ouvriere's tremendous merits in many fields — Arlette Laguiller got 1.6 million votes as their presidential candidate in 1995 — they have always insisted on keeping the basic scheme of the world from Trotsky's writings up to 1940 as the "frame" for all their analyses: the USSR is a degenerated workers' state, China and Eastern Europe are capitalist, imperialism makes any real economic development in the Third World impossible, etc. In discussions in the mid-1970s, one of their leaders explained it like this: Trotsky's writings educated a generation of militants. Since Trotsky's death the various neo-Trotskyists have added nothing but a pile of waste paper. The least we can do is avoid adding to the waste paper.

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 broke the frame. It seems to have set the comrades of the Faction rethinking on many issues, and helped to generate the tension inside LO which led to the expulsion of the comrades now in VDT.

Friday 7 November: To another meeting which indicates something of a ferment of ideas on the French left, and the possibility of some revolutionary unity or even moves towards a new class-struggle workers' party.

A dissident group of the Communist Party, the Gauche Communiste, is strong in the working-class suburb of Aubervilliers, northern Paris, and has invited various Trotskyist groups to join it on the platform at a meeting celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. The leaflet for the meeting carries a classic revolutionary photograph with Trotsky restored to the place from which, for years, he was painted out in versions circulated by the Communist Parties.

There are 350 people at the meeting, mostly political activists, we think. The atmosphere is very friendly and comradely. VDT's calls for revolutionary unity and a new workers' party get much applause — and there's also applause for criticisms of Lutte Ouvriere when the chair explains that they were invited but pulled out when they heard that VDT would be involved too.

The VDT speaker, Gerard Barthelemy, pulls no punches in his criticism of the Jospin government and the Communist Party's participation in it. The Gauche Communiste reply only that they think it better to be in a big party like the CP to promote the broad ideas of communism in the working class. Another Trotskyist speaker emphasises that Stalinism was the opposite of communism, and that the CPs' identification of "communism" with Stalinism caused immense harm. The Gauche Communiste do not try to deny this.

Many political debates remain to be resolved. Whether "anti-Maastrichtism" is a diversion, or should instead be central to left-wing agitation, is one of them. What's important, though, is that the possibilities of debating them seriously — and meanwhile organising joint action on the other issues where there is broad agreement — are better than for many years.

Carl Hornsey and Martin Thomas

Labour Party

Left must learn the lessons of defeat

THIS year's Labour Party Conference voted in favour of the Partnership in Power (PiP) proposals thereby effectively disaffiliating the Constituency Parties from the Party nationally and rendering the trade union link ineffective. How should the left respond?

The differences that emerged during the fight against PiP, on whether to oppose it on the grounds that it was anti-democratic or to tactically advocate a twelve-month delay in the vote to give more time for discussion, have now crystallised into new divisions.

Much of the debate has been about our approach to the new National Executive Committee. Banning MPs from standing in the Constituency Section for the NEC has created a new problem: who to stand instead of the Campaign Group of MPs slate? Alistair Ward, writing on the NEC slate in *Labour Left Briefing* argues: "...the priority is to unite all those who believe in a democratic Party based on links with the trade unions and policies to redistribute wealth in society. We must start... to plan a slate that wins backing from Labour Reform, the Campaign for Labour Democracy, the Labour Women's Action Committee and the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups."

But unity over a slate for the NEC requires a greater degree of commitment than unity over a single issue. Although it was perfectly possible to link up with Labour Reform and others over the battle against PiP, it will not be so easy to unite on a "left slate" as the core activists in Labour Reform agree with Blair's economic attacks on the working class.

Others argue in favour of building unity on political grounds, between the left in the Party and in the trade union movement whilst not isolating ourselves from other forces. Any alliances that are forged with the centre-ground in the Party must be based on specific issues. There is a problem with this. It is shooting ourselves in the foot to argue for unity on an across-the-board, self-styled "left" platform with people who do not share a commitment to the political independence of the working class and a socialist transformation of society.

Any "left unity" that falls short of this is born out of desperation to seek alliances with anyone and everyone, regardless of the real differences — for the sake of appearing bigger than your true forces.

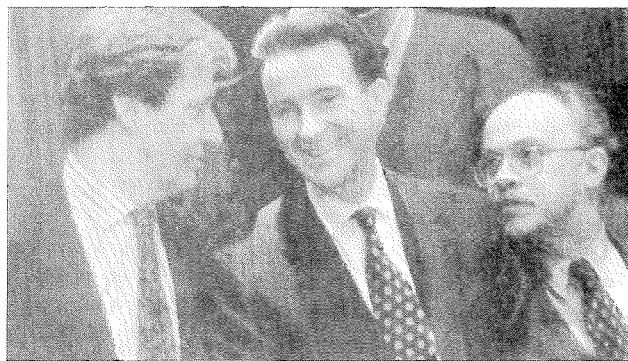
The same desperation led some in the anti-PiP campaign to over-inflate the threat that was posed to Blair's project — by the alliance between CLPD and Labour Reform.

For instance, Ken Livingstone, in an interview with *Labour Left Briefing*, suggested PiP had only been won because of shady deals and bullying from the Party machine, "If it hadn't been for incredible arm-twisting and brow beating of delegates — and a deal with the unions offering them much better legislation on trade union rights at work — they wouldn't have got PiP through." This is a very over-optimistic view of the strength of the left: "We could have had a spectacular defeat on each day of Conference — avoided only by traditional old Labour values... You could say that because of the strength of the left in the NEC elections there's been extra money for the NHS."

THE reality on Conference floor was different. The union leaders have signed up to a deal that offered Blair whatever he wanted in return for precisely nothing. Far from giving way on PiP to secure a reduction in the legal shackles around the unions, they are banking on the continuation of the anti-union laws to squash the demands of their own members. Edmonds and Morris are happy to avoid democratic debate in the Labour Party just as they want to avoid it in their unions. It will take an awful lot of sustained rank-and-file pressure in the unions to force them to actively oppose Blair.

There was little evidence of the need to bully CLP delegates either. Although nearly all the delegates I spoke to were unhappy at various aspects of the proposals, nearly all voted for the whole lot. A curious mixture of naivete and cynicism is at work inside the CLPs — cynicism about the ability of members to influence anything, and naivete that Blair et al have the working class best interests at heart, or at least those of Party members.

This is echoed throughout the labour movement. How many of us have attended union conferences where the leadership is defeated on policy after policy, and then



Mandelson and the spin doctors are in the ascendancy now. We need socialist ideas to defeat them.

overwhelmingly re-elected?

Partnership in Power has made that cynically naive relationship one of formal subordination. Winning the opinion of a majority of CLPs over any specific policy issue is no longer worth a hill of beans.

The battle over PiP was about Blair attempting to wall off the Labour Party from the struggles which are bound to appear between the Labour government and the working class. The left lost that battle. It therefore now becomes more crucial that work inside the Labour Party is related to the outside world. Any possibilities that arise for changing the Labour Party's structures, will do so out of pressure on the Party to change its policies.

When it comes to putting pressure on the Labour government to change policy, it's clear that Labour Party members are right at the back of the queue to be heard. But pressure will be put on the government in the coming years, not least because Blair, Brown et al have no solutions to the problems that beset the Tory government before them. When working-class tolerance with the Labour Government is pushed to the limit, (as it was in 1978-9) the task of the left must be to channel the emerging class anger into the labour movement, and not allow it to dissipate or, worse, to be used against the working class by the Tories in the way that Thatcher did in the early eighties.

We need to advance a clear and coherent socialist alternative in the Labour Party and the trade unions. To attract the most angry and active of class activists into the organised labour movement, we need to demonstrate that there are some forces inside the Party who are campaigning for the interests of the working class.

Allie Kemp

Letter to readers

DEAR FRIEND,

I want to apologise for the non-appearance of the October issue of *Workers' Liberty*. Instead we are publishing the first of two large volumes, under the title: *The fate of the Russian Revolution: lost texts of critical Marxism*. The first 500-page volume will appear in early December.

Our first intention was to publish a double October issue of *Workers' Liberty* to mark the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution. Then it "grew". Advanced socialist planning it isn't. We hope, nonetheless, that it will do something to bring socialist planning closer...

The "lost texts" are documents of "the other Trotskyists", the Workers' Party and Independent Socialist League. They split with Trotsky in April 1940, rejecting his policy of "unconditional defence of the Soviet Union", and thereafter evolved political positions on the key questions of Marxist theory in sharp distinction from the so-called "orthodox" or "official" Trotskyists. It has to be a matter of judgement and opinion, but we think Trotsky himself, had he lived a year or two longer, would not have been an "orthodox Trotskyist". He, like the Workers' Party, would have gone in the opposite direction.

The best known of Trotsky's writings on the USSR, after *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), is the collection *In Defence of Marxism*. But it is a one-sided, factionally-motivated selection of narrowly-focused polemical articles from part of his last period. This factionally bowdlerised "Trotsky" became the one most widely accepted after his death in August 1940, and ideas he was close to jettisoning became the foundation of what was "official" Trotskyism for fifty years.

By publishing these precious "lost texts" of "the other Trotskyists" we hope to help reshape the Marxist left and recreate a movement in Trotsky's real tradition. The one built by Trotsky's "official" epigones has, with the collapse of Stalinism, reached the end of its historical rope.

We think the publication of *The fate of the Russian Revolution* is an important event for the left, and not only in Britain. We hope you will think so too, and help us distribute it. We are also looking for financial assistance in the production of Volume II, which we hope to do not later than March, 1998. Please help us if you can.

Sean Matgamna

Living in the giving age

TRADER unions, single issue campaigns, millionaires and huge corporations have all made donations to Tony Blair's Labour Government. So have all kinds of ordinary folk. Up and down the country, from all walks of life, there have been inspiring stories of great sacrifice in the noble cause of our Young Country. Pensioners sending in a few pennies from their cold-weather payments, overworked nurses giving their last four pay increases, single mums their over-paid benefits and students their grant cheques.

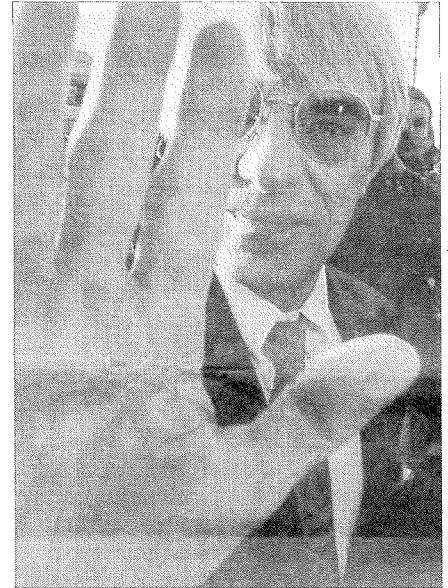
Acting swiftly in the spirit of public service, to ensure that there could be no hint of financial impropriety or political corruption, Tony Blair himself ensured that all the money collected for the government was transferred to the New Britain Millennium Dome Lottery Experience.

Instead of the old politics of interest groups and backroom lobbying, Tony wanted to put his very own stamp on the process of government. He decided to make tough political choices and govern by lottery.

So far, of the millions of people who have contributed, there have been no winners. But everyone who gave knew that, even with the best will in the world, you can't deliver miracles overnight. Since 1 May the union leaders have had no luck, nor the animal rights lobby, nor labour luvvies worried about the arms trade. And as for the rest, well, as we said you can't expect miracles...

Until now, that is. Because this month we can announce the first big winner — Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone! Bernie, known to his friends as "Smokey", has got all his numbers right. That means his biggest wish comes true. There will be no ban on cigarette advertising in his sport. Bernie got the bonus ball as well, which means that his £1 million entrance fee is refunded in full.

Amazingly Bernie's win comes just hours after Labour's Lottery officials had denied that he had even bought a ticket and had warned that he may sue if anyone



Don't be shy, Smokey, you're a winner!

suggested otherwise. Bernie commented: "I can't believe it! I was always a winner under Maggie, who liked a good smoke, but I just bought a ticket for this New Labour lottery on the off-chance. It's fumetastic! It just shows, you don't have to be a traditional cloth-cap Labour supporter to be a winner with this government."

The real shock news, though, is that the biggest winner of all could be the government! They plan to introduce legislation to allow all citizens to take part in the lottery — whether they like it or not. To ensure that there can be no hint of political parties being *bought* for cash, everyone will be asked to give them free cash. No strings.

Minister without accountability Peter Mandelson explained the launch of this bold new moral crusade, saying that the voters had had enough of lurid allegations about Mr Ecclestone and the Labour Minister's husband who helped him pick the right numbers. "It's a cheap smokescreen from the Sleazy Tories to suggest that this government can be bought for £1 million! We simply acted on our understanding of the realities of global capitalism. There was never any suggestion of any fee being involved." insisted Mr Mandelson.

Rachael Pitts

Symposium:

Socialists and the single currency



Whether or not Britain signs up to the single European currency and what it will mean for the working class has been a contentious debate on the left. Alan McArthur canvassed some left opinions.

Michael Hindley: By 2002, there won't be a single European currency project at all. They will have to give up on it because it is economically, financially and monetarily unrealistic and because of the continued ground swell of public opposi-

"Public opposition will defeat EMU"

tion to the social budget cuts needed to fulfil the Maastricht criteria.

It is good that Labour have not taken us straight in. Gordon Brown is leaving his options open. He has made the Bank of England independent. He's running the economy according to the Maastricht criteria, so that at a later stage we would qualify.

The left needs to consolidate around a few core issues which we all agree upon, like full employment and a commitment to increasing social welfare. Those things can unite large numbers of people and give a

political lead.

There is a better chance now than ever been of making a European link. We must say we want a different kind of Europe. There is not a national solution. It has to be a world-wide solution, but Europe's a good enough place to start. There has been considerable sympathy with striking French lorry drivers. There is a ripening of international solidarity.

I'm in favour of stabilising Europe politically and economically — but you can't do that on the basis of an unelected Commission. The left has always operated within constitutions which are not of its making. It's the old idea about, "Parliamentary opposition or not?" You do both. The EU cannot just be transformed into a progressive body, as some on the ultra-left think, but it's not entirely hopeless.

We have to challenge the idea that Europe is in competition with Asia and North America. This idea is used to drive down social standards in the name of competition. We have to argue for co-operative rather than competitive economics.

There's nothing wrong with nation states agreeing to reflate their economies rather than deflate them. There's nothing wrong with common action. Rather than to cut inflation to within one percent of the best performer we can cut unemployment to within one percent of the best performer.

We also need to think about peace. NATO's high defence expenditure was based on the alleged threat from the East. That's gone. NATO has made a magical transformation from an organisation that logically, should be wound up, to being uncritically accepted by large sections of the British left. We should talk about security through economic security rather than military defences.

● *Michael Hindley is MEP for Lancashire South.*

"We need workers unity"

Christine Blower: The government have looked rather foolish by being so cagey about their position. They are trying not to alienate anybody. Their whole strategy is to do with being re-elected. It's a devastating strategy, and not just on Europe. If they don't raise taxes — which relates to the convergence criteria for the single currency — by the time of the next election there could be nothing left for the Labour Party to defend.



John Monks, the TUC General Secretary, came to an NUT Executive to outline their position. He was unable to say what their stand is on the convergence criteria. All he said was that we are more in a position to influence things if we go in at an earlier stage.

I would like to see more genuine movements of workers across Europe. I'd like to see a socialist Europe. We ought, at a pan-European level, to be engaging with workers in Europe to

ensure that the convergence criteria don't militate against the working class and against public services.

That's easier said than done. Even in teaching it's very hard to work at a European level because the arrangements for teaching in various European countries are very different. There is also the language barrier.

There aren't any real links between the NUT, or rank and file structures, and teaching unions in Europe. Individuals have links. At a formal level there are very few links between the left.

I'd like to see pan-European political structures which are socialist — or more social democratic than not. There's no sense in which our government is socialist. Tony Blair shouting at Lionel Jospin about the French lorry drivers' strike is a fine indication of that.

We need to work together in our unions to discuss the pressure we can bring to bear at a Europe-wide government level. We need proportional representation — but not the sort of system that Labour have proposed. I want to know who I'm voting for.

● *Christine Blower is President of the National Union of Teachers.*

"We can't reform the EU"

Tony Benn: The main story was not that the decision had been taken not to join the single currency for five years but that the cabinet had decided — or the Prime Minister and the Chancellor had decided — that we should join the single currency.



What is now happening is a softening-up process, persuading people that this is inevitable and desirable, and building a coalition across the three parties — certainly Kenneth Clarke, Paddy Ashdown and New Labour. A sort of semi-national

coalition is being set up to persuade people that we should hand over the control of our economy to unelected bankers.

In a capitalist society elected governments don't actually control the economy, but they do decide how they will react to particular situations. The basic question for socialists is: do you think the vote has any importance or not? If you believe that capitalism runs the world anyway and it doesn't matter who is in charge politically, then obviously you don't care whether it is run by British capitalists, European capitalists, American capitalists...

I don't take that view. The history of

the British labour movement has been one of organising outside parliament then using the vote to bring about changes in the law inside parliament. Anyone who says it doesn't matter whether there is control by bankers in Frankfurt or by a government we elect is making a nonsense of Mandela, the Chartists, the Suffragettes and all those who have fought for the vote.

To get a United States of Europe you'd have to abolish the Commission and the Central Bank, tear up the Treaty of Rome. To present it as if you could democratise the European Union as it is absurd, because the Treaty of Rome commits Europe to capitalism. The free movement of capital and labour is what it is about. You cannot amend a constitution in which capitalism is entrenched.

Trotsky dreamed that one day you'd have a revolution across the world. It's a marvellous dream — but do you do nothing about it where you live now? I think that the control of the countries of Europe by unelected bodies takes away democracy from the French, German, Spanish, British and Greek workers and so on. I think that the left should mobilise to stop that happening — and then build proper European co-operation.

We should build international support for a Commonwealth of Europe where you harmonise your policies by agreement, at your own pace, according to your own democracy.

I think there is a very powerful movement in the working class in Europe against the single currency and European Union. Those are my natural allies.

It is a great mistake for Trotskyists to pretend that because Trotsky said we want a socialist United States of Europe that any sort of control of Europe is better. It isn't. We've seen in America that being the United States of America doesn't advance socialism necessarily. Socialism is advanced by people campaigning nationally and working internationally.

The government are in favour of the single currency because capitalism requires a one-party state, like communism. In Russia you had a central committee and commissars, neither of which were elected. In Brussels you have an unelected central bank and unelected commissioners. In capitalism and communism you're allowed to choose who runs the system but you're not allowed to change it. Any sensible socialist would see in the one party state in a federal Europe a deadly threat to everything they believe in: full employment, trade union rights, health and education, pensions.

● Tony Benn is MP for Chesterfield.

"Democracy does not work between nation states"

John Boyd: Gordon Brown's statement on the single currency makes the next general election the key event for people to make a decision on monetary union. It upstages any subsequent referendum. The Tory Party is now against the single currency and the Labour government for it. This places the electorate in a difficult position, particularly as, as the *Economist* has pointed out, 40 percent more people are against the European Union than are for it.

We need a broad campaign against the single currency which those in the labour movement who oppose EMU can take part in. We [the Campaign Against Euro-Federalism] take our example from the campaigns in Denmark and Norway, where the No to EMU movements are very broad. That doesn't mean you have to go round hob-nobbing with Tories.

If necessary, I would share a platform with a Tory. We all live in the same nation therefore we all have the same problem. It doesn't mean abandoning class principles.

The principles at stake are the right of nations to self-determination and national democracy. If you go into economic and monetary union you give that up. Internationalism is the right to self-determination of nations and national democracy. Proletarian internationalism is a different thing.

The whole object of the European Union is for transnational corporations, banks and big capital to do away with nation states and the powers they have to control capital. It is a direct assault on democracy. The TUC is the conduit used to pass EU policies and the Commission's decisions back through the labour movement. That is why the TUC and the CBI are hand in glove

A dangerous element of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union that has been paid little attention is the Common Foreign Security Policy. The EU is imperialist. It wants a European army, not only to suppress resistance around the European Union but to go marching once again around the Third World and exploiting it. That's why they want Eurofighters and nuclear weapons.

The National Health Service is funded out of our pockets. Why should we hand money from that to another country?

You don't have to all combine together as workers in a superstate to oppose cuts in welfare where that superstate is designed for big capital.

In individual nations, if we have self-determination, we have the right to debate, decide and struggle for socialism. We cannot do that across Europe. Democracy does not work between nation states; it only works within them. How can democracy work between fifteen different countries with completely different economies, histories, cultures, languages and so on?

● John Boyd is a spokesperson for the Campaign Against Euro-Federalism.



"What sort of economic union?"

Maria Exall: Labour getting itself into a mess about EMU is symptomatic of their general approach to financial policy. They are working within a framework inherited from the Tories. Their only criteria is: what is good for British business? British business, on the whole, wants to go into the single currency but avoid any immediate depressive consequences. The government want to avoid the political consequences of immediate entry, too, of the strict criteria.

In principle, I'm obviously not against using the same money as people in France and Germany. That's not the issue. The issue is what sort of economic union. I want to see pan-European economic policies in the interests of working-class people. We need a levelling up of social provision across Europe. We need solidarity between the working class of all countries.

Maastricht is just one tool for the ruling class across Europe to attack living standards and welfare provision. It's the capitalist consensus of the moment. If their drive to reduce standards and conditions didn't express itself this way it would find expression some other way. We need to unite with others to say why the criteria are wrong and to organise against them like any other attack.

We need to link up with trade unionists across Europe and fight for a levelling up. This will mean a real fight. Those people in the unions and TUC who see European legislation as some sort of automatic panacea for all ills are extremely naive.

The TUC seem to think that you have either American-style unions or European — particularly German — style unions. They see the German model as social welfare that works. It's part of their business unionism approach, which Europe encourages more than America. They think a prosperous market economy means a bigger share of the cake for the workers, that we are all Partners in Progress as they put it. It's based on a fallacy. Even if it weren't, it's a very impoverished view of the world.

There are some formal links between the CWU and communications unions in Europe but it's all very, very bureaucra-

tised. The CWU Broad Left has invited over representatives of French telecoms workers. We need much more of this. There are privatisation threats across Europe, too. Our interests, even in very immediate terms, are directly the same.

More or less the same principle applies to the political institutions of the EU as to British political institutions. They are even less democratic — incredibly so,

undoubtedly — and more remote, but no more remote just because they happen to be across the Channel, though that is clearly how it seems to many people. We need to democratise the institutions. We need to raise the workers' voice in them.

It's a question of Their Europe or Ours? The single currency is their form of integration. We need to say what you could do if, rather than pan-European cuts through the Maastricht criteria, you had pan-European public spending. Not just a few roads in Ireland — but, just as we raise similar demands on a national level, taxing the European rich for a European welfare state. The main thing is the need for a European integration of the workers. We should govern Europe, not the bosses and their unelected institutions.

● *Maria Exall is a member of the Communication Workers' Union National Executive.*

Strasbourg four, Millbank nil

THE attempt by the New Labour apparatus to prevent four Labour MEPs from speaking out against Labour's undemocratic plans for elections to the European Parliament has failed. The MEPs — Ken Coates, Alex Falconer, Michael Hindley and Hugh Kerr — had a gagging order lifted at a meeting of the European Parliamentary Labour Party on 11 November. They will now be allowed to comment on the Party's plans to introduce a centrally controlled "closed list system" for selecting European parliamentary candidates.

"This is a victory for free speech. We have asserted our right to speak out and we have not had to change our positions," said Hugh Kerr MEP.

The entire episode has been a serious public relations defeat for the leadership who have wanted to take on the left MEPs since 1995 when Ken Coates, Alex Falconer and Stan Newens succeeded in getting 31 of their colleagues to sign a statement in support of the old Clause Four.

Blair and General Secretary Tom Sawyer have behaved in a particularly cowardly way over the entire affair. It is inconceivable that they were not behind the original gagging order, yet they have tried to distance themselves from it's failed implementation. Both are now hinting that the real culprit was European Parliamentary Labour Party leader Wayne David. In true Stalinist style they are setting up a hapless nonentity as the fall guy. A purge of the European leadership seems inevitable. The question still remains whether or not any Millbank appointee will be able to control the existing group of MEPs?

Blair has always had a problem with the European Labour Party. It's members are not as directly dependent on patronage from the central party apparatus. The inter-

national multi-party character of the parliament, means that left MEPs can rely on cross-European support for initiatives that would never be tolerated by the bosses who run the "Mother of Parliaments". Coates has been a major thorn in the Blairites side because he has been able to mobilise the left in the European Parliament on the issue of full employment: anathema to the born-again Thatcherites of New Labour, but more popular with representatives from countries where the working class is in stronger position than Britain (most of Europe.)

The independance of the European Party is the real issue behind the attempted gag. The "closed list" system of PR, which the Blairites want, would take away the right of electors to those who to represent them and be given to the party machines. The electors would only be able to vote for a party name. The numbers of seats would then be distributed according to the actual percentage of votes cast, while the actual MEPs would be chosen by Party HQ.

The only sort of list system that is remotely defensible on democratic grounds is an "open" one in which a full list of candidates is printed and the voters mark their preference for one candidate or another. Blair opposes this, of course, because the Labour Party voters are to the left of him and could well prioritise MEPs who speak up for "Old Labour" causes.

As Ken Coates told *Workers' Liberty* "The real issue here, is not the democratic rights of poor old Ken Coates, or my comrades, it is the monumental assault on the right of the citizenry to exercise any form of control over their supposedly 'elected' representatives. We will continue to fight on this great issue of principle and will not be silenced."

Tom Rigby

Isaiah Berlin: Ideas for the weary

"Even when he talks nonsense, he earns our indulgence by telling it in an engaging and attractive way. The disciples repeat the nonsense, and fail to make it attractive." (EH Carr on Isaiah Berlin.)

*"With my heart in my mouth I had set out what I meant — wait for it — by stakeholding. I explained that the whole conception was to try and internalise pluralist values in the warp and woof of capitalism." (Will Hutton, a disciple of Berlin, *The Observer* 9 November 1997.)*

ISAIAH Berlin, who died at the age of 87 this month, was an influential historian of ideas whose main contribution was to reduce history to a series of accidents punctuated by the intentions of influential people. Too often these were bad people (Stalin, Napoleon, Hitler.)

Berlin was a liberal humanist. His view of history denied there could be any lawfulness to historical processes. Feudalism did not give birth to capitalism; capitalism could not give birth to socialism. Such a view has its attractions. It elevated free will to a privileged status in the historical process.

Berlin's adopted country was Britain. His adopted class was the ruling class. He was part of a wave of émigré intellectuals who came to Britain and the USA between the wars. Many were fleeing fascism, some were fleeing Stalinism. They were gifted and often erudite in the philosophical traditions that Marx and Engels rested on.

When they met the bourgeois intelligentsia of their host countries they found a world view that was literally exhausted. After half a century of catastrophes, with the world on the verge of a Cold War, these intellectuals wanted a new way to criticise their notion of Marxism and socialism.

Stalinism and fascism were described as variations on the same theme — the totalitarian society. Totalitarian societies were societies in which men had gone against the grain of human nature and tried to impose historical laws by using the power of the state and if necessary terror, attempts to push a messy, chaotic humanity into ordered systems. "Left" totalitarians would claim their historical laws demanded liberty, equality and fraternity. Right totalitarians would claim their laws demanded order, hierarchy and obedience.

Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper tried to blame Marx and Hegel for such a view of history. They claimed that if such laws were ever acted upon they would, whatever the intention, lead to a totalitarian society. So, the roots of the catastrophes of the 20th century were in ideas that underlay Marx's critique of capitalism, not capitalism itself! You have to be very exhausted to swallow ideas like this. But in times of uncertainty and decline — times such as the present — there is a market for such ideas.

This cannot excuse the nonsense that Berlin's disciple, Will Hutton comes out with. This influential writer, for quite honourable intentions, wants to weave bits of humanity into the anti-human process of capital accumulation. One may as well try to group a garden between the revolving cogs of a machine.

Paul Cooper

Australia: Third Party leader joins Labor

CHERYL Kernot, leader of Australia's "third party" opposition to both the ruling Liberal-National coalition and the Labor Party, has resigned from her party and joined Labor. She also resigned her seat in the Senate (upper house) and became the Labor candidate for a Liberal-held marginal seat in the lower house.

She said the Howard government was so disastrous that she could no longer maintain a stance of indifference as to whether the Coalition or Labor formed the next government. She wanted to help defeat the Howard government at the next election.

It cannot be bad that a leading exponent of middle-class "plague on both houses" politics is now saying that being agnostic on the question of Labor is untenable. A poll taken fairly soon after Kernot's defection showed a huge swing to Labor (enough to regain government) at the expense of all other parties, including Pauline Hanson's racist One Nation party, which had attracted many former Democrat voters.

Kernot went to a Labor Party meeting in her chosen electorate of Dickson and received what appeared to be a warm welcome. She offered to brief ALP members on her negotiations with the government over the Industrial Relations Bill, acknowledged that some ALP members might have reservations about her because of this issue (the Democrats eventually used their swing vote in the Senate to let the legislation through with some amendments). The ALP rule requiring three years' membership for parliamentary candidates was waived in short order.

Apart from the industrial relations

law issue, reservations about Kernot from ALP left-wingers centred around the fear that the surge to Labor would let the right off the hook on policy changes, and that without policy changes the new support for Labor would be ephemeral. There was also the rather tart comment that if Kernot had been in the ALP all the time, there is no way the "boys in suits" from the AWU — the big right-wing trade union which dominates much of Labor politics in Kernot's state, Queensland — would have let her be a candidate for a winnable seat.

The DSP, the biggest left group outside the ALP, claimed that Kernot had moved the Democrats to the Right, and her joining the ALP was part of Labor repackaging itself to be like New Labour in Britain. In my view, the claim that the Democrats had "moved to the Right" was just the DSP's way of changing their line on an alliance with the Democrats — which they have previously advocated — without admitting that anything was wrong with it. As for Labor becoming New Labour, there are certainly those who want such a transition — Victorian state ALP leader John Brumby has said as much. But it is still too close to the last election in March 1996. Observers right across the political spectrum agree that Labor lost because it failed to hold its working-class "heartlands". Consequently, the dominant ALP line for now is: "We've learnt our lesson, we're back to our working-class roots, we're old Labor." As in Britain, the danger of "New-Labourism" will become acute if the working class suffers a series of defeats.

Roger Clarke

Workers' Liberty

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Trade Unions:

A chance to learn from the past

THE formation of the Trade Union Lefts Alliance in 1996 provides the best opportunity in a long while for uniting activists across the unions. It was set up by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance to bring together trade union lefts. Those who attend Committee meetings are mindful of past failures so there appears to be a genuine desire to be non-sectarian.

It is unlikely that trade union activists will remain silent for much longer in the face of Blair's attacks and the union leaders' cowardice. TULA can play a crucial role in helping to bring together those in struggle and lay the foundations for a mass rank-and-file cross-union movement.

Broad Left and rank and file organisations already exist in many unions: the Socialist Teachers Alliance, the CWU Broad Left, RMT Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union, CPSA Left Unity, CPSA Socialist Caucus, UNISON Labour Left, UNISON Broad Left, TGWU Broad Left. Most of these bodies as yet fall far short of anything resembling an effective rank and file group.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty supporters in these organisations have argued for broad campaigns reaching out to the wider layers of members, for organising strike action if the leaderships refuse to call it, to campaign for union democracy such as the annual election of all full-time officials, for unity in struggle across the unions, and unity across the Broad Lefts and rank and file organisations.

Under the Tories, the union leaders' excuse for not fighting was that we could expect nothing from the Tories. We were not strong enough to fight. If the miners lost, how could we win? We should wait for a Labour Government. The idea that millions of exploited and angry workers organised in a serious fight are no match for a tiny number of bosses would be laughable were the consequences not so tragic.

Now these same miserable leaders are saying we can expect nothing from Blair, and are refusing to stand up to him. Not content with allowing him to crush the trade union link and smash democracy inside the Labour Party, the union leaders have caved in to Blair over the minimum wage. The TUC have dropped their demand for a minimum wage to of half male median earnings and are now calling for it to be set at £4 per hour — a



reduction of 66p on the original demand. Furthermore, the TUC have effectively accepted that there will be no minimum wage legislation until 1999 and that it will not cover the under 25s! Nor has Blair's announcement that any legislation on trade union recognition will be drawn up in consultation with and agreement of the CBI elicited any revolt by the TUC.

The history of the trade union leaderships is, and continues to be, shameful. At best they talk a good fight, then do as little as possible. At worst they collaborate with the ruling class to betray us. Their fear of the ruling class is greater than their concern for union members. But a strong rank and file can force them to either lead a fight or quit office.

The key task for socialists in the unions is to build mass, fighting, democratic rank-and-file organisations in each union and to unite these rank-and-files into a national movement. Failure to do this will allow our leaders to continue to cave in to the bosses, selling our jobs, pay and conditions in exchange for their own security. Our unions will become prison houses. Power will be further concentrated in the hands of highly paid officials, and discussion, debate and democracy will be stamped out.

Despite the craven cowardice of the union leaders, trade unionists continue to fight back. The Liverpool dockers and the Magnet, Critchley and Hillingdon strikers, for example, show the strength, determination and bravery of rank and file union members. Yet they have had to fight alone, with little or no support from their union leaderships. These disputes could have been won quickly had other groups of workers come out in solidarity.

The most serious and successful organisation to organise on a cross-union rank and file basis was the Minority Movement of the 1920s — formed in a

period similar to today, after a series of setbacks for the working class. Then, Communist Party members rallied workers on the basis of programmes related both to the problems of the given industry and the actual structure of the trade union machine. These rank and file organisations gathered together into the National Minority Movement at a conference in 1924, with 200,000 workers represented. At its peak, the Minority Movement had one million workers affiliated.

Despite its decline and eventual collapse (due to policy imposed on it by Moscow), the Minority Movement for a brief time transformed much of the trade union movement into a mass, united fighting force. No attempt to organise the rank and file across the unions since has come close to its achievements.

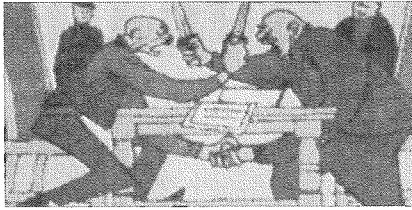
If a movement on that scale existed today it would be able to carry out activities such as:

- Raise enough money to sustain the striking dockers and other long-term strikers.
- Unite trade unions in a common struggle to break the pay freeze.
- Organise a national trade union campaign on the minimum wage in face of the TUC's climbdown.
- Organise a national trade union campaign against welfare to work.
- Organise an effective fight to force Blair to repeal the anti-trade union laws and introduce positive rights for workers and unions.

● While campaigns are being run on these issues by bodies such as the Free Trade Unions Campaign and the Welfare State Network, a united rank and file movement across the unions would massively increase our chance of success.

The increasing separation of trade union leaders from the members they are

INSIDE THE UNIONS



What's left in the T&G?

THE Broad Left has controlled the T&G General Executive Council for the last ten years. The present General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary were both elected on the Broad Left "ticket". So dominant is the "left" within the union these days, that even the right wing call themselves "left" (remember Jack Dromey's "left wing" bid for the General Secretary job?)

The union's national policies are generally "left": full employment; a decent minimum wage; employment protection from day one; public ownership of the key utilities; redistribution of wealth; power and income; positive union rights and the abolition of the anti-union laws; unilateral nuclear disarmament etc.

The trouble is that these fine policies are not fought for anywhere that counts. At this year's Labour Party Conference, for instance, the T&G delegation — and Bill Morris personally — agreed to dump union policy on the anti-union laws, the dockers and Labour Party/union links in order to avoid spoiling President Blair's media love-in.

These people can get away with it because there is no organised rank and file within the union to hold them to account. Certainly the Job Club-cum-Masonic Lodge that presently calls itself the Broad Left is riven by Byzantine personal disputes and rivalries that have nothing to do with politics or policies but a great deal to do with bruised egos and long-harboured grudges. At

the recent Biannual Delegate Conference the Broad Left was virtually invisible (apart from one poorly publicised little meeting) and had nothing to say on the single most contentious issue of the conference — the Liverpool dockers.

This was because the Broad Left is split on the dockers, with the majority of "left" GEC members supporting the Bill Morris/Jack Adams line that the dispute is unwinnable and should be settled on more or less any terms.

Of course, a healthy Broad Left would allow debate and disagreement. Differing assessments of the docks dispute are permissible within the left. But the principle of support for workers in struggle should be the bottom line for any grouping claiming to be "left", however "broad".

The trouble with the T&G Broad Left is that it is largely self-defining. If someone tells you that s/he can speak Polish, run a four-minute mile or play the National Anthem through their bottom, there are ways to putting their claim to the test. But not, it seems, if they claim to be a 'left-winger' within the T&G.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the matter closest to the Broad Left's heart, elections. The Broad Left has a long record of supporting dodgy characters, disaffected right-wingers, opportunists and the "least bad" candidates at election time, only to find them backing the right once they've got in.

We now have the bizarre spectacle of sections of the Broad Left campaigning against

some of the best left-wingers (including those like John Ennis who opposed the Morris/Adams "statement" on the dockers) in the forthcoming GEC elections. Worse still, there is talk of the Broad Left supporting the born-again Blairite Margaret Prosser to succeed Bill Morris, on the grounds that she is likely to win and the Broad Left cannot be seen to back a loser. Apart from the unwarranted pessimism of such an assessment (the membership have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to back perceived left-wing candidates and policies) one has to ask what sort of "left" it is that is willing to back someone who has gone along with the Blair anti-working class "project" at every turn? Name one single issue on which Ms Prosser has voted for a left-wing position against Mr Blair on the Labour Party National Executive over the last two years. If the T&G membership wanted their union to become an extension of the Blair regime, they'd have voted for Jack Dromey when they had the chance.

No-one is arguing for a narrow, doctrinally pure "Broad Left". On the contrary, we want an open, democratic, inclusive left. But there has to be a bottom line and at present that means supporting the GEC members who back the dockers and finding a General Secretary candidate willing to back union policy against the Blair government.

Sleeper

supposed to represent dates back to the middle of the last century and, over the decades, has become the key issue for socialists in the trade unions — particularly in Britain, where the anti-trade union laws have helped concentrate power in the hands of national union officers.

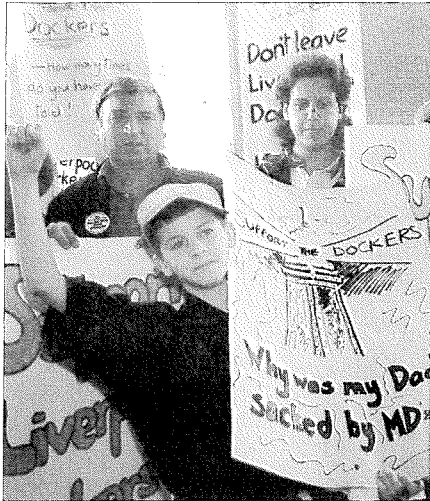
Unelected, highly paid full-time officers, who are supposed to work for the union, become the henchmen and women of whoever is in power at any particular time. And, although the National Executive Committee, General Secretary and some other key positions are subject to national election under the law, the system of individual *postal* balloting, and the ability of those already in power to "work the system", keeps the lid on.

Throughout the Thatcher and Major years, trade union leaders caved in time and again to attacks on the workforce. Mass unemployment, the dismantling of the Welfare State, the anti-union laws, privatisation, contracting out, "flexible" working practices and the end of national bargaining were brought in by the Tories in an attempt to break the unions. The response of the union leaders was pathetic. They were often reluctant to lead fights for their own unions let alone unite workers *across* unions in a concerted fightback.

The miners, dockers, printers and other groups of workers fought brave and hard battles but were let down either by their own leaders or the failure of leaders in other unions to organise solidarity action in their support.

The miners' strike of 1984-5 was a key dispute and their defeat was a huge defeat for the whole labour movement. Had other unions come out on strike in their support, it is very likely the miners would have won and the whole of the British political scene would look very different today. We would not have had 18 years of Tory rule — and we would not now have Blair! But the cowardice of the union leaders and that miserable failure of a Labour Party leader — Neil Kinnock — meant the miners were left to fight alone, so ensuring a victory for the ruling class from which the labour movement is still feeling the effects.

The union leaders could get away with such behaviour partly because of the failures or shortcomings of previous attempts to build rank and file movements. The SWP (then called International Socialists) initiated several rank-and-file groups, and then a National Rank and File Movement in the early 1970s. They seemed to have come at an ideal time. Dockers, engineers, health service workers and the miners took militant



industrial action. Between 1972 and 1974, over 200 occupations of factories, offices, shops and shipyards took place. In February 1974 the miners forced Heath to call a General Election.

What these struggles taught many militants was that the trade union leadership are at best inadequate and at worst treacherous. The main left wing trade union grouping of the time, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions — dominated by the Communist Party — was almost entirely preoccupied with winning official positions and acting as a cheerleader for left-wing bureaucrats. Against this background, the stated aim of the National Rank and File Movement was to link up militants across the industries and organise independently of the officials where necessary.

However, in the end the NRFM was too much of a "front" for the IS/SWP. The cumulative end-effect of the SWP rank and file groups' work was to discredit the very notion of "rank and filism" amongst many militants. The term is now tainted with organisational sectarianism, narrow economism and a tendency to avoid the question of leadership. Eventually, in the early 1980s, the SWP shut down the rank-and-file groups to focus on narrower "party-building".

In 1981 the Broad Lefts Organising Committee (BLOC) was set up by Militant. The first two conferences were large and lively, but the heavy domination by Militant was a taste of things to come. BLOC became nothing more than a signboard for Militant rallies. It ran no campaigning activity.

In 1983 thousands of activists mobilised to support the NGA print union picket lines against Eddie Shah in Warrington. It was a crucial test for the anti-trade union laws. BLOC took no initiative at all around the dispute.

The 1984 BLOC Conference coincided with the start of the miners' strike. All the Conference did was to pass a

bland resolution in support of the miners. For the whole year of the strike, BLOC did nothing beyond issuing one leaflet and calling one lobby of the TUC. It was *Socialist Organiser* (forerunner of the AWL) and *Briefing* who took the initiative to organise the Mineworkers Defence Committee, attracting 1000 delegates. BLOC played no role at all.

BLOC had completely disappeared by the late 1980s — another wasted opportunity.

In 1988 another attempt was made to set up a national cross-union left current. The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee (SMTUC) was initiated by people grouped around the Socialist Movement, some of whom were members of left groups and some not. Its first conference in 1989 was lively and open and attracted quite a reasonable turnout given the generally poor morale of the left by then. But soon certain individuals came to regard the SMTUC as their personal fiefdom. When one of the elite was involved in the RMT's capitulation to London Underground management's Company Plan in 1992, it was made very clear that no criticism of his role would be tolerated within the SMTUC. The SMTUC threw away a lot of campaigning opportunities.

- The ambulance dispute 1989-90. A proposal to organise an ambulance workers' solidarity conference which had the support of the Camden and Liverpool strikers — groups that were occupying their stations — was rejected. Nothing else was done.

- The poll tax. A proposal for a special SMTUC trade union conference on the issue was blocked.

- Gulf War 1990-91: nothing from the SMTUC despite the pretentious internationalism of some of its officers. The initiative for Trade Unionists Against the War which organised a successful lobby of the TUC came from non-aligned NUT left-wingers and the AWL.

- The battle over Labour's union links in 1992-3 was met by sectarian indifference from key SMTUC officers.

When the elite could no longer hope to maintain their grip one the SMTUC they simply gave up. The secretary, Carolyn Sikorski, and chair, Phil Griffin, walked out and took with them the "Unshackle the Unions" campaign, an initiative that had been built up by everyone in the SMTUC.

The failures have left their mark. But they were avoidable; and now in the Trade Union Lefts Alliance, there seems to be a real will to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Trudy Saunders

After the UPS victory

MORE than two months have passed since 185,000 members of the Teamsters union won their dispute with United Parcel Service. The victory has given a boost of confidence to the American labour movement and, sure enough, the American bosses are starting to move against the Teamsters, ordering a re-run of the union's presidential election where they are supporting the right-wing James Hoffa Jr against the incumbent, Ron Carey.

The Carey leadership supported this strike and fought to win it. The previous right-wing leadership ruled for decades by working hand in glove with the bosses. Linked to the mafia, they made secret deals with the employers, paid themselves huge salaries, and enjoyed extravagant perks such as union owned private jets! It took two decades of rank and file campaigning, co-ordinated by Teamsters for a Democratic Union, to remove them.

Controversially, the courts were used to clean up the union and the election for president of the Teamsters was underwritten by \$22 million of public money. In this incredibly corrupt, mob-ridden organisation, "normal" methods of democracy weren't easily available to the membership.

But now these same courts have over-turned the result of the election they ordered. Ron Carey won that election by only 4% over James Hoffa Jr, son of the infamous, gangster boss of the Teamsters, Jimmy Hoffa. But Carey's election fund included illegal donations. Fraud charges have already been levied against a campaign aide and the boss of a telemarketing firm involved with Carey's campaign. Still, if Hoffa wins it will be a huge setback for the union.

Socialists have to support Carey in the election. Despite faults he represents a significant step forward from the business unionists and mafia. With Carey re-elected, the work of pushing home the advantage of the UPS victory and finishing off the job of democratising and radicalising the union can really begin.

Mick Duncan

The first signs of a fightback in industry

It is now possible to see the first signs of a fightback in industry and across the unions. Unofficial strikes over pay at Fords and in the construction industry; guerilla battles in the Post Office; a two-day national strike by Barclays bank workers; ballots for action in the fire service; protests by health workers from Cornwall to Scotland; a partial climbdown by John Prescott over selling off the Underground. All of this points to one thing: no matter how much the new government prattles on about "partnership" between bosses and workers they can't stop the class struggle.

1996 saw the highest number of strike days of the '90s, with over a million days "lost" in Royal Mail alone. 1997 could see even more. There are four related developments defining this situation.

Firstly, in parts of the private sector the economic upturn has given workers back a certain level of confidence to take action. This could be seen at Fords recently — with unofficial walkouts over

pay. But it is amongst electricians in the construction industry, where 30,000 new jobs have been created in the last year, that things are clearest. Here the bosses and the right wing leadership of the AEEU (engineers' and electricians' union) have stitched up a pay and "flexibility" deal which will cut overtime payments and de-skill 80% of electricians' work. Rank and file activists at some bigger construction projects such as the Jubilee line extension and Bluewater shopping centre in Kent have linked up with workers in the Glasgow shipyards and Sellafield to call unofficial strike action against the deal.

Unofficial action is not, however, restricted to the private sector. Walkouts in the Post Office continue on a weekly basis and it is here that we can identify the second pattern of struggle, arising from attempts by the bosses and the government to push through major attacks on the so far undefeated bastions of public sector trade unionism in the post, tube and fireservice.



Royal Mail CWU national officials and management negotiators appear to have agreed to push through the key elements of the "teamworking" plans which lay behind last year's strikes. But even if this deal remains a dead letter management will try to implement its many proposals. The may lead to local strikes that could explode into national action. This could well provoke a rank and file revolt against a stitch-up and a return to national industrial action. A London firefighters strike is also a real possibility with £10 million worth of cuts and station closures on the way, whereas on the tube, management and the New Labour leadership are set on driving through a programme of piecemeal privatisation designed to undermine effective trade unionism and break down solidarity as has already happened particularly in what used to be British Rail.

The third element in the situation is the time bomb ticking away in the NHS, local government and education. Massive cuts, privatisation and sackings are on the immediate agenda unless the unions fight back both nationally and locally.

A recent TUC poll showed that 55% of the public support a one-day strike over public sector pay. So the support is there for a co-ordinated resistance. The question is: can we force the unions — and in the first place UNISON — into calling the action needed to win.

The recent strikes by British Airways cabin crew and Barclay's Bank workers points to the fourth set of developments in the unions — new layers of workers coming into action for the first time. These strikes give the lie to the idea that the "new" working class isn't interested in unions, strikes and solidarity.

The key question is: can we find a way to link up the different struggles and develop a strategy that challenges the stranglehold that official leadership of the unions have on the class struggle.

Ann Mack

London Underground Strike against privatisation!

The biggest threat facing tubeworkers right now is privatisation. This is not alarmist. Those who say that we should not get too worked up are the "business as usual" business unionists of ASLEF and TSSA. As long as their subs keep rolling in every month they can't imagine there is a problem. There is no problem for the union head offices, but it's another story for the rank and file whose jobs and futures are going to be on the line.

Tube workers are waiting for a report, commissioned by New Labour from leading accountants, Price Waterhouse on whether the tube should be sold off. Well, I wonder what they will say?!

New Labour may have been enjoying a honeymoon period with public opinion, but the arrogance and dishonesty they are showing over the tube (pre-election, "Don't cut up the tube"; post-election, "Sell it off in bits") is exactly the kind of unreasonable behaviour that could lead to a messy divorce.

New Labour has new cliches, and there's one for every occasion. They don't say "privatisation", they say

"public-private partnership" — just like a bacon sandwich is a pig and baker partnership!

Let's hold Labour to their pre-election commitment. The consequences of defeat on this issue can be seen on British Rail where thousands of jobs gone and the service has been run into the ground.

Tube workers are in a strong position. Tube privatisation is a deeply unpopular policy. How do we turn this into a victory? We are faced with a deliberate strategy of piecemeal privatisation. The best response is an open fight and action against privatisation. We should strike. It would be a political strike and though some union leaders say they are not afraid to break the law in this way, we will need to hold them to that.

We need to prepare for the eventualities of the unions funds being sequestered? Such an attack on a union would up the stakes hugely, and could backfire dramatically on the Government. Above all we need to reach out beyond our own union branch meetings to the wider labour movement and workers and service users beyond that.

A Underground station worker

Frank Field's new Poor Law

By Helen Rate

MARGARET Thatcher employed rhetoric about "Victorian values" to lubricate her programme of economic and social reconstruction. Frank Field is a true believer in Victorian values. He may even be under the delusion that he is living in 1834, when the recently enfranchised middle-class passed a New Poor Law and began to systematically build workhouses all over Britain in which to imprison and punish the poor.

For many years Field was a maverick in the Labour Party, now he is at the centre of government — as Minister for Welfare Reform. He spends his time in working-breakfasts with former members of Chilean dictator Pinochet's government, picking up tips on privatising pensions. Field's latest tome* brings together his recent Ministerial speeches and demonstrates his influence on government policy. It also reveals his complete lack of warmth or insight into the lives of other human beings.

Two big themes dominate Field's thinking. First his religious beliefs. Secondly his deeply held class prejudice against the section of the working-class he would call the "underclass".

Field has a fixed and Catholic view of human nature. Human beings are "fallen", they are sinful, and doomed to be so, unless they can be led towards the path of righteousness. It is the state's job to construct institutions which will push people towards a potential goodness.

What is evil and good in socio-political terms, according to Field? Evil is top-down state-sponsored welfare which has brainwashed people into "dependency". Goodness is welfare based on "mutual aid", encouraging self-reliance and proper self-interest.

These religious views are meshed together with Field's view of the working-class. Field is very keen on the mutual aid movement of the nineteenth century — funeral funds, cooperatives, public libraries — and says we should resurrect these institutions. Why? For Field "mutual aid" had important social consequences. Samuel Smiles made some points in the 1840s which Field might make today if he were as politically honest:

"The accumulation of property has the effect which it always has upon thrifty men: it makes them steady, sober and dili-



Field: life is good when you've got religious dogma to keep you warm

gent. It weans them from revolutionary notions and makes them conservative. When workmen have secured their own independence they will cease to regard the sight of others' well being as a wrong inflicted upon themselves."

Field's concerns are two-fold. One is that "thriftiness", or "the respectable working-class" should be encouraged. And the corollary of this is that the "unrespectable" unemployed working class should be discouraged. Two, "thriftiness" will stop the workers from revolting.

Unfortunately, right-wing propaganda against the most impoverished sections of our class — about the "underclass" for instance — has some resonance among better off (or even slightly better off) working-class people. We should also remember that similar prejudice has been expressed in the more conservative sections of our labour movement. For instance, in 1910 a Labour Party report differentiated between the "genuine working class" and "those who are allowed... to wander about parading their sores and propagating their kind". In the same year the TUC described the "unemployable" as a "menace to the state." Field builds his programme on this prejudice.

Field views the nineteenth century, with its proliferation of mutual aid societies, as a golden age of working-class politics. Such institutions are an antidote to the conspicuously homeless and the unemployed single mums who dare to parade their kids or their destitution in front of "respectable" people.

Field's account of mutual aid is highly

idealised. In some cases these societies were attempts to provide an alternative to the capitalist market (such as the Lancashire co-operative movement), but many were just small funds to provide something better than a pauper's funeral; or they were organisations destined to become corporate giants, like the Prudential, which had little respect for the interests of their members. Whatever part of the mutual aid movement these societies came from, none of them could provide adequate protection for most of the workers against all of the vagaries of the capitalist market.

In summary, Field wants to turn us all into "saved and thrifty souls". How is it to be achieved? By way of a welfare system based on deterrents and compulsion and putting the unemployed (but especially the "unemployable") to work. The devil will have to take care of the refuseniks.

In his war against sin and the underclass, Field has got Labour to target two groups. The young single ill-qualified men who may once have found jobs in manufacturing industries but are now doomed to long-term unemployment; and young single women whose sense of underachievement might, according to Field, make them want to have babies instead of going out to find jobs in supermarkets. These two groups demonstrate high levels of "dependency".

All young people are now to be put to work on Labour's Welfare to Work programme, for slave labour "wages". Single mothers will be "encouraged" to work and the government promises to provide childcare. Field wants to use the fund collected from student tuition fees to finance childcare workers! He also wants to make work compulsory for single mothers, but the government has not yet said it agrees.

Field identifies the cause of the evil of "dependency" as the culture of means-testing. Socialists of course oppose all means testing. However, we would not want to scrap means-tested benefits in order to replace them with what Frank has in mind — a "stakeholder" National Insurance Scheme. Here people will have to pay extra to get decent unemployment, sickness benefit and community care.

What if people won't stump up for these benefits? It won't happen says Field because once you've abolished means-testing, you will abolish dependency. Hey presto, everyone is working (and if they don't like the new "culture of work" we

* *Reforming the Welfare State*, published by the Social Market Foundation

will make them like it by putting them on the government slave labour scheme!) Of course we'll be working in the New Labour low-pay economy. And *we will be happy* to work all the hours God sends, and scrimp and save to insure our families for the bad times. We will be equally happy to contribute to our compulsory second pension scheme: putting a bit aside for when we can afford to retire — at 90!

The flipside of evil is good. Good, for Frank is self-reliance. Self-reliance is derived from the natural human condition of "self-interest". "Self interest", says Field "is the most powerful motivating force in each of us." And self-interest is the polar opposite of altruism — another evil in Saint Frank's Holy Book.

According to Field, if we base our welfare system on altruism — as the post 1945 system allegedly did — we are on a long-term loser.

The assumption that the modern welfare state was based on an over-riding social principle of altruism is wrong in a number of respects. Firstly, from the point of view of the working-class, it was built on *self-interest*. Workers fought for certain social rights, demanding an end to unemployment and a better standard of life, *for themselves*. These were not abstract principles. Nor did the ruling class accept welfare reforms out of altruism, but because they were scared of working-class revolt and they wanted to preserve the status quo. Only in one sense was the modern welfare state based on altruism, where it was to do with human solidarity. Working-class people wanted a better life not only as individuals but also *collectively*.

That historical moment and idea culminating in Labour's 1945 landslide — long-term commitment to the welfare state — has endured despite the best efforts of the Thatcherites and Labour's neo-Thatcherites.

Field's notion of how society is based on self-interest is wrong. People in society are social beings as well as individuals. Moreover, it is based on a shallow reading of the values that do exist. Lots of working-class people would rather exist on a pittance than turn to the state for support. This attitude is still prevalent today among many working-class people and not just those of the older generation. But where do such attitudes come from? In the past they came from a fear of the workhouse. They come from a concern to hold on to some pride and dignity, to avoid the stigmas and indignities implicated on the poor. These are rational responses to the barbaric workings of capitalist society, not "eternal truths" on which to base a social policy.

In this kind of New Labour thinking

the state is also bad — as it encourages dependency. The state interferes with the democratic rights of people as taxpayers. But concern for the rights of this mythical average tax-payer translates into policy to cut public spending by any means necessary.

To Field the £100 billion spent on social security is a moral outrage which highlights the escalating culture of dependency. What a miserable little bastard this man is! Never mind the fact that the Tories cut taxes for the super rich to the tune of £10 billion a year. We can't reverse those cuts can we? That will mean going against not some classless "tax payer" but stinking rich people who get their money by profiting from the low-paid labour of other human beings.

In any case the overriding desire for tax cuts no matter what it means for society largely exists only among the rich. For them, £100 billion is too much to spend on social security. But these peoples' concerns are the standards by which Field and the rest of New Labour judge things. £40 billion can be "lost" in one day because of a stock market blip, yet that does not morally outrage Field. The truth is £40-odd billion is nothing to international capitalism. £100 billion for them is just a fraction more. It is the crumbs from the bosses table!

FIELD'S other concern is how to get the tax payer to stump up for compulsory work schemes. Field says we must convince "the tax payer" that the poor are behaving themselves. Crack down on benefit fraud!

Frank Field says his is a "liberating" vision. Nothing in this world could be further from the truth. In Field's Britain we will all become slaves, treated decently as long as we behave ourselves, expected to work for the bosses no matter what the terms of our exploitation, or else be punished. If we do well in our position we can expect to progress. The government will ensure we save for the future.

Because New Labour accepts capitalism as part of the natural order of things it has been easy for the policy makers to assimilate and use Field's quasi-religious demagoguery. These days, with the long boom of post-war capitalism far behind us, it is only possible to imagine doing away with unemployment if you can imagine doing away with capitalism. For those devoid of socialist vision (or even decent working-class instincts), unemployment is not something that can be dealt with by economic reform. Like the rich, the poor are always with us. Therefore we need to get the poor to help themselves.

Will Frank Field succeed in pushing

through his whole programme? That depends on the success of Labour's New Deal for Youth. The prospects do not look good. The government is so desperate for work places on the schemes that New Labour MPs are now whizzing round their constituencies desperately canvassing local employers to take on "trainees".

The only antidote to Field and the rest of New Labour is a campaign which rests on socialist principles. We must remember that the notion of working-class self-improvement that was once central to our movement was driven by a fight against capitalist exploitation and often had as its goal, working class self-rule. These are the principles which should inform us today.

Field's "working-class politics" are based on a one-sided reading of working-class self-improvement efforts from the time when labour was dominated by the Liberal Party and Liberal ideas.

It is certainly true that many thousands of working-class people have been condemned to live out their lives without hope of permanent full-time employment. Our crumbling, ill-equipped, overstretched schools cannot give increasing numbers of children the basic literacy and numeracy they need to find jobs and attain a quality of life such as everyone is morally entitled to. But when Field characterises these lives as "dependent" it is an utterly mean-spirited doctrine and a way of asserting that the long-term unemployed live a life of evil. It is only one step along this line of reasoning to the idea of punishing them, as Field's spiritual ancestors did, when they built terrible workhouse prisons all over the country to incarcerate them. We shouldn't let Field get away with it.

We should raise a storm of protest! We should shout loudly against the absolute poverty and day-to-day oppression that grinds people down. And let us talk about changing society.

The socialist left has to reassert the idea that society can be re-organised. We need to convince the labour movement not to accept capitalism and what the capitalists do to us — unemployment, overwork, cuts in wages — as the natural order of things. We need to put forward practical policies. For instance why can't the four million jobless be given real jobs that are necessary such as building homes? Why can't the working-week be cut (without loss of pay) so that more jobs can be created? Why can't the credit system, banks and insurance companies be taken into public ownership? Why can't public ownership be based on mass, democratic accountability? These reforms will not be won easily. Our starting point now is to vigorously counteract the likes of Frank Field and his anti-human vision.

How to save free education

By Mick Duncan

IN London, on Wednesday 26 November, thousands of students will march, alongside workers and other campaigners, against Labour's plans to scrap student grants and introduce tuition fees in higher education.

In 1984-5 Tory Minister Keith Joseph tried to scrap grants but was forced to back down by a militant campaign that mobilised students and workers. At the time, the Tories did not want striking miners to have a "second front" formed against their government.

What the Tories did not dare cut, Labour has cut with enthusiasm. If Labour gets away with scrapping grants and introducing tuition fees they will feel confident enough to introduce NHS charges, compulsory second pensions and privatise social services.

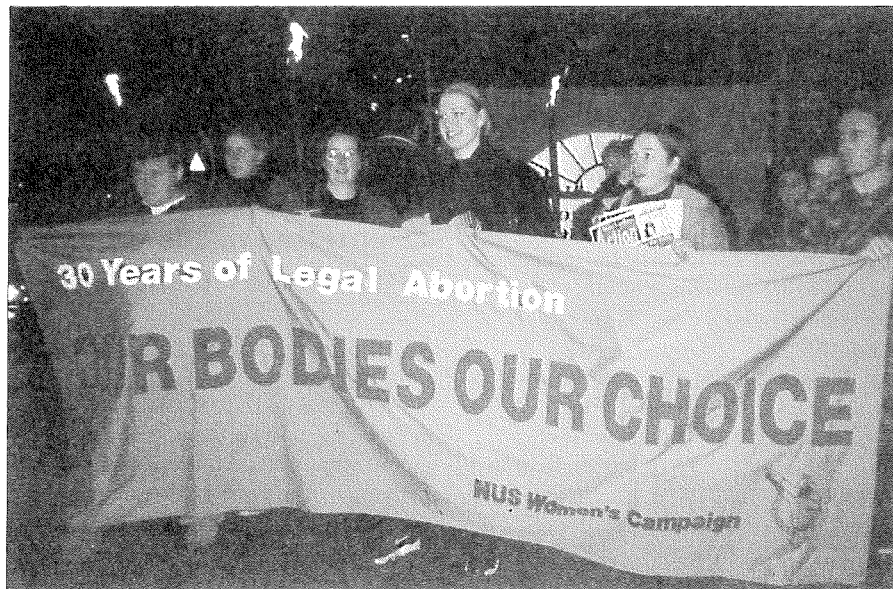
The November 26th demonstration will be the first big demonstration against the Labour government. A victory for students in this fight would give a huge boost to everyone facing attacks by this government now, and in the future.

What will Blair and Blunkett's attacks on students' funding mean?

Their plans will make the price of a degree somewhere between £15-20,000. There were no votes on this inside the party nor were the proposals on fees included in the election manifesto. Back in April, Blair explicitly said fees would *not* be introduced. However, Labour indicated that it would support the Dearing Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education, which in July, recommended introducing tuition fees. As the Campaign for Free Education pointed out before the election, the Dearing Commission was always going to be a cover for whoever won the election — Tories or Labour — to bring in fees without having to take the flak.

However, Dearing *did not* recommend scrapping the grant. It was left to David Blunkett to propose this — barely three hours after the Dearing Commission had reported. Clearly Blair and Blunkett had their plans sorted out well in advance of the report. The only thing they didn't have sorted was a mandate!

Why did Blair and Blunkett think they could get away with it?



NUS Women's Campaign 600 plus demonstration to mark the anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act. The Women's Campaign is a radical wing of NUS, and under attack from Labour students.

These plans are opposed by the vast majority of students. And it is the anger of hundreds of thousands of ordinary students which NUS's Labour leaders fear. The Blairites of Labour Students needed to prepare the National Union of Students for this sell-out well in advance.

In March 1995, NUS Conference voted for a "review" of its funding policy. Alliance for Workers' Liberty student members immediately saw that this was an attempt to drop NUS' commitment to free education. Along with other activists at that conference we launched the Campaign for Free Education. Within two months, NUS had indeed attempted to drop free education policy but were roundly beaten by the CFE at an Emergency NUS Conference held in Derby. It took them a full year to overturn the free education policy.

How did they sell the turn-around to the members? It was sold as "realistic", and enabling NUS to "get a seat at the negotiating table". We were told we had to concentrate on stopping fees. We were also told that it was selfish of students to demand grants when there are people homeless on the streets and an NHS in need of repair — although NUS

did not launch any campaigns to defend the welfare state that year!

We argued that, by accepting the principle of paying for education, and dropping the commitment to grants, the door would be opened to tuition fees. We were right!

UNDER pressure from the CFE and student activists, NUS was forced to organise a series of regional demonstrations against fees (but not against the scrapping of grants) on 1 November. The regional demonstrations were timed to disrupt the NUS Women's Campaign march to commemorate 30 years of legal abortion on 29 October and the Newcastle University Union/Tyne Tees Area NUS/CFE demonstration in Newcastle on 5 November, which had already been called.

After the regional demonstrations NUS is under pressure to support a national demonstration. But it has decided to hold a week of action which encourages students' unions to, "write to up to 2 local school sixth forms," and to, "put No to Fees screen savers on the student union's computers." A truly devastating campaigning strategy indeed!

The CFE had already called our national march for 26 November.

OVER the last 18 years the student movement, affected by Thatcherite victories over the labour movement, has become increasingly gutted and de-politicised. This has helped Labour Students to get away with their pathetic, doing-nothing strategy.

So how can we stop Blair and Blunkett? First we need an active campaign. The CFE advocates a campaign of demonstrations, pickets and occupations. These are the activities that students can play a part in and play a role in directing.

We need to give people the feeling that they *can* fight for change. Highly visible activity gives those who get involved some confidence and a feeling that there are thousands of others across the country who are just as angry as them.

We need to use every opportunity available to us to mobilise. If the NUS leaders say they are against fees we should use their "opposition" to help us mobilise.

In the long run we need to transform the student movement into the sort of movement that will take genuine independent action against the Government, will seriously defend its members' interests and the right to high quality education and decent living standards. We need a union that does not fear to organise militant action in order to win its demands. We are a long way away

"This fight is about more than grants and fees. To win what we need we must insist, against all the lies, that human rights and needs should come before profits"

from that goal.

That is why the AWL takes working in the student movement seriously. We do not want to base our campaign on winning over a layer of bureaucrats (by

watering down our politics.) Nor will we snipe from the fringes. We will stand for elected positions to spread our ideas and demonstrate in action what can be achieved with a different kind of leadership. When NUS fails to act, we believe the responsibility lies with us and the socialist left to organise the fight. That is why we work with activists inside the CFE to build activity like the coming national demonstration. This is why we help to build broad, democratic campaigns like the CFE. It is why we tenaciously fight for our ideas through thick and thin. Unlike the SWP, for example, we will not set up "fronts" (with no democratic structures) when an issue like fees is a bit "sexy" in order to recruit a few people, only to disband the front when the next fashion comes along.

What kind of politics do we need to transform NUS and stop the Blairites?

This fight is about more than grants and fees. To win what we need we must insist, against all the lies, that human rights and needs should come before profits — the right to an education, the right to housing, to a job, to state of the art healthcare... It is about asking what the economy should be geared to: should it be to satisfying the needs of the many or, instead, to the greed and profit of the few?

These are the principles that we must reassert, against the NUS leadership, but also in order to convince rank-and-file activists that there are realistic and convincing answers to the right-wing propaganda which says "we can't afford it." We must say: we need a government which will tax the rich to pay for the services we need.

Our campaign must be for unity. We need to link up with education workers facing attacks — in sixth form colleges, schools and nurseries. We must make links with those campaigning for the defence of the rest of the welfare state. That is why the CFE demonstration on 26 November will be addressed by the Liverpool dockers, and why there will be delegations on the march from trade union branches and all the major on-going disputes. We also need unity on the left. We can and should unite to "stop tuition fees" but can only do this if our campaigns are open and democratic.

If the proposals go through, Labour will go a long way to completing the Tories' ambition of making education once more about enforcing ideological control, about teaching people to "know their place." We can stop them if we organise an active democratic, united campaign based on socialist ideas.

Education for the workers!

LABOUR wants an education system based on the ability to pay. This will further the trend to favour the teaching of vocational courses that lead to well-paid jobs.

Blair and Blunkett talk of a "skills shortage" and of the need for a "well-educated workforce" but socialists must see education as something more than a glorified job training scheme.

For the ruling class, that is the only sort of education the majority are fit for. If of course you have enough money you can indulge in education for the sake of expanding your knowledge, but this is a privilege not to be extended to the proles!

The working-class fought for the right to an education. They also struggled to educate themselves, through the workers' educational leagues and the co-operative colleges that many of the founding Marxists were active in and which taught basic literacy as well as political theories to working class people.

Our sort of education would

teach people about the history of our class, about the history of mass movements and about how the world has changed. This view of history is almost non-existent in our schools and colleges.

Education should be geared towards the interests of the individual and the needs of society, not to the needs and whims of the market.

Marx pointed out that the dominant ideas of a given time will be the ideas of the ruling class of that time. These are the ideas we get taught today.

We should argue for control of our schools and colleges by the students and workers in them and by the communities they serve, not by unelected quangos of "captains of industry", so that we can determine what we teach and learn.

We should also struggle to educate ourselves and those around us in the struggles of our class, the history of our movement and our political theories. We must learn from the past if we are not to be "condemned to relive it".

How should Che Guevara be commemorated?

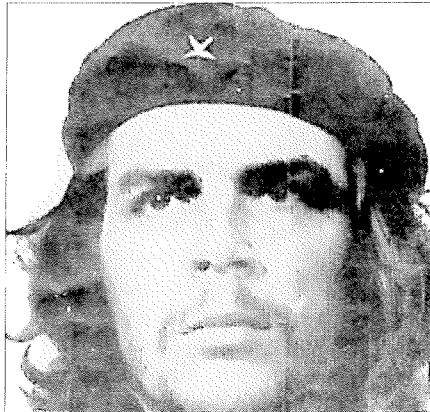
By Pablo Velasco

In *Workers' Liberty* 42, Helen Rate rightly criticises the Socialist Workers' Party's opportunistic attitude towards Che Guevara. The thirtieth anniversary of his murder, this October, prompted much discussion of his legacy, both on the left and in the bourgeois press. Although I agree with Helen's overall assessment of Guevara, I think that certain issues about his life and politics need to be drawn out more sharply than an article which focuses on the SWP is able to do. Recent biographies of "El Che," particularly one by John Lee Anderson, have shed new light on his place in history and allow us to make a more balanced assessment.

Guevara's experiences in Guatemala in 1954 were the turning point in the development of his political views. Despite the good intentions of Abenz's reforming, bourgeois government — redistributing land, taking control of US-owned industries — they failed to break up the old state machine and were brought down by a CIA-backed coup. This set off a bloody chain of repression making Guatemala a frightening place to be for the next thirty years. The army systematically terrorised the peasant and workers' movement.

The young Che Guevara — a 26 year old medical student who tried to join the revolutionaries in Guatemala but was only able to donate his medical expertise to the movement before it was crushed — drew conclusions about how to wage a serious fight against US imperialism and its allies in Latin America. He fled to Mexico where he linked up with Cuban revolutionaries grouped around the Castro brothers in the July 26th Movement (J26M). For the Cubans armed struggle was already a strategic method of fighting — they tried to seize the La Moncada barracks in Cuba in 1953 — and it would serve them well when they sailed for Cuba on the *Granma* in November 1956.

Recently uncovered evidence has shed more light on Guevara's views before the successful seizure of power in Cuba on 1 January 1959. It is clear that he became a Stalinist long before Fidel Castro, and was centrally responsible for pushing the Cuban revolution from its petty-bourgeois origins towards Soviet-style communism. After capitalism was overthrown a totalitarian state would take its place. Evidence comes from the CIA file opened on Guevara while he was in Guatemala. The authors debate whether he was a communist: he *had* refused to join the Guatemalan CP, but by December 1954 he announced his conversion to Communism to his family.



Guevara mixed with various radicals and revolutionaries in Mexico, but the earliest (and otherwise unconfirmed) date for his formal membership of the Stalinist movement was, according to research carried out in the Soviet archives by Fursenko and Naf-tali, in 1957. At the time, the PSP (the Cuban Communist Party) was *openly hostile* to J26M which Guevara was leading. (The PSP remained publicly hostile until 1958, when it sent Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to meet with Castro. It had accepted ministerial positions in Batista's government as part of its popular front strategy.)

The *Granma* expedition was ambushed on its arrival in the summer of 1957 by Batista's forces. The remnants of the expedition had to regroup. The PSP sent a young cadre, Pablo Ribalta, to work with Che in the mountains. They set up political education classes. Che's sympathies with Stalinist politics hardened during this period and in a 1958 interview with an Argentine journalist, Massetti, Che claimed to be a, "genuine Marxist," whilst Fidel was still a, "revolutionary nationalist."

In the decisive months of late 1958, as Che's rebel army closed in on Havana, he linked up with PSP columns and led the decisive battle for Santa Clara in December 1958. With the army in disarray, the old Cuban state, already rotten and decaying, collapsed, and the Batista fled.

In the early months of 1959, Che played a key role in the new government, organising the purging and reconstruction of the state through the G-2, the new secret service. The G-2 included a PSP politburo member as its deputy chief. At the same time, Che organised political education on "Marxist-Leninism," i.e., Stalinism, for Cuban army officers. He also presided over the tribunals which sentenced some 500 former Batista supporters to death and imprisoned hundreds of others. Guevara pushed for more

radical land reform and the nationalisation of Cuba's mineral wealth, electricity and the US-owned telephone company, ITT. In January 1960, cattle ranches, sugar plantations and other large holdings were taken over. By the end of the year, 80% of industry was state owned. Che played a role in switching the trade links from the US to the USSR. The main commodity, sugar was sold in return for Soviet oil.

It was Guevara who led the drive to turn Cuba into a one-party state and, spurred on by the defeat of the US-inspired Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, he pushed for the fusion of the PSP and J26M, which took place in July 1961. The final seal on the Stalinisation of the Cuban revolution was set by the first five year plan, orchestrated by Guevara in early 1962 in his capacity as director of the National Bank and Industry Minister.

After the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, which took the world to the brink of nuclear war, Che told Sam Russell of the *Daily Worker* that if the missiles had been under the control of the Cubans, they would have fired them against the US. He denounced the climb down by Khrushchev as a sell-out, and it added to his dissatisfaction with the poor quality of Soviet technical aid to Cuba. Never one for personal privilege, Che denounced the USSR as a "pigsty," in 1964, and later as an "accomplice of imperialism," in 1965. He also expressed support for the Chinese model of Stalinism early on, employing Chinese advisers in his ministry, at a time when Sino-Soviet relations were deteriorating.

Beginning in 1962, Guevara began to organise guerrilla forces in Argentina, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Bolivia and Peru. He reacted against the policy of "peaceful co-existence," favoured by the USSR and by Castro, and was increasingly viewed by orthodox Stalinists as a Maoist or a Trotskyist, bringing him into conflict with other Cuban leaders. Upon his removal from government posts in 1965, ostensibly for his remarks on the USSR, Guevara set off for the Congo, where he spent what was until recently a "missing year." In *The Guardian*, 30 November 1996, Richard Gott wrote an article piecing together what happened between Guevara's disappearance from Cuba in March 1965 (he resigned both his leadership post and his Cuban citizenship) and his ill-fated expedition to Bolivia, which began in November 1966.

Contemporary commentators thought that Guevara's expedition signalled a break with Castro, but in fact it had the full back-

ing of the Cuban leadership. From 1960-63, the Congo crisis was headline international news. Taking the pseudonym Tatu, meaning three, Che and 150 specially-trained black Cuban guerrillas flew to Africa. They fought with the Peoples Liberation Army of Congo, and on the side of Laurent Kabila. The expedition was fraught with difficulties: many Cubans, including Guevara, became sick (Guevara suffered from asthma); Congolese fighters were sometimes unable to master their weaponry.

The Cubans were forced to flee to Tanzania in November 1965. Here Guevara wrote a document from which researchers have drawn the bulk of their conclusions. It turned out that Guevara's 'resignation' was to cover the Cuban government should he fail. Guevara was welcomed back by Fidel Castro on his (secret) return to Cuba in July 1966.

The final events of Guevara's life and his murder are better known, thanks to the questionable testimony of Felix Rodriguez, the CIA agent who was sent to Bolivia following Guevara's capture by the Bolivian Special Forces. Rodriguez witnessed the night of Guevara's death, when Sergeant Mario Teran emptied his machine gun into Guevara's body in a schoolhouse in the village of Higuata.

There has been an historical dispute over whether the CIA or the Bolivian President authorised Che's murder. His hands, cut off for identification, were returned to Cuba, whilst his remains were buried near the town of Vallegrande. Just this summer, these remains were "discovered," dug up and returned to Cuba. They were buried in a mausoleum last month near Santa Clara, the scene of his greatest military triumph.

What are revolutionary socialists to make of the life and politics of Che Guevara? As a man he was, in the words of Jorge Castaneda, "generous, idealistic, unselfish," expressing the, "heroism and nobility of the Latin American middle class," and a, "symbol of the impossibility of indifference." In the early 1950's he chose to give up an affluent life as a doctor to join the fight against American imperialism in Latin America, and against this most powerful enemy he remained implacably opposed until his death. In 1959 he helped to lead what was ostensibly a popular revolution against a hated dictator, and later reacted to the evident bureaucratisation of the Cuban revolution by continuing some kind of internationalist struggle in other countries. Che was certainly a man who gave his life to a struggle for what he perceived to be human freedom, and for whom theory and practice were intimately connected.

For these actions and attitudes we should honour Che Guevara, without pretending that his leftward evolution in the mid-60's meant he was moving toward revolutionary socialism or Trotskyism. In fact, he

denounced Fourth International supporters in Cuba on TV (then apologised) in 1961. And his attitude appeared to harden in 1964, when he called them "divisionists," with, "no history of support to the revolution." The idea that Guevara was some kind of "unconscious Trotskyist," as argued by some on the left (especially in the US), is ridiculous.

In fact, the small Trotskyist group active in Cuba during and after the revolution — the POR(T), who believed that Cuba had become a healthy workers' state and made only limited criticisms of Castro — were the object of a crackdown which began in May 1961 when their paper, *Voz Proletaria*, was seized and the plates for Trotsky's book *Permanent Revolution*, were smashed. In a 1962 interview with Maurice Zeitlin, Guevara claimed this repression was, "an error," committed by a second-rank official, but that the Trotskyists were, "acting against the revolution."

THERE is some other evidence to suggest that Guevara disagreed with the repression and intervened to gain the release of some of the Trotskyist leaders. From 1963, he shielded some Trotskyists known to him from prison sentences and even from the death penalty. Trotskyist Roberto Acosta continued to work for the Cuban state with Che's tacit approval. However, we also know that Guevara led the praise for the PSP on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its paper, *Hoy*, in 1963 — despite its scurrilous role before the revolution.

Although there is evidence of his growing disillusionment with Russian Stalinism by this stage, it does not mean he embraced a Trotskyist account of international politics. His attitude to Trotskyism was contradictory. Moreover Guevara extracted a price for the Trotskyists' freedom. In 1965 on the instigation of G-2 he made them give up their political propaganda and activity. Whatever his reading matter, Guevara was neither willing, if indeed he was able, to secure the Trotskyists' right to dissent.

"Trotskyism" however, moved closer to Guevarism. Post-Trotsky Trotskyism adopted a millenarian, contentless and agentless view of "revolution." Like many of the would-be Trotskyists of the 1960s, Guevara understood the, "uninterrupted revolution," to be an ill-defined process, to be led by an elite band of cadres who would make, "the revolution" — i.e., create a benevolent Stalinist state, on behalf of the people.

This is entirely at odds with Trotsky's idea of the permanent revolution, where the working class is the leading class of the revolution, fighting for its own interests at the same time as seeking to answer the democratic, land, anti-imperialist and national questions of other oppressed classes and strata. Revolutionaries play an irreplaceable

role but they do not substitute themselves for the workers movement.

We should not forget that Guevara was one of the architects of a Stalinist state in Cuba, which to this day holds down by terror the independence of the Cuban workers. For all the recent eulogies of Che in Cuba, Britain and elsewhere, this central question of his legacy has been conspicuously ignored.

Guevara's strategy of a guerrilla seizure of power is not an answer for revolutionaries in Latin America (or elsewhere) in the present period, particularly given the growth in the size and weight of the working class in these societies. Clearly Che's actions in Cuba in 1957-59 involved more than just guerrilla fighting divorced from big struggles, and the J26M did go some way to organising peasant resistance to the landlords and the government. The best of this tradition is represented today by the Zapatistas in Mexico.

However, other attempts at guerrilla warfare, including Che's own fateful expedition to Bolivia, did not successfully mobilise the peasantry and the elitism of these guerrilla bands does little to promote the mass action of workers in the cities against capitalism. For this, a revolutionary party is the historic instrument of the socialist revolution, not the guerrilla foco.

Whilst we honour his fighting spirit, we evaluate Che Guevara on his politics, the very thing that he fought and died for.

An historical footnote.

"The myth-creating force of popular fantasy has manifested itself in all times in the invention of 'great men.' The most striking of this sort is indisputably Simon Bolivar." Karl Marx, Herr Vogt, 1860.

Historical analogies and comparisons are not always useful or valuable, and quotes from Marx on their own do not tell us how to evaluate a twentieth century figure like Che Guevara. However, I think our attitude to Guevara can be informed by some evaluations made by Marx of comparable characters from his period. Centrally, Marx's attitude towards individuals turned on their attitudes to the working class and its struggles, and how their life's work and deeds related to the progressive political aims of the socialist movement. On these criteria, Guevara saw himself at best as making, "the revolution," for the workers, rather than the workers emancipating themselves, and, although the overthrow of Batista in 1959 was unquestionably a progressive act in the interests of Cuban workers, this does not mean we should be uncritical of its consequences, which were ultimately to deny Cuban workers any political and economic freedom. Acknowledging objective processes does not necessarily imply political support by working class socialists for them. The nearest analogies are, I think, with Bolivar, the "Liberator" of South America, Hungary's Louis Kassuth and the Italian revolutionary Mazzini. They too fought, with varying degrees of success, for broadly progressive goals in the nineteenth century, but Marx did not flinch from political criticism of their actual role in the class struggle. Neither should we when discussing Che Guevara.

When Our Lady of the Catwalks died

IN the two weeks following the death in a car crash of Princess Diana, the former wife of the heir to the throne, an out-pouring of grief, mourning and fantasy engulfed millions of people in Britain and beyond. Certainly, it was media-orchestrated, but it was much more than that. It was one of the strangest, and probably most significant, things seen in British public life in a long time. It has had a small-scale sequel in the media treatment of the case of Louise Woodward, a 19 year old child-killer convicted after due process in an American court: the same taking of sides on civic events and personalities as in a football match, a wrestling contest or a TV soap opera, the same blurring of the line between reality and media fictions and factoids, the same sort of emotion freed from the shackles of reason.

Patrick Avakuum made this day-to-day account of what was happening in Britain in the week after the death of Princess Diana, for a friend temporarily out of the country and for himself.

Sunday 31 August, 1997

Princess Diana has been killed in a crash — with her lover, an Egyptian. All day, two TV channels have done nothing but report and comment on it in reverential tones and show and re-show clips of the gilded princess. The lover was Dodi, son of Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods — the man who publicly confessed to bribing Tory ministers and who, though he owns important parts of the country, has repeatedly been refused British citizenship.

Was it really an accident? Ask the police procedural question, "Who benefits?" and it is almost impossible to believe that. It is so wonderfully convenient for "them." Diana has, in her own way, done more for British Republicanism than anyone since Oliver Cromwell! She stole the "magic" of the Royals and, increasingly, she used it against them. Or was it the Royal jelly she stole, like the blundering Goldilocks with the bears' porridge?

With Diana roaming the world, King Charles III would not sleep easy on the throne, or anywhere. Did someone in high places mutter: "Who will rid me of this turbulent princess?"

Monday 1 September

Astonishing media-whipped-up brouhaha over Diana, RIP. Little else on TV. Endless reverential talk and clips depicting her as a "carer," visiting the sick, the poor and the afflicted — a glamorous Mother Theresa. Newspapers are equally full of it, with the same tone of uncritical adulation. She is presented as though she was a candidate for sainthood, with not a hint of the case against her, no Devil's Advocate to question the claims for her sanctity. I expect to hear soon of miracles being worked by Saint Diana of the Catwalk, or by some piece of posh clothing she once wore, and of shrines being set up with a cast-



off tiara in the place of holy relics!

Do you remember the reports in the 1980s that people on some small and isolated South Sea Island had created a religion around the unlikely figure of the Duke of Edinburgh? No kidding! They did. Socialist Organiser had an article on it. Maybe the Duke had visited the island — a great God-like man flying in, surrounded by pomp and glamour and power, glitter and magic-working wealth — a divine being in the eyes of the simple folk.

Here, it is like a General Election, only a lot more of it. It must have been like this, come to think about it, during the Queen's Coronation — except that then mass TV was in its infancy. The mood is different, but it is curiously like what we saw on 2 May, the day after Labour's landslide. Is there a connection?

I guess we have reached saturation level now. It must generate some sobering revulsion and recoil, a backlash maybe. The British people are not fools. Over the last ten years they have stopped forelock-tugging and genuflecting to the Royals. John Bull has ceased to gawp open-mouthed. Royalty has been demystified and revealed as a stodgy, troubled collection of upper-class folk who are extraordinary only in their dullness, wealth and "position." The more we see of the family — the old huntin', fishin', and ridin' ones, and now the younger ones, characters out of a shoppin' and fuckin' trash novel — the more we see the absurdity of the monarchy. These are Wizard of Oz Royals, nothing there behind the facade: the dim, mean, little folk who live up the hill inside an aged and crumbling institution.

The contrast of the last ten years with the attitude to the Royals in the '50s, '60s, and '70s is astonishing, if you remember what it was like

then. I do, because when I first came here from Ireland it was in full swing and I simply could not understand it. I couldn't grasp the why of it, or what there was in this family to look up to. What exactly did they do? What was it in them that brought out this mass respect and reverence?

At home you would sometimes see Eamonn De Valera walking to Mass on a Sunday morning — it was his constituency. The tall, dark, almost blind man who had led the country to independence in a terrible war, which people still talked about a great deal, walked through the town with no fuss or ceremony, even when he was head of the government. People would be unmistakably respectful, but that was all. I thought of De Valera as a hero; but what had these people done? What were they?

Of course, I was more inclined to deride than to understand, but if you thought about it, if you saw it from outside the mystic circle of its devotees, the British monarchy was a mystery. It seemed to indicate something very odd about the British. The question Walter Bagehot had posed, of the mystery of the constitutional role played by, "a retired widow," Queen Victoria, and, "her unemployed son," the future King Edward VII, was too much for my small self to fathom.

Tuesday 2 September

It gets stranger and stranger! Britain is in the grip of a psychological convulsion. Newspapers and TV can scarcely find time or interest for anything but Diana. We must be beyond saturation level now. Reaction must come soon.

Thousands and thousands of people queue for hours to sign memorial books for Diana. Pavements outside her palaces are being covered with carpets of flowers — bouquets and wreaths in tens and tens of thousands. Weeping people, of all classes, say to TV cameras things like: "She was one of us."

I do not understand! All the obvious explanations — projection, film-star glamour, "sex appeal" — are inadequate to the scale and scope of it. This is not about Diana; it is about the people reacting to her death.

Certainly the media whip it up and keep it going and growing. But the egg-whisk effect of media agitation had to have something to whip up. The people of Britain, including most of the media pundits, seem to have had their critical faculties and their sense of reality numbed and paralysed. What makes so many people think they knew Diana? It is not even to be taken as known that her ministrations to the sick — cameras and TV in attendance — were the result of her real feelings and drives rather than following of expert public-relations advice, and then attachment to a role that had brought praise and acceptance.

Was she genuinely concerned for people, identifying with suffering, and did this somehow get across? There is a vast amount of footage, and stories with no visual record, of her visiting sick or homeless or troubled outcasts. The "one of us" theme is everywhere in the stories. Maybe

there was more than camera-courting. Maybe she saw herself as the patron saint of the suffering? Or am I catching the bug? I want to *understand*! But there is no "genuineness" test. On TV, what seems, is.

She may have felt a real affinity with the damaged and the outcast and the "worthless." The psychology would be obvious. Yet the AIDS stuff was the "film-star" cause of the '80s. The "leper" stuff wasn't. But you can see how, encouraged, finding, and expanding in, a role, she could be led on from one to the other. The evidence, which is, of course, edited, sifted and selected by advocates for her saintliness, suggests empathy with and concern for children. Her earlier choice of job is, I suppose, hard evidence for that.

It turns out that her driver was drunk, with three times the permitted alcohol level in his blood.... The conspiracy possibilities multiply enormously.

Wednesday 3 September

The Diana-mourning gets weirder and weirder, my sense that I do not understand, stronger and stronger. Mass hysteria seems to be growing, not abating as you'd expect by now. It begins to become dream-like, nightmarish even, a world out of control, whose laws you don't understand, or where the usual laws are suspended while uncanny things happen. It is like the mass psychology of a riot — or a pogrom, or a witch-hunt. How much is suspended disbelief and how much delusion — or delusion "for now" — I can't guess. Lots of people — millions, so I've read — think of soap opera characters as real people...

Millions are expected at her funeral next Saturday. What did they see in her, or project on to her? People in the street tell TV cameras: "I felt she was the friend I'd not yet met and now never will." Except that they wouldn't have met her anyway.

Sex? She had the essential film-star Love Goddess ingredients. Her private life and sexual history were as well known as those of a certain sort of film or soap star. She discussed it all before millions. She bared her wounds like a hero or a martyr — her anorexia, her bulimia, her insecurities and her damaged self-esteem. This let-it-all-hang-out style was the ethos of the new, media age, villagenation, soap-cosmopolitan Britain; it contrasted markedly with the stiff-upper-lip, upper-crust image of the old Britain, congealed like cold suet in the Royal Family.

At the same time she projected an image of "caring," of motherliness — universal motherliness. That is the central theme of all the media coverage and the film clips. One clip has her saying of her own role something like: "Someone has to go out there and give them love." Is it part of people's innate yearning for a caring, "one-big-family," society?

What we are living through is, I think, a religious phenomenon, or the manifestation of a yearning for religious consolation. Much of Diana's "charity work" and visiting the sick cast her in a benevolent, quasi-religious role as "healer" — if not by magic, then by means of the magic-working money which the publicity generated. Behind the seeming magic — the magic of gold!

It is a bit like the King's touch for scrofula. For many centuries, until the 18th century, people would come at appointed times to be touched by the healing power of the King of England. Diana, in her own way, revived this old Royal function and adapted it for the TV age. The power

of the King's touch was, in Diana, magnified and multiplied by the power of the media, of annexed, mobilised, borrowed, bestowed, multi-headed celebrity, which is here in the final analysis, the power to mobilise money. (Or is that "reductionism"?)

Thursday 4 September

PEOPLE suspend critical functions and lose themselves in a delirium of make-believe.

How can they? Is it the same thing as projecting themselves onto images of pop stars and footballers? Or is that the point? They want to, need to. I don't understand! Are people so empty?

Like the delirious crowds all over Europe, with no sense of the reality of it, cheering the outbreak of war in 1914 — a break in the monotony of life?

It is TV pseudo-religion for the millennium: the beautiful but also mothering sugar-ice fairy-tale figure off the Christmas cake, living the life of a multi-millionaire in a prime US super-rich fantasy soap, and chatting on TV about her bulimia, her rotten marriage, and her lovers — a modern adaptation of, "bathe your hands in the bleeding wounds of Christ." Bathe your sorrows in the tears of Diana! It is all presented naively, on the level of old-fashioned romantic pop-song values, conceptions and standards. And she was a "good Mum"!

One marked note in the generally naive and uncritical comments of people interviewed in the endless TV marathon is a, "them and her," critical attitude to the Royal Family. "Them," and us? People are asked to evaluate the behaviour and "performance" of the Royal Family as they would a drama or a football match. There is a lot of open criticism. It is evoked, but I think real: there has to be something for the media to tap into.

No-one says that Diana's marriage, for example, is simply not something they can know about directly. There is a strong, unformulated, anti-Royalist and maybe anti-Establishment element in the hysteria. Diana was a victim of "them.". Like us? She is seen as a rebel — a glamorous fantasy "rebel," and a rebel only in fantasy.

The idea is simply ridiculous of accepting as a rebel the earl's daughter who married the prince and was wronged by the prince, and by Camilla, one of Cinderella's ugly sisters. (The physical evaluation and abuse of the prince's paramour has been one of the nastier things in public life for a long time.) It sharpens my feeling of history having moved backwards. Rebel anti-monarchs in the 15th century — Jack Cade and Perkin Warbeck, for example — would claim to be the rightful king, the long-lost heir. There is the suggestion of a scene from Shakespeare that keeps half-coming to mind, but I can't drag it into consciousness. Are we back in a framework where you can't say, "Down with the King!" without saying, "Long live the other King!"

Diana was the "people's princess," the good Queen that never was. Diana, the charitable super-millionaire, one of them who was also, "really," one of us. Was she Britain's Eva Peron?

Of course there is pity for one cut down so young, and a potent mix of death and sexuality, of Eros and Thanatos — the fascination of the death of such a one in such a way. But the mixture is strange. The whole business is plainly pathological.

Friday 5 September

I think I'm living in a world gone raving mad! Five

or six million are expected to turn out for the funeral tomorrow! Under pressure, the Queen has appeared on TV to say what a wonderful person Diana was! I'll bet it choked her.

Endless TV images continue of Diana with the sick and the diseased. And, getting in on the act of one who muscled in on hers, the Original, Mother Theresa herself, has died in Calcutta. To no avail: she did not succeed in pushing Diana out of the limelight!

The mystical little old lady living for decades in Calcutta's slums cannot compete with the pretty lady who lived in palaces and mixed with pop stars and fashion designers.

Mother Theresa was on some levels a bit of a fake herself. Much of the, "healing," element in the operation in Calcutta was spurious. It was a "soul-gathering," rather than a body-healing, enterprise. And Mother Theresa, as we "know" her, was also a media creation. Malcolm Muggeridge, when he got too old to do, or enjoy, the rakish things he had spent his life doing — drinking and polygamous fucking, for example — turned religious and, with geriatric hysteria and self-hypnotising wishfulness, started to denounce worldly things and even life itself, which he somewhere called, "the disease." He "invented" the media Mother Theresa, with a pioneering documentary. He found the opposite of himself and tried to hide behind it.

But, even so, the lifestyle that went with Mother Theresa's do-gooding contrasted very remarkably with Diana's. The soap-opera saint is glamorous and saintly while living "the good life" of the very rich to the full. That gives the story piquancy. That gives point to, "She was one of us." Mother Theresa was on the dark side of the moon; Diana on the light. Diana's moving in two worlds — coming "down" and "out" from theirs to "ours," and down to the deeper depths beyond "ours," was essential to the tone, the flavour, the tension, and, of course, the glamour.

If Diana had divested herself of the glamour and super-rich lifestyle, wouldn't she have lost all or much of the power to capture people's imaginations? Isn't there a horrible undertaste of deference and forelock-tugging in the response? Like the Cockney patois that says to people: she's a princess, or he's a prince? And calls people "guv'nor"? Implicit, deep, acceptance of a natural state of hierarchy, and gushing, "roll-over-and-she'll-tickle-my-belly," gratitude for a little bit of condescension. Sex appeal plays a massive role in it, I think.

Diana was to Mother Theresa what Elvis Presley was to the black music he diluted and bowdlerised and "whitened" to make it widely acceptable. Wasn't she brave to stand out and, "be herself," against the conventions of her role? Yes. But how much of it was media-led?

A diamond necklace worth £120,000 which Al Fayed had just bought for Diana was found in the crashed car. There is no evidence of this producing a distancing effect, but rather speculation: were they getting engaged? Evita, Queen of Hearts and of Argentina's non-class-conscious poor, indulged in immensely vulgar ostentatious consumption. Still, millions of the deprived saw her as their representative, living out vulgar fantasies for them — as their proxy, their vicar at the tables and in the salons and the beds of the lords of the earth. This is displaced religion.

The thing in Shakespeare, a typical "mob" scene of the "cheesy-breathed" multitude fawning on the great, keeps coming to the verge of

memory, but no further... Probably because I don't want to think the thought: these people happily let themselves live in media-orchestrated pseudo-democracy of vulgar obsequiousness towards glamourised nothingness — and they call it freedom! But I don't know where media-fostering ends and real mass feeling begins. And the fantasy of a caring "one of them," and resentment at the others, may be the raw material of something better than this degrading nonsense.

The current of resentment is strong within the fascination and the seeming Royalism (real Royalism, too, for Diana's son is second in line to the throne.)

However it got going, this is now out-of-control hysteria. Is it like nationalism and chauvinism and... home team games, the feeling of enhanced belonging, of communal celebration that simulates the feeling of community when it is weak or does not exist. "Doing good," "caring," "loving," warmth and maternal concern are the keynotes.

I suppose this hysteria has been primed for a span of over 16 years, since the wedding in 1981. Is the sharp contrast between the image Diana projected and the dominant, brutally Thatcherite, devil-take-the-hindmost ethos of those years important?

We live still in a world of organised and orchestrated hysteria, of belief in astrology and the Stars, where pop stars — the Stones, the Who, Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan — over a lifetime build up devotees like religious cultists following an ancient god or a Christian saint. What else but semi-religion is the devotion of people who may go through life, like the elephant boy Mahood who grows old in sync with his elephant, attached to a pop star like Bob Dylan, engaging in rituals like attendance at uncomfortable pop festivals? This is the world in which Diana achieved superstardom, a hungry, none too rational world.

In TV interviews, "the public" is theatre critic of the Royal vaudeville, evaluating the once-revered Royals for the quality of their shows of emotion. It would be intolerable at a village funeral. Here it creates the illusion of being involved in such a funeral, the funeral of someone you know. It is a spin-off from discussing the performance of footballers and the like. Except that here people are evaluating and judging without standards other than the real but inappropriate ones of family and neighbourhood life, and without perspective, and — above all, and this is what troubles me most — without real, sure knowledge. It is "judgment" disarmed, transfixed, hypnotised and led by the nose after the TV image of the pretty, "caring" lady — "judgment" reduced to gawping in opulent shop windows.

Does TV, and life reported as heightened drama, regress mass intelligence to the superficiality of an imaginary omniscience the manipulated two-dimensional images seemingly bestow? We have the pseudo-democracy of village gossip with, in the case of mass TV, less real direct knowledge than villagers would have. There is a pseudo-democratic breaking-down of class barriers, but with the people as spectators, like the peasant peering in the palace window.

It is very far from real democracy. Yet the element of mass critical response to the show, even though it is now a response in the Royals' own terms, may grow to criticism of the show as such — just as the demand for religious freedom of opinion grew into the demand for the freedom to be against religion, and into our modern idea

of intellectual freedom in general.

Saturday 6 September

The endlessly repeated accounts of Diana visiting the sick and the homeless, on camera and "secretly," are the stuff of a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, an uplifting account of the Life of a Saint, in which there would be much of everyday life to identify with. Or of old tales and modern legend — say, a ballad such as Woody Guthrie's Pretty Boy Floyd. The 1930s outlaw and Public Enemy to the FBI comes and begs a meal from a poor family, then goes — "and underneath the napkin left a thousand dollar bill." Never mind that such people would probably wind up in jail if they tried to cash it...

Is it that TV and modern communications, making bridges across time, space and social class, generate an effect akin to what ignorance and imagination, and the spooky God-and-the-spirits-are-everywhere feeling, creates in primitive or very religious people? Everything and anything is possible. Much is not known, but everything seems to be. Are we made back into such a million-headed tribe by the illusion of closeness and omniscience created by mass communications?

Such tribes would elect a God-priest-king — and kill him in season... Diana, Queen of Hearts in the global village, whose death stirs (and satisfies) the village's imagination and other faculties.

"I think this strange outpouring of emotion, the delusion of empowerment, is all of a piece with the enthusiasm for Blair at the beginning of May."

Isn't it to do with the nature of mass media — vast, intense overdrive and hype? You see it in the mad inflation of pop music and football: a mechanical, structural, in-built characteristic of mass media that quickly gets out of control where lucre-generating interest exists and can be magnified...?

What is most horrible is that people do not stop and remind themselves that they know very little about Diana. It is their open-mouthed willingness and eagerness to be fed images and consolation and sentimental spurious identifications — even identification with cathartic and vicarious "rebellion."

It is the crowd scenes in Julius Caesar that I have been trying to pull out of my memory. The crowd lurches from their old favourite Pompey, defeated and killed by Caesar, to enthusiasm for Caesar, then to vacillation between Brutus, Caesar's assassin, and Anthony, Caesar's avenger. These are helplessly ignorant and essentially powerless people, making mock-wise, foolish, grey-beard grave comments and evaluations of the Great Ones — as so many have in the last week, on camera in the streets. And to the London crowd in Richard III, the usurping, child-murdering, own-mother-slandering monster has only to walk on his balcony between two priests, making a show of "goodness" and holiness by pretending to read a prayer book, to win the citizens over.

Shakespeare was no democrat. He hardly could have been, living when he did. His idea of democracy came from Plutarch's references to ancient democracy. But I have this persistent feeling that we have regressed! Is it such an illusion? People are in fact more politically helpless than for a very long time. How, in a world where the political parties say interchangeable things, where politics is increasingly bureaucratised, where the Labour Party has in effect been hijacked by the bourgeoisie, can they express themselves politically? How might they actually go about controlling what happens to them and to their society?

Whatever ends they would strive for, they lack political means of achieving them. The vote, without your own political party, in a political world dominated and structured by way of parties, is a hopelessly debased throwaway coin. People who wanted a proper National Health Service voted Labour on 1 May. What control have they over what the government does? None, unless they get rough on the streets, and maybe not much even then. No wonder "saviours from on high" are fashionable again. I do think this strange outpouring of emotion and fantasy, the delusion of empowerment that is part of the critical mood, is all of a piece with the enthusiasm for Blair at the beginning of May.

One aspect of it is that Diana, it is reported, is particularly popular with black people, homosexuals, and women. People need more than their own lives give them, need to see themselves projected large and glammed up: that's the point about the popularity of the Australian soaps like Neighbours and Home and Away in which nothing happens but mundane things, common in everybody's life — even, at that, in exceptionally dull lives — but most of the actors are pretty and fanciable, and some of them gorgeous. The self-projecting, self-worshipping Holy Family, with libido raw and plain, instead of disguised in mystical religious feeling...

Sunday 7 September

Yesterday was the day the Brits turned into Hibernians! Lots and lots of people weeping openly to the strains, relayed out into streets from Westminster Abbey, of the awful bewigged Elton John singing an old song, recycled for the occasion — the drippiest, most falsely romantic and sentimental stuff you ever heard. Diana was a "candle in the wind," burned out long before her legend, "ever w-e-e-e-ill."

Two and a half billion people all over the world saw the funeral! Shakespeare's ghost was there too, writing the script. Diana's lord of a brother made a ringing speech in the Abbey — to applause from those within the Abbey and outside in the streets — implicitly criticising the Royal Family, and promising to bring up Diana's children, one of them a future king, according to her, and not "their," values and priorities. If a vote could have been taken then, he would have been proclaimed Regent for young King William, and Charles and the others dispatched to the Tower! It was Laertes in Hamlet, brother of the dead Ophelia, leading "the mob" to storm the King's palace. He made an open appeal for people to transfer their feelings for Diana to the future king.

The Queen of Hearts — the star who joined the dowdy, musty, ageing rep company and stole the show — is dead! Long live her son who will one day be king! Will he?

Dockers worldwide vs. capital worldwide

"We are the muscles and brains that make it work"

THE Liverpool dockers' dispute is now 26 months old. In October the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company made a pay-off offer, to be voted on by secret ballot. The dockers rejected the deal by over two to one. The vast majority want their jobs back, and are prepared to stick it out until they win.

Despite international solidarity from dockers as far afield as Japan, America and Australia, the Liverpool dockers have been isolated in the British labour movement. The anti-union laws fetter our class, preventing solidarity action that

would strengthen us in our battles against the bosses.

Sacked Liverpool docker, Herbie Hollerhead spoke to Jill Mountford of *Workers' Liberty*. He had the following to say:

WE have received some fantastic international solidarity. Initially, we went over to the continent to talk to dockers in Germany, Denmark and Norway. We got the support of the rank and file dockers and on occasion the union leaderships. In Germany, dockers' support groups have been set up and they have raised money for dockers and their families. This support is vital for us and our families, especially after being out so long. But the real international solidarity, that is, the solidarity that has really hit back at the bosses, has come from dockers in America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Japan.

Dockers all over the world have responded brilliantly at the days of International Action we've called. Dockers have brought key ports to a standstill worldwide. Cargo from Liverpool and Medway (another port controlled by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company) has remained on ships for months, going from one port to another because dockers refuse to touch the boxes. This is how you hit back at the bosses.

Goods from Liverpool and Medway were on a ship called the Neptune Jade. The shipping line changed the numbers on the boxes in an

attempt to trick American dockers into shifting them. The American dockers flatly refused to move any cargo whatsoever until the bosses identified the goods from Liverpool and Medway. The boxes then went on to Japan. The Japanese dockers took the same line as the American dockers. The last we heard the goods were thousands of miles from their stated destination, somewhere in the Pacific Ocean! You can begin to see the power we have if we simply stick together.

In the recent secret ballot the dockers voted over 2:1 to reject a pay-off. The bosses' offer consisted of a lump sum and the reinstatement of our pension rights for the last two years. 97 men voted in favour, but 244 voted against. The 97 men said they would respect the majority decision. That's how trade union democracy should work.

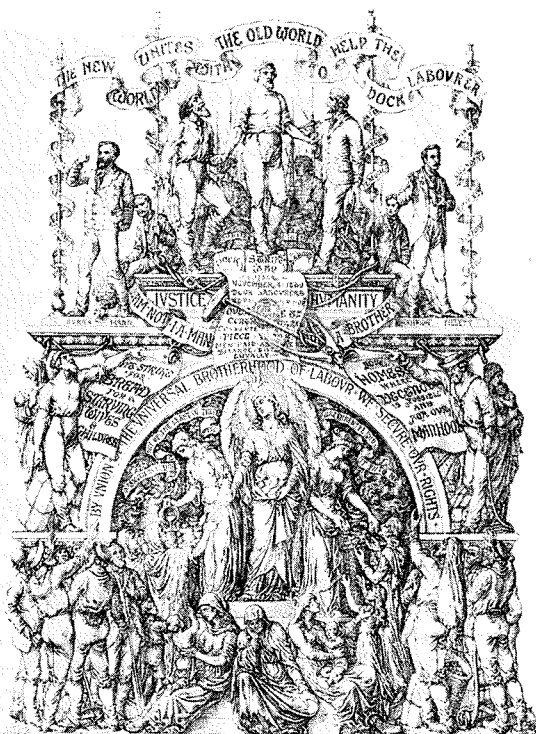
The bosses were shocked by the size of the rejection, and by the response of the 97 who voted in favour of the offer.

Next they sent out individual letters offering a £28,000 lump sum. We have now heard that 15 men have accepted this latest offer, and that the 15 men have now heard that the bosses have reneged on their offer of reinstating their pension rights for the last two years. This will cost the 15 more than £11,000 each.

The Socialist Campaign Group of MPs are going for another Early Day Motion in an effort to get our case discussed in Parliament. The Labour Government is the biggest shareholder in the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company. We want them to use that power to get some justice. So far they have refused to do so.

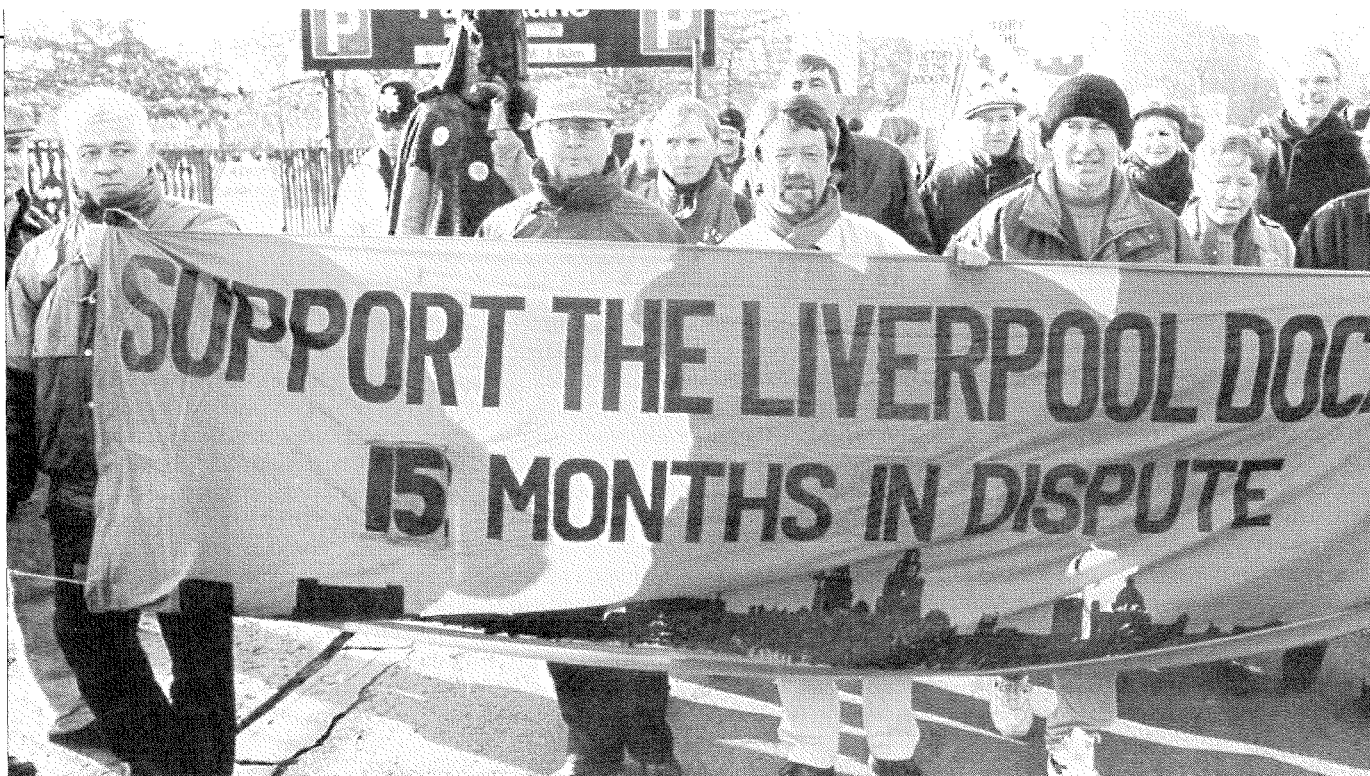
After two years the men and their families are feeling a bit battered. It is not enough knowing you're right, you need to know you're supported, you need to know you can win.

Since the ballot result and since



IN COMMEMORATION OF THE GREAT STRIKE SEPT 1889

International solidarity has always been paramount. In the great docks' strike of 1889 Australian dockers came to the aid of British dockers



some of the men accepted the offer the police seem to have stepped up their attacks on us. Merseyside is not one of the richest areas in the country as everyone knows. It desperately needs money for schools, hospitals, homes and jobs. Yet local people have been forced to pay £2.4 million so far on policing the dockers' picket lines and demonstration. The people of Merseyside have never been balloted on whether they wanted their local taxes to be spent in this way.

The police should be chasing the real criminals, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, who have robbed 500 dockers of their livelihoods.

The dock company turn a blind eye to what's going on the picket lines and so, unfortunately, does Bill Morris, the leader of our union.

Before the ballot result Morris promised to meet us whatever the outcome. He too was obviously shocked by the result, because of all a sudden he's not available for a meeting.

At a union recruitment meeting in

Birmingham we gave out leaflets outlining our case, the case for solidarity, the basic reason for unions existing. We asked a simple question in our leaflet. "Why try to recruit more members to the union, when the unions leadership is not prepared to defend existing members?"

We want an answer from Bill Morris

"It doesn't matter if you speak Japanese or American, workers of all languages understand the word solidarity!"

on this and other questions.

Jimmy Nolan, the Chair of our Committee, is standing for election to the National Executive Council of the TGWU. The campaign we're running to get him elected is in opposition to the anti-union laws. We want them scrapped. We want to get British workers into a position where they can fight to win improvements and, most importantly, can fight together in solidarity.

The big lesson for us all in this battle should be about the importance of solidarity.

At the beginning of this battle we realised how potentially powerful we are. You see, the bosses can close factories down and move them elsewhere if the workers get stropy. They can move the workers elsewhere if the factories are too expensive in one place or another. But they can't move the ports! This is one reason why worldwide solidarity from other dockers has been so good.

It doesn't matter if you speak Japanese or American, workers of all languages

understand the word solidarity!

THE Liverpool dockers have in recent times taken solidarity action in support of dockers in Spain and South Africa. They won their battles. It's not just British dockers who have been under attack. Since 1989 dockers all over the world have faced similar attacks.

There are something like 6 massive shipping lines that move the world's goods. The globalisation of capital makes these people very powerful, more powerful than some governments. These bosses have got a virtual monopoly on the transporting of all cargo.

But while they might own the shipping lines, we run them and the globalisation of industries and capital is one thing but international or global solidarity is quite another. We are the muscles and the brains that actually make it work. At the end of the day, it's down to us!

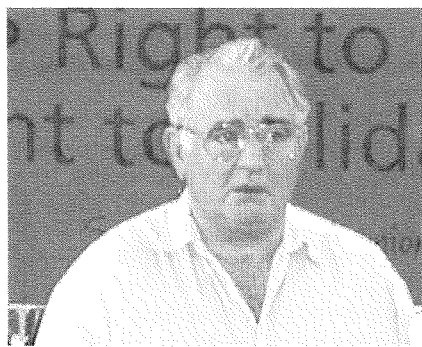
Affiliate to the Free Trade Unions Campaign!

£25 (large union organisations);

£10 (small organisations);

£3 (individuals)

Send cheques (payable to "Free Trade Unions Campaign") to Lol Duffy, Liverpool City UNISON, 8 Victoria Street, Liverpool, L2 6QJ.



Jimmy Nolan, Chair of the Dockers' Committee is standing for the TGWU executive, on a platform of opposition to the anti-union laws. Union militants must campaign to get him elected!

A new politics of emotion?

By Jill Mountford

I believe Louise Woodward, the 19 year old British au pair, played a central role in baby Matthew Eappen's death. I can think of nothing more precious or innocent than a baby. Yet, my initial sorrow at the news of Matthew's death last February, turned, within seconds, to immense sympathy for Woodward. Why?

My assumption was that Woodward had snapped in a fit of rage and frustration, and inability to cope with a demanding baby who couldn't be pacified or comforted. The ill-equipped teenager, without malice aforethought, must, I thought, have lashed out. For the rest of her life she will carry a huge burden of guilt. For me, this is punishment enough. I shouted at the TV for her immediate release: locking up Woodward, little more than a child herself, would not bring baby Matthew back.

Like thousands of au pairs and nannies all over the world, Woodward was far away from home, had had only 4 days child care training and had only a loose emotional tie to the baby left in her charge. It was a tragedy waiting to happen.

Child rearing was never meant to be the responsibility of just one or two adults. Even when those adults are devoted, loving parents. It is a difficult, trying and exhausting job. All too often it is seen as fun, rewarding and satisfying but it also brings huge demands and responsibilities it brings. The death of Matthew Eappen, no doubt, sent shivers down the spines of working mothers who, to hold down a job, have to turn a blind eye to practices their child-minder, nursery nurse or nanny might employ.

Woodward is a young working class woman who earned only £1.70 an hour, working long stretches, for a rich middle class family who had it all: big house, good careers, a young family — and cheap childcare. Well off and privileged the Eappens may be, but now they are devastated parents grieving the death of an eight month old son.

The American media cast a cold judgmental eye over Matthew's mother: she was a poor mother for continuing her career after the baby came.

Childcare here and in America is mainly private provision: not seen as a priority for governments. Britain has the most expensive pre-school childcare in Europe. Yet, the need for decent, affordable, child-centred, childcare has not been discussed in the countless column inches and hours of TV debates sparked by the Woodward case.

For the gutter press this side of the Atlantic, much of it has been nothing more than hysterical nationalism. The tabloids have whipped up a campaign to, "bring back our Louise," without any serious discussion about what has happened, and seemingly without

regard for the dead baby. It is enough for the tabloids that a British woman is being tried and convicted in a foreign land.

The day after the original verdict (second degree murder), The Mirror had over 11 pages of coverage. But it's not just the tabloids and daytime TV. The broadsheets have carried long discussion articles and lots of readers' letters.

Most letters favoured Woodward's release because Woodward is a young woman whose crime was not pre-meditated, or on points of law, or because prison is no fit place for a young woman. Readers' letters, protests outside the courthouse in Massachusetts, the campaign from Louise's home village of Eltham proclaiming her innocence... is there, as some commentators suggest, a new politics of emotion of the sort that swelled up in grand style over the death of Diana?

Then, we were bombarded by the mass media telling us we were a, "nation in mourning," grieving the loss of our "Queen of Hearts." After a week of that was it any wonder millions lined London's streets to say farewell to a woman with whom they had little in common and had never really known? How much did media coverage reflect mass feeling and how much did mass feeling reflect the media coverage? The same questions are there in the Woodward case.

Yes, the Rigger pub in Eltham, the Woodward family's local, was packed: there could have been as many as fifty or sixty people in there. It is true that Woodward's most vocal supporters and her family were insisting she was innocent. But does this amount to a new politics of emotion in Britain?

At protests outside the court in Middlesex, Massachusetts, American women, men and children called for Louise Woodward's freedom and they, too, declared her innocence. People who only knew her through the lens of a TV camera, or from newspaper reports, carried placards in her defence. How could they feel they know she was innocent? Is there a new politics of emotion that goes beyond Britain?

However you define it, lighting candles, wearing ribbons and coming together with complete strangers in defence or remembrance of an individual arbitrarily elevated to the status of hero or saint, seems to have a growing appeal to increasing numbers of people. It started long before the death of Diana.

Gay communities, in America and all over Europe, wear ribbons, hold mass candlelit vigils and processions to commemorate those who die from AIDS. Diana was closely associated with AIDS charities and made very demonstrative displays of emotion when meeting people infected with HIV and AIDS. People have got progressively more open

about their feelings and this has to be a good thing, yet we are told there has been a breakdown in communities, that society does not exist. Fewer people participate in elections. There is isolation, alienation and a feeling of impotence. The dominant ideology in big politics in America and Britain has over the last eighteen years moved towards a more individualistic, me first, dog-eat-dog ethos.

Maybe the, "problem of emotionalism," is an expression of the feeling that "things" should be better. That there's not enough caring and sharing. The growth in alternative therapies, counselling, environmental/Green politics is perhaps another expression of this. The need for comfort, reassurance and a feeling of taking some control, doing something about the "problem," is one interpretation of these ribbon wearing, candle holding individuals who come together to defend, remember and grieve.

If there is a politics of emotion, a real politics rather than a media creation — and I'm not convinced there is — it is by its very nature subjective. More people, largely children, die of diarrhoea related illnesses each year than from AIDS. Lots of people do very good work for charities and causes like leprosy and land mines. Millions of people who are locked up prisons, in barbaric, inhumane conditions shouldn't be. Yet they don't evoke the same emotions or the same response.

John Venables and Robert Thompson are at present detained at her majesty's pleasure for the murder of Jamie Bulger. In this case the two ten year olds murdered a more fully formed, walking, talking baby, a toddler aged two and a half years. There were no candlelit vigils, no ribbons and no protests for their freedom — no demands for better care for the two little boys whose lives so far had lacked love, direction and respect. No big protests that two wrongs don't make a right. It was more difficult to cope with little boys stoning a toddler to death. Baby Matthew Eappen couldn't talk or walk.

Perhaps, for some, babies this young are not seen as fully formed and therefore less emotions are evoked when something dreadful happens to them.

If there is a general and growing desire for a more caring way of living then the labour movement, and the left in particular, need to organise people to fight for objective demands that can positively transform the lives of the majority. A mass campaign for decent, affordable, child-centred childcare is a demand that would transform the lives of millions of children and their parents — and society's attitude generally towards children. This is a demand we could win, a demand that would be a positive step forward for humanity, but it will not be won by wearing ribbons, lighting candles and weeping.

The workers take Petrograd

By Alan McArthur

RED flags had appeared on many official buildings in February but little had changed: the socialist Ministers held office by permission of the classes they claimed to have overthrown — their social traditions, individual incapacity and meagre theoretical baggage all dictated they should share this power with the bourgeoisie.

Thus they took on the solution of insoluble tasks: the people's interests were irreconcilable with those of the propertied. The inner logic of the revolution exposed all those who failed to grasp this.

The front was in ferment, discontent spreading rapidly among the peasants. The workers increasingly distrusted "their" representatives. The Ministers sheltered behind the General Staff. In the background, Generals Kornilov and Kaledin, the "mailed fists of the bourgeoisie," awaited their turn.

As the months went by the impotence of the coalition and provisional governments, and the scarcely veiled designs of the counter-revolution, were revealed. But another power was arising, its roots in the factories, barracks, mud of the trenches and the landhungry countryside.

The demands for peace, land and bread echoed the deep needs of the people, voiced through the soviets, which soldiers, workers and peasants constantly sought to mould into organs of their own power.

The soviets' influence spread far and wide. Within them, the influence of the Bolsheviks increased day by day, and within the Bolshevik Party, Lenin's views, advocating the soviets take power — considered pure adventurism in April — were soon realised to be the only ones offering a solution to the crisis.

Events moved rapidly. The June offensive. The July demonstrations. Kornilov's attempted coup...

Class consciousness surged forward. Successive leaderships were tested, found wanting and rejected. Alone the Bolsheviks knew what they wanted and were able to pass from words to action.

The second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was to be held in September, but the old executive, threatened by the



growth of Bolshevik influence, decided to postpone it until after the Constituent Assembly was convened. Scheduled for December, this was postponed several times over the summer. The Bolsheviks, in the name of the soviets of northern Russia, decided to summon the Congress themselves.

The old executive at first strenuously opposed this call. But when confronted with the obvious, increasing response they attempted to lead the movement, the better to guide it into "harmless," "constitutional" channels.

THE Congress was to meet at Smolny, on November 2 — later postponed to November 7. The Bolsheviks were confident of a majority. After much discussion it was decided to seize power through the Petrograd soviet and place it in the Congress' hands at the opening session, confronting them with a fait accompli and compelling a decision.

The government, having vacillated for weeks, decided on drastic measures. Petrograd, Kronstadt and Finland were declared in a state of siege. Cossack troops patrolled the streets for the first time since the July days.

On the night of November 5-6 the Ministers summoned their courage: they

would move reliable troops into Petrograd, smash the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) set up a few days earlier by the soldiers of the Petrograd soviet, suppress the Bolshevik newspapers and arrest the soviet leaders.

In the morning the Winter Palace guards were reinforced, armoured cars lined up in front of Staff Headquarters, the officers in the military schools asked to prepare for all eventualities.

Instructions went out to open the bridges over the Neva; the cruiser Aurora — its crew won to the Bolsheviks — ordered to regain the high seas; all garrisons confined to barracks; public meetings forbidden. There was one minor drawback: no-one was capable of enforcing these decrees.

Cadets did succeed in closing the print-shop of one Bolshevik paper, but Smolny sent over a company of the Lithuanian Regiment. Printing was resumed.

The Aurora refused to sail, instead taking up position as instructed by Smolny.

Later that day the MRC put all regiments on a war footing. These acts of open defiance heralded the insurrection proper. The power of the government was exposed as illusory.

Smolny was fortified. Sections of the soviet were in permanent session within the Institute and the working-class areas of Petrograd.

The Central Committee took its final decisions, the practical details worked out by the MRC. Congress delegates were arriving. Power must be taken within 24 hours.

Kerensky meanwhile addressed the Pre-Parliament (that still-born substitute for an elected assembly), for the last time seeking endorsement for his emergency measures. The uproarious meeting failed to reach agreement, the whole afternoon spent in the vain search for magic formulas to solve the problems of class relations.

The pseudo-deputies denounced the reaction, Bolsheviks, government and one another. The Committee of Public Safety must lead the struggle it was decided, not the government, which had failed to solve any of the problems confronting it. Even the furious Kerensky's own supporters no longer backed him.

In the afternoon a Municipal Duma deputation went to Smolny to inquire whether an insurrection was envisaged. The balance of forces was changing rapidly: the soviet's leaders were formally under threat of arrest!

In extraordinary session the Duma appointed a Committee of Public Safety, to become the rallying point of the counter-revolution in the days ahead.

Smolny had last-minute doubts about the political reliability of the motor-cycle corps at the strategic Peter-Paul fortress on the Neva, of largely peasant stock, deliberately chosen by the government — and sent down its best agitators. Trotsky spoke.

There were immediate repercussions. Other sections of the motor-cycle corps, detailed to protect the Winter Palace, came over to the Revolution.

Hour by hour the government's military support narrowed and its class character became more obvious.

Yet Kerensky's military orders met with greater success than his appeals to the Pre-Parliament. Throughout the afternoon, cadets occupied the railway stations, guards were placed at the main cross-roads. Private vehicles were requisitioned.

The bridges over the Neva were occupied and raised, in the vain hope of severing all contact between official, bourgeois Petrograd and the proletarian districts.

The answer was immediate. Workers' and soldiers' detachments appeared. Arguments and threats sufficed; the bridges were lowered again.

The main insurrectionary offensive develops in the early hours of 7 November. The arsenals, railway stations, banks, post-office, food depots, power station and the Tauride Palace are occupied by workers and soldiers. Scarcely any opposition is encountered.

Soldiers enter the print-shop of some of the bourgeois papers, welcomed by the night workers. Hundreds of thousands of revolutionary proclamations are printed. Government troops ordered to recapture the premises refuse.

Armoured cars painted with Bolshevik slogans patrol the bridges and key road intersections. Ministers and isolated groups of cadets are arrested. Government troops sent to reoccupy the post office refuse to fight the soviet.

In the working-class districts the trade unions and factory committees spearhead local action. Class and party act as one.

Throughout the night, as power slips into the hands of the MRC a joint meeting of the Petrograd soviet and the

“In the working-class districts the trade unions and factory committees spearhead local action. Class and party act as one.”

old All-Russian Congress of Soviets is held at Smolny.

The compromisers are still at work. The professional politicians manoeuvre. By now, they represent little else than themselves. The people have moved far to the left. The Bolsheviks refuse to compromise with these political nonentities. The long, noisy meeting is inconclusive.

On the third floor, a different picture! Reports of success are pouring into the MRC.

Immediate decisions are taken. Weary, grimy, determined men act with enthusiasm and confidence. The insurrection moves methodically towards completion.

Kerensky spends the first part of the night in the Winter Palace, once again deciding the Bolsheviks must be resolutely tackled. Menshevik leader Dan presses him to take the wind out of their sails, however belatedly, by announcing that peace proposals have been put to the Allies.

The right insists on action of a different kind: no concessions to the

soviets' propaganda, annihilation of the Bolsheviks. Frantic orders are sent to Cossack regiments on the city's outskirts, but still they fail to turn up.

The railways are instructed to suspend passenger services to allow passage of other reinforcements. These do not materialize either.

POLKOVNIKOV, the military commander of the Petrograd region, proposes a march on Smolny. Kerensky acquiesces. Alas, the reliable regiments are revealed to be totally inadequate for the task. Instead, Red Guards occupy the Palace Bridge under Kerensky's very windows.

An urgent conference is held at Staff Headquarters where many officers are sheltering from their troops. Feelings run high. Groups of officers threaten to arrest Kerensky. Chaos prevails.

Kerensky returns to the Winter Palace. The Bolsheviks have cut all telephone communications, Kerensky throws in the towel and hurries out of Petrograd, in a car flying the American flag.

By 10 am on 7 November Smolny proclaims victory, though the formal authority of the provisional government still prevails — at least in the Pre-Parliament and in the corridors of the Winter Palace.

By noon the Marinsky is surrounded. In the afternoon the Lithuanian Regiment and groups of sailors enter the building.

The assembly is peacefully dispersed. Its leaders are not arrested. Many of them set out for the Winter Palace proclaiming they will die in defence of Constituted Authority. They are held up on the way and denied this dubious privilege.

At 2.30 pm Trotsky, speaking on behalf of the MRC, announces that the provisional government no longer exists: “We were told that insurrection would drown the Revolution in a sea of blood — we have no knowledge of even a single victim!”

Throughout the day posters appear announcing victory. In the afternoon, groups of incredulous, agitated bourgeois appear on the streets of the better quarters.

The shops are open, the trains running and the restaurants serving meals. Soldiers and armed workers patrol their city.

Later, great excited crowds pack the streets to argue and watch what is going on. In the evening the theatres and cinemas are full. Chaliapine sings in Don Carlos.



Sailors from the Aurora

At the Winter Palace a curious medley of Ministers without Ministries, generals without troops, monarchist or patriotic politicians, speculators, frightened minor officials and cadets — the political riff-raff of the February regime — await salvation at the hands of non-existent "loyal" battalions.

The high-ranking officers among them no doubt take a gloomy view of their prospects. The defence is entrusted to a civilian, Kishkin, Minister of Public Assistance!

The Bolshevik plan for capturing the Palace grossly over-estimated resistance, and is proving unnecessarily elaborate.

The arrival of the revolutionary detachments from Kronstadt is unavoidably delayed. Several crucial hours elapse.

Further small groups gain access to the Palace: armed cadets, groups from the Military Schools, and later a small detachment of Uralian Cossacks, some Knights of St. George (ex-servicemen) and a further company of the women's battalion. At one time the Palace contained an estimated 1,500 people.

In the late afternoon the Kronstadt sailors appear at last in the Neva estuary. The ring now slowly tightens around the Winter Palace.

By 6 pm the encirclement is completed. Armoured cars occupy the open ground in front of the palace. Attempts at parley fail. Shots are exchanged and the first casualties occur.

Demoralization spreads within the Palace. Agitators are discovered among the cadets. The officer-cadets organize a meeting, insisting on being told what is happening. Ministers attempting to appease them are given a rough passage.

The idea of a glorious last stand loses much of its glamour.

An ultimatum arrives from the Peter-Paul fortress: surrender and disarm the garrison — or the guns of the fortress and the ships in the Neva will open fire.

Twenty minutes to decide. Squabbles among the besieged. The military are for surrender, the civil authorities will hear none of it. It is decided to ignore the ultimatum... and to appeal to the Duma.

The Staff Headquarters, immediately opposite the Winter Palace, are occupied by Red Guards and sailors, without resistance.

Another hour or two pass. The Ministers become increasingly gloomy. They start quarrelling in earnest. Polkovnikov, military commander of the Petrograd region, is deposed as insufficiently energetic and replaced by General Bagratuni, chief of General Staff.

But the General resigns his new appointment after a few brief hours, is publicly demoted and escorted out of the Palace where he is almost lynched by the sailors. Some officers have had too much to drink (the Palace is exceptionally well provided) and duel in the corridors. Others point out the futility of resistance... and are denounced as Bolsheviks.

Desultory firing continues. Further delays on the part of the besiegers, who still hope to avoid unnecessary casualties. Several groups of cadets decide they have had enough. Further arguments. Will they take their artillery out with them or not? They do.

The cannons are turned to face the Palace. Others also leave the Palace, including the Uralian Cossacks. Further parleys between besiegers and besieged,

Chudnovsky actually entering the Palace to conduct negotiations.

THE opening of the Congress of Soviets has to be postponed for a few hours. The Bolsheviks are determined to spare life if possible. But surrender proposals are rejected.

The Aurora fires her first warning rounds, blanks. Further small groups surrender. Infiltrators get into the palace, first singly, then in clusters. Some fight, others spread defeatist rumours. No-one knows who is on which side.

Indescribable chaos ensues. The Ministers seem paralysed.

The defenders attempt to plunge the Palace into darkness but the lights keep going on again.

The bombardment slowly increases. Heavy shells are not used and the crews are reluctant to inflict real damage. The object is still intimidation.

More and more infiltrators gain access to the corridors. Fighting breaks out within the Palace itself. Smolny now insists on a rapid completion of the affair. The ships prepare to open up a really heavy barrage when news reaches them that the Palace has been captured... from within and from without.

The people invade the building in their thousands. At 2.10 a.m., Antonov, in the name of the MRC, arrests the remaining members of the Provisional Government.

That night the All-Russian Congress of Soviets meets, elects a Bolshevik leadership and, in the early hours of November 8, issues the first of its momentous appeals to the workers of Russia and of the whole world. The foundation stone of proletarian power had been laid.

The price of isolation

By Max Shachtman

THE world is paying dearly for the isolation of the Russian Revolution, paying in blood and sweat and tears and in carnage and destruction such as history records nowhere else.

The Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 opened up a new epoch for mankind. It contained the promise of a life of security and peace, of abundance and brotherhood, of equality among men in a world freed of classes and class rule.

What no other social upheaval before it had even dared to hope for, the Russian Revolution proclaimed boldly and confidently. Not the great French Revolution, not even the Paris Commune of 1871, not even the rehearsal of the Russian Revolution in 1905 dreamed that it was the immediate forerunner of international socialism.

The Russian revolutionists of 1917, from their leaders down to the most obscure militant, did believe that they had only made the magnificent beginning, and that the flame that they lighted would burn until it illuminated and warmed the whole earth with the victory of socialism.

But the promise of the Russian Revolution required for its fulfilment the victorious organisation of the revolution in all the great and advanced countries of the world. It was required not only in order that the peoples everywhere might emerge from the blind alley into which capitalism had driven them, but in order that the revolution in Russia itself might establish a socialist order and even less than that — that the Russian Revolution might be maintained at all.

Every intelligent person understood this simple truth. That the two great titans of the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, understood it, it goes without saying. That the whole Bolshevik Party understood it is equally incontestable. Even the backward peasant understood that what he gained from the Bolshevik revolution was constantly in danger of being lost if imperialism abroad continued to remain in power. Woodrow Wilson understood it, and so did Lloyd George and Winston Churchill and Georges Clemenceau and Benito Mussolini and the Emperor of Japan and all the other pillars of the old order, including Adolf Hitler, an obscure corporal in

the German Imperial Army whose name was not known at that time to more than 50 people.

Was the immense confidence of the Bolsheviks in the world revolution mistaken? Before saying categorically "Yes" or "No" it would be better to ask whether Lenin or Trotsky were right in arguing from 1914 onward, and especially from 1917 onward, that the world is living in a period of the final decay of capitalism, of dreadful wars, of socialist revolutions and of colonial uprisings.

The Bolsheviks were right in their optimistic confidence, because their complete lack of confidence in capitalism's ability to restore the old, pre-war, more or less peaceful relationships has been confirmed over and over again in the last quarter of a century. They were right in their optimistic confidence, because for 24 years there has been one revolutionary uprising after another, with no continent, with hardly any one country, exempt. They were right in their optimistic confidence, because capitalism can no longer maintain itself without imposing the most gruesome sufferings upon the hundreds of millions of plain people who make up the world, without spreading the most terrifying devastation everywhere, without destroying all remnants of culture and civilisation.

But they were mistaken in their confidence, too. The Russian Revolution did indeed spread to other countries, but it was not triumphant. Each time it was crushed, and often with the greatest bloodshed. Capitalism proved to be stronger and capable of longer life — if the convulsive agony of capitalism can be called life — than the Bolsheviks thought in 1917 and in 1919.

Yet, wherein is the strength of capitalism represented? In our times, in one thing, and one thing only: in the weakness of the working class which is destined to destroy it. And wherein is the weakness of the working class represented? In its lack of numbers? Not at all; it is numerous enough to crush any enemy. In its social unimportance? No; it remains the indispensable foundation-stone of all modern society. Its weakness lies only in its lack of full class consciousness, in its lack of complete independence from the capitalist class, in

its lack of a fully independent class organisation, class programme, class leadership and class aims.

THE political name of that weakness, from 1914 on (and even earlier) and especially from 1917 on, was the Social Democracy, the Second International. It saved capitalism during and after the First World War. It mowed down the proletarian revolution in Western Europe with machine guns. It seduced and traduced the working class, trading on its past services to labour, on the inertia of traditionalism on the short memory of the workers. It alternately beat the workers into unconsciousness with clubs or lulled them into paralytic sleep with soothing whispers that, by careful medical treatment of the poisoned body of capitalism, by transfusing workers' blood into it, it would not only get well but become transformed painlessly into socialism.

By driving back the wave of revolutions that followed the war of 1914-18, the capitalist class and its social-democratic assistants isolated the Russian Revolution from the rest of the world. The products of this isolation of the revolution are uniformly and universally reactionary. Because the workers of Germany did not take power into their own hands, Hitlerism was imposed upon Germany and then upon the rest of Europe. Because the Chinese workers did not take power when they had the chance to do so, the rotten regime of Chiang Kai-Shek kept the power, enfeebled China, facilitated the attack of the Japanese barbarians and helped in general to perpetuate the precarious rule of these barbarians in Japan itself. Because the French and British workers did not take power, they must now fight in an imperialist war against resurgent German imperialism and fight it under menacing handicaps. So it is throughout the world.

Not the least monstrous of the reactionary products of Russia's isolation, however, is the growth and triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Capitalism's victory over the revolution in the West gave birth to the bureaucracy in Russia as a powerful social force. The bureaucracy, in turn, has repaid its capitalist midwife by invaluable services rendered to keep

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



The Bolshevik leaders of 1917. Stalin is not represented.

it in power throughout the world. What the social democracy could do for only a few years after the end of the war, Stalinism has succeeded in doing since 1933, for 18 long and horrible years.

Masquerading as revolutionary communists, defaming the names of Lenin and Bolshevism under which they operate, the Stalinist bureaucrats systematically undermined the revolutionary and labour movements in one country after another. They took up the work of the social democrats — often co-operating directly with them — if disrupting the unity of the working class. Those organisations they could not dominate, they destroyed. Those revolutionary uprisings they could not misdirect, they crushed, as in Catalonia, with armed force. The hundreds of million of colonial slaves who saw in the great Russian Revolution a beacon of liberty, they cynically betrayed to imperialism. The class-consciousness of a whole generation they tore to shreds. Those they could not win to their ends by persuasion or intimidation or outright

bribery, they sought to discredit and isolate by methods that any half-decent capitalist politician would hesitate to employ.

The havoc they wrought in Russia itself was, in a sense even more sinister in its magnitude. Every trace of the great revolutionary promise of 1917 has literally been wiped out by reactionary force. The Soviets, the most wonderful machinery of popular democratic expression and rule known to history, were wiped out, step by step. The Bolshevik Party itself, which never had its equal as a power for social, historical progress, was physically and ideologically destroyed with a thoroughness and brutality that Tsarism, before 1917, never dared to use, that Hitlerism, since 1933, was never successful in using. The great Communist International, which set more of the world's people into motion for an ideal than did Christianity in all its history, was killed by one hammer blow after another, and a caricature of it set up to do the bureaucracy's dirty chores abroad.

The workers were reduced to the status of slaves, toiling under the despotism of the new ruling class, the bureaucracy. The peasants were made like serfs again, wiped out wholesale, by the millions, to suit the needs of the bureaucracy. For every big factory set up, another concentration camp rose to surround the victims of a totalitarian regime. All intellectual life was transformed into organised, compulsory bootlicking of a vulgar, vain and voracious autocracy, "with Comrade Stalin at its head."

Nothing, absolutely nothing, was allowed to stand in the way of the Atilla-like march to power of the Stalinist bureaucracy. A small section of the heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution was corrupted; by far the great part of it that remained alive after the rigours of the civil war was decimated by Stalin. The noblest figures of October were sent to their graves by assassination, including our greatest contemporary, Leon Trotsky. The murder of this gifted incorruptible symbolised the long-drawn out murdering of the Bolshevik Revolution by the new masters of the Kremlin.

Property — the means of production and exchange — was not restored to the capitalists, to be sure. The bureaucracy was not so simple. Instead it established its own absolute monopoly over the property; or, more accurately, it established complete totalitarian control over the machinery of its own new state in which the ownership of all property is concentrated. It was thus able to rest upon an economic foundation which enabled it to exploit and oppress the Russian masses and the still more cruelly subjected peoples of the national republics, like the Ukraine, White Russia and Georgia and the like with a ferocity and arbitrariness rarely seen in ordinary capitalist countries.

Such is the price that the Soviet working class was compelled by the bureaucracy to pay for the isolation of the Russian Revolution. The totality of the payment has meant the destruction of the rule of the proletariat, of the workers' state and its replacement by the repulsive, reactionary rule of the new bureaucracy.

But just as the idea of building "socialism in a single country" was preposterous and reactionary from its very inception in Stalin's brain in 1924, so even the idea that the new and isolated bureaucratic-collectivist state can long endure is absurd.

Shift and dodge as it would — and did — the Stalinist bureaucracy could not escape entrapment in the mad whirlpool

of contradictions that make up the world of imperialism today. It has been pushed into the Second World War under conditions most unfavourable to it — and, for that matter, to the working class of Russia and the rest of the world. The Russian working class is drawing on all the vast reservoirs of idealism, courage and self-sacrifice that it has tapped on more than one occasion. It is now fighting the armies of Hitler with a courageousness that evokes such universal admiration not because it loves Stalin more but because it loves Hitlerism less; more accurately, because it detests Hitlerism, and indeed all foreign rule, with a fierceness that all the still-unforgotten heroic memories of the Russian Revolution imbue it. They are

impelled and resolved in their resistance to the Axis and all it stands for by an even more masterful type of the spirit that animates the workers and peasants of the Balkans of Poland, of Norway, of France, of the workers of Britain, who fear and hate Hitlerism with the same irreconcilability. But like the embattled British workers and the other true enemies of fascism on the European continent, the Russian masses are now being exploited by their rulers for the cynical imperialist directors of the Allied “democracies”. The policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy have driven the fighters of Russia right into the camp of the imperialist democracies it serves today, as it served the imperialist totalitarian states up to yesterday.

What more accurate reflection could there be of the real role of Russia in the World War today than the fact that congenital enemies of the Russian Revolution such as Churchill and Beaverbrook vie with each other to send aid to Stalin, that the Stalinist regime is dependent for its very life upon the good will of Anglo-American imperialism?

The Stalinists here screech with hysterical frenzy for the, “defence of the Soviet Union,” coupling their demand with the call for support of the imperialist war of the democracies and for the self-strangulation of the American working class — another sign that Stalinist self-preservation goes hand in hand with the enslavement of the working class. However much they are actuated by revolutionary considerations, others who now cry for the, “defence of the Soviet Union,” in this war find themselves completely unable to tell the working class just what it should do for this “defence.” For defence of Stalinist Russia in this war, like defence of England in this war, means support of the camp of democratic imperialism. Hence, the impotent clamour of the Cannonites.

The revolutionary defence of Russia, like the revolutionary defence of the working class and its rights in England, can mean only one thing in this war: the unremitting struggle of the working class to acquire state power, to establish working class rule in England and similar countries and re-establish it in Russia. The Stalinist bureaucracy is celebrating a Black October. It not only overthrew the power of the Russian working class, but it has brought the Russian workers to the very edge of the huge concentration camp of Hitlerism, a fate which the Russian workers have been resisting with such fierce doggedness. To preserve his power, the bloody Czar of all the Russians was forced to arm millions of workers and peasants who finally used their arms to establish their own rule over the country. Stalin, too has been compelled, in the interests of self-preservation, to restore the arms he took from the Russian masses.

Whether Hitler finds his grave in Russia or some other land is not yet certain. But the fate of the Stalinist counter-revolution is being settled now. As we are not for the triumph of Churchillism, we are even less for the triumph of Hitlerism in Russia or anywhere else. All our hopes and confidence rest with the international working class and, in Russia, with the Russian working class. Once, in 1917, it put an end to one despotism. It will yet put an end to the new despotism.

• “24 years of the Russian Revolution”, *Labor Action*, November 1941

Red Seventeen

Who fears to praise Red Seventeen?
Who quails at Lenin's name?
When liars mock at Trotsky's fate
Who adds his, “Theirs, the blame” — ?
He's Stalin's knave, or bourgeois slave
Who scorns the Old Cause thus,
But *honest* men and women
Will raise a voice with us.

We praise the memory of the dead,
Of Lenin's friends long gone
Who led the workers in revolt,
An army, not a throng.
All, all are gone, but still lives on
The cause of those who died
And *honest* men and women
Remember them with pride

They rose in blood drenched war-torn
days
To help set workers free
Their own lives fed the living blaze
That burned out tyranny.
But bourgeois might half vanquished
right
Some fell and passed away,
And others spun 'neath Stalin's gun
— But we strive still today!

We work to free all those who live
In bourgeois slavery
And glory in the names of those
Who fought for Liberty.
'Trenched bourgeois might won't
vanquish right
But fall and go astray,
— And *honest* men and women
Will speed them on their way!

Yes, we dare praise Red Seventeen,
We honour Lenin's name.
Though cowards shirk the old Red fight,

We're still in Trotsky's game!
Let Stalin's knaves and bourgeois slaves
Go scorn the Old Cause thus,
While *honest* men and women
Will voice this faith with us.

We hail the memory of the free,
Of Trotsky's 'durate few
Who fought in France, Spain, Germany,
And died in Russia too.
Though all are gone, they still live on,
Their cause won't go away
And honest men and women
Still sing their song today.

Then here's their memory, may it be
For us a guiding light
That shows us workers' liberty
And teaches us to fight.
Through good and ill continues still
The Cause that thrives unseen,
That brought the bourgeois tyrants
down
In Nineteen Seventeen!

This is based on one of the most effective political songs ever written: “The Memory of the Dead”, better known as “Ninety Eight”, by John Kells Ingram. “Ninety Eight” was 1798, when a series of doomed republican risings erupted in Ireland, stimulated by the Great French Revolution.

In the last 150 years “Ninety Eight” has been sung by Irish workers on ships, picket lines and military camps; in the factories and mines of Pennsylvania, Australia, Scotland, and on docks, building sites, engineering works and aerodromes all across the world, wherever a part of the Irish Diaspora has settled. Many migrant workers who sang “Ninety Eight” learned to sing other songs too — the Internationale, the Red Flag.

In fact one of them, Jim Connell, wrote the Red Flag, in 1889.

Sean Matgamna

Kerensky: "The soviets must not rule"

This article, abridged and translated by Stan Crooke from *Sovremenniy Zapiski*, 1922, is by Alexander Kerensky, formerly the head of the February-October 1917 Russian Provisional Government. Kerensky presents an unintentionally, self-damning defence of his government. He was replying to an article by VM Chernov, himself a former member of the Provisional Government, who had accused members of the Social-Revolutionary Party of lacking political energy after the February 1917 revolution.



The Petrograd Soviet

WHAT then is the mortal sin of, "that group of individuals in whose name speaks comrade Rudnyev [a leader of the Social-Revolutionaries], who on more than one occasion shared in the responsibility for events in the political arena?" Above all it is the following: "In the course of the entire period from March to October 1917 that group championed the idea of a coalition, whatever the price that had to be paid. When the Left SRs detached themselves from the party (what a tender expression for triple treachery — to the Fatherland, the Revolution, and the party!) and the party equilibrium was temporarily ruptured, the group forced the party to follow once again the path of capitulation to the demands of the Kadets (Constitutional Democratic Party), and to accept the changes in the Provisional Government and its programme which they demanded."

Everything here is a completely fictitious legend! All the nonsense about "that group" must be disposed of. There was no such group in the name of which Rudnyev would have had the right to speak.

Once that piece of fiction has been disposed of, then it becomes clear what really happened in 1917: from the time of the entry of the representatives of the Soviet into the Provisional Government (the end of April) and up to the Kornilov plot, a properly constituted and substantial majority of the SRs approved of the participation of its members in the government coalition. And it did so not because it was eager for a coalition, "whatever the price that had to be paid," but simply because it did not regard it as

possible to place the responsibility for governing the state and for the conduct of the war exclusively upon the shoulders of the Soviet and socialist elements alone.

I remember perfectly an incident at in June at the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In response to a question I posed in the bluntest terms possible, whether any of the representatives of revolutionary democracy present at the conference were ready to take upon themselves full responsibility, the auditorium replied with the silence of the grave. Only someone from among the Bolsheviks, sitting next to Lenin, and with the silent approval of the latter, openly declared: "We will take it." And I remember how people who heard this sentence responded to it, as if it were a not particularly clever joke on the part of the "irresponsible opposition."

What kind of force would the SRs and the Menshevik elements have represented if they had split away from those layers of the bourgeoisie and non-Soviet democracy which in one way or another went along with the revolution and its government, in a situation where the Bolsheviks were again growing in strength after the Kornilov plot? What kind of force would they have represented? Very little! If they did not recognise this by September, then, at any rate, they certainly felt it.

They felt very intensely that the Bolsheviks were pushing them to break with

the tradition of revolutionary power — its support from all sections of Russian society — and were only wanting to weaken and dissipate the organized revolutionary forces, just as, from the opposite direction, all military and non-military plotters were striving after the same goal, after having achieved the departure of the Kadets from the Provisional Government after July. The task which the Bolshevik strategists had set for themselves was only too clear: to facilitate for themselves the seizure of power, which they had already resolved to achieve by destroying the unity of the revolutionary forces and by using a homogeneous socialist government as a springboard.

Yet the majority of the SRs voted to maintain their links with the government of the revolution and to continue with their participation in the government of the state. What else could they do in that situation — just wash their hands of everything? Step aside and passively observe the further development of the tragedy? No, such a Pontius Pilate role cannot be played by a political party! The party always acts, always speaks!

[Then] another accusation, one which, in my opinion, is the most serious one. "Oh, bold prevaricators! Did you not prevaricate in Russia from February to October of 1917, did you not prevaricate on the question of reorganization of the army, the policy of peace, and the land question, hopelessly hanging on to

the rump of a coalition with the Kadets until there bore down upon you those forces which were thrown up by your policies of patience and which — not without your share of the blame — resulted in the October Revolution and all its destructiveness.”

This is a very real and very concise accusation, but also a very weighty one, levelled against the entire state politics of the February Revolution. It is even more than this. It is, of course, an unintentional justification — yes, a justification — of the “October Revolution.”

What was the situation from March to October? Instead of revolutionary daring — hopeless prevarication in relation to the Kadets, i.e. in the language of Soviet Russia, in relation to the most authentic forces of reaction. If this is correct, if the official organ of what was then one of the parties of government is now obliged to recognise this, then the revolt of genuinely revolutionary forces was utterly justified — and the counter-revolutionary October coup is transformed into a genuine popular revolution!

But let us look more closely at the three mortal sins of our prevarication — the army, land and peace.

“Did you not prevaricate on the question of reorganization of the army?” In what sense are we to understand this reference to reorganization of the army? Clearly, what is meant here is that slowness which we had to show as a matter of necessity in the Sisyphean task of strengthening discipline in the army and in restoring normal relations between commanders and their subordinates.

I remember how energetically all members of the Provisional Government — including the Minister of Agriculture, none other than VM Chernov himself — spoke out against “revolutionary excesses” in the army! I remember how bitterly, but nonetheless unanimously, the entire Provisional Government voted for the law restoring the death penalty at the front after the collapse of our front at Tarnopol! I remember all this, and therefore completely understand that the slowness of the Ministry of War in its task of liberating the army from the “liberation” which it had suffered under Minister of War Guchkov should still provoke from V Chernov and all Russian patriots the obligatory measure of anger and chagrin.

The Ministry of War is guilty of this slowness in restoring discipline in the army. But by way of mitigating circumstances does not our strident accuser recall the obstacles which we had to overcome in this reorganization? Does he

not remember the inhuman energy and self-sacrificing efforts which the commissars of the Ministry of War (almost all of whom were SRs and Mensheviks) had to expend at the front and in the rear in freeing the army from the hypnosis of Bolshevik and enemy propaganda? Does he not remember that even in his own areas of responsibility we were sometimes helpless in the face of the effects of the demagogy?

“Did you not prevaricate on the land question?” is the second accusation raised against us. With regard to this question I must confess to finding myself in a somewhat delicate position: I have to defend the agricultural policies of the Ministry of Agriculture against charges levelled against them by the longest-serving of all the Ministers of Agriculture during the period of the February Revolution, VM Chernov.

Rather than run through the actual activity of the successive Ministers of Agriculture and the role they played in accelerating or slowing down the preparation of the great land reforms placed on the political agenda by the Provisional Government in the first days of the Revolution, I find it easier to quote from a conversation held with E K Breshko-Breshkovskaya in Moscow in the spring of 1918: “... The grandiose land reforms, unheard of in the history of humanity and embracing the infinite space of the Russian state, could not have been achieved in six months, or even in six years. Any hastiness, any fidgeting under the pressure of appetites whipped up by demagogy, would merely have led to such chaos in agriculture that decades would pass by before it could be cured.”

IN the pursuit of their agricultural policies the Bolsheviks have clearly demonstrated how well-founded were my fears. Just as their policy of “armistice by individual military companies” transformed itself into an unending succession of foreign and domestic wars, so too their “spontaneous socialization” of land transformed itself into total agricultural anarchy. I do not deny that there was much unnecessary slowness in carrying out the land reforms of the Provisional Government. But nonetheless there was no “prevarication”. The fundamental land reforms had been decided upon by the Provisional Government, and we constantly made progress in achieving those reforms.

“Did you not prevaricate on the policy of peace?” is the final question. Yes, we prevaricated in the sense that we did not opt for a separate pace! The Bolsheviks did so — but look at what became of

their peace! How then did our “prevarication” express itself? Well, let us suppose that the Provisional Government did indeed prevaricate because it was hopelessly in the hands of “Western capitalists and imperialists” and so on and so forth. But what of the Soviets? Was it not the case that after issuing the famous appeal “To The Peoples of the Entire World” on 14 March they then came to recognise, having experienced the debacle of Stockholm in May, that the key to the speediest possible conclusion of general peace could lie only in strengthening the military capabilities of the country and in an active policy on the front?

One must stare reality in the face. Those who, in Russia, regarded themselves as the spokespersons of the real opinions of the international revolutionary proletariat were in reality expressing the opinions of an insignificant minority of a minority of the socialist opposition in the West. The war in Europe was not a war between governments but between peoples. The proletarian masses in Europe felt — and their leaders recognised — that “the international solidarity of the workers in defence of their interests against capitalism” did not exclude a sense of solidarity between people of one and the same nation when their shared interests and rights were subject to external threat.

Among all the great states of Europe there was no country which had a greater justification to defend itself than Russia. As the future collaborator with the Bolsheviks, NN Sukhanov, demonstrated as early as 1915, our motherland had no aggressive capitalist goals in the World War. We could not throw away our weapons without betraying the fatherland, without betraying the revolution!

Yes, the army, land and peace — these were truly three inhuman tasks which the February Revolution had to accomplish, but it had to accomplish them whilst defending the country from the most brutal blows of the enemy, and defending the freedom which had only just been achieved from the insane pressure of domestic anarchy, selfishness and treachery!

Let me declare in conclusion that not only did the February Revolution not prevaricate in its efforts to satisfy the revolutionary impatience of the masses, but that it went to the very edge of catastrophe in its efforts. In that historical situation, in those conditions of war, no state, not even one a hundred times more revolutionary, could have given more to the masses. We were on the edge of a precipice, beyond which already lay the chaos into which Russia was plunged after October.

Lessons in fighting bigotry

By Janine Booth

TEN years ago, the anti-gay law Section 28 made its first appearance in Parliament. It was to mark a turning point in the lesbian, gay and bisexual movement. The story of the Section is a story of the bigotry of Tories, the power of mass mobilisation, the potential of the labour movement, the weakness of Labour leaders, the challenges for the future, and of the courage, pride and imagination of people fighting back.

Bigoted beginnings

Section 28 can be traced back to a Department of Education and Science circular, DES206/86, issued on 6 August 1986. It stated that, "There is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the 'norm', or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils."

Later the same year, the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill was proposed in the House of Lords by the Earl of Halsbury. Halsbury's motivation lay with his attitude towards gay sexuality, spelt out in his proposing speech. He attacked those gay men he saw as, "the sick ones who suffer from a psychological syndrome", giving their "symptoms" as exhibitionism, promiscuity, proselytising and boasting, adding that, "they act as reservoirs for venereal diseases of all kinds."

The Bill, on its First Reading, enjoyed the unanimous support of Their Bigoted Lordships. Lord Longford chipped in with his view that, "Homosexuals, in my submission, are handicapped people... the tragedy of such people is that they cannot enjoy family life and they cannot have children." Lord Denning boasted of having imprisoned many people for having anal sex, and then declared that, "We must not allow this cult of homosexuality, making it equal with heterosexuality, to develop in our land. We must preserve our moral and spiritual values which have come down through the centuries."

The supporters of Section 28 were later to claim that neither they nor their proposal were anti-gay.

Halsbury's Bill was taken to the House of Commons by Birmingham's biggest bigot, Dame Jill Knight MP. It did not become law, as the Tory Government promised to think about it and bring it back in a more suitable form at a later date. It



The Tories saw homophobia as a useful weapon to whip up hostility to Labour

took them less than a year to keep that promise.

The local government left

The focus of the Tories' anger was that some Labour councils had taken initiatives in support of lesbian and gay rights. Tory MP Harry Greenaway was disgusted at Ealing Council for suggesting to schools that they post notices about a lesbian and gay switchboard. Greenaway denounced this as, "wrong, because it is an incitement to children." (An incitement to do what? Get advice? Ask questions? Not try to kill themselves?)

He was equally incensed that the same Council had advertised for a Lesbian and Gay Officer, and had included in the job description the task of promoting, "positive images of lesbians and gay men in the community."

The prime target of Tory hysteria was the book *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, about two gay men and their daughter. A copy of this book was stocked in an Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) teachers' resource centre. Tory MP David Wilshire was appalled by a book which, "portrays a child living with two men ... [and] clearly shows that as an acceptable family relationship."

The Tories saw homophobia as a useful weapon to whip up hostility towards Labour. In the 1987 General Election they had billboards posted declaring that Labour intended to force kids to read books entitled *Young, Gay and Proud*, and *Black*

Lesbian in White America. Both very good books, apparently, and useful in bringing up youngsters not to be queerbashers, but, to the Tories' PR people, an excellent example of Labour's lunacy and immorality.

A favourite pursuit of gutter press hacks was to sniff out Town Hall tales of "loony left" councils and their efforts for minority groups. The bigots and queerbashers found their most helpful allies writing in the tabloids.

Work by Labour councils on lesbian and gay issues had begun in earnest in the early 1980s. The Labour left made sizeable inroads into local government, winning control of several metropolitan and borough councils in London and other big cities. At the same time, the Tory Government made attacking local government one of its main priorities (along with attacking trade unions.) Central government funding to councils was cut, "ratecapping" introduced to limit expenditure, councils' powers reduced, and metropolitan councils such as the Greater London Council (GLC) abolished. Next on the Tories' list was the Poll Tax.

The left councils said that they would fight the Tories. They promised to continue to provide jobs and services for local working-class people, and to take on the laws and cuts that sought to prevent them doing so. But one by one, these councils — amongst them the GLC, Lambeth, Brent and Liverpool — gave up that fight. They put up rates, cut services and made shabby deals with the Tory Government.

The councils tried to maintain the illu-

sion of radicalism by putting money into projects such as women's centres, race equality units, and lesbian and gay switchboards. This work was valuable and worthwhile: the problem was that it was done as an alternative to taking on the Tories. Equality issues were seen as different from, rather than integral to, working-class politics.

The effect of the councils' actions was to fertilise the ground for a homophobic backlash. People are much more likely to resent a council funding a lesbian and gay centre if, at the same time, it cuts their granny's meals on wheels. If, alternatively, the councils had fought the Tory Government for decent funding, defending the rights of all sections of the local community to the services they need, then lesbians and gay men would have been on the same side as pensioners, tenants, library users, teachers, parents, benefit claimants, trade unionists, youth clubs, refugee groups, sports players, students, trainees and their local Labour Party. A working class united in action soon sees the need to throw away prejudices. That is the opportunity that the local government "left" refused to take.

Return of the clause

THE legislation returned to Parliament in December 1987. More closely focused on the activities of local authorities, it was proposed by Tory MP David Wilshire as an amendment to the Local Government Bill. Introduced in Standing Committee A on 8 December, it was known at first as Clause 14. (Stop Clause 14 badges had a short shelf-life, as it became Clause 27, then 28, then 29, then 28 again. Merchandisers to the movement soon gave up their reprints and stuck with Stop the Clause!).

Wilshire's new Clause read as follows:
"Local authorities shall not:

- (a) promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality;
- (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."

At this time, local authorities had much greater responsibility for schools than they do now. The new clause was used by its proponents to demonise both homosexuality and local government — a two-pronged assault on both freedom and democracy.

The new clause referred to lesbian, gay and bisexual people's families as "pretended." People who loved and cared for children in the face of discrimination and prejudice found their lives dismissed as a sham. It was to become an article of law that same-sex desire was incompatible with

the ability to form "acceptable" relationships or families.

The clause broke new ground for bigotry, as it was the first law to proscribe homosexuality as a sexuality; previous laws had criminalised same-sex sexual acts. With this new clause, being lesbian, being gay, being bisexual, was branded undesirable, not to be supported, never to be condoned.

The bigots were determined that young people could not be told that it is OK to be gay. This includes kids whose parents, siblings, neighbours or friends may be lesbian, gay or bisexual. It also includes youngsters who are considering whether they themselves may not be heterosexual. The isolation, rejection and fear confronting these young people causes them untold stress. Surveys quoted during the Parliamentary debate on Section 28 showed that around one in five gay youth had attempted suicide.

If it is not OK to be gay, then presumably it is OK to disapprove of gays. If the Government can discriminate against lesbian, gay and bisexual people, then why shouldn't anyone else? Wilshire's clause implied that it was better to be a queer-basher than a queer, better a suicide than a happy homo.

"The clause explicitly sought to put an end to those local authority and school initiatives that could help lesbian, gay and bisexual people."

Section 28's ban on the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools is an issue not just of lesbian, gay and bisexual rights, but of youth rights. It seeks to deny all young people the opportunity to come to a balanced, informed decision about their own sexuality. A law which claimed to "protect children" actually proposed to leave them vulnerable, isolated, confused and unsupported.

The clause explicitly sought to put an end to those local authority and school initiatives that could help lesbian, gay and bisexual people: advertising of helplines, books about homosexual lives, support groups. The irony is that it is the prevalence of homophobia that makes such services necessary.

Wilshire's ludicrous and contradictory claim was that, "the new clause is not anti-homosexual in nature. I believe that society needs to understand homosexuals and that homosexuals must not be discriminated against. Nevertheless, I am certain that society has the right to prevent homosexuals encouraging others to be homosexuals."

If proof were needed of the clause's homophobia, it could be found in the rise in violent anti-gay attacks that accompanied its passage into law. In December 1987, arsonists firebombed the offices of newspaper Capital Gay. Tory MP Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman refused to condemn this, arguing that, "it is quite right that there should be an intolerance of evil." Soon after, a gay pub in Rochester was attacked with teargas bombs, and gay Labour MP Chris Smith reported that "the number of queer-bashing attacks on gay men and lesbians has dramatically increased during the past year." Section 28 was a bigots' charter.

Opposition? What opposition?

What was the Labour front bench's reaction to the new clause? The Party whose policy committed it to supporting equality, and whose councils were under attack, was represented on this issue by Shadow Home Secretary Jack Cunningham. He stated in Committee:

"I speak on behalf of the Labour Party when I say that it is not, and never has been, the duty or responsibility of either a local or education authority to promote homosexuality... The Labour Party does not believe that councils or schools should promote homosexuality... I intend to support [the clause]."

Cunningham was particularly keen on the opening paragraph of the clause ("... shall not promote homosexuality ..."), stating that, "We do not wish to change that in any way, shape or form." He allowed the clause to be agreed by the Committee without a division (vote).

Neil Kinnock's Labour Party was developing an irritating tendency to jump to Tory orders. A Tory would challenge Labour leaders to distance the party from someone who was doing something radical, and the reply would come: yes sir, of course sir. A Labour London Borough has said something nice about lesbians and gay men. Do you condemn them? Yes, of course. Will you support our clause? Yes, of course. Nothing was said about those Tory (and Liberal, and Labour) councils which did nothing for their lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens, that allowed homophobia to go unchallenged.

The only real opposition to the clause when it first appeared in Committee was from Labour MP Bernie Grant. Labour's later opposition came once anti-clause protests had started.

Liberal spokesperson Simon Hughes MP made it clear that "the initial part of the clause ... had the support of the Liberal party." Gay Tory MP Michael Brown flew the flag for self-hatred when he opined,



The campaign continues, but we must learn the lessons

"Of course I accept that it is necessary to protect children and to ensure that irresponsible local authorities do not promote homosexuality."

Out on the streets

Outside Parliament, people were not so reticent in opposing homophobia. The delicious irony of Section 28 is that a law which sought to ban the promotion of homosexuality actually prompted the biggest promotion of homosexuality that Britain had ever seen. Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and our heterosexual supporters got active in protest against the homophobes.

Activists in Manchester formed the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, which adopted a tube station logo declaring that we were Never Going Underground. In early 1988, the campaign organised a demonstration which brought around 25,000 people to the streets of Manchester. A huge variety of people and groups marched against the clause, and celebs galore spoke of their support at the post-march rally in the Free Trade Hall.

In April, a national demonstration was held in London. The North West Campaign chartered a train which brought 1,000 marchers to swell the crowd to more than 30,000. "Stop the Clause" groups sprang up in most towns and cities, and organised local protests to complement national action.

Direct action boosted the profile of protests. One evening, the Six O'Clock News headlines were disrupted by shouts of, "Stop Clause 28!" A couple of intrepid lesbians had snuck into the BBC's studios and attached themselves to Sue Lawley's desk. Nicholas Witchell's attempts to restrain them prompted a tabloid headline the following morning of "TV Newsman Sits on Lesbian."

When the clause was debated in the Lords, protesting dykes absailed from the public gallery down to the floor of the House. If you read Hansard's record of the Parliamentary debate, you will be sickened by the outpouring of bigotry. You may also be heartened by some of the speeches

against the clause. You will no doubt be entertained by the frequent reprimands from the Speaker to the protesters in the public gallery.

The campaign against the clause was active, involving and creative. Its unapologetic pride inspired people to come out of the closet in record numbers. Phonelines, support groups and social events can all help people through the difficult process of coming out. But there is nothing quite as helpful as seeing thousands of people taking up banners and marching in support of your right to be out and proud.

It should be remembered that this was a lesbian and gay movement with no Pink Paper, no Stonewall, no Outrage!, no TV and radio shows. All these were to follow in the wake of Section 28 becoming law. Attendance at Pride hit a new record in 1988. Numbers taking part in the march and festival are of a different order post-Section than pre-Section.

Grass-roots labour movement activists did not generally share the weakness of their leaders. Many Labour Party and trade union branches passed resolutions condemning the clause, and supported action against it. Trade unionists were concerned both to protect workers — especially teachers and local government workers — from the clause, and to bring to the anti-clause movement the politics of solidarity.

Trade Unionists Against Section 28 (TUAS), set up in January 1988, promoted opposition to the clause amongst unions, and defiance of the Section once it became law. TUAS saw lesbian and gay rights as a labour movement issue: the working class has a fundamental interest in tackling prejudice. So TUAS — which involved trade unionists of all sexualities — also took its banner against homophobia to picket lines and to demonstrations on issue such as abortion rights.

Law and defiance

NO doubt inspired by campaigners, some Labour MPs made decent speeches against the clause in Parliament. Others made naff speeches. Paul

Flynn and Clare Short insisted that councils supporting lesbian and gay rights were few and far between. Others argued that it was impossible to promote homosexuality and therefore unnecessary to legislate against it: the point, however, is that there is nothing wrong with promoting homosexuality in a world which so enthusiastically promotes heterosexuality.

When Tory Home Secretary Michael Howard quoted Labour Party policy urging councils to support lesbian and gay issues, Jack Cunningham denounced his comments as an outrageous slur on the Party.

The Tory majority ensured that Section 28 became law in May 1988. However, the strength of the protest movement limited the damage it could inflict. No local authority has ever been prosecuted under the Section. Some councils were threatened with legal action: the threats proved to be idle.

Campaigners and trade unionists urged defiance of the new law. Schools should teach objectively about homosexuality; local authorities should continue initiatives against homophobia. Such defiance would, we argued, a law already weakened by the mass opposition it had provoked of any real power.

However, many councils backed off and practised self-censorship to avoid any chance of prosecution. Labour councils scrapped or scaled down projects in support of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. (Few Tory councils were running such projects in the first place.)

Edinburgh City Council refused funding to the Scottish Homosexual Action Group for a lesbian and gay festival, having provided funding before the Section. The London Boroughs Grants Scheme compelled groups receiving funding to sign an agreement to comply with Section 28. East Sussex Council withdrew a youth directory because it listed a lesbian and gay group.

Some local education authorities decided that they could no longer allow Lesbian and Gay Societies to exist in further education colleges, which were at the time still under LEA control. Essex County Council was advised that lesbian and gay further education (and some higher education) students should not be allowed to meet on college premises. Similarly, the Principal of Kitson College (now Leeds College of Technology) banned the Lesbian and Gay Society, citing both Section 28 and the age of consent. Both these decisions were overturned following vigorous campaigning by lesbian, gay and bisexual student activists.

Solidarity action also saw off attacks on workers. Bradford teacher Austin Allen was

Catching a new mood

By Colin Foster

THE Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) has set out on another zig-zag. For 18 years, under the Tory government, it repeatedly told socialists not to bother with Labour Party politics. Sometimes *Socialist Worker* gave journalistic support, from a distance, to the left in Labour's big battles — over the trade union link, over Clause Four, or over the purge of Militant. Sometimes it ignored those battles or dismissed them as pointless — as with the Labour democracy fight of 1979-81, the struggle against the rate rises being implemented by half-left Labour councils in the early 1980s to avoid fighting the Tories' cuts, or the resistance to the ban on *Workers' Liberty's* predecessor, *Socialist Organiser*, in 1990. Always it kept a distance and urged others to keep a distance.

Now, when political life inside the Labour Party has been reduced to casualty-ward feeling-the-pulse levels, and Labour is in government doing worse than the Tories dared, suddenly *Socialist Worker* is very pro-Labour. It is critical, of course, but its constant quest to "catch the mood" now has Socialist Worker running after a decidedly pro-Blair mood rather than the quasi-syndicalist, quasi-anarchist, anti-parliamentary mood it chased yesterday. Headlines like "All Europe swings left", "Limits to what Blair's offering", "Blair's wrong choices", and the SWP's self-presentation as people "with doubts about Blair" or "worried about Blair", set the new tone. When the SWP organised a big lobby of Labour Party conference in October, its slogans were very moderate: Fund our services, tax the rich, no to privatisation, keep the union link.

Presumably the new turn in Britain is linked to the international lurch in which, over the last year or so, the SWP has liquidated its small sympathising groups in Europe by instructing them, very brutally and

peremptorily, to join the social-democratic parties (Germany, France, Belgium), and means that the top SWP leaders have decided to "bend the stick" (as one of Tony Cliff's favourite Lenin-phrases puts it) towards recognising the continued influence of social democracy. Yet it also has a continuity with the previous quasi-syndicalist line.

Both now and then, the SWP define themselves and recruit, essentially, not as the advocates of a full-scale strategy for the workers' movement, not on "big politics", but as the most militant activist campaigners for a series of immediate

"Over the last year or so, the SWP has liquidated its small sympathising groups in Europe by instructing them very brutally to join the social-democratic parties."

demands, sometimes very minimal indeed ("Don't vote Nazi", for example). If poverty is the life you have when you don't have a life, then the SWP is the politics you have when you

don't have politics. This approach was expressed crisply in the party Manifesto they published at election time (*Socialist Worker*, 19 April). Although it used the words "socialism" or "socialist" several times, it in no way whatever advocated workers' control, common ownership, jobs for all, or even renationalisation of the utilities. Its "maximum" demand, capping a long list of (mostly excellent) immediate demands, was that, "New Labour could simply restore top rates of tax to what they were for the first nine years of Margaret Thatcher's government."

In the present poor state of the labour movement, an energetic group, even one with no more to offer than busy flyposting, leafletting, and marching for whatever immediate demands "catch the mood", will reasonably have attractive power for activists looking for something with more life than the damped-down official organisations and hair-splitting sects. How far it can take those activists in the fundamental work of re-educating the working class for socialism is another matter.

sacked after giving honest answers to students' questions — which included telling them that he was gay. He was reinstated when the NUT threatened to strike.

So what now?

Although Labour dropped the pledge from their General Election manifesto, the Government has promised to repeal Section 28. It is one of only a few things it has promised to lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Home Secretary Jack Straw has not yet said when the Section will be scrapped. The excuse for inaction so far — that there has been no Local Government Bill — prompts two questions. Firstly, why not introduce an Equality Bill, which could repeal Section 28 and do much more besides? And secondly, why has there been no Local Government Bill when there is so much Tory damage to local democracy to be undone?

We face the following scenario: the Labour Government eventually gets round to scrapping the Section; the age of consent is eventually equalised at 16 on a free vote (with some Labour MPs voting against); then the next General Election is nearly upon us, and it's shoved back into the closet as a "vote loser."

The danger is that a lesbian, gay and bisexual movement which has been through two decades of serial Tory attacks will accept Labour's crumbs. Instead of such undemanding deference, we should act in the tradition of the anti-clause campaign: active, defiant, relying on our own activity, placing our own demands. We should also recognise the irreplaceable role of solidarity, in particular with the labour movement.

We need to pile on the pressure to scrap Section 28 straight away. But kicking out an old law should be accompanied by demanding new moves for equality. A new law should make it illegal for employers to discriminate on the grounds of sexuality; and introduce equal rights for same-sex partners in housing, immigration, pensions, and hospital and prison visiting. Fostering and adoption authorities should be made to consider potential parents on merit, with sexuality considered irrelevant; and the Child Support Agency should be told to stop hassling lesbian and gay parents. Local authorities should have both the duty and the resources to provide services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Trade unions should have the right to take effective action in defence of workers victimised by homophobes.

Today's lesbian, gay and bisexual activists — and today's socialists — should learn from the struggles of the past and keep up the fight until homophobia itself is part of history.

Stalinism and state capitalism

By Martin Thomas



Since the mid-1980s there has been a turn away from the “statisted” economies

“THE organisation of the capitalist mode of production, once fully developed, breaks down all resistance... The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but only exceptionally... It is otherwise during the historic genesis of capitalist production...”

Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume I, ch.28.

SINCE the mid-1980s, a turn against “statisted” economic enterprise — rapid or slow, cautious or dramatic — has taken place all across the world, from Mexico to Moscow, from Sydney to Saigon. It has been accompanied by great popular revolutions in Eastern Europe and by an ideological offensive branding all “statisted” economies — mildly social-democratic, nakedly nationalist, or Stalinist — as failed “socialism.”

None of the variants were ever socialist. Back in 1891 Karl Kautsky declared, in the most influential codification of Marxist politics in that era, his commentary on the German socialists’ Erfurt programme, that: “The theory that... the Cooperative Commonwealth could be the result of a general nationalisation of all industries without any change in the character of the state... arises from a misunderstanding of the state itself... As an exploiter of labour, the state is superior to [i.e. worse than] any private capitalist. Besides the economic power of the capitalists, it can also bring to bear upon the exploited classes the political power which it already wields.” Only if the workers ruled could state ownership be socialist.

What, then, was the significance of the “statisted” economies of the 20th century? What was their role and place in history? Turkey, after the Young Turk coup of 1908 and especially after 1923, pioneered patterns for the Third World. During World War One, “Under the guise of making provision for the capital city and the army, the [government] instituted allocation mechanisms which totally bypassed the market... Moslem businessmen were brought together under the aegis of the party organisation to found ‘national’ companies for the financing and carrying out of trade...”

Between 1915 and 1924, “probably 90% of the pre-war bourgeoisie,” Greeks and Armenians, were pushed out of Turkey or killed. In the 1920s, the government “actively invested in the

economy, notably in an ambitious campaign of railway construction and in two sugar factories. After 1929 it began purchasing foreign-owned railway and other concessions... in addition to nationalising all foreign companies delivering public services. The new character of state capitalism appeared with what was called, in an obvious allusion to the Soviet experience, the First Five-Year Industrialisation Plan (1934). The plan was, however, no more than a list of fifteen investment projects... What distinguished these projects was their scale — obviously beyond the capabilities of private capitalists at the time...”

The bureaucrats dominated even private industry. “In 74.2% of all firms established between 1931 and 1940 (and still surviving in 1968) the founding entrepreneurs were bureaucrats”. [C. Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey*, p.63, 69, 105-6.] A proto-totalitarian one-party state was established.

The role of the state increased in the advanced capitalist countries, too, so that by the 1980s about 50% of national income passed through the hands of the state (and it’s not much less today.) The average was about 20% in 1929. More than half the surplus-value produced is taken by the state rather than by private capitalists. In most advanced capitalist countries, however, state spending is mostly on the military and on public services. The state usually plays a very secondary role in investment. “The public sector in most developing countries,” however, “account[ed] for... some 50 to 60% of total investment” [World Bank *World Development Report* 1983 p.48.]

Some Third World economies had strong private capitalist classes: Mexico and India were examples. Even for India, an Indian Marxist wrote:

“The trend towards state capitalism, true in general for the advanced capitalist countries in the twentieth century, manifested itself with particular keenness in the underdeveloped countries after they became formally independent in the post-Second World War period... The government just could not leave the matter in the hands of individual capitalists because, first, they were ill-equipped for those investments that were essential but least paying, particularly in the short run and, secondly, they lacked, in general, funds, initiative, and experience.

“In other words, those segments of the economy that needed huge investment, modern and sophisticated technology, and a

long gestation period before being able to provide a strong base for massive industrialisation were brought under the direct purview of the state. Hence in almost all underdeveloped countries the government, irrespective of the particular 'ideology' it professed, took a significant part in the functioning and controlling of the economy." [P. Chattopadhyay, 'State Capitalism in India', *Monthly Review* March 1970; *Financial Times* 18.2.85.]

Even some vocally pro-capitalist governments used the pattern of a one-party state; mass organisations controlled by that party; Five-Year Plans; and a heavy state role in the economy. Two examples were Tunisia and the Ivory Coast.

In Tunisia state-owned enterprises accounted for 60% of value added in manufacturing [1978-81; WB *WDR* 83 p.51.] In the Ivory Coast 61% of investment was by the public sector [1980-5; WB *WDR* 88 p.47.] The state controlled marketing of agricultural produce. It owned the biggest plantations and ancillary factories. Its share of total industrial capital rose from 10% in 1976 to 53% in 1980. Almost all the rest of industry was foreign capital operating under detailed conditions imposed by the state. Researchers could find only five Ivorians who could be described as private industrial capitalists. [H S Marcussen and J E Torp, *Internationalisation of Capital*].

In those countries, as also partly in Turkey, the state nurtured a native private-capitalist class. In others, the state substituted for and clashed with private capitalists. In Algeria the FLN (National Liberation Front) took power in 1962 after a long and bloody war for independence from France. Most of industry and large-scale agriculture had been owned by the French state, or by European settlers, who quit. Workers took over many enterprises and estates. The new regime moved in to nationalise and establish state control.

By 1968-9 the government controlled foreign trade, banking, and most major industry. The takeover of oil and gas — now the country's major earners — was completed by 1971. FLN political control was also made complete. The previously independent though sympathetic trade union federation, the UGTA, was brought under government control. In 1967-9 the public sector made 92% of industrial investment. In 1986 its share was estimated at 95%. [T Benhouria, *L'économie de l'Algérie*, p.256-8; J P Entelis, *Algeria: the revolution institutionalised*, p.128.] The private sector continued to include a lot of small-scale enterprise. In 1983 it employed 33% of the workforce, including agriculture. [R Tlemcani, *State and revolution in Algeria*, p.119.] A tremendous drive was launched to build up heavy industries and modern technology. "Under Boumedienne, the landscape looked like a vast building yard" [Tlemcani, p.114]. 60% of agriculture was in state farms, and the state had a monopoly on buying agricultural produce; the prices were set low by decree so as to siphon surplus value into industry [Entelis p.142; Benhouria p.69, 117].

Until the early '80s, all state company profits went direct to the government, and all investment was financed by state credits. Later, state enterprises were allowed to keep some of their profits, but all their investment projects were controlled by the state banks and the supervising ministries. All prices were theoretically subject to state control, though — apart from agricultural and food prices — not all in fact were controlled. Despite strict controls on paper, in practice, it was said, "The central political power's control over the [state] corporations is very loose". Foreign capital was quite active in Algeria, under deals arranged with the state. [Entelis, p.126; M E Benissad, *Economie du développement de l'Algérie 1962-82*, p.200, 220; Tlemcani, p. 161; Benhouria, p.288].

For Algerian workers, however, this implied no relief. The state

co-ordinated not only investments but the exploitation of labour. An Algerian Marxist commented on the regime:

"The omnipotence of the state, the overwhelming weight of the superstructure in relation to the infrastructure, is itself a fundamental class fact, quite apart from the goals of the state's actions... When the simplest of problems, at whatever level of social life, needs in order to deal with it a formal procedure, haggling, an administrative decision; when the press, publishing and cinema are only state monopolies run by officials concerned above all to consolidate their privileges; when the unions are only transmission belts of the single party, which itself is only an annexe of the State, all questions are overshadowed by the basic one: the total domination of society by the State..." [Benhouria p.330].

Here the State was more than a powerful agency and partner of private profiteers.

"The State domination which here precedes, protects and accompanies the development of capitalist exploitation cannot be considered as an episode of that development, leading at the next stage to a liberalisation, or 'Sadatisation' to take the example of Egypt, but is the basic characteristic of this development... Here is no longer a question of a State which provisionally administers the interests of the dominant classes, but of a structure which partially substitutes itself for them... There is no point looking behind this State for a dominant class which is using it, as... in France... A fraction of that dominant class, to be precise the state bureaucratic fraction which is also the hegemonic fraction, only exists through and thanks to the State" [Benhouria p.430].

"In those countries, as also partly in Turkey, the state nurtured a native private-capitalist class. In others, the state substituted for and clashed with private capitalists."

"The bureaucratic form of Algerian capitalism is a product of history. On the basis of State property, wage-labour is juridically, socially and politically insufficient to ensure a problem-free reproduction of the relations of production... State capitalism, for

the worker, is wage-labour plus control and surveillance" [Benhouria, p.395-6]. Plus, indeed, very often, police-state terror. As Nikolai Bukharin put it, extrapolating (extravagantly for the time) from statist economics in World War 1:

"State capitalist structure of society, besides worsening the economic conditions of the working class, makes the workers formally bonded to the imperialist state... The workers... become white slaves of the predatory imperialist state, which has absorbed into its body all productive life." [Imperialism and World Economy, 159-60.]

Structures similar to Algeria's existed in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa. "By 1960, the bulk of economic activity in the region, with the important exception of oil, had passed into the hands of the governments or the native bourgeoisies. The next two decades saw a powerful wave of socialisation. Outside agriculture and housing the national private sector was reduced to insignificance in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and, most recently, Iran, and severely curtailed in other countries. The takeover of the oil industry since 1973 has completed this process" [C Issawi, *An economic history of the Middle East and North Africa*, p.15].

In Syria, a first wave of nationalisations in 1961 was followed by another in 1963. "Most of the industrial sector and foreign trade, as well as financial institutions, have been nationalised". The public sector accounted for 74% of the capital invested in industry in 1972, and 75% in 1976. [E Kanovsky, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p.9, 42; Economist Intelligence Unit *QER Annual Supplement 1976*]. "Extensive price controls and subsidies are the norm in the Syrian economy" [Kanovsky, p.110], though economic outcomes diverged from government plans much more



Nasser

even than in Algeria, where the divergences were sizeable enough. In Iraq, a revolution in 1958 was followed by the nationalisation of "the few large plants still in private hands" in 1964. All banks became state-owned after 1964; all foreign trade state-controlled after 1976; the oil industry was nationalised in 1972-5. The public sector

accounted for 75% of total investment in the 1970-4 Plan. There were extensive price controls. In the public sector, "the achievement of physical targets of production features very importantly, perhaps even more so than profitability". [EIU QER Annual Supplement 1976; Y A Sayigh, *The Economies of the Arab World*].

Egypt showed a fairly similar pattern to Syria, though with different government rhetoric. There was a coup by reforming military officers in 1952. Over the next ten years they forced out British troops; nationalised the Suez Canal; confiscated the big landlords' land, redistributed it to peasants, and later grouped the peasants into state-supervised co-operatives; expanded social services; nationalised most major industry and commerce, without compensation, in 1960-1; and launched an industrialisation drive.

From 1967 Nasser's 'state-capitalist' policy was gradually reversed and replaced by an all-out drive to promote private enterprise and attract foreign investment under his successor, Sadat. Many former capitalists had in substance retained their positions despite the nationalisations. Jewish and other non-Egyptian capitalists did genuinely have their property confiscated by the Nasser regime; but Egyptian construction bosses, for example, continued to run their companies and draw profits from them even while they were formally nationalised. Under Sadat the private capitalists reasserted themselves. Egypt, however, still had a heavily statified economy well into the 1980s. The public sector made 65% of all investment in 1981-5. State-owned enterprises accounted for 65% of all value-added in manufacturing in 1979 [WB WDR 88]. There were big price subsidies on basic foods, like bread.

Burma is an instructive example because there a more-or-less complete "Stalinist" structure was established by purely military methods. There was a coup by nationalist army officers in 1962. Over the next two years, "the Revolutionary Council declared illegal all political opposition, took over the direct management of most educational and cultural organisations, and established the nucleus of a political party with ancillary mass organisations". There followed "the nationalisation of external and internal trade, and of large sectors of manufacturing, together with the introduction of quantitative physical planning as the basic mechanism of economic control..." Private capitalists were forced out, not so much because they were capitalists as because they were almost all Indian or Pakistani. In May 1964 all large currency notes were declared worthless.

Enterprises were run by military officers, as military operations. Prices were set by the government. It was of no concern to the government whether individual enterprises showed a profit or a loss. Agriculture remained in private hands, but the state became the

sole buyer of agricultural produce. A number of private businesses remained: "However, these figures belie the control the state has over the activities of the private sector. After 1962, firms which were not nationalised were placed under strict supervision". Or, as another report puts it: "A great majority of the private firms were small family operations... and the strict government control and regulation over them was almost equivalent to de facto nationalisation". The public sector accounted for virtually 100% of investment. [R H Taylor, *The State in Burma*; O I Steinberg, *Burma's Road Toward Development*; K Bandyopadhyaya, *Burma and Indonesia*; EIU QER Annual Supplement 1976].

All the Third World states examined above — and many others besides — modelled themselves in many respects on Stalin's USSR. Benhouria's comment — "In Algeria, Stalinism appears more and more as the 'theory' of the manager" [p.426] — applies to administrators, officials, and army officers in many other countries, too. Common features were the single party monopolising politics — or in India and Mexico, partially doing so — the state-controlled mass organisations monopolising social life (except in India); the Five-Year Plans; the bias towards heavy industry, developed by the State without regard for immediate profitability; the squeezing of the peasantry to boost that heavy industry.

WITHIN these common features there were very important differences. In Mexico and India, the state was itself a capitalist on a large scale, but it did not aspire to control the economy in any detail, and it worked in partnership with a strong private capitalist class.

In Egypt, and probably also Syria and Tunisia, there was again a state/private-capitalist partnership, but with the proportions changed. The state was the major capitalist, and it intervened more minutely in the economy, though leaving a great deal to the market. It dominated and regimented labour, banning all independent workers' action.

In Algeria and Burma, the proportions changed again. The state utterly overshadowed private capital. It was not representing or acting for a private capitalist class, but to a large extent replacing or substituting for it. It controlled the bulk of investment, and systematically manipulated the economy by setting production targets and decreed prices.

As well as the countries where there was a foreign bourgeoisie, or virtually no bourgeoisie, before the state took control of the economy, there are also ones where a bourgeoisie existed and was ousted by revolution — Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, and others — revolutions which, however, were more nationalist than social, chiefly aimed against the bourgeoisie because of its close links to foreign and landlord interests. What variants did they add to the pattern?

China between 1958 and 1978, Yugoslavia in 1948-50 and partially to 1955, and Cuba from the early '60s, all followed the economic model of Stalin's USSR closely. In the USSR major industry had been nationalised in 1918 not by a middle-class group seeking national economic development, but by the workers' government put into power by the workers' revolution of October 1917. From 1918 to 1921 the economy was run on a makeshift basis of 'war communism', without planning but without normally functioning markets either. Goods were requisitioned and allocated according to immediate availability and immediate need. From 1921 to 1928 the market was the chief regulator. A state planning organisation, Gosplan, was set up in April 1921, but outside key sectors of heavy industry the nationalised enterprises generally guided themselves by the market. Private enterprise was given wide scope in trade.

In the 1930s a centralised command economy was imposed. Peasants were herded into state-controlled farms. Private traders were banned. All trade-union independence was crushed, the Bol-

shevik party was destroyed, and terroristic domination of society by the state bureaucracy established. Enterprises now received detailed instructions from central government about how many workers they would have, what wages they would pay, what inputs they would receive, and what outputs they must produce. Prices were also decreed by central government. It was like a war economy, raised to screaming pitch.

In principle this 'command economy' made prices irrelevant — mere accounting symbols — except for consumer goods and labour power. Whether an enterprise made a profit or a loss in terms of the decreed prices did not necessarily signify anything about the enterprise (rather than the decrees) and did not matter. Until the mid-'50s' workers' movements from job to job and place to place were strictly limited by law; millions were in forced labour camps; and excess demand for consumer goods could not produce much increase in official prices or in supply.

Marx had argued that socialism needed material abundance — enough produced for everyone to have what they want. Stalin's "socialism" could work only on the basis of extreme scarcity. Workers would buy whatever food, shelter, and clothing they could get, and that would be all they could afford. The planners need not concern themselves with what people wanted — as might be indicated by price movements on a free market, or by votes in a workers' democracy. All they need do is plan enough basic food, shelter and clothing to provide a minimum subsistence.

From 1928-9 to the early '30s, indeed, many goods were distributed by rationing. But the system never, in practice, made money irrelevant. The command economy was never all-embracing. Peasants kept private plots and sold quite a lot of food on the free market (about 25% in the 1980s). In addition to legal free markets there were black markets. In some parts of the USSR in the 1980s, such as Armenia, the black market was said to yield two-thirds of total incomes [*Economist* 9.4.88]. Legal controls over movement of labour were never very effective. In fact the USSR had a very high turnover of labour: workers frequently changed jobs to find less gruelling conditions or better pay. Piece rates and bonuses were widely used. Money mattered.

Prices were unstable in the 1930s. In 1933 and 1946 the decreed prices for food had to be increased drastically to bring them more in line with free-market prices. Always, the bureaucrats had to push hard to restrain price inflation, and never fully succeeded, despite the total administrative control they had in theory. Factory managers always found ways to increase product prices. There was an officially-tolerated "grey market" for producer goods to be bartered between enterprises, and an illegal "brown market" for stolen or illegally-produced spare parts [A Katsenelinboigen, 'Coloured Markets in the Soviet Union', *Soviet Studies* January 1977.]

THE command system did, however, make the economy operate differently from a market system in many ways. Vast resources were thrown into heavy industry and military production, by state command, and everything else managed as best it could. As the system matured, other tendencies became clear. There was a tendency to lurch to and fro, from splurges of over-investment to "tightening-up" to over-investment again. Every ministry (i.e. branch of industry), region and enterprise wanted as many investment projects as it could get, because then it got more supplies and more power. At any time there were about 2½ times as many investment projects underway as the economy could handle; and large projects took about 2½ times as long to complete as in the West. Delays and pauses were routine. [D A Dyker, *The Process of Investment in the Soviet Union*, p.36, J. Sapir, *Les fluctuations industrielles en URSS*, 1941-85.]

Plans were calculated to be "taut", giving each enterprise

only the inputs it needs and requiring it to work at full capacity. To calculate otherwise, the planners reckon, was to encourage waste. In fact "taut" planning meant that there were always shortages. Because there were shortages, enterprises hoarded supplies — which makes shortages worse. Because there were shortages, enterprises worked at half-pace most of the time and then made up their plan targets by "storming" — turning out products frantically, any old how — at the end of the month. A lot of the products were unusable — and that, in turn, made shortages even worse.

After the first rush of Stalinist industrialisation, the central bureaucrats oscillated between high-pressure attempts to push industry along by repression and coercion, and subtler attempts to use market mechanisms to spur on the factory managers. Both tacks had very limited success, and the whole system eventually broke down as Gorbachev made one last effort to get it moving.

Over the whole range of the Stalinist economies there was, however, wider variation than in the USSR. Yugoslavia scrapped all detailed plan directives for enterprises in 1955, and decentralised more and more thereafter. By the 1980s central government spent only 6% of national income.

Yugoslavia was still a nationalised economy. In 1983, 83% of all output and 95% of industrial output came from state-owned enterprises. But each of those enterprises was run by a management committee more or less free to pursue maximum profit for the enterprise. Surveying the price structures of 31 underdeveloped countries, the World Bank found that Yugoslavia's was one of the least distorted by subsidies, controls and decrees.

Some features of the "command economy" remained. A loss-making enterprise did not generally close down; it just got more in debt, and might have a temporary manager appointed from above. Conversely, a successful enterprise could not take over and asset-strip other enterprises.

The hallmarks of a market economy were there, too. "The ability to grapple with factors external to the success of the individual enterprise and small region has disappeared," commented Granick. "The Yugoslav economy [was] run along Adam Smith lines to a degree that is quite unusual for Europe as a whole." Yugoslavia had roaring inflation and high unemployment.

Yugoslavia was extremely open to the world economy, exporting 30% of its production, and 54% of that outside Eastern Europe. In 1985 it had 187 joint ventures with Western capitalists operating, and seven Free Trade Zones in which multinationals could do business free of usual tariffs and formalities. [F Singleton and Carter, 'The Economy of Yugoslavia'; *WB WDR* 83, 85, 88; D Granick, *Enterprise Guidance in Eastern Europe*; A Nove, *The Soviet Economy*, p.310-14; *Wall Street Journal* 4.8.83; *Yugoslav Economic Review*; *Yugoslav National Bank Quarterly Bulletin*].

Before the Maoist revolution of 1949 some 60% of China's industrial capacity was state-owned, and much of the rest was owned by a clique close to Chiang Kai Shek's government. When Chiang Kai Shek and his clique fled to Taiwan, Mao's revolutionaries took this over. By 1952, 80% of China's heavy industry was in government hands, and 30% of light industry. Taiwan, meanwhile, had a more statified economy than mainland China.

Gradually, however, the Maoist government established total state control of the economy. Between 1958 — when agriculture was collectivised — and 1978 — when the market-oriented economic reforms began — China was run on the strict Stalinist model. All important prices were fixed by the state, the main ones centrally. Practically all enterprise profits went directly to the state budget, making up the greater part of public revenue. The bureaucracy allocated investment funds and issued production targets.

Industry was built up even faster than in the USSR under Stalin. Despite heavy economic losses and vast destruction of human life at the time of the Great Leap Forward (1958) and the

Cultural Revolution (1967), electricity generation grew at an average of 13% a year between 1949 and 1987, steel production at 15%, cotton yarn production at 7%, and rice output about 5% (1949-82).

Even in its most Stalinist period, the Chinese economy had some important differences from the USSR's. The plan, it seems, was always less detailed and "taut". Enterprises would get some of the supplies they need through the plan, but some through more-or-less free markets. The labour market, however, was more tightly controlled in China than in the USSR. Until 1960, China, unlike the USSR, had mass unemployment in the cities — about 10 to 20 million unemployed, or 15 to 30% of the workforce. The government dealt with this by forcing people out of the cities into the countryside and imposing strict controls on urban labour. "The control of labour allocation [was] more far-reaching in China than in Eastern Europe and the USSR... Neither workers nor enterprises [had] much say in job assignments, and most workers expect[ed] to spend their working lives in the enterprise they [were] assigned to when they leave school... The wage and bonus system [was] just as rigid as the labour allocation system in theory and nearly as rigid in practice." Modern, large-scale enterprises accounted for only about two-thirds of urban labour. On the whole wages (and side-benefits) in big state-run enterprises were less bad than in petty enterprise; and — as in many other Third World countries, Pakistan for example — employment in a big state enterprise was considered almost a privilege. Children hoped and expected to "inherit" their parents' jobs.

Since 1978 the system has been changed drastically, so that, while the regime is still Stalinist, agriculture has returned to individual peasant production and state enterprise accounts for less than half of industrial production. [N Harris, *The End of the Third World* p.49; G Tidrick and Chen Jiyuan (eds), *China's Industrial Reform*; C Howe, 'China's Economy'; *Economist* 1.8.87.]

Some East European economies also showed paths away from the strict Stalinist model. In Hungary, plan directives to enterprises from central government were scrapped in 1968. The economy was made much more open to the world market. Exports increased from 19% of output in 1966 to 40% in 1986; the proportion going outside the USSR and Eastern Europe increased from 34% to 51% (1983). Hungary joined the IMF (in 1982), and borrowed heavily from Western banks.

On paper, Hungary became almost as market-oriented as

Yugoslavia. Most prices were freed. Enterprises were supposed to aim for profits and to find money for investment from profits and bank loans at interest. In fact, bureaucratic string-pulling still played a big role. Bargaining with central government over taxes and subsidies was as important for enterprise bosses as commercial profit. Yet, as in Poland, even before 1989, the visibly rich of Hungarian society, with their BMWs

and Mercedes, were private capitalists. [*Financial Times* 10.5.83; J Kornai in Tidrick and Chen Jiyuan, op.cit.; P Hare, H Radice and N Swain, *Hungary: A Decade of Economic Reform*; *L'Alternative*, May-August 1982].

East Germany showed another variant. A lot of planning was decentralised to industrial cartels, which could haggle and bargain with each other. Plans were slack, not taut. Meeting their production targets was not a problem for enterprises; making profits was a greater concern. Banks played a big role because of "the emphasis placed by the entire economic system upon financial results", especially profit.

Enterprises had great freedom in setting wages. Until 1972, 15% of the labour force in industry and in trade was in private and semi-private enterprises; then there was a clampdown, but 5% of the non-agricultural labour force was still in the private sector in 1979, a bigger proportion than elsewhere (in the legal economies, at least) in state-monopoly industrialisms.

"[East German] experience shows that it is apparently not entirely true that 'the system needs administrative pressure in order to perform. When there is slack and a relatively free supply system, some sort of market pressure may develop even in a bureaucratic economy'" [Nove, quoting Keren.] [J-C Asselain, *Planning and Profits in Socialist Economies*; D Granick, *Enterprise Guidance in Eastern Europe*; I Jeffries and M Melzer, *The East German Economy*; A Nove, *The Soviet Economy*, p.314-316.]

The extreme terror used by Stalinism in the USSR, by brutalising, atomising and bureaucratising the society, seems to have reduced the USSR bureaucracy's ability to experiment effectively in economics below that of its homologues who used smaller terror, since they had no Bolshevik party to extirpate in order to settle their rule.

Stalinism was (is) thus more a social regime, a particular method of class organisation, working extreme torsions on the underlying statised capitalist infrastructure, than an original mode of production. As regards their economic mechanisms, Stalinist command economies could be changed into market economies (albeit heavily-nationalised), and vice versa, by government decision, without a social revolution or even a change of government. Yugoslavia and Hungary changed from command economies to largely market-regulated economies. China has also made a gradual change from a (heavily-nationalised and controlled) market economy to a command economy in the 1950s, and then back again.


What cannot and could not be changed so readily is class identity and class power. No private capitalist class has been dispossessed without a revolution, or drastic military action — not even when many of the private capitalists were later to become state managers, as in China and Eastern Europe. For a state-monopoly bureaucracy to cede place to (and partially transform itself into) a private capitalist class has also been difficult. In the USSR and most of Eastern Europe, it took popular revolutions, led by the middle class and mobilising (at least partially) the working class, to crack the central bureaucracy's monopoly regime. Yet there were profound economic imperatives pushing the same way.

There is a connection between the state-monopoly economies being parallel to market capitalism in economic development, and their constant use — however residual and limited at times — of money and the market. In modes of production before capitalism, the allocation of labour is determined by subsistence, custom, and the desire of the rulers for particular goods. The working people produce enough to feed, clothe and shelter themselves in some fashion; then on top of that they are dragooned into making lavish meals, rich clothing, palaces, cathedrals or Pyramids for their rulers. The potential for expansion is limited. There is no drive for general, mobile wealth, as distinct from the wealth embodied in particular goods. Under capitalism there is that drive. And the mar-

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ket provides a mechanism to stimulate that drive and evaluate different projects. Under socialism the drive to unlimited expansion of humanity's productive capacities will continue, but in more human, rational, and equal form. Calculation of costs and benefits, based on labour-time accounting, will enable us to evaluate projects. Even a workers' government, however, would have to use market mechanisms, and the information on costs, supply and demand given by free-moving prices, for a very long time. Short of socialism with general abundance, a high level of social solidarity and responsibility, and advanced techniques, there is no other way.

The USSR could launch its drive to build power stations, steelworks, and coal mines in the 1930s-50s — and China could follow it in the 1950s — with only the sketchiest market mechanisms because they could copy what needed to be done from Western capitalism, and they could keep the mass of the working people down to bare subsistence.

If the goal of those state-monopoly industrialisms had been simply to produce those particular goods — steelworks, power stations, and a military machine — they would have stopped there. Indeed, the great state despotisms of the past did become static once they reached a particular level of splendour. They became static even if, like the Ottoman Empire, they were in military competition with more dynamic societies.

But the 20th century state-monopoly economies did not stop there. They had a drive to develop wealth in diverse and new forms. These hideous bureaucratic regimes could not conceivably regulate and manage that drive through socialist methods. That left none other than market methods.

When choosing between 100 different investment projects, how else can you decide than by having information on costs provided by prices that mean something? When you expand consumer-goods production beyond the minimal necessities, but are still far from general abundance, how do you decide what to produce without supply-and-demand information?

Thus the bureaucrats' insistent drive for "rational pricing" in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Thus their free-market experiments. They could not have a form of economic regulation superior to market capitalism; they would not settle for a form of economic regulation inferior to it. Their regimes had been not socialist, but an especially brutal means of driving through "the historic genesis of capitalist production."

Objection 1: Capitalism is a market system. A command economy can't be capitalism.

Answer: For Engels, under state capitalism, "freedom of competition [would] change into its very opposite — into monopoly; and the production without any definite plan of capitalistic society capitulates to the production upon a definite plan of the invading socialistic society [but] so far still to the benefit and advantage of the capitalists" [Anti-Duhring p.329]. Engels was thinking of a highly-developed capitalism becoming statised, rather than a newly-industrialising economy; but the point remains. Capitalism is the system of exploitation of wage-labour by capital, whether carried out in a free market or a state-controlled economy.

Trotsky thought state-capitalism would be impossible in practice because of the conflicts between the capitalists and because the single state capital would be "too tempting an object for social revolution." Engels thought the same: "No nation will put up with... so barefaced an exploitation of the community by a small band of dividend-mongers."

In fact the state-bureaucratic classes suppressed their internal conflicts in the process of banding together as military groups for

combat against the old regime. In fact they established regimes with enough repressive strength (and, in some cases, political credit for their achievements against the colonialists and landlords) to keep control. But Trotsky and Engels were not entirely wrong. These regimes were inherently tense and vulnerable.

Objection 2: The workers are not really wage-workers under state-monopoly industrialism. They are state slaves. Wage-labour implies a more or less free labour market.

Answer: Yes, state repression redoubled exploitation. But there were labour markets in the state-monopoly industrialist societies. Instead of being handed rations, or living from what they could produce with means of production they owned themselves, the workers were paid wages and bought their subsistence. The bosses used piece-rates and bonuses. There was a difference between the situation of the bulk of the workers — wage workers — and that of the slaves in Stalin's forced-labour camps.

The political question is this: did the state-monopoly industrialisms create a wage-working class of the sort discussed in Marxist theory? A class with socialist potential? A class which by liberating itself can liberate humanity, as no other class in history could do? The answer of Hungary 1956 and Poland 1980-1 was: yes!

Objection 3: The statised system, at least as it existed in the USSR, was very different from what we know as capitalism in Britain. What is the sense in applying the same term to two such different societies?

Answer: Only in the textbooks does history proceed tidily from stereotype slavery to stereotype feudalism to stereotype capitalism. Each of the major modes of production known to history has seen wide variations. History is full of hybrid and exceptional formations which cannot be slotted tidily into one category or another.

Capitalism, the most dynamic and flexible mode of production yet known, has had especially varied forms. The capitalism of 14th century Florence or present-day Zaire were and are quite different from what we know in Britain, and the capitalism of most of the world in the era 1945-80 was closer to the USSR model than to what we know in Britain.

Objection 4: Wage-labour alone does not define capitalism. It is wage-labour and capital. You need to show that capital existed in the USSR. Machinery and factories are not of themselves capital. Capital is a social relation.

Answer: The state-monopoly industrial systems aimed not just for the production of particular use-values — be they palaces or power stations — but for the production of wealth in general, wealth not limited to any predefined form. That is capital.

Objection 5: Wage-labour is not special to capitalism. A workers' state would continue to use wage-labour long after the overthrow of capitalism.

Answer: A workers' state would be governed by an increase in the living standards of the working class, so that gradually the wage relationship would cease to be a market relationship governed by the value of labour power, and the working class would cease to be a working class. Investment would be directed to social need rather than self-expansion of capital; commodity forms would be eroded with basic services and goods distributed freely.

There was none of that under Stalinism. The Stalinist systems were located within the era of capitalism not just by an abstract economic category shared in common (wage labour), but also by their development of technology and of social classes.

History is full of hybrid and exceptional formations which cannot be slotted tidily into one category or another.

Stop the military campaign!

**An open letter to
Gerry Adams**

YOU have said publicly that you deeply regret the slaughter and havoc caused by the Provisional IRA bomb in Enniskillen last Sunday.

I'm sure you do. Not only have you slaughtered and maimed innocent Irish people attending a religious service, you have also dealt a grievous blow to the cause you want to serve — Irish unity.

Nor will it do much good with decent people in Ireland or Britain to express regret and sorrow. Even if the bomb had exploded accordingly to your schedule, there must have been a very big chance that it would have killed civilians too. Every thinking person in Ireland and Britain will know that. They will find your excuses hypocritical and obscene. There are deeds that stand out and are long remembered. I suspect that this will be one of them.

You don't have to be religious to find it peculiarly horrible and unpardonable to explode a murderous bomb in a crowd of Protestants holding a religious service in memory of the Protestant and Catholic dead of the two Great Wars. It is also, and you must in some part of your mind know it, Mr Adams, an act which is in flat and absolute contradiction to the root idea of Republicanism—the equality of the different segments of the Irish people, "Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter," to use Wolfe Tone's phrase.

It was a grossly and explicitly sectarian act. Mr Adams, neither you nor the movement you speak for takes seriously the sentiment expressed in the declaration of the Republic read out by Patrick Pearse at the Dublin Post Office on Easter Monday 1916 — the commitment to, "treat all the children of the nation equally." You talk vaguely about socialism, but you function as Catholic sectarians.

You have neither acknowledged nor apologised for the Catholic sectarian side of Sunday's massacre — though that is the side of it which will be most in the minds of Ireland's Protestant community, and especially of Protestants in areas of Northern Ireland where Catholics are in the majority, as they are in Fermanagh.

The constitutional nationalist John Hume was right to describe the Enniskillen slaughter as a, "sectarian provocation." You say you want a united Ireland — and you commit a sectarian atrocity like this against the community without whose consent there will never be a united Ireland!

The entire logic of your military campaign points not towards a united Ireland but towards bloody repartition by way of sectarian civil war — a war made up of such acts as Enniskillen.

Even if you gain your immediate objective, British withdrawal, that will only be the first step towards the tragedy of sectarian civil war — out of which can only come repartition.

Doing what is necessary to defend Catholic communities in Northern Ireland against attacks by Orange bigots or British forces is one thing. Trying to unite Ireland by guerilla war against the British Army — and in fact, against the Northern Ireland Protestant community — is another.

It is a war you cannot win. It is a misconceived war. Its objective — Irish unity — cannot be won by war. It can only be won if the consent of the Irish minority is won.

YOUR war is premised on a number of radical misunderstandings and self-hypnotising ideological lies. It is not "British imperialism" that keeps Ireland divided. Fundamentally, it is the refusal of the Protestant-Unionist Irish minority, who are the majority in north-east Ulster, to accept the status of a permanent minority in a Catholic state.

If Britain withdraws without a political settlement — that is, before the Catholic and Protestant sections of the people of Northern Ireland and of Ireland as a whole have worked out a way of living together — then what will follow will not be self-determination for the people of Ireland as a whole, but Protestant self-determination. Deprived of the British state, which they see as their own, they will not submit to Catholic rule. The Protestants will assert their own identity and work for their own self-determination against the Catholic majority. And they have the strength to achieve it.

For at least 100 years Irish political life has been dominated by the contradiction between the Irish majority's demand for unity and its demand for independence. The resistance of the minority — aided, for reasons which have varied over the years, by the British ruling class — has made it impossible to have both independence and unity even after the initial British resistance, for Imperial military reasons, to any form of Irish independence, had vanished, as it did decades ago. The barrier to Irish unity lies within Ireland, Mr Adams.

The Northern Ireland unit is undemo-

cratic and unviable, and Ireland should be united. But Ireland will be united by a political movement which has a programme capable of uniting its communities—and, in the first place, the workers of the two communities.

An effective Republican movement should be fighting sectarianism in all forms, advocating a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area, and striving to unite workers in struggles for jobs, wages and conditions. It should ruthlessly reject all green-nationalist rhetoric and all provocative actions that divide workers. We cannot unite Ireland without uniting Irish people. James Connolly was right when he wrote: "Ireland without her people means nothing to me."

The last way to break down the barriers to Irish unity is by way of a military campaign. Your military campaign — conceived and justified as a campaign against British imperialism and its local agents — has raised and strengthened those barriers massively.

Yours is a war waged in the name of the Irish people, but you base yourselves on one community only, in both your political aims — a unitary all-Ireland state, which would inevitably be Catholic-dominated — and your methods — a guerilla war against the British state and against the Protestant community.

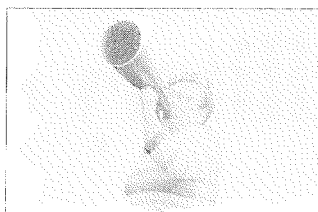
Against the Protestant community? Yes, Mr Adams, there is no other way to describe it, whether we are talking about what happened in Enniskillen or about the killing of Protestant workers earlier this year after they had been labelled as "military targets" for doing jobs somehow related to maintaining the army or police.

The slaughter of the innocents in Enniskillen will convince many of Sinn Féin's erstwhile supporters that the Provisional IRA's war has landed your movement — and all of Northern Ireland's society — in a bloody dead-end. It should convince the socialists within Sinn Féin that the military campaign needs to be called off now.

No good can come of this campaign. There is nothing revolutionary about militarism-on-principle. Even if this campaign should succeed in forcing the British to withdraw — and it won't do that — then it will not unite Ireland, but bloodily red-
vide it... forever.

Enough is enough!

*John O'Mahony,
Socialist Organiser No 334
12 November 1987.*



Surrender on the cultural front

I WAS appalled by much of the nonsense Jim Denham treated us to in his article about Elvis Presley (WL42). He seems to have little grasp on the Marxist theory of ideology and to be determined not only to live in the 1950s himself, but to drag the rest of us back there too.

At the root of the problem is Denham's attempt to counterpose the real problem of the degeneration of culture by capitalist consumerism, to some ahistorical category of "great" popular music. In doing so, he offers an alternative which is closer to the feudal-absolutist and Stalinist positions (which share Jim's belief in ahistorical "greatness") than to a serious Marxist analysis. He therefore offers capitulation on the cultural front to forces even more reactionary than the bourgeoisie.

Jim states: "When the roster of great popular singers of the century is finally drawn up, he [Elvis] most assuredly won't [top the list]." Yet it is impossible to construct such a list except on a subjective basis. In practice, such rosters of "great" artists are invariably right-wing, presume the existence of a dominant culture rather than a diverse collection of subcultures and fail to recognise that all culture is historically relative.

This recognition — that the controllers of production in a given epoch also control cultural production, that culture can only be assessed from a modern viewpoint which is itself a historical construct, or else in the context of a broader socio-historical analysis — is at the heart of the Marxist view of ideology, and to reject it is to reject the materialist core of Marxist theory.

What roles do cultural products — especially ones which Marxists, from the standpoint of their own politics, may perceive as "great" — play in society? Firstly, they perform definite functions for their consumers by providing enjoyment and/or a degree of self-actualisation. Second, they can help to raise the intellectual level, usually by bringing their users into conflict with the dominant culture. Thirdly, they can resolve internal dialectics within the cultural sphere by innovatively combining elements of previous traditions.

Rock music, when viewed historically, is "great" by all three standards. It has brought a great deal of enjoyment to a huge number of people. Variants on rock and roll played a crucial role in the popular-democratic fightbacks of the 1960s and later, helping to create movements from below such as "hippies" and "rockers". And rock music also resolved a dialectic within culture, by combining "black" and "white" musical styles. Since the 1960s it has been far easier for black-led musical forms "from below" to gain a wider audience.

Crosby, Sinatra et al, by contrast, emerged in a period typified by stultifying social structures, political conformity and cultural staleness. These performers hardly innovated from existing styles, and did nothing to revive struggle. I challenge Jim to prove otherwise.

Jim's approach — like that of the reactionary Tories who believe in forcing children to regurgitate "classical" — elevates his personal taste to the level of an objective standard, excludes large numbers of people who do not share his subjective viewpoint, and fails to address (thereby covering up) the issues of social construction of culture and ideological effects which are so central to understanding culture in a real, social and histori-

cal framework.

If Jim really feels the need for Marxists to live in the past, he should at least pick a period with a sense of fightback about it. In his ridiculous attempts to turn the music of the past into some latter-day Socialist Realism, he risks alienating the millions who enjoy rock music, contemporary pop, and their derivatives. These include many good socialists and ordinary people, not only people like Blair and Clinton*. Socialists should recognise the validity of the cultural forms they prefer.

The crucial issue for Marxists is not "greatness", judged by some fictitious externally-imposed standard. Our role is to champion cultural freedom and struggle from below. To forget this is to lose what makes us Marxists.

* Incidentally, Leo Abse (in "The Man Behind the Smile") provides a detailed argument as to how rock music may link to the pathologies of people like Blair, Clinton and the Elvis cultists. But I seem to recall Jim dismissing this approach as "psychobabble". Evidently, his attitude to innovative science is as hostile as his attitude to innovative culture.

Andy Robinson

A bankrupt project

IT serves "Paddy the Old Believer" [Patrick Avakum, 'Socialism or Nationalism?', WL40] right that he should get a diatribe from James D Young [WL 42] in return for writing a ridiculously "soft" review of Young's "The Very Bastards of Creation."

"One Scot's critique of Western imperialism inside the Celtic fringe of Great Britain," is how James D Young describes his truly wretched book. Young's starting point is that the Act of Union in 1707 was "when 'Scots lost their freedom to a superior English imperialism,' and Scotland became 'a subordinate or oppressed nation.'"

Since then, "the colonial dimension" of Scottish politics has been "real and tangible." Scotland "remained an oppressed country until after 1832... The sense of national grievance... was to persist for several decades into the next two centuries."

"Scotland," writes Young, "has always been a sort of 'Third World country'." Thus, the central task for Scots today is that of "regaining our national independence: independence from British imperialism and multi-national corporations."

The villains in Young's typically incoherent and rambling tirade are the British — or, to use Young's parlance, the "Brits": "The Brits' official culture", "Havelock Wilson's Brit National Union of Seamen", "the Brits' Establishment", "the Brits' Prime Minister", "the Brits' Labour Party", and "a Brit Marxist magazine." (The crime of the latter magazine was that it "had no sympathy for either the Stuarts, Jacobitism or Celtic communism" — something which one can only applaud.)

Young condemns the ruling classes in Scotland not so much for being ruling classes, but for their pro-English, pro-British sympathies. Hence his interminable references to "the Anglo-Scottish ruling class", "the Anglo-Scottish Establishment", "the Anglo-Scots Scottish Enlightenment", "the anti-Scottish Anglo-Scottish ruling class", and the "Anglo-British state in Scotland."

High on the list of crimes of this "Anglo-Scottish ruling class" is their denial of a university education to indigenous Scots: "[In the 1980s] highly qualified Scottish students were increasingly kept out of universities in Scotland to make

way for incomers (is this the "Brits"?) who could not get into British universities elsewhere.... The Anglo-Scottish ruling class did not want an educated or politically conscious labour force."

Young counterposes a second Scotland ("from 1688 onwards there were at least two Scotlands") to that of the "Anglo-Scottish ruling class." In opposition to "the sleekness (cunning) of the Anglo-Scottish rulers" there existed "a carnaptious (quarrelsome) radicalism." "The London-inspired consciousness of the Scottish Enlightenment existed in bitter and hostile opposition to the carnaptious radical culture and consciousness of an older Scotland of the common people."

Scottish workers developed "their own class identity as Scots and workers." Influenced by "the nationalism and anti-Englishness of the Scottish radicals and socialists," stiffened by "the Scots tradition of metaphysics and Marxism", and "sharpened by the imperialism of the English workers' movement", there gradually emerged "a re-made Scottish working class with a new-national-cum-class identity."

(The "radical Scottish nationalism of the labour movement of the Athens of the North" turns out to have had some unusual forerunners. Young praises the Jacobites of the 1745 rebellion as "very real opponents of English imperialism", struggling valiantly against "Cumberland's modern English imperialist army." A more orthodox Marxist interpretation would rightly dismiss the Jacobites as forces of feudal reaction.)

Typically Young's overall political incoherency is reinforced by sweeping generalisations devoid of supporting evidence.

"Scotland has always been preoccupied with metaphysics over profits," writes Young. Edinburgh, the thirteenth biggest financial centre in the world, is doubtless a prime example of this Scottish disdain for profits.

"Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle anticipated the *Communist Manifesto*" is another fascinating claim advanced by Young. So perhaps Lenin's pamphlet should have been entitled: "The Five Sources and Five Component Parts of Marxism"?

Young's argument that "Scots lost their freedom" in 1701 is a non-starter. The plebeian masses had no freedom to lose. And the ruling classes supported the Act of Union in order to benefit from the imperialist expansion of their Southern neighbours. Nor does it make any sense to talk about Scotland in 1707 as if it were a fully-developed nation-state. Nation-states were still only in the process of formation in the early eighteenth century. In the modern sense of the terms, Scotland was neither a nation nor a state.

In any case, at the time of the Act of Union Lowland Scotland had more in common with England than it did with the Scottish Highlands.

Young does not use "British" as a definition of citizenship, just as he does not use "English" or "Scottish" as a definition of national identity. For him, they are definitions of a *political* identity — English/British is reactionary and imperialist, whilst Scottish is progressive and anti-imperialist. Hence he ends up equating, and thereby confusing, a class identity with a national identity (or, imputed national identity.) On the one hand, there is the "Anglo-Scottish ruling class." On the other hand, there is the Scottish "national-cum-class identity" of the working class.

Young's creation of a hierarchy of cultures — with the (pure) Scottish culture of the plebeian masses elevated over and above the (adulterated) Anglo-Scottish culture of the Establishment — is a particularly dubious venture, especially for someone who claims to speak as a "socialist internationalist".

History is littered with individuals and movements which have sought to promote the "purity" of nations and cultures. Their political provenance is not of the left.

Scarcely less dubious is Young's construction of a Scottish radical tradition which, he writes, has traditionally been portrayed as "eccentric" (by, of course, "English cultural imperialists in the Scottish universities") but is in fact simply "carnaptious".

He cites, for example, the mentally unhinged John Maclean as an example of this carnaptious, but not eccentric, tradition!

(Even a cursory reading of Young's book, however, leaves the reader with the distinct impression that young has a vested interest in blurring the distinction between eccentricity and carnaptiousness.)

If Young's book serves any purpose at all, it is to demonstrate the bankruptcy of attempts to merge the ideologies of socialism and nationalism, a particularly popular project amongst sections of the Scottish left at the moment. The gobbledygook of Young's book merely brings out into the open the absurdity of the project.

Stan Crooke

The next step in the American Labor Party movement

THE socialist left in America is faced with two separate but inter-related issues concerning the emerging, yet still very modest, labor party sentiment now circulating in the secondary and tertiary ranks of the trade union bureaucracy. The first great divide — and one all too familiar to the readers of these pages — is our orientation to such a movement, and the second, and somewhat separate issue, concerns the concrete, specific circumstances which confront us and from which we can evaluate the prospects for translating these sentiments into the reality of a full-fledged party.

It must be acknowledged from the outset that a trade union party is no substitute for a revolutionary socialist party. Its political dynamics are shaped and thereby limited by the social role of the trade union bureaucracies themselves.

Knowing full well, moreover, that such parties are not merely non-revolutionary apparatuses but devices for suppressing revolution, as the lessons of history abundantly confirm, why then did Lenin and Trotsky "impose" the struggle for a labor party on the nascent American communist movement in the 1920s and what relevance do these arguments continue to have for the socialist left today?

The organizational independence of sections of the American working class from the capitalist party structure would signal a giant and welcome step forward in its political maturation. It would mark the first stage in broadening worker militancy beyond the immediate and narrow scope of confrontation with the individual employer or industry and would provide a framework conducive to socialists for linking and integrating these struggles with the larger systematic problems of social oppression and exploitation.

What distinguishes revolutionary socialists from sectarians is precisely the desire to overcome their sterile isolation by participating in and even of sharing, if necessary, in the experience of reformist politics, whenever and wherever that marks a stage through which the working class passes. This is done not to embroil illusions about such politics, but, on the contrary, as a point of departure to attain the political competency needed to organize a broad socialist current capa-

ble of mounting a decisive challenge, in the first instance, to the labor bureaucracy.

The sectarian impulse, that a "workers party" must be built in immediate opposition to existing trade unions, is a declaration of abstention from the preparatory propaganda, agitation and action needed to gain mass support and authority. It is an abstract demand for revolutionary politics aimed at those not yet convinced of the limitations of reforms or prepared to repudiate their readerships by those who have done nothing to earn the confidence of the very class they seek to influence.

This of course is all ABC for those in agreement with the orientation of *Workers' Liberty*. The decisive question is not the inadequacies of the American Labor Party's current program, which in vital ways represents an unprincipled compromise with some of the more backward impulses of American labor, but whether this type of reformism is now on the social agenda at all. There are special problems that confront such politics, largely distinct from those reactionary obstacles which plague the organizational potential of any would-be third party in this country.

For reformism to be translatable into reality, capitalism has generally either entered into ascendancy or enjoyed a lengthy period of prosperity. Only when reassured by extra layers of protective economic fat does it become clear to the ruling class that a menu of concessions provide the cheapest and most expedient means for preserving social cohesion. If the flowering of New Deal liberalism in the midst of the Depression seems to contradict this, it must be borne in mind that the ruling class was constrained to spawn its reforms from within the tightly controlled confines of one of its own political institutions, the Democratic Party. By transforming the Democratic Party into the political equivalent of a company union, the ruling class managed with one stroke to bottle the working class with Jim Crow reaction and pre-empt the drive for an independent reform party of labor.

Should that scenario have failed and an authentic labor party surfaced in the teeth of ruling class opposition, the political limits of reform would have in all likelihood quickly clarified themselves. After all, 1937 alone witnessed the greatest wave of strike activity in the history of US labor.

The genius of New Deal liberalism; powerfully reinforced by the advent of war, was to have entangled labor within the innumerable tentacles of capitalist influence and control, depriving labor of the very institutional independence needed to assimilate the lessons of struggle and attain consciousness of its own unique social interests and historic aims. By thwarting the drive towards working class political autonomy, liberalism at the same time kept the forces of ruling class authoritarianism at bay and thus prevented the radicalization of society at both ends of the class divide.

This later proved indispensable in fighting the cold war. The Democratic Party became the party of bourgeois internationalism — of "guns and butter" — freeing American imperialism to confront Stalinism abroad without fear of a second potentially anti-capitalist front being opened at home. Its success paralleled the success of European social democracy insofar as both fed on the thirty year post-war economic recovery. The American labor bureaucracy was able to fortify its position through the political leverage, bargaining power and patronage that the existing Democratic Party arrangement offered, without being pushed or challenged from below. It even managed to advance its status by tailing the civil rights movement's campaign to suppress the openly racist wing of the party. But the crusading social vision behind which the early CIO rallied all the progressive forces of society was smothered by the choke-hold of Democratic machine politics. The union leadership itself, devoid of independent conviction or direction, was seen — in an oversimplified fashion, no doubt — as just another pillar of the Establishment.

Had Stalinism ultimately been defeated by a progressive or revolutionary force, that is, by one

based on the Eastern European and Russian working classes acting in their own interest, this would undoubtedly have had a profound and catalyzing effect on American rank and file political quiescence, perhaps even jarring it from its long time political inertia. But the fossilization and disintegration of Stalinism rapidly matured instead against a mutually exhausting arms race, the ramified impact of which contributed powerfully, if somewhat less dramatically, in bringing the postwar capitalist prosperity as well to a resounding close.

With the end of economic prosperity and the winding down of the Cold War, the premises of Democratic Party liberalism were under assault on every front. Indeed the Democratic Party of Roosevelt and Johnson was a functional relic, the lubricant of an obsolete machine. Because the interventionary state, of which the permanent war economy was but one component, could only prop up demand as a substitute for flagging accumulation by absorbing increasing layers of economic resources, it came to be identified with prolonged stagnation. The form of economic interventionism associated with Keynesianism could never be anything more than a holding operation under such circumstances, artificially maintaining the value of assets whose very devaluation and consolidation is in any case a precondition to the restoration of capitalist profitability. The restructuring of capitalism was therefore increasingly forced to resolve itself beyond the confines of the state, whose field of operation became, in turn, increasingly constrained against the threat of capital flight. The old semi-monopolistic heavy industry, where American union density was most deeply entrenched, began to fragment. The international fluidity of capital, now promiscuously in search of cheap labor abroad, acted as whipsaw to introduce successive assault waves against domestic employment stability — from contracting work out, to permanently replacing striking workers, to re-engineering jobs. The economic framework of even the rather anaemic American welfare state began to corrode, and the "modernizers" of the Democratic Party led by Clinton began the painful task of aligning the institution to the demands of the time.

Having grown fat during the cold war when their services were needed, the bewildered leaders of American labor found themselves at the end of the day increasingly without a program, a vocabulary, an ideology or a political vehicle to mobilize the rank and file in defense of their elementary class interests. What else could have been expected? The bureaucracy had for decades found themselves presiding over the demise of the strike, the increased bureaucratization of the negotiations process and the abdication of the unions as an viable and aggressive organizing venture. Even so and much to the chagrin of the labor tops, a downsized capitalism no longer looked to the still relatively expensive services of unions and their readerships as a necessary overhead cost of social stability. The working class base, for its part — fractured, disoriented and increasingly wary of politics as a means of social redress — has been left devoid of any generational memory of significant union triumphs or successful remedial government concessions. Its confidence in its own class power has dwindled, and its consciousness hurled backwards. The burgeoning abstention from the rituals of bourgeois democracy that has ensued might be celebrated by some unthinking souls as a mark of reflexive rebellion. But it would be a monstrous mistake for socialists to confuse such alienation from the two party system as stems from rampant cynicism with politicalization.

It is into this breach that the Labor Party steps. As a political sentiment, the labor party movement is thin and isolated, little more than a shop stewards' movement for now. Wary of challenging Sweeney and his new regime, it has disavowed mounting, at least for the time being, an open electoral challenge at any level to the Democratic Party in the vain hope of slowly bringing the labor bureaucracy on board. But if the

bureaucracy tolerates this movement, it does so in a time honored fashion. Even such reactionary entities as Meany and Beck now and then put the Democrats on notice by pointing to the existence of such attitudes within the ranks and embellishing these sentiments with the hint of concealed sympathies for such politics on their part as well. The labor bureaucracy, however, is not about to open up (much less relinquish) its political action committees, now among the entities within the trade union movement most fortified against rank and file interference, for fear of loosing whatever remaining influence they retain in Democratic circles. It is these PACs that control vast bankrolls of union dues earmarked for political purposes and which mobilize community and rank and file electoral action. That is why the capture of the PACs is indispensable in translating the labor party sentiment into a political reality. The question much debated in socialist circles as to whether the Labor Party should presently endorse independent candidates, little more than an educational gesture — though meaningful enough for that reason alone! — largely misses the point. What highlights the lack of determination and resolve on the part of Mazzocchi and his followers is not their refusal to endorse an immediate electoral strategy, but their failure to recognize the need and prepare the movement for an open attack to democratize the PACs, to wrench them from the hands of the union tops and to take direct responsibility for them. It is hard to comprehend how unions can be politicized without introducing politics into the unions. That is to say, the Labor Party movement must come to see itself as a resolute force for democratization of the AFL-CIO, not merely a political adjunct to the status quo. Without the power that the PAC mechanism commands, the Labor Party would remain isolated as a labor version of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action — a sterilized Democratic Party pressure group. Accommodation between it and the existing labor bureaucracy would assume a retrograde form of "lesser evilism" familiar to students of American labor history. Endorsements of Democratic Party candidates on an independent labor line under such circumstances would transform the Labor Party into an overflow tank, whereby disenchantment with the national Democratic Party can be registered, while Democratic power itself is reinforced.

Entering this next stage promises an immediate confrontation with the very bureaucracy Mazzocchi is now tiptoeing around. But like the last great departure in the American labor movement — the rise of the CIO — a meaningful labor party movement requires treading over the union time-servers who seek to restrict and contain it, perhaps even splitting the union tops in response to an upsurge from below. And this struggle is just the precondition for a Labor Party... Then the hard part begins.

Barry Finger

Wrong about Hutchinson?

WE would like to bring to your attention the following statement by Mr Billy Hutchinson in August 1997, when he said: "We have been advising the UVF to maintain its ceasefire because the talks were the way forward, but we can't give that advice any more. We are being taken for granted and there is nothing in it for us."

Bearing in mind the record of the UVF of randomly killing any Catholic they get hold of, including Mr Hutchinson's record of killing a SDLP councillor and his Protestant girlfriend for the 'crime' of daring to mix with each other (Hutchinson and his comrades slashed off the woman's breasts in what was an orgy of sectarian butchery) then

clearly his advice spells trouble for Catholics in the north of Ireland.

In this context we therefore ask whether *Workers' Liberty* is now prepared to admit that it was wrong to allow Mr Hutchinson to write an article for your publication in October 1995 in which he claimed: "Yes, I am a socialist!" He was allowed to speak at a *Workers' Liberty* dayschool on a similar theme.

We look forward to hearing your reply.

Mark Metcalf, on behalf of the Colin Roach Centre/Resistance

Don't wait for Blair's bubble to burst

IT used to be said that there were only two things certain in life — death and taxes. Under Tony Blair, of course, the latter is a little less certain. But the way in which he tried to take over the national mourning for Diana suggests that he is working on the former. But let us guess that Tony's hair is going to thin and go grey and that his waist is going to thicken and go saggy... and that he is going to become subject to mortality despite all his image-makers can do for him. What is going to happen then?

When Blair's bubble bursts, where will you be? The signs are already there. It is not that Blair's Labour Government is disappointing its enemies (it never wanted to please us in the first place), but that it is disappointing its friends. Some media comments: "(Blair) preaches 'giving'. He will be judged by whether he has given in to Thatcherism"; "The growing realisation is that we may soon not be able to look to the Labour Party to represent what we believe"; "Australian politics are known to influence New Labour — so the message is clear. It should prepare to move to the left."

Who said the above? Not socialists, not "old Labour", not even the blessed Roy of Hattersley. It was the editor and business editor of the *Observer*, who encouraged Blair in the "new" direction to abandon Clause Four and public ownership.

In business circles the same disappointment is forthcoming. European monetary union is demanded by Blair's business "partners". So much headway has been made by Blair in enlisting trade union support for his "project" that the trades unions themselves have joined (at TUC level) in the call for Maastricht's rigid anti-welfare state criteria to be adopted.

As for the "people", those sweet ordinary somethings who Blair was so keen to "include" in a Whitehall open-door approach... look at the patronising pat on the head which Blair gave Blunkett after his education speech to the Party Conference, and the secret shake of the hand which Blair gave to Adams, paternally elevating him to "human being" status. Thus Blair's language before the election to people who are black, disabled, lesbian or gay. He pronounced that these "differences aren't important", and to all those suffering disadvantage generally, he envisaged a society which would be fair to ordinary people. Equality is for all "ordinary" people. Discrimination is "unimportant". Four legs good, two legs better.

But Blair seems upset when his erstwhile friends become surprised by his new directions. Don't they understand, he petulantly asks, that the Tories are still in government? Don't they understand that the "Treasury" has set these spending limits? One local Labour Party leaflet, in a constituency with a fair number of middle class parents, advises its readers to "join the Labour Party" if they are concerned about tuition fees for higher education, as it is the "Treasury" which is to blame for all the difficulties.

The same goes for health. Poor Frank Dobson has no choice but to live within the government (that's the Tory Government) spending limits. And

the Mersey dockers should know better than to ask their union leadership (the mighty TGWU) or the Government (13% share-holders in their employer's company) for support in their dispute. They (the Labour Government and the TUC) would be breaking the law. Their hands are tied and there's nothing they can do about it. (Of course, if the Tories had won again, taxes would have gone up by now to pay for the economic deficit they had left for their successors.)

But a lot of us are not Blair's friends. Dockers, deportees, disadvantaged, disenfranchised, discriminated against... people can't wait for Blair's bubble to burst. We have to help make it happen. This is because new Labour's new Danger is still the same old danger: that the opposition to its sunshine smile and Camelot carry-on will come from the far right.

To redress the balance, to counter the threat, there is no one right answer. No-one has a monopoly of ideas. Instead there is a compelling argument for developing alliances of forces. Socialists, environmentalists, direct action campaigners, trade unionists, need to join together, working across the issues and across the regions, to say that there is an alternative to the free-market madness of Blair and Major, Hague and Thatcher.

This is what the Liverpool dockers have represented, in making links with many non-traditional forces. Their struggle is about challenging the globalisation and casualisation of work and workers everywhere, about connecting the environment with the economy, and about raising the standard of human dignity against the oppression of the new capitalists and their "partnership" politics. Their struggle is all our struggle. Their victory will be all our victory. Morris and Blair could do with remembering that this is where their organisations come from, before they become consigned to the place in history which they seem so eagerly to desire. And we need to put them there, not just sit back and wait for the bubble to burst.

The first national conference of the Socialist Alliances in England will be held in Walsall on 29 November. Further details from 58 Langdale Road, Manchester M14 5PN.

John Nicholson

SWP practice equals violence

TO the SWP's Executive:

Recently I wrote a short letter complaining about two idiot-nutter members of your organisation — Ian Mitchell and Yunis Baksh — who attempted to break up a fringe meeting we helped to organise at your so-called "Marxism" event (July 97, London.)

Experiences since suggest that you reined in Mr Mitchell; but Baksh is still at it. Brother Baksh appears to object to our growing influence in the Newcastle colleges. His response has been to act like a nutter in local student meetings and to threaten more of our people.

In front of a number of witnesses at the back of a very big Free Education meeting he threatened to beat up our local organiser (a young gay man, about half his size.) Incidentally, there is evidence that this bloke has completely lost it: he wasn't just threatening our known comrades on the 5 November student march in Newcastle. For example, he threatened to beat up a 17 year old comrade who was giving out CFE placards. I know about this only because this young man is in fact a member of ours. There is no way Yunis would have known that. I understand that SWP leader Tony Cliff has declared the current period one where the key battle is the battle of ideas. I had a good laugh when I heard this. What are you going to do with Yunis Baksh and others like them in your ranks? Get them to have the word "ideas" tattooed on their fists and stencilled on their bovine boots?

All the best,
Mark Osborn

A government of the working class

By Karl Radek

THE starting point of our activities must be the demand for higher wages, the demand for retention of the eight-hour day and the demand for the development of the Industrial council movement. But these demands do not suffice. Workers who belong to no political party at all can and do demand the daily wage of one thousand marks, whilst five hundred marks will not procure them the necessities of life. But they see that to increase their wages in paper money provides no issue from their troubles. To begin with, such watchwords may suffice but the longer the struggle lasts, the more essential does it become to proclaim political watchwords, the watchwords of social organisation. When the time is ripe for the voicing of such demands, it is time to move from the defensive to the offensive. We must put forward in these circumstances the demand for control of production and make clear to the workers that this is the only way out of economic chaos.

What are the masses of the workers, not merely the Communists, thinking of when they speak of Workers' Governments? I confine myself to countries in which these ideas have already found an echo: Britain, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In England, think of the Labour Party. Communism there is not yet a mass power. In the countries where capitalism is decaying, this idea is intimately associated with that of the United Front. Just as the workers say that the meaning of the United Front is that the Communists and Social-Democrats must make common cause in the factory when there is a strike, so for the masses of the workers the idea of a Workers' Government has a similar significance. The workers are thinking of a government of all the working class parties.

What does that mean for the masses practically and politically? The political decision on the question will depend on the fact whether the social-democracy does or does not go with the bourgeoisie. Should it do so, then the Workers' Government can only take the form of the dictatorship of the Communist proletariat. We cannot decide for the social democrats what their policy should be. What we have to decide is this. When we lead the masses in the struggle against the capitalist offensive, are we ready to fight on behalf of such a labour coalition government? Are we or are we not ready to bring about the conditions essential to its realisation?

In my opinion, when we are concerned with the struggle for the United Front, we ought to say bluntly that, if the social-democratic workers will force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie, then we are ready to participate in a labour government, so long as that government is an instrument of the class struggle. I mean, if it is ready to fight beside us shoulder to shoulder.

What we have in mind is not a parlia-

mentary combination, but a platform for the mobilisation of the masses, an arena for the struggle. The form the question takes is this. Will the social-democrats be excluded from the coalition by the bourgeoisie; will they continue to rot in the coalition; or shall we help the masses to compel them to fight? Perhaps you will ask why the deuce we should bother what they do? If it only concerned the fate of the leaders of the social-democrats, we should certainly be quite happy to leave them to rot. But when the question at issue is the mobilisation of the social-democratic masses, we must formulate a positive programme.

To what extent does such a programme conflict with the dictatorship of the proletariat? To what extent does it conflict with the civil war? It conflicts to the same extent to which an ante-room conflicts with the room to which it leads. As far as we are concerned with the broad front of the proletarian struggle for freedom the watchword of the workers' government is necessary to supply us with a directive; it is a watchword that whets the edge of our political weapons. The

"The moment when the workers find themselves simultaneously engaged in the fight for the workers' government and in the fight for control of production, will be the moment when our fundamental offensive will begin."

moment when the workers find themselves simultaneously engaged in the fight for the workers' government and in the fight for control of production, will be the moment when our fundamental offensive will begin, the moment when we shall cease to content ourselves with trying to defend what we have, and shall advance to the attack on new positions! Our offensive will begin as soon as the workers are ready to fight for these two watchwords.

Even in the countries where we have the best developed parties, our agitation still exhibits an abstract character, it is not yet instinct with the passion of persons convinced they are fighting for aims realisable in the near future. All their work produces the impression of pure agitation. If we desire that our debates shall not die of anaemia, and that our congresses shall not resemble party conventicles in which nothing but theoretical evolutionary tendencies are discussed, the parties must pursue in practice a very different policy from that they have pursued in the past. There must be a change, not merely in political aim, but also in the

energy of the struggle.

The Communist International is not merely the party for the conquest of power, it is the party for conducting the fight. It is nonsense, therefore, to say: "These are piping times of peace, so the party cannot fight." Such a view would make of the Communist International a parasite upon the proletarian world revolution instead of a combatant on its behalf. The watchword must be not one of disillusionment and of waiting for the revolution, but one of fighting for every inch of ground. All our discussions are devoid of meaning unless we understand that we can only form Communist Parties upon condition that their main activity is not to be in the rooms where resolutions are passed and studied, but on the battlefield where our aims find practical fulfilment, in the United Front of the proletariat, in the fight along the lines that are made actual by contemporary history.

Comrades. I want to say a few words about the peril from the Right. How does the British Communist Party apply its United Front tactics? It says: "We are a section of the working class, namely its Left Wing. Nevertheless, we want to stand together with all the other workers' parties." Whither Naomi goes thither goes Ruth also. And then the election address goes on: "What is the Labour Party? The workers are fine fellows, they want to fight, but the leaders are not quite so fine." And then it says: "In the past as in the present there was treachery on the part of the leaders. Such treachery might happen once. But nevertheless, the Labour Party is against the capitalists." By Jove, if this is a sample of unity tactics, perhaps we better leave them alone. The Executive has shown in its manifesto that the entire policy of the Labour Party is nothing but a continuous betrayal of working class interests. But the Executive also said to the workers: If the Labour Party is victorious and forms a government, it will betray you in the end and will show to the workers that its aim is the perpetuation of capitalism. Then the workers will either desert it or the Labour Party will be compelled to fight owing to the pressure of the workers, and in that case we shall back it. We issued a definite watchword: vote for it, but prepare to struggle against it. If thereupon comrade Webb comes here and warns us against the opportunists, we can only say to him: "Comrade Webb, book your berth as quickly as possible and return to England, in order to fight against opportunism there, and you will have our heartiest support".

Karl Radek was a revolutionary active in the German, Polish, and Russian revolutionary movements, and an early leader of the Left Opposition. (He later capitulated to Stalinism, then fell victim to Stalin's purges.) This speech is from the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922.

The Fate of the Russian Revolution

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