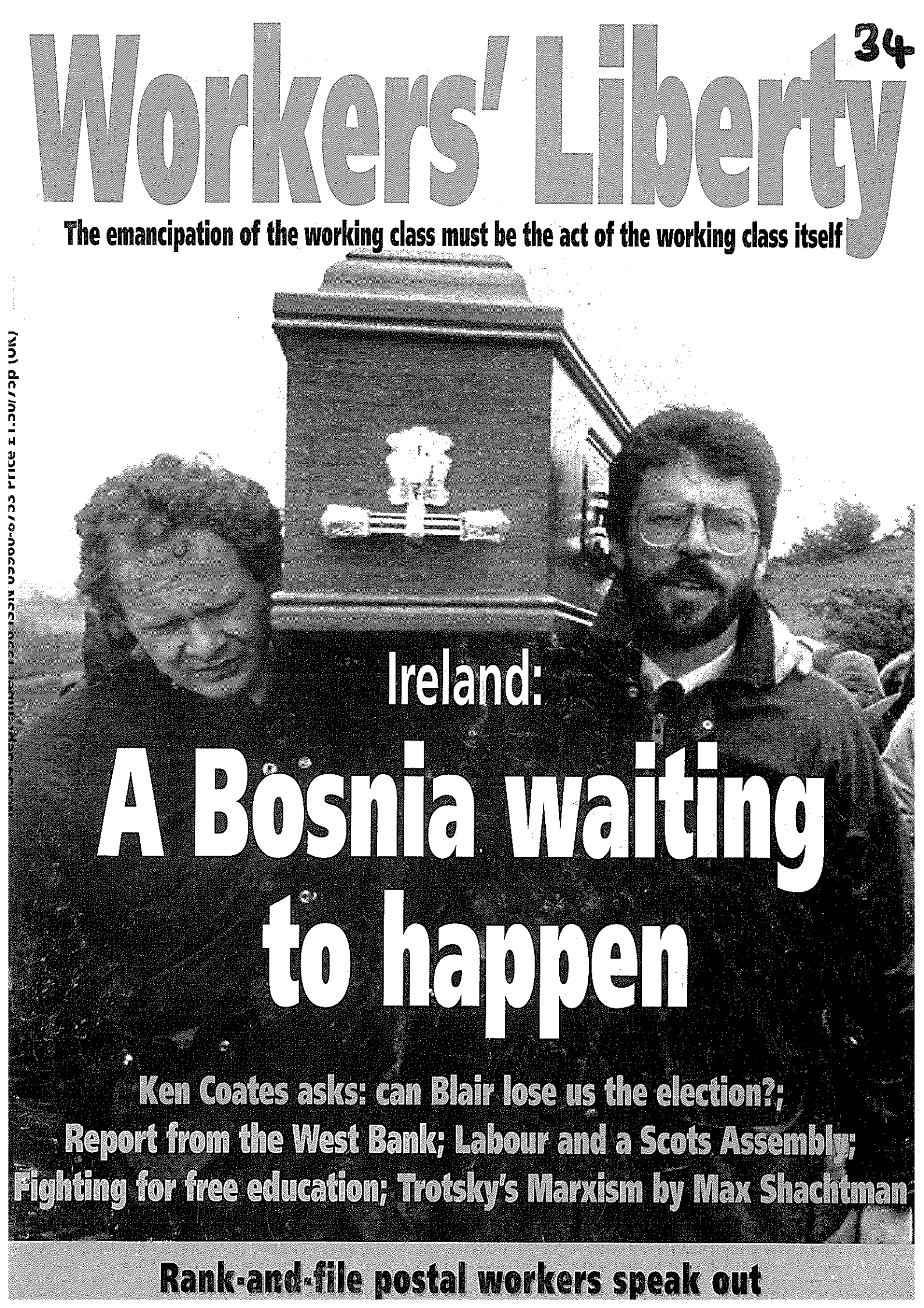


Workers' Liberty ³⁴

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself

(UK) 020 7350 0755 FAX 020 7350 0755



Ireland:

A Bosnia waiting to happen

Ken Coates asks: can Blair lose us the election?;

Report from the West Bank; Labour and a Scots Assembly;

Fighting for free education; Trotsky's Marxism by Max Shachtman

Rank-and-file postal workers speak out

3 Commentary

Ireland: a Bosnia waiting to happen;
Tony Blair and Queen Victoria;
 Why we publish Workers' Liberty;
Correction.

6 The industrial front

A diary of the dispute **by a postal worker;**
 CWU London Regional Secretary, **Dave Ward,** interviewed.

9 Labour Party

"Could Tony Blair lose us the election?" **by Ken Coates MEP**

11 Survey

Israel under Netanyahu, **by Adam Keller and Walid Saleem;**
 CWU: Why can't Johnson score? **by Sleeper;**
 Australia's Tories face the workers **by Martin Thomas;**
 Labour and Scotland **by Stan Crooke;**
 Indonesia: the workers resurgent **by Colin Foster.**

16 Our contemporaries

New Statesman **by Jim Denham.**

17 The cover story

Ireland as it seems and as it is **by Paddy Dollard.**

24 Students

Students and the struggle for socialism **by Alan McArthur;**
 Why do student leaders support graduate tax? **by Janine Booth.**

27 Political economy

"The economics of the New Depression" **by Martin Thomas.**

30 Our History

Stalin's nightmarish counter-revolution, and the Moscow show trials of 1936-8 **by Frank Higgins.**

32 Putting it in context

"Is there life in space?" **by Les Hearn.**

33 In depth

Trotsky's Marxism **by Max Shachtman.**

37 Forum

Excluding children **by William Irons;**
 The USSR was state capitalist! **by Martin Thomas;**
 Socialists and football **by Rosie Woods;**
 Unite Jewish and Arab workers! **by John Laurence;**
 Labour and Welsh Home Rule **by Theelia Weed;**
 Mistaken about peace **by Dan Katz.**

40 Anti-Zionism and anti-racism

Jim Higgins and Sean Matgamna continue a debate on Israel and Palestine.

45 Reviews

Lenin and the Myth of Revolutionary Defeatism **by Tom Rigby;**
 Verse and worse: two anthologies **by Jackie Cleary;**
 William Morris on History **by Fergus Ennis.**

47 Ideas for Freedom

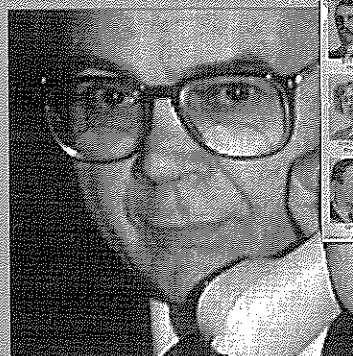
Marx's theory of value **by Tom Rigby.**

48 Struggle

The Tube sell-out: reports **by a driver and a guard.**



Students and the struggle for socialism, pages 24-5



Ken Coates asks "Could Blair lose us the election?" pages 9-10



The Moscow Trials: when Stalin murdered the revolutionary generation, pages 30-31



Indonesia erupts, pages 14-15

Workers' Liberty

THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!



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

Editor: Sean Matgamna; Assistant Editor: Helen Rate; Business Manager: Martin Thomas; Design: Tom Rigby

Published by WL Publications, PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA

Printed by Upstream Ltd (TU).

Articles can be sent to WL on 3 1/2" disc in any normal PC or Macintosh format

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Workers' Liberty

(Incorporating Socialist Organiser)

International rates: \$2.50 US; 54 Australia; IRE1.40 Ireland;
 FF15 France; DM4 Germany, R4 South Africa

Ireland: a Bosnia waiting to happen

For a while in July and August, the people of Northern Ireland found themselves lurching unexpectedly back into the old sectarian nightmare which most of them had hoped the "peace process" was, even after the collapse of the Provisional IRA ceasefire, lifting from their lives.

The conflict about whether a small Orange Order procession from an ancient church should go by the "traditional" route, through what is now a Catholic housing estate in Drumcree, near Portadown, or agree to be rerouted, was an old one. There had been a crisis there last year too. But this July, suddenly, like dry grass in Summer, Northern Ireland seemed to be catching fire from the sparks struck at Portadown.

Learning from last year's confrontation there, the Orange Order had prepared its forces. But it wasn't just the Orange Order. Drumcree was seen by a large proportion of Northern Ireland's people as a test case for whether they, the Protestants, the Unionists, the "Loyalists", were still "the people" of peoples in a Northern Ireland state set up three quarters of a century ago to enshrine and wall off their separateness from the rest of the Irish.

With vast hordes of Orangeists on the point of rallying at Drumcree to try to force the issue, the Chief Constable of the RUC, Sir Hugh Annesley (or was it the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Sir Patrick Mayhew?) decided to lift the ban and let the Orange march through the Catholic housing estate. They later explained that the army and police could not have contained the likely levels of violence if the confrontation had been allowed to develop.

Worse: unable or unwilling to control or confront the Orange Order the state now sided with the stronger force within Northern Ireland, and put itself at their service to quell Catholic-nationalist attempts to "interfere" with the Orange march. Plastic bullets were fired at Catholics who dared to protest.

If the episode had been scripted by nationalist propagandists, it could scarcely have served their cause better. The political fall-out was massive. The British government was seen to be surrendering the rule of law to the threat of Orange force, and to be siding with the Orangeists in their patently unreasonable and provocative determination to hold what could not be other than a supremacist demonstration.

The mainly Protestant RUC was shown on the television screens of the world batoning and shooting plastic bullets at Catholics. The Orange Order, in its strange Masonic regalia,

was seen strutting among people for whom their rituals recall the memory of ancient subjugations and rub their noses in present dissatisfaction.

Amidst the teeming bowler-hatted, Sunday-suited Orangemen filling the fields around Drumcree, sectarian assassins moved. They killed a young Catholic.

And yet, a month later in mainly Catholic Derry, the other part of the truth uncovered itself. Faced with a scheduled Catholic counter-march against the projected Protestant Apprentice Boys' march, the government once again acted on the side of the stronger force in the situation. It sent troops with guns and barbed wire to stop Protestants parading on that part of their sanctified city walls that overlooks the Catholic Bogside.

In those two episodes, the reality of Northern Ireland is lit up plainly. Only those who do not want to will fail to see: *it is a Bosnia waiting to happen*. If you doubt it, imagine that the confrontations had been allowed to take their course.

Clashes of unarmed crowds would quickly have become battles between the gunmen who are plentiful on both sides. As always in such situations, the reckless, unashamedly militant chauvinists would set the pace and define the situation. People would seek safety from the armed bigots of the other side in militarised enclaves and ghettos even more exclusive than now, protected by the armed and shameless bigots on their own side.

Both sides would compete for control of territory, drive "aliens" out, seek to expand and maximise their areas of control. Apart from Belfast, Antrim and Down are very heavily of one colour, Orange. The Border areas are heavily Catholic. Elsewhere the populations are mixed and interlaced.

If that process were allowed to develop — if, for example, the British state were to cease to be a force in the situation — then it requires small imagination to see what would follow. There would be full-scale "ethnic" war between the two sorts of people locked together in Northern Ireland's Six Counties.

What we saw in July was a sudden spurt in the direction natural to the Northern Ireland situation when conflict intensifies. We also saw the weakness of the British state. The Six Counties has long been in a condition of limited warlordism. Protestant and Catholic gunmen control, or contest with the British state to control, sizeable pockets of territory, from South Armagh to Belfast. In these areas, dictatorial military rule has partly or wholly replaced the rule of the bourgeois-

democratic state. Many Catholics reject that state, and many Protestants no longer trust it. For example, the Provisional IRA cudgels out its own savage "justice" in large parts of Catholic Belfast.

Thus, already, in parts of Northern Ireland, the outlines of a future Bosnia can be seen. By bending in one direction at Drumcree and in the other at Derry, the British state has openly, and not for the first time, accepted such fragmentation and unofficial cantonisation within Northern Ireland. It accepts it in order to manipulate and master it, but in doing so it also, inevitably, enhances it.

This is not good, on any level. Rule by a state under bourgeois-democratic administration is preferable in all parts of Northern Ireland to military-communal rule. That would only cease to be so if military-communal rule — by the Provisional IRA in the Catholic ghettos of Belfast, for example — could be seen as incubating a transition to something better. In fact, it prepares worse — the disintegration of the state into chaos, "ethnic cleansing", and a very bloody repartition. Provisional IRA rule in the Catholic ghettos does not prepare Irish liberation from Britain, but Irish civil war.

Socialists want to see the bourgeois state disrupted and dismantled — but only to be replaced by something better, not, as here, by something which, if it is allowed to happen, will be infinitely worse.

Neither the Provisional IRA nor their Protestant/Unionist equivalents can offer or impose any general solution. They are sectional, communal groups. All they could do, given their head, is fight each other for redivision of the territory of the Six Counties.

That is the fundamental reason why the Provisional IRA war makes no sense *even from an Irish nationalist point of view*, and why the overwhelming majority of nationalist Irish people reject the Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein and their enterprise.

The mad paradox is that, while they denounce the British state in Ireland, the Provisionals' central goal is to compel that state, through international pressure, to coerce ("persuade") the Irish Unionists into a united Ireland. This is, in historical terms, not Republicanism — which is properly concerned with the unity of *the people* of Ireland, not the mechanical unity of a state — but the *reductio ad absurdum* of middle-class Catholic-Irish nationalism.

In their own convoluted and mystified way, the Provisionals thus "recognise" the fundamental truth, that there is *no revolutionary nationalist solution* to the Irish question. At the end of the 20th century the "Irish question" is substantially a question of intra-Irish divisions snarled up by a British imperialist "solution" which created the Six Counties seven and a half decades ago.

The point about the events of July and August, and the suddenness of the flare-up despite all the previous relaxation of tension, is that though the British state is at its core stable, and will not let Northern Ireland collapse into a Bosnia, its operations in Northern Ireland, the way it runs the area, feeds the sectarian fires.

The Orangeists feel threatened; the Catholics are unsatisfied. Capitalism — Irish capitalism and British — decrees an economy of scarcity and unemployment and massive human waste, in which the Catholics are especially the victims. The Provisional IRA channels the consequent restlessness and rebellion into activities that make these problems worse.

Socialists want to transform Ireland, but the working class

must first be transformed from its present condition of murderous division and communal antagonism.

The British and Irish governments, backed by the US and the European Union, propose to recreate a Belfast government, this time with institutionalised Catholic/Protestant power-sharing, and to link that government with the Dublin government through a Council of Ireland. This Council of Ireland would immediately assume limited but major all-Ireland governmental responsibilities for Irish links, North and South, with the European Union.

It may be that moves towards this will result from the "peace-process" talks that will soon resume. But it may not. July and August show how volatile Northern Ireland is.

The lesson for the left needs to be spelled out: the Provisional IRA campaign offers no possibility of progress. It is a big and often defining part of the problem, not a solution. Even the Protestant paramilitaries, who have disbanded the organisation responsible for the sectarian killing in Drumcree, are for now being more constructive than the "Republicans".

The second general lesson is this: reliance on the policing capacity of the British government is a blind alley.

The core problem is to work out a *modus vivendi* between the two peoples on the island of Ireland. The existence of the artificial Six County entity, where Catholics are a massive minority and may in ten or twenty years be the majority, makes rational appraisal and working-out of this problem all but impossible.

Until it is sorted out, until there is a widely accepted political solution, Ireland will remain a Bosnia in the making.

The Northern Ireland labour movement needs to break with communalism and create a new Labour Party out of the existing, united, trade

unions. A precondition for working-class unity, above the bread-and-butter trade-union level, is that such a working-class movement should adopt and make propaganda for a consistently democratic solution to the intra-Irish conflict. The British/Irish state system should be recast into an intra-Irish federal and British-Isles confederal system, guaranteeing the right of the Northern Ireland Protestants to maintain their identity while creating normal and democratic relations with the rest of the Irish.

"The Provisional IRA campaign offers no possibility of progress. It is a big and often defining part of the problem, not a solution."

Subscribe to Workers' Liberty

£12 for 12 issues post free

Unwaged rate £6 for 12 issues

Write to WL Publications, PO Box 823,

London SE15 4NA (Cheques payable to WL Publications Ltd)

Australian subscriptions \$35 for 10 issues from

Workers' Liberty, PO Box 313,

Leichhardt, NSW 2040 (cheques payable to Workers' Liberty)

European subscriptions

£18 for 10 issues from the

London address (payment in British currency, please)

Tony Blair and Queen Victoria

WRITING about Queen Victoria and the future Edward VII, Walter Bagehot once asked how it happened that “a retired widow and her unemployed son” came to be the lynchpins in the British constitutional system. About the Labour Party, we have to ask a similar question: how does a personable, and moderately eloquent public-school barrister who, past 40, has never in his life done anything brave or outstanding and whose ideas are conventional and commonplace, come to be dictator over the labour movement in politics? For that is what he is.

The old living, thinking, responding labour movement is being replaced by a vacuous personality cult which wet-blankets, smothers and bureaucratically stifles anything higher than its own Dead Sea level of awareness and concern.

Ours is a movement built over many decades by millions of working-class people. They had, and have, about as much in common with Blair and his fat-cat coterie as Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, would have with the Archbishop of Canterbury! Yet this movement seems to have accepted Blair as autocratic ruler!

Beaten down by a decade and a half of Tory government; shackled by trade union laws that outlaw many of the elements of effective trade unionism; convinced that the only way forward is a Labour victory — the labour movement has let itself be bamboozled into accepting the ridiculous idea that it scarcely matters what Labour stands for so long as it wins the next general election.

The dominance of Blair and his sycophants increasingly

takes on the form of a grim parody of old working-class experiences — and of Stalinism.

In the name of democratic accountability to the broader electorate, the Parliamentary Labour Party claimed the right to dictate to the labour movement. It raised itself above the party. Now this wretched little nonentity raises himself above the PLP, like a dictator. And the PLP puts up with it!

Policy is now made and remade by the leader and his aides to win the fickle favour of the bourgeois press. Even the PLP is disenfranchised! The Labour Party’s National Executive is just a rubber-stamp.

Blair sees himself as a leader in the Thatcher mould, but he may be in for surprises. The Tory Party is the natural party of government, based on the ruling class and on the haves in society. Thatcher *satisfied* most of her party. Blair in government cannot do other than alienate his. That is one reason why he may not even win the next election. It is why, even if he wins, there will be a labour and trade union, that is a working-class, revolt against his projected Tory-blue Labour government.

Full-scale opposition to Blair’s policies will certainly develop under a Labour government. There are stirrings of discontent even now, though the pressure not to rock the boat before the General Election is immense.

The job of socialists now is to prepare for the inevitable effort by the bedrock labour movement to reassert itself. In the first place we tell the truth to the labour movement: the Blairites are preparing a disaster for us!

Why we publish Workers’ Liberty

MARKSIST socialism is the conscious expression of unconscious historical processes. It is rooted in the class struggle — which is rooted in the ineradicable realities of capitalist society.

Socialism in its history has gone through many phases of eclipse and of brilliance. Today it is in eclipse, and our enemies tell us it is dead. Socialism cannot die, because the proletariat and the class struggle cannot die so long as capitalism lives.

Socialism can, however, take a longer or a shorter time to revive; it can be clearer, or more blurred and garbled, in its regrowth as a mass force in the working class. Nothing is predetermined here. A very great deal depends on what the socialists do.

Socialists today have a number of linked and urgent tasks. We must settle accounts with the past, and scour socialism of the encrustations and toxins of Stalinism and its mutant strains, including some that had superficial resemblances to Trotskyism. We must disinter and replant the living seeds buried so long in mud and blood. At the same time we must spread basic revolutionary socialist and even here-and-now-reform-socialist ideas in the existing working-class movement. To do this we publish *Workers’ Liberty*.

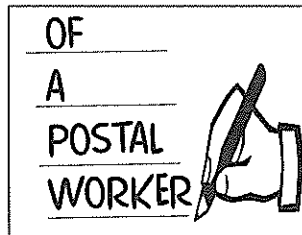
It is a magazine with a number of complementary but not always congruent or easily integrated tasks — theoretical explana-

tion and elaboration, polemical hammering-out of disputed issues, republication of long-lost key texts from the past, reports on and analysis of current class struggle, an elaboration of the lessons of past class struggles and many other things. The central reason why we publish *Workers’ Liberty* and why *Workers’ Liberty* is irreplaceable to our work, was long ago expressed by Lenin: **without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.**

We are engaged in rebuilding that movement. Help us!

READERS will notice that *Workers’ Liberty* has been redesigned and, we hope you will agree, improved. We offer readers an apology for the rough edges in the physical production, and for the quality of the proofreading in *Workers’ Liberty* no.33. We were short-handed and overstretched. We will try to do better! The increase to 48 pages will not yet, unfortunately, be a regular feature of *Workers’ Liberty*, which is normally 40 pages.

One proofreading error had political importance. In the introduction to Max Shachtman’s discussion of Trotsky’s ideas on the Stalinist USSR, a summary sentence (page 23) appeared garbled as: “Plainly Stalinism was a form to capitalism in backward countries”. It should have read: “Plainly Stalinism was a form of class society paralleling capitalism, not superseding it, in backward countries”.



Determined to win

ROYAL Mail management have for months now been running a propaganda war against the strikes and in favour of their plans for postal workers. Our line manager gives us regular team briefings on the dangers of a strike and what a great idea team working is. He shouts out for everyone to gather round him, and then, like a nursery school teacher surrounded by his flock, reads out a leaflet on how good team working is, how damaging the strike will be and how unreasonable the union is. But we are no docile audience: usually he is stopped repeatedly by people heckling and interrupting him. He then hands out copies of the leaflet, which are greatly prized as little footballs or paper aeroplanes. All the propagandising line manager has achieved is to add a small extra amount of irritation and resentment.

The day before the first strike, after a team meeting on how Royal Mail would lose Direct Mail (junk mail) business because of strike action, one lad spoke for all of us when he shouted out that he couldn't give a toss about Royal Mail's business because Royal Mail don't give a toss about us.

The first strike day was inspiring: out of over a thousand of us only a couple of regular workers went to work. I was worried about those on temporary contracts. In our office all new recruits are on rolling temporary contracts, each one covering only a month or so. Then, if they don't like you, you go up the road. The bosses think they have temporaries like me by the short and curlies. These strikes have proved them wrong.

The union called all the temporaries together in special meetings to explain the strike, giving a commitment to defend any temps who are victimised. In the weeks before the strikes temps were systematically recruited to the union. Despite problems in other areas, in my area office not one temp scabbed. As a temp standing on the picket line, this made my day. And, of course, it made my job more secure.

What are we fighting for? The six-day

week and the very early start postal workers have to endure is a real pig. It means you only get Saturday night when you can really hit the town. Not surprisingly a lot of postal workers use strike days as days off and the night before a strike to go out. It helps! On the first day, the strike picket grew as hung-over workers arrived late and the night-shift pickets returned from a short kip. We jeered at scabbing managers driving Post Office vans in and out of the depot, and one picket kicked a van, while the slowly assembling press-pack filmed and photographed us.

Later we were to discover that managers who routinely sack workers for minor mistakes had lost registered letters, left pillar keys on the street, and generally messed up big time when it came to actually doing some real work.

Later in the day, we were all taken to support the very trendily suited joint General Secretary of our union Alan Johnson at a press stunt. We overcame our reticence and cheered Johnson for the cameras, not forgetting that Alan had to be pushed into the strike ballot and the dispute. Someone near me muttered "Nice suit, where's your spine, Alan?"

Fifth day's strike, Wednesday 14 August. Everyone is relieved that the dispute is still going and that the terrible deal Johnson and the negotiating team accepted has been rejected by the national union's Postal Executive.

There was chaos last week in my office when the scheduled Friday strike was called off on the Thursday. The Postal Executive had called off the strike because Alan Johnson and the negotiating team said they would get a deal from the ACAS talks over the weekend. Tens of people in my office missed work or turned up late. We were all very fed up, especially the union reps who bore the brunt of the anger. No one knew what was going on. The media were full of reports of the end of the postal strike.

Johnson did get a deal, accepting the very things we struck against — team working, and Royal Mail's delivery proposals.

The Postal Exec rightly kicked out the deal and organised a national briefing meeting for union reps, to explain. Johnson and the negotiators got a real roasting there.

Once people learned about the deal they couldn't believe that Johnson had wanted to accept all the major things we had struck against.

A lot of people did not know about ultra right-wing "moderniser" Johnson's cosy relationship with Tony Blair, or his record in the union. After the experience of the deal fiasco a lot of people think he should go.

The management cranked up their propaganda machine after the deal, whining "We shook hands with Alan Johnson on the deal", "Why hasn't the union put the deal to you?"

More team briefings, more management lies! They have a serious credibility problem.

In my office, the union held canteen meetings and circulated a London Postal District Committee pamphlet that demolished the deal. Everyone thinks the deal is crap.

On the seventh one-day strike the London District Committee organised a rally at Westminster Central Hall. People came up from the picket line or made their own way to Westminster for 12.30.

The rally was a real inspiration, with up to 1,000 postal workers cheering to the echo the speakers from the London District Committee, who analysed Royal Mail's plans to end the second delivery, while imposing job cuts and simultaneously increasing our workload (the so-called 'team working'), and urged rejection of the deal. Speaker after speaker from the floor denounced the deal.

Mention of Johnson was met with angry shouts against the besuited, expensively coiffed and well-manicured sell-out merchant. The message was clear, and very loud: the strike is more solid than ever. Postal workers are determined to defeat Royal Mail.

Name of author has been withheld to protect them from victimisation.

London postalworkers' leader speaks out:

“We must dig in for a long dispute”

THE Communication Workers' Union London Postal District Committee has played a leading role in the current postal dispute. Since day one of the dispute the London District Committee has pushed for a defence of the second delivery and total opposition to 'teamworking.'

On 2 March they convened a meeting of District Committees from all over the country to discuss the Employee Agenda negotiations. It was this initiative, at first strongly opposed by union leader Alan Johnson, that forced the national Postal Executive to call a strike ballot.

On the strike day of Wednesday 14 August the LDC organised a protest march to the Royal Mail headquarters, which, following a police ban, was changed to a mass rally attended by up to 1,000 rank and file postal workers.

Workers' Liberty spoke to London Regional Secretary Dave Ward.

What has the LDC done in this dispute?

We have set a positive agenda. We helped organise the original meeting on 2 March. We organised a rally on Wednesday 14 August. We have regular meetings with branches, keeping people updated and exchanging views on tactics.

We have just published a pamphlet, *The Deal*, on the last document proposed by Royal Mail.

We see dangers in the proposed agreement itself and also a danger to the union's future independence.

Once you get involved in this type of agreement, it dictates the way the union operates, and you end up with a staff association, instead of an independent



Post: striking against "teamworking", for a shorter working week and a better service

trade union. That is a major part of Royal Mail's "Employee Agenda", with its theme of "The Social Partnership".

Is there anyone in the CWU who wants to go in that direction?

I think there are elements of the leadership who know what the social partnership is about, and who are quite happy to see this union head in that direction.

How solid is the strike in London?

Very. Only one office, Plaistow, a very small delivery office of 25 people, has worked on strike days.

With the escalation of the strike I think London will stay solid. People have chosen sides now. I don't expect the longer strike to have an adverse effect on us.

I also think now is the right time to go for a four-day strike.

The Executive now recognise that the deal has been rejected. They know it will not go out to ballot, and because Royal Mail won't talk to us, they've got no alternative but to look for further action.

What do you think of the way the negotiating team have led the dispute so far?

I think our negotiators made a major error and gave Royal Mail an opportunity to attack us.

First and foremost, they should not have spoken to the press before the Executive Council meeting. I think they should deal with the press in a similar way to ASLEF, who do not talk to the press before negotiators have met the executive.

Do you think their negotiating behaviour reflects their attitude to the dispute?

To be perfectly honest, Alan Johnson believes this is a good deal. The deal suits his view of the direction the union should take. He thinks he got the best deal he could get. Some of us disagree with that.

My view is that at this stage of the dispute we don't need to gang up against Alan Johnson. I don't see any point in that. He is the General Secretary of the union. As long as he runs with the decisions of the Executive I am happy for

him to go on being the General Secretary.

He is a very talented man who, unfortunately, has different ideas to quite a lot of the rest of us about where we should be going.

That will have to be dealt with after the dispute. When we have a settlement, people will make their views known on that.

What are the lessons of the dispute?

The main lesson people can learn from this dispute, outside of what is in the deal, is about the direction of the union. Members should be able to see quite clearly that certain elements of the leadership are trying to take the union towards "social partnership." We will have to make a decision as to whether or not we support those politics or oppose them.

Will the events in this dispute lead to a growth of the Broad Left on the postal side of the CWU?

I am all for people of similar views getting together and speaking on issues as those issues arise. There is nothing wrong with people from different parts of the country getting together and drawing up policies. That should be done when the situation demands it, be dependent on the issue rather than on any formal organisational links.

I think the meeting we helped to call on 2 March created an environment for the union to debate issues, for rank and file activists to meet and express their views.

I have felt for some time that we must dig in for a long dispute. That's why, tactically, it would have been a mistake to call an all-out strike at this stage. The issues are so fundamental in this dispute, particularly around 'team working' and the delivery side of it, that we should play a long game, and gradually up the ante at various stages.

That has to be our tactic unless the Post Office do something that forces us to change our position. We must remain flexible. We have got to keep up the propaganda, keep up the information to our members.

The London District Committee document on the 'Deal' has gone down very well because it takes apart what 'team working' really is, using cartoons to push the point home.

People must understand just how important the delivery issue is going to be. In my view, this is an attempt by the Post Office to introduce a one-delivery postal service, without having public

debate or a political row about it.

The deal lays the foundation for a one-delivery service after the year 2000. For Royal Mail it is the deal of the century but for postal workers it is a voyage into the unknown. We can not accept that. The industry is not in a crisis. Royal Mail is one of the most successful postal services in the world. I think we are entitled to ask, why does it have to be this way?

What support have local Labour Parties and CWU sponsored MPs given?

Southwark and Bermondsey Labour Party have passed a motion supporting the postal workers. Obviously it is disappointing, the response from the rest of the Labour Party, but it is not surprising. It's ironic that the Lib-Dems have come out with full backing for postal workers. I don't expect the Labour Party to change their position on the strike.

Labour MPs should put our case forward. They should attend meetings and show our members that they support them.

It's unlikely that Alan Johnson will raise the strike openly on the Labour National Executive. That would not be in line with his previous position.

I would imagine some members of the Postal Executive of the CWU will be saying it's time we put Labour on the spot, and there is nothing wrong with that.

What support have you had from trade unions? What can other trade unionists do?

We have had offers of support, use of rooms, equipment etc. from a number of trade unions and from colleagues on the engineering and clerical side of the CWU. We are very grateful for their support.

I think the best thing trade unionists can do is to go out and spread the message about what we are challenging in this dispute, and about its wider implications. I think this is an interesting dispute and it needs more media coverage. The very fact that we are opposing team working and new management techniques is something people should wake up to.

I personally believe there are a lot of people in trade unions, rank and file activists, who perhaps are not totally aware of the direction their own unions are going in, who reject this argument for social partnership. This dispute should bring that out into the open and allow other trade unionists to reflect on the way their unions are dealing with these issues.

Bourgeois pride

In every age the left, before it can do anything else, has to confront the pretensions of those in power, and debunk them, especially when, as now, the ruling class is prosperous, triumphant and confident.

For most of the 19th century, radicals and socialists quoted, reprinted and recited these splendid lines from John Keats' poem "Isabella", which pour scorn on the pretensions and pride of a bourgeoisie which lived by mean and inhuman exploitation.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandise,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip; with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts
Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?
Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts
Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?
Why were they proud? Because red-lined accounts
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?
Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

Could Tony Blair lose us the election?

THE direction in which the Labour Party leadership is moving is effectively disenfranchising millions of people, leading to a further diminution in British democracy.

This was illustrated by a poll carried out by the TUC which showed that though working-class people and trade unionists continue to support the Labour Party in a very broad way, that support was also dilute.

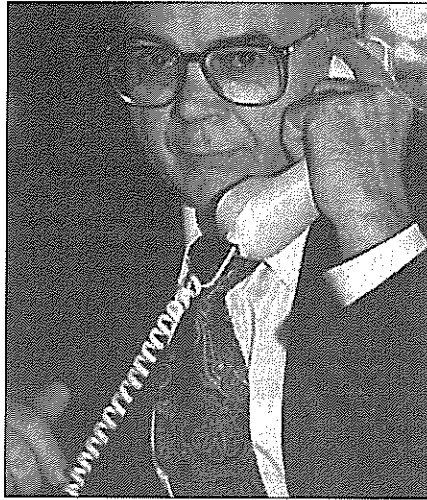
I don't know what the party as a whole is doing, but the party in Parliament — or more precisely, the leadership of the party in Parliament — is evolving away from its working class base and taking on more and more the character of a narrow middle-class sect.

The meaning of all these smoke signals, coming from Clare Short and company is that there is substantial opposition to this direction even within the Parliamentary Labour Party itself. They are still just smoke signals though. This is the way that the PLP converses. It's a nonsense. It comes from the narrow British culture and tradition that you don't recognise the right to form tendencies and factions to present alternative platforms to that of the leadership. This is entirely unnecessary. In the French Socialist Party, for instance, they elect the executive on the basis of platforms. We, instead, present a fictitious pretence of monolithic unity. Now that the leadership has been taken over by anti-socialists it means that even the most guarded talk of egalitarianism, of the redistribution of wealth or power, is no longer tolerated.

The document *New Life for Britain* is not really a very serious manifesto commitment. The problem is that wherever there is a promise to be made, it is fudged. Unless it's a promise of more draconian action against the victims of poverty: then it is made very strongly!

For instance, there is the proposal to speed up the prosecution of young offenders. How are we going to do that? I don't know. The phrase used is "fast track" punishment. It's frightening.

What are we going to do to the justice system that has not been done heretofore? Why hasn't it been done heretofore? The probation services and



Ken Coates MEP argues that Labour's race to the right is also an attack on British democracy.

the constabulary and the machinery of the courts are too liberal? Is that what's being said? What are they telling us?

I don't think much of the proposals on youth unemployment either. Perhaps someone can tell me what's good about them, but I can't see anything. A youth unemployment policy is good if it is likely to create actual jobs and real educational advance. But none of those things are being talked about. The problem is that the net number of jobs available to under 21s is now half of what it was at the beginning of the decade. Unless something is done to increase jobs and raise the number of apprenticeships, you haven't done anything to increase youth employment. Punishing people for not going where they have been sent is really only a way of compelling people to collaborate in the fiction that something is being done about youth unemployment.

What really concerns me is that a lot of the detail is missing in these proposals. None of it looks good to me.

Take the NHS proposals. There is huge room for cutting wasteful bureaucracy in the NHS. Big savings could be made. But I really don't know that you can reduce NHS bureaucracy if you are determined to keep the purchaser-

provider split upon which the whole NHS market bureaucracy is based.

What is fundamental is that these ills are not capable of being cured without spending more. Business is saying that it doesn't want to pay taxes — that's nothing new — but now something more sinister is happening. It is being said that the rate of general taxation can't be increased because of its effect on business. Well, if that's the case, there is nothing for a social-democratic or reform socialist administration to do. If it's not allowed to increase taxes then it's not allowed to make any beneficial changes whatsoever, unless they are purely cosmetic — you can change the colour you paint the post box, or knock down some ugly buildings.

The truth of the matter is that we can reform the health service and considerably cut back the bureaucracy that has been put in place by the Tories. Market reforms are just another twist in the spiral of inequality. The same is true of the Quango State. But, what is going to happen about the Quango State? I don't know!

The truth is that a Labour victory in the general election is by no means certain. The greatest problem at the moment is Labour's lack of credibility among the people who used to be considered the rock-solid core Labour vote. It has been assumed by the "modernisers" that these people will never forsake the Labour Party. But you have to listen to people.

You can enumerate these constituencies who are now deeply distressed by the evolution of the Labour Party. One is the pensioners. This is a whole generation of people who feel absolutely betrayed by the clear signals that there will be nothing done to anchor pensions to earnings. Yes, we've seen this very strong case from Barbara Castle and a comprehensive argument from Professors Townsend and Walker. That is very solid. Probably 95% of Labour Party members and trade unionists would passionately support those arguments. But those arguments have not won over the parliamentary leadership: nothing is

going to be done to ease the squeeze on pensions. So, that's one natural Labour constituency at risk.

The second constituency is the poor, the long-term unemployed, and all those who are the victims of long-term unemployment and of the attacks on welfare.

The poor have nothing to expect from a Labour government other than the worsening of their position!

I wish that wasn't the case. But there have been no serious proposals put forward. All we've had is rhetoric — and quite a lot of that — but nothing serious in terms of policy.

The third constituency — a specialised one — is professionals working in education. They are deeply alienated.

More teachers than members of any other single group have left the Labour Party. They say — and I've talked to a lot of them — that they want to support the Labour Party, that they will vote for Labour, but they can't remain compliant because everything the party has said on education during their working lives has been abandoned.

This is strong, just criticism.

If you look at this absolutely wretched argument about teaching methods, then you can learn a lot about the current party leadership.

Of course there are some teachers who aren't up to scratch. Who would have thought otherwise?

It's the same in every profession. The question is: what do you do?

In any education system you will get people who are not coping. They will be ill and under stress, or wrongly advised and trained. It's not a hopeless state. So you try and help them.

This notion that everyone is always tip-top is applying the competitive market ethos to an area of life where it is not appropriate. And teachers are being told to treat the pupils in the same way.

I'm not condoning low levels of performance. The education system should aspire to the highest levels. But what I'm sure of is that this trend of witch-hunting teachers started by right-wing newspapers, and taken up by some people in the Labour Party, is really monstrously counter-productive.

There is a real problem here. The leadership of the PLP allows the right-wing press to set the agenda. No alternative view is aired. Inevitably, this leads to a reduction in democracy.

Just think. Who are these people who agitate about poor standards in education? Do they know anything about education? Have they spent any time in schools examining these prob-

lems? Can they teach? I don't think so. It's mainly just tap room gossip.

What is happening? The propaganda of the right-wing media is being allowed to set the political agenda for Labour. The leadership of the Labour Party leave their propaganda unchallenged.

It is the opposite of a hegemonic politics in which Labour would try to map the political terrain and provide intellectual leadership.

It's an exercise in sailing into the wind. It is the very antithesis of democracy.

The point is, they are being rumbled. More and more people inside and outside the party can see what's going on. The question is: what can we do about it?

I don't feel disposed to go along with this idea of a referendum on the manifesto.

I would not be voting on anything substantial. If I vote against it it will be construed as an attempt to sabotage

"I'm not at all convinced that the leadership can't do the seemingly impossible and lose Labour the election."

Labour in the election. Yet, I am absolutely certain that a Labour victory will come about — if it does come about — because people have ignored this manifesto.

If the only people who voted Labour were the convinced supporters of this manifesto, then we would get the lowest vote in Labour history.

So I don't want to play this game with the manifesto. I don't think it's a serious contribution to our politics.

We should try to deny the leadership the ability to plausibly claim that they have majority support in the party for their manifesto. This would best be done by people simply not voting in what is a deeply undemocratic exercise.

Right now, any vote against the leadership would be very small, but I think we will find that it will grow suddenly very large five minutes into a Labour government — should we be so lucky as to get one.

I'm not at all convinced that these people could not achieve the seemingly impossible and lose Labour the election.

For some time now I've been alive to the possibility that a serious split in the party is possible. But that is not

really the right way to look at things. There are a number of changes taking place. One is a leadership drive to separate the trade unions from the Labour Party. Mr Blair and his coterie think that the trade unions are responsible for the fact that the Labour Party lost so many elections. That is absolute nonsense! It is back to front. The Labour Party in Parliament was responsible for the fact that the trade unions lost confidence in it. That's what happened in the winter of discontent in 1978-9.

We had inflation at 20-25% and we saw the very lowest paid people in the public services taking cuts of anything between 12% to 20% — on wages that before cuts were quite insufficient to keep body and soul together. What did the Labour leadership expect them to do but fight back?

At the same time, the Labour Party leadership in Parliament succeeded in alienating the more skilled workers by attempting to apply an egalitarian incomes policy — but only inside the working class!

The combination of both these things led to a maximum turn-off of Labour votes among trade unionists. It was that which gave Thatcher a trade union vote. I don't think she got many votes from the public service workers, but she did sure as hell get lots of votes from the toolrooms in Birmingham.

So, the analysis we are being offered of why the Labour Party lost is total nonsense.

The trade unions have now been systematically instructed in the separateness of their and Labour's interests. They've been told that they mustn't expect any favours from a Labour government. That kind of thing is actually making a damaging split now. A withdrawal of confidence by trade unionists in the Labour Party as a political instrument is taking place.

The danger I see in this is that if a Labour government then behaves in a way that thoroughly antagonises trade unionists people will conclude not that we need a different kind of Labour Party, but that the whole set-up is no bloody use. Workers will conclude that politics is not for them.

It is just possible that the PLP will assert itself. But it tends to do so in the form of smoke signals, and this is no way to persuade people to your view. You can't make coherent arguments out of smoke signals. Yet the worm just might turn. The first sign that it is turning will be when people in the PLP stop using smoke signals and start telling it like it is.



A baby, killed by Israeli bombing in Lebanon, is carried by her father. What will the new government do to the peace process?

Israel under Netanyahu

Adam Keller, an Israeli socialist and peace activist, spoke to *Workers' Liberty* on 30 August.

Is Netanyahu trying to stall the peace process, or reverse it? I am not sure that even Netanyahu himself knows. He is a weak person, pushed in different

directions, not only on the Palestinian question but also on others, for example privatisation, where he has retreated after the trade unions' one-day strike.

He does not want to break with the extremist hard-line settlers — he does not want a confrontation with them — but nor does he want to have a con-

frontation with the whole Arab world and with the Israeli business community, which wants the peace process to continue. Most of Israel's industrialists, bankers, and so on, openly supported Peres for prime minister. So Netanyahu shifts back and forth.

One of the ideas going round in Netanyahu's circle is to try to get the Jordanians back into the picture as a replacement for independent representatives of the Palestinians, but I don't think that it can succeed.

There is much frustration among the Palestinians. Their economic situation is terrible, with enormous unemployment, and now we see the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the demolition of Palestinian houses. There is a drive, which went on under the previous Labour government, too, to clear out Palestinians from the areas which are still under complete Israeli rule in the West Bank.

Arafat moved very strongly against Hamas after the terrorist bombings in March. He imprisoned many Hamas people. There was also some popular anger against Hamas, because Palestinians felt that the closure of the border and the resulting economic hardships were a result of the actions of Hamas.

"Likud are freezing the process"

WALID Salem, a Palestinian journalist and writer working at the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem, spoke to *Workers' Liberty* on 29 August.

The Palestinian Authority has to be seen to achieve something for the Palestinian people.

However the Netanyahu government is refusing to cooperate. The Palestinian Authority wants a peaceful mass mobilisation, of limited duration and under its control, to put international pressure on the Israeli government.

There is an idea among the Authority that the current Israeli government has some weaknesses. They want to press the centre of this

government and play them against the genuine far right in Likud — people like Ariel Sharon.

Unfortunately there is no genuine, real left amongst the Palestinians. We have institutions for elites not the Palestinian masses.

The Israeli authorities are beginning to close off Jerusalem. I have just come here from Bethlehem, and the road from there has been closed behind me. All West Bankers are refused entry, including those who have Israeli entry permits.

In my opinion Likud want to freeze the peace process. They want to return to the Madrid formula, rather than the Oslo agreement. In other words they want to tie the Palestinians to Jordan.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



Why can't Johnson score?

THE latest developments in the postal dispute leave the partisan observer puzzled and frustrated.

How much worse for postal workers, losing pay and rooting to win and wondering why, oh why, can't Johnson score?

It's like playing football with a centre-forward determined to draw. Johnson gets good service from the mid-field — the ball is at his feet again. Run with it, Johnson!

Nought betwixt him and goal but a quaking keeper, Johnson turns round and knocks the ball back to his mid-field.

Sooner or later, you think, they must take him off. Trouble is, he leads the negotiating team.

Trouble is, he thinks you have to give management something or they will take the ball away.

He will bring back the same deal — a pay deal agreed *before* the strikes, and team working — until his side gives in.

He spoke recently to the *Financial Times* about the dispute and his frustration with the postal executive.

They keep turning down the crappy "deal" he has negotiated, and sending him back to try again.

He must be frustrated the strikes are so well supported: scabbing would strengthen his hand.

He's not frustrated with Royal Mail, who want to scrap the second delivery, and make his members part-time workers car-

"Johnson knocks the ball back to his mid-field."

rying heavier sacks.

What motivates this lizard?

Johnson enjoys his position as leader of the single union in a monopoly company in the state sector. The strikes are ammunition to those who would privatise the post office, so he wants to settle. If not, "we could end up losing everything we have fought for."

Johnson takes cred for the government backing down on plans to privatise the post, and for popular campaigns against the closure of Crown Post

Offices. Why can't he sell the strike to save the second delivery to the public?

Last year Johnson helped Blair to win the battle against Clause IV, the Labour Party's commitment to public ownership.

He wants Royal Mail to stay in the state sector. He doesn't want it sold off, or broken up. But rail, telecoms, gas, electricity, water — no need to get Labour to commit to bringing them back into public ownership.

Johnson is a big fan of Tony Blair.

And he likes team working. He buys into workers selling their souls to save their jobs.

If his prime joy in life is an efficient postal service, why doesn't Johnson join Royal Mail management? Why doesn't he become a Labour MP and vote to keep all the Tories' anti-union legislation?

He just might! He is looking forward to giving up the General Secretaryship in 1998. So are we.

By Sleeper

In Hamas, the the more pragmatic leadership within the territories is at odds with the external leadership, in Jordan, Sudan, and Iran, which is much more intransigent and fanatical. It has some supporters inside the territories, which it manipulates against the internal leadership.

There is also a growing opposition, not yet organised, to Arafat from Fatah activists. They say Arafat is making too many concessions to Israel and that the Oslo agreement has turned out to be a failure, and they accuse the Arafat leadership of corruption, inefficiency, violations of human rights, and arbitrary behaviour. The fact that there is now a Palestinian parliament which has a considerable element of, if not opposition, then dissidence, creates tensions with Arafat's wish to have the administration centred round himself, for example, the fact that he has several different police forces, all competing with each other, and accountable only to him.

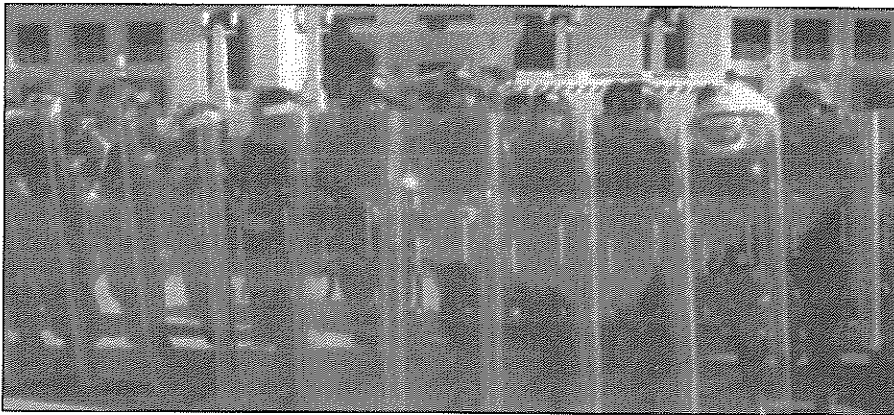
I do not know of any forces among the Palestinians offering a concrete programme on unemployment and the economic situation. The problem is that the Palestinians are not allowed to go to work in Israel, the sale of Palestinian products in Israel is restricted, and the Israeli army checks on the crossing points from the Palestinian territories into Israel, Jordan and Egypt lead to agricultural produce, for example, very often being spoiled. It is difficult to sell products from Gaza in the West Bank or vice versa because they have to go through Israel. Many of the places of employment in the territories are closing down or losing work.

There have been quite a lot of small-scale activities by the peace movement in Israel, involving dozens or hundreds of people. Peace Now has become more active. On 28 August Gush Shalom had a demonstration for a Bedouin tribe under threat of being evicted for a Jewish settlement to be built.

As yet we have not been able to mobilise big demonstrations of tens of thousands. I think we will be able to, within a month or two, the way things are going now, but the people who make up the broad support for the peace movement are still in a state of shock and confused after the election. For example, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron has been a big issue, and the government says "yes...", then "but...", then "perhaps...". And there is the question of when Netanyahu will meet with Arafat.

We are already in a crisis. It is going to develop, and at some point bring tens of thousands of Israelis onto the streets.

Australia's Tories face the workers



"MARITIME Union [dockers and seafarers] rank and file say: don't tinker with Industrial Relations." "Maritime Union tug crews say: Industrial Relations are a right." Slogans on handmade banners in Brisbane, on the 19 August cross-Australia trade-union day of action against the new Liberal government, struck a note not heard in Britain for more than ten years: workers feeling that they have and can hold institutionalised industrial strength.

That note is an index of the difference between 17 years of Tory government and 13 years even of such a wretched Labor government as Australia has had. Yet it has an undertone of uncertainty. There is widespread anger, and on 19 August Parliament House was stormed by a section of the Canberra demonstration. Yet one-off protests will not be enough. Trade-unionism in Australia has declined from over 50 per cent of the workforce to 35%. Strikes have decreased drastically. The system of industrial relations has already been "tinkered" with a lot, and with the connivance of left-wing unions such as the Maritime Union.

The Australian labour movement still has great strength readily available. Deploying it will require great political reorientation. Since their big election victory on 2 March, the Liberal-National coalition have been swinging the axe in all directions. Already well-flagged before 2 March were plans to privatise the telecom business, Telstra, and to rewrite industrial relations. The Australian system of "awards" — agreements on wages and conditions covering whole industries, ratified by an arbitration system — is to be lopped down in favour of individual con-

tracts. Legal limits on strikes are to be tightened, solidarity strikes outlawed, and union access to workplaces limited.

Thousands of jobs have been cut in the federal public service. Immigration controls have been tightened, and adjusted to favour better-off English-speaking migrants. The elected representative body of Australia's Aboriginal minority, ATSIC, has had its budget cut by almost half over the next few years, and Aboriginal land rights have been threatened.

Universities' funding has been cut drastically; students have been charged higher fees and required to repay their government-subsidised loans for those fees quicker; eligibility for student grants ("Austudy") has been further restricted, although even at present 60% of university students get no Austudy at all; and from 1998 Austudy is to be subsumed in a general Youth Allowance. Dole claimants are now required to keep a daily diary of their job searches. The Commonwealth Employment Service (analogous to Job Centres) is to be abolished, and the social security system will call on private agencies to get the jobless into work.

Child-care subsidies are to be restricted. The special levy charged as part of income tax for the health insurance system, Medicare, is to be increased for higher earners, with the avowed aim of driving them into private health insurance. At present 34% of Australians rely on private health insurance, and as recently as 1983 it was 63%. The Australian welfare system is already heavily geared to means-testing and to arrangements where public provision for the poor flanks private provision for the bet-

ter-off — more so than the British welfare state, even after 17 years of the Tories.

There has been a spate of protests. Universities were partly shut on 30 May and again on 7 August by lecturers' and staff strikes, with some support from students. Public service unions have called one-day strikes. The actions across Australia on 19 August were called by the ACTU, Australia's TUC. Some of the biggest rallies (60,000 in Sydney, 10,000 in Brisbane), and also the most youthful, have been against the government's cuts in the budget of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The crack in the bell, the flaw which makes the protests lack confidence and the militant speeches by ACTU president Jennie George ring hollow, is the fact that almost all that the Liberals are doing, even in industrial relations, is a continuation down paths pioneered by the 1983-96 Labor governments, to which the ACTU was tied by the various versions of the Accord.

By 1996, as Australian Labor Party national secretary Gary Gray recently put it: "We couldn't run on policies because they [the voters] thought we were liars on policy. We couldn't run on our record because they thought our record stunk." And since 2 March their major shift has been a move by Victorian ALP leader John Brumby... to "moderate" his opposition to New Right flagbearer Jeff Kennett.

And, as yet, there is no concerted rank-and-file organisation, consistently pushing alternative policies, within the labour movement. The official ALP "Socialist Left" is weak and discredited by a thousand dirty deals with the Labor right. The revolutionary left has turned away from the ALP, and often from the unions too, to various single-issue campaigns.

The elements for a fightback are there, in the still formidable strength of Australia's trade unions and the many thousands of activists wanting a left-wing alternative to ALP politics. The job of bringing them together is yet to be done.

Martin Thomas

● Australian subscriptions to *Workers' Liberty*: send \$35 for 10 issues to *Workers' Liberty*, PO Box 313, Leichhardt, NSW 2040.

● *Rank and File News*: "A forum for workers to raise our industrial and social struggles, to seek solidarity, and to solidarise with the struggles of other workers." Published bi-monthly in Melbourne. To subscribe for a year send \$15 (\$10 unwaged) to *Rank and File News*, PO Box 103, West Brunswick, Victoria 3055.

Labour and Scotland

THE Scottish Labour Party has been thrown into a state of chaos by the new Blairite line on the creation of a Scottish Assembly.

Throughout the twentieth century the labour movement in Scotland has generally advocated some form or other of Scottish self-government, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War (supposedly a war fought for the "rights of small nations") for example, the labour movement campaigned vigorously for the "small nation of Scotland" to have its own parliament.

Within a decade, however, it had become a virtually forgotten demand. Economic planning at a national level, rather than the devolution of economic powers, was seen as the solution to Scotland's economic problems.

Similar ebbs and flows in the level of support for a Scottish parliament followed in subsequent decades. But since the Tories came to power in 1979 there has been a fundamental change in the situation.

At UK level the Tories have won all the General Elections since 1979. In Scotland, however, the Tories have won only a minority of seats, and a steadily dwindling minority at that. Support for the Tories in Scotland is currently around the 12% mark.

The imposition of Tory legislation and public spending cuts on a Scotland which repeatedly rejected Tory policies at the ballot box created the problem of the "democratic deficit". The majority of Scots voted anti-Tory, only to find themselves the victims of Tory policies.

The Scottish Assembly was the solution to this "democratic deficit". Scotland would be governed, within the framework of the UK, by a parliament of its own, one which implemented the wishes of the majority of the Scottish electorate rather than the policies of the majority party at Westminster.

Rather less good motives have also given impetus to the demand for a Scottish Assembly.

For the Scottish Labour Party leadership, calling on the next Labour government to create a Scottish Assembly was essentially a coup out.

Rather than fight the Tories in the here and now, they advocated passivity. A future Scottish Assembly, not class struggle, would put the world (or Scot-

land at least) to rights.

For others in the labour movement, calling for a Scottish Assembly flowed out of an accommodation to Scottish nationalism, or meshed in with their own careerist designs — unable to get selected for Westminster, they saw a seat in the Assembly as the next best thing.

Out of this mixture of often conflicting motives, the creation of a Scottish Assembly had become by the end of the 1980s a touchstone of mainstream Scottish politics. It had become the centrepiece of the Scottish Labour Party's political programme.

Once Blair took control of the Party, it quickly became the Scottish Labour Party's "only piece". As Blair ditched one policy after another, remorselessly driving the Party to the right, the Scottish Labour Party's promise of an Assembly became virtually its own vote winner.

Moreover, insofar as the Scottish Labour Party had anything left by way of even a semi-coherent set of economic and social policies, the vehicle for their implementation was to be a Scottish Assembly.

Now all this has effectively been tossed aside by Blair.

The Scottish Labour Party was committed to the creation of an Assembly without a referendum — the mandate gained at a General Election would suffice — and the Assembly would have the powers to vary national rates of income tax by plus or minus 3p in the pound.

Blair and his hangers-on have now decided that the creation of an Assembly and its possible tax-raising powers will be the subject of separate questions in a referendum.

This has made a laughing stock of the Scottish Labour Party. It promised an Assembly so that Scottish people could run their own affairs. But now the Scottish Labour Party looks like a tame poodle of the national leader in London.

The centrality of a Scottish Assembly to the Scottish Labour Party's policies, combined with the autocratic London-based re-writing of party policy on the issue, accounts for the fury which greeted the new Blairite line.

Blair managed to win a majority on the Scottish Executive for his new line. But the shock waves continue.

Stan Crooke

Indonesia

The workers resurgent

DITA Sari, president of Indonesia's independent trade union centre PPBI, and some 19 other leaders of the radical People's Democratic Party are in jail, together with Muchtar Pakpahan, the leader of another independent trade union organisation, the SBSI. All face charges of "subversion" which carry the death penalty. There is evidence that they are being tortured.

Dita Sari and some other activists were arrested when 20,000 factory workers in Surabaya, east Java on 8 July marched to demand wage rises. The other arrests have come in a military clampdown after up to 200,000 people took to the streets in Indonesia's capital Jakarta on 27 July, rioting and clashing with police and army in the country's biggest street protests since the 1965 coup which brought in the current military regime. Maybe 100 people were killed in the riots.

In the 1965 coup, the biggest non-ruling Communist Party in the world, with some two million members and 300,000 activists, was wiped out. Over half a million people were slaughtered. Half a million more were jailed in the following years, without charge or trial, and 1.4 million more were kept under surveillance by the military, on suspicion of PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) sympathies.

Since then Indonesia, a nation of nearly 200 million people, has been kept under tight control by the military regime of General Suharto. Cities and manufacturing industry have grown. Jakarta now has 12 million people. While oil was by far Indonesia's main export in the 1970s and early '80s, about half of its exports now are manufactured goods. But in the hundreds of new factories, wages and conditions are poor relative even to other Third World countries. Average wages are about 28 US cents (40p) an hour, lower even than China (34 cents), and much lower than Malaysia (\$1.80) or South Korea (\$4.93).

Conditions in a working-class suburb of Jakarta are described by an Australian socialist. "In front of the houses ran open

SURVEY

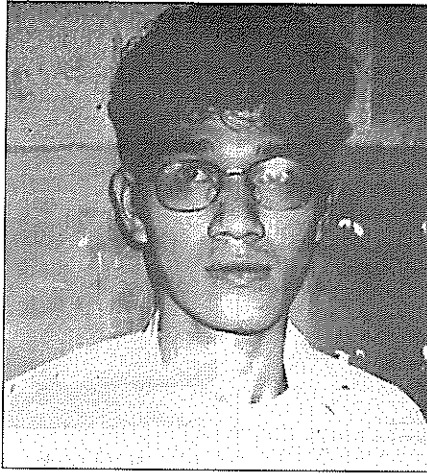
drains that seemed to be filled with raw sewage. The smell was overwhelming. Small, roughly built houses crowded together, their balconies sagging over the streets draped with washing. Women washed clothes in doorways and hundreds of children played in the dirt, often climbing into the drains to use them as toilets. Many had rashes or the big glazed eyes of malnutrition. I visited the room which was the home of four young women [factory workers] about 17 to 20 years old. It was about two metres square, and the women slept on the damp, sloping floor..."

In these conditions, student radicals have taken the initiative to launch new trade-union groups like the PPBI, independent from the government-controlled fake unions, the SPSI. Linked to the PPBI is a new radical party, the PRD (People's Democratic Party), now forced underground by repression. The PPBI was set up in October 1994, and since then has led a number of strikes. It demands an increased national minimum wage; the right for workers to organise outside the SPSI, to speak out, to demonstrate, and to strike; and an end to military intervention in labour disputes.

It urgently needs aid from the international labour movement. Unfortunately the official organisations of the working class in neighbouring Australia, the ACTU (Australian TUC) and the Australian Labor Party, remain allied with Suharto's machine. The ALP government in office from 1983 to 1996 laid great stress on opening out Australia towards Asia — but by that they meant building commercial and military alliances with regimes like Suharto's. The ACTU continues to support the government-run "trade unions" in Indonesia, and to shun the new independent trade unions.

Indonesia was the jewel in the crown of Holland's colonial empire from the 17th century to 1942. The Dutch mainly siphoned off tribute rather than vigorously promoting capitalism. From independence in 1949 to the 1965 coup, the veteran nationalist Sukarno ran a populist regime with himself as arbiter between the three elements of a so-called "Nasakom" alliance — secular nationalists, Islamists, and the Communist Party (PKI). The 1965 coup crushed the PKI, ousted Sukarno, and led to a military regime which calls itself the "New Order."

The "New Order" is a sort of soft totalitarianism. The economy is "crony capitalism", based on private profit, but where riches follow political influence rather than political influence following riches. Independent trade unions, opposition political parties, and opposition publications, have occasionally been tolerated, but the army intervenes everywhere,



Budiman Sudjatmiko, chair of the PRD

controlling the National Assembly, acting as a parallel police force even in the smallest village, arbitrarily repressing whenever it sees fit.

Necessary caution is thus part of what limits the public demands of the PRD: parliamentary democracy, independence from Indonesia for East Timor, and better conditions for workers. However, the PRD's chief international ally, the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) in Australia, which is free to express its ideas openly, also goes no further than calling for "people's power" and democracy in Indonesia. The theory behind this is the old Stalinist idea that revolutions in economically underdeveloped countries like Indonesia must proceed in two stages, with the first, "democratic", stage being completed before the second, "socialist", stage can start.

Both the PRD and the DSP support Megawati Sukarnoputri for president. Megawati is the daughter of Sukarno, and until recently was leader of the PDI, one of the two tame opposition parties maintained by the regime. The rioting on 27 July was sparked by events following the regime's intervention to oust Megawati from the top of the PDI and replace her by someone more pliant. Yet she is no radical, but rather more like an Indonesian equivalent of the Philippines' Cory Aquino or South Korea's Kim Young Sam.

The US government wants democratic reform, of a sort, in Indonesia. It wants a less corrupt, personalised and erratic capitalist administration, implementing IMF free-market policies. Megawati Sukarnoputri could well be the instrument for this programme, and bring with her substantial sections of the military and the business elite.

Even limited democratic reforms would be an improvement for the workers. But they must and will aim higher.

As the crisis unfolds in Indonesia, the workers' struggles will not remain neatly

confined to a "democratic stage." The idea will also be raised that the workers create the country's wealth, and that they, not any capitalist or bureaucrat, should control it. The workers' struggles should not be cut down to fit into the role of back-up force for a bourgeois democratic "stage" or for leaders like Megawati.

The workers have the social weight to achieve more. And if their mobilisation is artificially restricted by dogmas about first being auxiliaries to complete the "democratic stage" before they can raise their own independent demands, then that will undermine the fight for democratic reform, by crippling the main social force that will fight for democracy. That is what happened in the run-up to 1965: the Communist Party, the PKI, limited itself to critical support for Sukarno and left its people unprepared and defenceless when the army butchers came for them.

Two other dangers face the reviving Indonesian workers' movement. Indonesia is 85% Muslim. The Chinese minority, four per cent of the population, controls around 70% of private enterprise. The military regime has kept religious and racial tensions under a heavy lid. If the workers' movement can offer only pallid democratic formulae, then social rebellion may be channelled into Islamic or anti-Chinese blind alleys, and the "democratic stage" of the struggle will not be democratic at all.

The tirades by Indonesia's military dictator Suharto against "communism", however, reflect his uneasy awareness that even a massacre like that of 1965 can not wipe out a political tradition as deep-rooted as that of the PKI. What he can stop is open discussion of socialist strategy in Indonesia, and of the lessons of the 1965 tragedy.

That makes it more important for supporters of the Indonesian workers' movement in other countries to provide space for that discussion.

Colin Foster

● Fax letters of protest to the Indonesian Minister of Justice, Uahi Utoyo Usman S.H., on 00 62 21 525 3095, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Alatas S.H., on 00 62 21 380 5511. Send copies to the Indonesian Embassy, 38 Grosvenor Square, London W1, and to Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASJET), which will forward them to the PPBI. Contact ASJET on 00 612 9690 1381 (fax) or asiet@peg.apc.org (e-mail). For latest information, consult ASJET's World Wide Web page on <http://www.peg.apc.org/~asiet/>. Contact TAPOL, the Indonesian human rights campaign, at 0181-771 2904 (phone), 0181-653 0322 (fax), or tapol@gn.apc.org (e-mail).

The mentality of the whore

TONY Blair and his friends may not be very good at ideas, policies, principles and such like, but there is one thing they do know about: the media. Ever since seizing the leadership, Mr Blair and his chums have devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to cultivating their media image — whether by sucking up to the likes of Rupert Murdoch and Lord Rothermere, or by blackguarding any journalist who resists the Campbell/Mandelson 'spin' on a story.

The Blair clique is particularly touchy about those publications closest to it ideologically — the *Guardian*, *Observer* and *New Statesman*. Hostility to the *Guardian* for occasionally publishing an 'unhelpful' story or venturing a mild criticism has resulted in the spin doctors transferring their favours (exclusive briefings, privileged access to the Great Leader's innermost thoughts, etc.) to the laughably titled *Independent*.

But at the *New Statesman* the Blairites reckoned they were in a position to take more direct action against recalcitrant editor Steve Platt. Born-again Blairista Margaret Hodge was on the magazine's board and in September 1995 attempted a coup to remove Platt and bring the magazine into line with correct thinking. Unfortunately, Hodge's spaniel-like loyalty to her Leader was not matched by any corresponding intellect or competence. The attempt failed and the hitherto mildly dissident Platt became a confirmed anti-Blairite.

Less than a year later, however, the Blairites had the *Statesman* handed to them on a plate when millionaire Labour MP Geoffrey Robinson bought the magazine and promptly replaced Platt with former *Independent on Sunday* editor Ian Hargreaves. Out, too, went contributing editor and columnist Ian Aitkin (whose soft-Tribunite politics and *Guardian* connection presumably made him dangerously Old Labour) and assistant editor Nyta Mann (no surprise there: at the 1995 Labour Party conference Blair babe Derek Draper had called her a "fucking cunt" and promised "we're going to get you").

Perhaps the most significant person-

nel change was the return (as Associate Editor and regular columnist) of John Lloyd, who had edited the magazine in the late '80s. Lloyd is an able journalist whose pedigree includes a period as the *Financial Times*' chief industrial correspondent and one of the more interesting (and less pretentious) of the regulars at *Marxism Today*. But a socialist he is not. Indeed, one of Lloyd's recent columns opens with the question "What can we invent to fill the hole where socialism used to be?" There is, of course, nothing wrong with a socialist publication giving space to non-socialists with interesting things to say. The point about Lloyd, however, is that he isn't just an occasional contributor but an integral part of the *Statesman*'s editorial team who almost certainly carries more political clout than Hargreaves (whose appointment was due to his journalistic expertise rather than any political credentials).

"The *New Statesman* knows what it *doesn't* stand for: class struggle."

Lloyd — an ex-Maoist and one-time member of the British and Irish Communist Organisation — equates 'socialism' with Stalinism and considers that social democracy (in the sense of what a recent *Statesman* editorial described as "the post-war period of big, welfare-state government") has pretty well reached the end of the line. The best that Lloyd and the *Statesman* can come up with as an alternative is a search "for a way to tame capitalism" — but, by their own admission, they haven't found it yet.

Such intellectual vacuity has drawn the *Statesman* and New Labour into a warm embrace and it was no surprise, earlier this summer, to find that the Labour Party had rented out its national membership list to the magazine for a publicity mailing and cut-price membership offer — an arrangement that may well be in breach of the Data Protection Act. But Har-

greaves and Lloyd (not to mention their boss Geoffrey Robinson) are not complete fools: they know that an unrelenting diet of New Labour propaganda would spell certain death on the news stands. So, in an effort to emulate the *Spectator* under Dominic Lawson's editorship of a couple of years ago, the *Statesman* has gone in search of 'scoops' with which to publicise itself, and in doing so has caused the Labour leadership some embarrassment. Joy Johnson's attack on New Labour's "elaborate and obscure" use of language and Clare Short's strange ramblings about "the people who live in the dark" both made headlines in virtually every paper. Good publicity for the magazine, certainly. But scarcely substantial critiques of Blairism.

The *New Statesman* may not know what exactly it stands for these days, but it certainly knows what it *doesn't* stand for: class struggle in any shape or form. A recent editorial admonished striking postal workers thus: "It (the strike) offers valuable ammunition to those who would further restrict the rights of trade unions. It undermines attempts to create a new set of relationships based on a shared interest in the well-being of their enterprises rather than a presumption of class conflict. And a programme of industrial action that stretches into a critical political autumn is a gift to Labour's enemies."

Mind you, there is nothing new about such craven cowardice and hypocrisy at the *Statesman*. Back in 1937 the magazine's first editor, Kingsley Martin, refused to publish George Orwell's articles on the Spanish Civil War, not because he (Martin) denied that Orwell's facts were true, but because he believed that to publish them would damage the Stalinist Popular Front then so fashionable with British liberals and social-democrats. Orwell described Martin's subservience to the centre-left 'common sense' of the day as "the mentality of the whore." I hate to think what he'd have to say about today's *New Statesman*.

Jim Denham



Bloody Sunday, January 1972

Ireland as it seems and as it is

By Paddy Dollard

THE single most striking thing about Ireland in the 27 years since the British Army assumed direct control of a Northern Ireland that was disintegrating into sectarian pogroms and civil war is this: despite much talk, much marching and much resolution-mongering, and despite the fact that there is a powerful working-class movement in Ireland, the labour movement and the left in Britain has had no appreciable effect on events in Northern Ireland.

The left has had no real grip on what is going on in Ireland, or what might happen in the future. Though much fine work has been done on Irish history by academic historians since the "Troubles" began, it has had little impact on the left.

The serious Marxist left, and those who base themselves on the fine traditions of Irish republicanism — those of Tone, of Connolly, even of Pearse — need first of all to understand, and spread understanding of, the

real situation in Ireland. The following examination, in propositions and counter-propositions, of the Irish question at the end of the 20th century, is offered to help in that work.

The fundamental conflict is between the Irish people and British rule.

In Ireland there are two quite distinct peoples: the "Ulster Protestants", or Anglo-Scots Irish, and the Catholics, or Gaelic-Irish. The fundamental conflict is between these two segments of the Irish people. Religion serves only as a symbol of conflicting national or communal identities, so that Protestants of very different theological views (or none) are still British-Irish, and atheists from Catholic roots are still Irish-Irish.

Britain controlled Ireland for centuries, employing great violence. They used the conflict between the communities and sharpened and poisoned it. The Catholic-Irish majority rebelled. In the late 19th century the Liberals, then Britain's second

major party, came to favour limited Home Rule for Ireland. They formed an alliance with the Catholic-Irish bourgeois nationalists. The Tories allied with the Protestant-Unionists, and played the "Orange card" against the Liberals.

The Protestant-Unionists, considering themselves British more than Irish, did not want to be a minority in a Catholic-dominated Ireland. Believing that the Liberal British government could be relied on to coerce Ireland's Protestant minority into a united Ireland if necessary, the Catholic-Irish bourgeois nationalists gave no serious thought to working out a settlement with the other, Protestant, Irish.

Both Irish groups were subordinate allies of powerful British factions. Britain came close to civil war on the question of Home Rule for Ireland on the eve of World War 1. In the upshot the Liberals betrayed the Catholic Irish. They agreed to cut the country in two, and on Tory-Unionist terms.

The way they did it poisoned and worsened the conflict between Protestant-Irish and Catholic-Irish. For forty-odd years, between 1921 and the late 1960s, the conflict was subdued because the Northern Ireland Catholics had been so heavily beaten down, but it blew up again as soon as the Northern Ireland Catholics began demanding elementary rights.

Our governing principle must be self-determination for the Irish people as a whole: majority rule.

There is no such thing as the Irish people as a whole. There are two peoples. To propose "self-determination for the Irish people as a whole" without any means of making it "a whole" thus means asserting the right of the bigger people to control over the smaller.

If the principle applies according to which the Catholic Irish claimed and largely won the right to secede from Britain, then it must logically apply within Ireland too, for those who proclaim a distinct identity against the rest of the Irish islanders. Secession is undesirable where populations are heavily intermingled, and we advocate reconciliation within a federal united Ireland rather than "Protestant self-determination" by way of a repartition which would certainly be bloody and bring great suffering to local minorities trapped on both sides of the new border. But a Catholic-Irish claim to conquer the area where the Protestants are a compact majority, in north-east Ulster, can claim no democratic legitimacy.

THE fundamental problem is the British military presence. Northern Ireland is an artificial and unviable political unit. It would collapse without the prop of British troops, and the way would be opened to a settlement.

The borders of the present Northern Ireland state were drawn to engineer a Protestant majority in an artificially large area. It has a Catholic majority in large areas outside the Protestant heartlands of Antrim and Down. British governments have implicitly recognised that Northern Ireland is not a tenable or viable political unit by imposing direct rule almost continuously since 1972; local self-government would be likely to break down in a civil war.

But the existence of the compact Protestant community in the north-east of the island is no artificial contrivance or fig-

ment of British policy. After a sectarian civil war the Protestant area would be smaller, but it would exist. Eamonn de Valera and other Republicans long ago abjured the idea of trying to unite Ireland by force, because they recognised that it could not work. A civil war would result not in the removal of the Border, but in shifting it north and east — and making it permanent.

A united Ireland is the solution.

It is no sort of progress to free half a million Northern Catholics from oppression by making one million Protestants into a minority which is, or feels, oppressed. The Northern Catholics are right to fight against oppression. But doubling the number of those who feel oppressed is no answer.

There is no answer, no alternative, no way out.

We propose a federal united Ireland with local self-rule for the Protestant north-east, and confederal links between Ireland and Britain. We want to help socialists and trade-unionists in Northern Ireland to create a Labour Party which can unite Catholic and Protestant workers round social demands and a programme of consistent democracy recognising the rights and fears of both communities. Socialists must reach out to the Protestant workers, strive to organise and mobilise them, to undercut the Protestant bigots.

We demand of the Provisional IRA that it calls off its military campaign. We oppose British and RUC repression; we want troops out as part of a political settlement. In the last analysis, only working-class unity in Ireland will allow real progress to be made out of the tragic blind alley into which Northern Ireland has corralled its people, Protestant and Catholic alike. And only a programme of consistent democracy — coupled with social demands — can enable socialists to build working-class

unity.

The only answer is to forget the national question for now and try to get working class unity by building on the joint actions of Protestant and Catholic workers for working-class demands like wage rises, and against killings.

Limited bread-and-butter unity should indeed be sought and cherished. But it shatters easily whenever the "constitutional question" arises: the relationship between Protestant Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland. The rare but much-cited cases of unity — 1907 and 1932 — prove this. Immediately afterwards the workers fought each other on sectarian-constitutional lines. Workers' unity for more than trade-union goals is impossible without an agreed programme spelling out how Protestants and Catholics can live together in peace on the island.

If the root problem in Ireland is the conflict between Protestants and Catholics, then the solution is for the Protestants to have the Northern Ireland state, reformed of course.

A former Northern Irish Prime Minister once called it "A Protestant state for a Protestant people". But that, pointedly, is not what it is, or not only what it is. It has also been a Protestant state for a very large number of Catholic people. Over 40%

"Workers' unity for more than trade-union goals is impossible without an agreed programme spelling out how Protestants and Catholics can live together in peace on the island."



Protestant anti-imperialism? Unionist demonstrators burn effigy of Thatcher, 1985

of the population are Catholics who would prefer to be part of an all-Ireland state. They are a majority in half the land area of the 6 counties! They are a bigger minority in Northern Ireland than all the Protestants of all Ireland would be in a united Ireland.

Northern Ireland is not a viable political entity. For the 50 years before 1970 the Catholics were treated as second-class citizens in Northern Ireland, discriminated against in housing, jobs and even voting rights (in local government).

Their first revolt was not an IRA-type military campaign, but a movement for civil rights modelled on that of the US black movement of the 1960s. That's the measure of how badly off they felt.

There have been reforms since the 1960s, and there could be more. Northern Ireland is not perfect, but it is viable. A solution could be reached within the existing Northern Ireland framework, at manageable cost.

Northern Ireland is a Bosnia in the making. It is not a viable political entity. British troops can keep the lid on it, but at the cost of perpetuating and worsening the tensions. If that lid were taken off, the result would be sectarian civil war and bloody repartition. Repeatedly the Northern Protestants have shown themselves willing to fight rather than become a minority in a Catholic Ireland.

Reform is necessary. The problem is that the British state has granted an Orange veto over fundamental changes in the position of Northern Ireland.

The Orange veto is ultimately dependent on the power of the Orangeists on the ground and on the credibility of their threat to use force. And the Catholics have had a veto, based on their power to resist, over any return to a Protestant home-rule government in Belfast. The "vetos" reflect the intractability of the conflict between the two Irish peoples. They do not create it.

The main problem is the Protestant resistance to reform. The only answer is to face them down. The Protestants would not resist a

serious, determined drive to do that.

To do what? To implement what reform? A substantial Irish-based movement for a democratic settlement might indeed be able to face down the Protestant bigots. A drive to push the Protestants into a Catholic-dominated united Ireland would be resisted fiercely, and by more of them than just the bigots.

In 1911-21, Irish Protestants fought all-Ireland Home Rule, and the densely concentrated Northern Protestants finally settled for a fall-back position: partition. They allowed the disbanding of the 'B-Specials' in 1969 — to have them replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment (now Royal Irish Regiment). They allowed the abolition of Belfast home rule (in 1972) — to see it replaced by the direct rule of the British state, which they regard as theirs. In May 1974 they organised a powerful general strike which defeated the British government's 1973 power-sharing agreement, including tentative links with Dublin through a Council of Ireland.

Even today, despite the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, which they detest, the Protestants still think that the British state is their state. Threaten to put them as a permanent minority in an all-Ireland Catholic-controlled state, and they will certainly resist, guns in hand. Northern Ireland has the most heavily-armed civilian population in Britain, and probably in Europe.

If Northern Ireland collapsed into civil war, the Catholic-Irish would win the war, and it would be a small, quick war. The impasse would be broken, a solution would be reached through a united Ireland, and at manageable cost.

The Catholic-Irish could win a civil war only if all Catholic Ireland were mobilised and concentrated on the task, and probably not even then. It would be no small, quick civil war! In fact, Catholic Ireland would not mobilise — the South has given scant support to the revolt of the Catholics in Northern Ireland over the last 20 years.

Civil war can be avoided or minimised by British troops disarming the Royal Irish Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Association, and the Ulster Volunteer Force before they leave.

Such disarming would pitch the British army into full-scale war with the Protestants. It would mean vastly more British troops, and for an indefinite period ahead. The British withdrawal would be very slow and bloody, if it ever came at all.

We should just press to get British troops out now and let the Irish have their way.

Britain set up the wretched Northern Irish framework in the first place and defends it now. We should not take responsibility for the British army in Ireland or anywhere else.

But opposition to British troops does not mean that we call on the British ruling class to pull out and create a Bosnia-style chaos. Neither, incidentally, do most people in Ireland. Very few Northern Irish Catholics call for immediate troops out. Sinn Fein and the IRA do not. They want a negotiated British withdrawal.

To say "Bosnia" if Britain withdraws is to assign a progressive role to British imperialism, and British imperialism cannot be progressive in Ireland. It is a matter of principle for socialists to agitate for Troops Out Now, whatever the consequences.

We want to destroy the British state and replace it with a more democratic working class state. But we do not go around shouting "smash the state". That's for when the working class is ready, willing and able to take over. Collapse of the state into chaos and civil war, as in the former Yugoslavia — that is no way forward for the working class.

From a socialist, working-class point of view, even a bourgeois democratic imperialist state can be progressive in its own territory in comparison to, for example, the emergence of warlordism if the state collapses before the progressive alternative is ready to replace it. It is in the interests of the labour movement to maintain bourgeois democracy against fascism, and also against chaos which would block progress and work

against the emergence of the progressive alternative. We do not defend the British army, but the British state in Northern Ireland is better than all-out sectarian civil war and warlordism on the model of Bosnia.

Britain cannot be progressive in Ireland.

A million Irish people insist that they are British. To say "Britain cannot be progressive in Ireland" begs the question of their rights. Do not the British-Irish have a right to "occupy" their part of Ireland? Who has a better right? Those who were driven out of that part of Ireland 300-400 years ago? Those who claim affinity with them or to be their descendants? Then what happens to the British-Irish?

THE Ulster Protestants are a privileged settler caste. Their refusal to go into a united Ireland represents only bigotry and the desire to lord it over the Catholics.

Many Protestants are guilty of bigotry and irrationality, and they have lorded it over the Catholics. But it is perfectly reasonable for a minority not to want to submerge itself. Southern Ireland is heavily Catholic-confessional.

In decades of mass poverty and unemployment an informal system grew up in Northern Ireland of reserving certain jobs for Protestants and discriminating against Catholics. Fear that in a united Ireland they would lose the protection such discrimination gives them is a big consideration with Protestant workers.

Of course socialists oppose such discrimination. We advocate a trade union campaign against it.

But many Protestant workers can and do oppose discrimination while still feeling themselves different from the rest of the Irish and without ceasing to fear and reject a united Ireland. Defence of privileges is not the only consideration for Protestant workers in opposing a united Ireland, or even the main one. Preservation of their own felt identity and tradition, and refusal to submit to a majority they consider alien, are central.

The idea that there are two Irish peoples, or two nations, is an artefact of imperialism, an idea coined by Tory ideologists in the 19th century to justify their opposition to Home Rule.

In practice, all the nationalist and republican groups believe that there are two distinct peoples, and see themselves as representing the "nationalist people". The SDLP have a more benign variant of this attitude, but the Provisionals treat Unionists (that is, the overwhelming majority of Protestants) as an enemy people and claim the right to bomb or shoot as many of them as "necessary." Supposedly left-wing and socialist republicans have unapologetically engaged in sectarian attacks (Dalkey, 1987). The Protestants are the bad, pro-imperialist Irish, at least until such time as they renounce their own separate identity. This ideology, with the belief, sincere or hypocritical, that the Protestants will be "assimilated" if Britain goes, is both wishful thinking and a denial, gun and bomb in hand, of the Protestants' right to decide for themselves.

The fact that there are two peoples compels recognition, open or mystified. Open discussion is the only way to work out a democratic response.



Orange marchers confront the RUC

Whatever they say about it, the fact is that the Protestants are Irish. There are no real differences between them and the Catholic-Irish except those erected by stupid prejudice.

Is the Protestant identity contestable? So, for long, was the idea that the Irish majority were a nation separate from the British with whom they intermingled and shared a language and much of their culture. It was denied by British nationalists and even by the apostle of liberating European nationalism in the mid-19th century, Guiseppe Mazzini. Mazzini was wrong because the majority Irish felt themselves to be a separate nation. The Northern Ireland Protestants say they are British. Self-defined identity is decisive, not geography.

The Protestants may see themselves as different, but that's prejudice and we should have no truck with it.

Should socialists also tell the Catholic-Irish that their feelings of being different are just prejudice? We combat nationalism by advocating and trying to create a consistently democratic framework which undercuts national and communal grievances or fears, not by overriding or ignoring those grievances or fears.

To dismiss all feelings of national identity as just stupid prejudice is ultra-left. To condemn Protestant-Irish feelings of national identity, but cherish and flatter Catholic-Irish feelings of national identity, is hypocritical. To argue for Protestant-Irish workers to see themselves as citizens of the world, sharing more in common with Chinese, Czech or Chilean workers than with Protestant-Irish bosses, is one thing. To tell them that they must identify with the Catholic-Irish as against other nations, or stand condemned as hopeless sectarians, is another.

Ireland is oppressed by British imperialism. Southern Ireland is a neo-colony. Northern Ireland is occupied by British troops.

Southern Ireland is fully independent politically. In 1922

26 counties of Ireland achieved dominion status within the British empire, the same as Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, which were effectively independent states. By the mid 1930s De Valera had broken the ties to the British monarch and was openly and accurately describing the Irish state as an independent republic in external association with the British empire. It was formally declared an independent republic in 1949.

Britain gave up its remaining military bases in southern Ireland in 1938. Ireland remained neutral in World War 2. The Republic is today formally Britain's equal within the European Union, pursuing separate policies. This is full self-determination, to the extent that it is possible for a small state, occupying a relatively privileged position in the world and integrated as a partner into one of the great imperialist blocs.

Southern Ireland has one of Western Europe's weaker capitalist economies. But it is not a colony. It is ruled by the Irish capitalists. And most of the foreign-owned companies in Southern Ireland today are US, German or Japanese owned, not British.

WHATEVER about the economics of Southern Ireland, Northern Ireland is occupied by British troops. It is Britain's oldest colony.

Northern Ireland is an unviable unit. But the majority of the people in it want Britain there. Northern Ireland has been part of the English or British state since the 12th century — earlier than the union of the Scottish and English crowns, and five and a half centuries before the Act of Union between England and Scotland. The majority of the people there consider themselves British, though their ancestors have been in Ireland for centuries.

Partition brought many injustices for the Catholic minority, but even so, the relationship of Northern Ireland to Britain is not one of a colony seized by an alien power against the wishes of the majority of the people concerned.

Britain must have economic and military motives for retaining control of Northern Ireland.

Economically, Northern Ireland is a drain on British capitalism, to the tune of over £2 billion a year. British capitalists have more profitable relations with the independent South than with Northern Ireland. And in no way does Britain's military presence in Northern Ireland help British capitalists' profit-making in the South.

When Ireland was partitioned in 1920, it was still very important to Britain militarily. Britain kept naval bases in the South too until 1938. But since World War 2 Ireland has become less and less important to Britain.

Britain must really want to stay in Northern Ireland, otherwise it would have pulled out long ago.

The 1964-70 Labour government in the mid-'60s started edging towards reform and, perhaps — the exact story is in dispute — moving towards a united Ireland. They pressed the Protestant parliament in Belfast to treat the Catholic minority better. When the effete and inept Tory-Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland tried to comply with British demands, there was a Protestant bigots' backlash against them, led by Ian Paisley and with heavy working class Protestant support.

Britain had to step centre-stage and take direct control in 1969, when serious fighting broke out between Protestants and Catholics in Derry and Belfast. Civil war in Ireland would do Britain no good, especially as it would certainly have reverberations in, for example, Glasgow. Governments do not just scuttle and run, if they have a choice.

Britain fears the upsurge of radical politics in Ireland which would follow from the removal of the two main blocks to progress: partition, and the British military occupation.

A settlement which eased the communal conflict in Ireland would improve the prospects for working-class unity and socialism — in the long term. The British government does not have a Marxist view of the long term. If they could get it easily, they would be happy with a quiet withdrawal and a united Ireland.

They can not get it easily (in part this is because of their own brutality and blundering, which has helped to poison the Catholic-Protestant conflict). A cut-and-run withdrawal which unleashed all-out civil war would lead to repartition and a great worsening of the prospects for the left in Ireland.

What matters most of all is to see the British government defeated. Defeat in Ireland will weaken and destabilise the British government.

Britain has liquidated the greatest empire in history with few domestic convulsions. It withdrew precipitately from India, Palestine and Aden without domestic crisis. But it can't survive defeat in Ireland? Ireland will be the last straw that breaks the camel's back? The idea is stupid beyond belief! The British state would gain from a withdrawal from Ireland as long as that withdrawal led smoothly to a settlement and not an Irish civil war which could well spread to parts of Scotland.

The idea that the defeat of the British government matters more than anything that happens in Ireland is also British parochial nationalism of the most shameful and irresponsible sort. The nationalism is back to front, inside-out, negative, but the indifference to Ireland brands it plainly for what it is.

The Provisionals fight imperialism, and so should be supported, whatever the details and complications. Their aim is to free Irish people from British coercion.

That isn't really true, although the Provisionals occasionally shoot British soldiers and set off bombs in London. They proclaim the goal of uniting Ireland — which can only be done by the consent or conquest of the Protestants. Yet they behave so as to outrage and inflame the Protestants. They act against all persuasion and, representing a minority of the Northern minority and with small support in Southern Ireland, they can scarcely hope to conquer the Protestants. What do they think they are doing?

They are working to compel Britain to coerce the Protestants. War-weariness aside, that was the rationale behind the ceasefire of 1994: they thought that their pan-nationalist alliance with the SDLP, Dublin and America could push Britain into strong-arming the Protestants. They expressed it in code: "Britain must join the persuaders". Nationalists could think this meant a word in Protestant ears, yet any such "word" from Britain would destabilise the Protestants, and be followed either by a British retreat or by force. The Provisional IRA "fights Britain" to compel Britain to coerce one million Irish into a united Ireland, or some stage towards it. They demand a "British solution"!

The Provisionals represent a political step forward, a working-class political alternative to old-fashioned middle-class nationalism.

They are a petty-bourgeois political formation. They have now abandoned most of their "no politics" principles, and many of their leaders want to abandon "physical force on principle". For what? There is no mystery about it. Gerry Adams and his friends want to become mainstream bourgeois, albeit Catholic community-based, politicians. They have had many predecessors, who started with "the IRA gun" and wound up as jobbing politicians — Fianna Fail, the main bourgeois party in the South, for example.

Revolutionary politics is not the same thing as physical force. Especially in Ireland. There, the most reactionary bourgeois parties in the south (the two main parties) began as physical force parties. Revolutionary politics is a matter of programme and class. We judge these people from the point of view of working-class socialism.

The Provisionals continue the policy of the middle-class Irish Home Rule party in the years before World War 1 when they operated as a tool of the Liberal Party, making no effort to reach a democratic modus vivendi with the Irish minority because they expected the Liberals to coerce the Northern Ireland Protestants.

Like it or not, the Provisionals' approach has produced results where patient, peaceful political agitation achieves nothing.

Britain will not do what the Provisionals want. The maximum policy of both Dublin and London was set out in the February 1995 White Paper: slow, piecemeal movement towards links between Northern and Southern Ireland, on the model of the process which has shaped the European Union over nearly 40 years.

And even if the Provisionals' expectations from Britain were less deluded, their policy would still be false — and not anti-imperialist in any way! They confuse geography with people. The mechanical unity of the state replaces the Republican unity of the people.

The Provisional IRA began in 1969-70 as a right-wing sect committed to the gun and bomb on principle, and pretending that the problem was Britain and not a division within the people on the island. Their military campaign pushed tens of thousands of Protestants into the arms of the bigots and mili-



The Provisionals had immense illusions in the ability of a pan-nationalist alliance to force the British government's hand

tarists of Unionist fanaticism, who organised a mass armed militia, perhaps 35,000 strong by 1972 (there are one million Protestants in Northern Ireland so to get the equivalent figure for Britain you'd have to multiply by 55). The Provisionals could not possibly win. Irish unity could and can only be got by consent. The IRA campaign pushed that consent further away. That is the main result they have achieved.

Socialists must always side with the oppressed and their representatives. That means backing the Provisionals, even if critically.

We blame the British and the southern Irish bourgeoisie for letting Northern Ireland fester for so long in conditions of sectarian discrimination and mass unemployment. But identifying the Catholics as the oppressed does not settle all questions, nor absolve us of the responsibility to give honest accounts of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politicians who lead the organisations of the oppressed in Northern Ireland.

The Provisionals are entitled to fight fire with fire, to respond to the Protestant killers.

Yes, if that is what they do! It is not what they do — fundamentally. The real situation in Northern Ireland is one of Irish opposition to Irish unity. The logic of their politics leads the IRA to shoot Irish Protestant workers as “collaborators”. They put a better ideological and political gloss on it than the Protestant-Unionist killers do, and, as a rule, their people believe the ideological slant — but the pseudo-Republicans too go in for sectarian killings.

Socialism is the answer.

The answer to what? Yes, socialism is the only answer to the chaos and cruelty of capitalism, which underlies the tensions in Ireland — but only the working class can make socialism, and the Irish working class cannot make socialism while it remains grievously divided by the national/communal

conflict. Socialists need answers to that conflict, and collective ownership of the means of production is not in itself an answer.

Even if the working class could take power despite its crippling divisions, once in power it would still need a policy for dealing with the divisions in the Irish people. Such a policy could only be that of the 1917 Bolsheviks for dealing with national and communal divisions: consistent democracy, the fullest possible freedoms, limited only by conflicting claims, for peoples and fragments of peoples to join or leave existing states, or to set up states of their own. In Ireland now that could only be some form of autonomy for the mainly Protestant areas in a federal united Ireland, which would probably have to establish closer links with the British state which the Protestants still identify with.

A WORKERS' GUIDE TO IRELAND

A WORKERS' GUIDE to IRELAND 95p + 31p p&p

IRELAND: The Socialist Answer

IRELAND: the SOCIALIST ANSWER

£1 + 38p p&p

From: **WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.**

IN May 1968 9 million workers brought France to the brink of revolution in the biggest general strike ever. It was sparked by something seemingly insignificant — a campaign by students at Nanterre, on the outskirts of Paris, for the right to visit each other's rooms after 11pm.

At a time when, like now, the commentators had written off the working class, the working class came to occupy factories, to join students in pitched battles with the police, in some cases even to run entire cities. May '68 gave us perhaps our best picture so far of what a working-class revolution will look like in the West and, though ultimately the movement, betrayed by the Stalinist leaders of the labour organisations, went down to defeat, what happened holds many valuable lessons for the future.

One lesson for students is that if they look to the working class, and link their concerns with working class concerns and goals, then they can play a part in changing the world.

The Nanterre protest, which began in March 1967, soon took in other issues, like overcrowding and the content of courses. When college bosses shut down the campus, the students responded by holding a protest meeting at the Sorbonne on 3 May.

The Sorbonne authorities, panicking at rumours that fascists were going to attack the meeting, called in the notoriously brutal CRS, the French riot police. Students fought the police, who eventually occupied the Sorbonne.

Students and lecturers acted to gain support. Thousands demonstrated in Paris, and mass meetings debated what to do next.

The small forces of the left argued for turning to the working class, and despite the resistance of the trade union bureaucrats and the Stalinist Communist Party — who had students beaten up at factory gates — the students' message got through.

By Friday 10th, 30,000 were marching through the streets of Paris when the police attacked and fought demonstrators right through the night.

A one-day general strike was called for 13th May — but spontaneous rank and file action went way beyond that. Workers occupied the Sud-Aviation factory at Nantes, then Renault at Cleon, then Renault at Billancourt, and so it went on — often with small demands and little political direction.

But the logic was revolutionary; a different way of running society became visible in the struggle itself, as workers occupied the factories. In Nantes, for one

week, a General Strike Committee administered the city — controlling food supplies, traffic and petrol; at Cleon workers staged plays by Brecht and Chekhov, and held debates on sexuality and contraception; in Paris the Stock Exchange was set on fire.

President De Gaulle, who at one stage fled abroad, so great was his fear of revolution, wooed support from the upper echelons of the army by releasing an imprisoned right wing general. Workers and students sought the support of rank and file soldiers: some units made public proclamations that they would never shoot workers.

And all the while, the 'socialist' and Communist Party leaderships of the labour movement were screwing down on the activity and trying to defuse it.

Against this, the movement had either to go forward or to die. But there was no organisation like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty — armed with the lessons of the past — well positioned and large enough to give the leadership that was needed.

IN July, De Gaulle called an election, and significantly increased his vote. The ruling class could offer order, the established order, and in the absence of a strong working class alternative, the French people accepted it.

But that is not to say class struggle then somehow 'died out'. In class society, it never can die out. The French working class moved again only last year, with two million strong demonstrations against Prime Minister Alain Juppé's plans to slash welfare spending. Rail strikes, college strikes, power strikes against welfare cuts may provide a model for what British workers will do a couple of years into a Tony Blair government.

Last year too, students were an important detonator in starting and escalating the events in France: it began with protests for more money for universities.

Lenin, the leader of the only successful workers' revolution in history, the Russian revolution, said that the reason students, regardless of their background, can play a part in the class struggle is that they are able to step back from society and see its dynamic. Uprooted for a brief interregnum from their often middle-class background, they have the time to study history and to think. They have the chance to see society whole with fresh unprejudiced eyes and realise how immensely tragic and unnecessary class society is.

But Lenin rightly stressed that the power to change society, to harness the productive potential unleashed by capital-



Students and

A WO

Alan McArthur looks : involvement in wo

ism and use it for the common good, lies with the working class, and only the working class. Students can play an important role — with ideas, with solidarity and with activism, or with inspiring struggle, as in France '68 — but they must, if they are not to get lost politically, see the working class and its organisations as central.

Long after the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the rise of Stalinism, students again played an important part in the so-called democratic revolutions that toppled the Stalinist states across Eastern

“ A big national demonstration will be the start of building a mover



ance, May '68: students inspired the struggle

the struggle for socialism world to win!

the history of student working-class struggle.

Europe, and seriously challenged the Chinese regime.

In Czechoslovakia (as it was then) students initiated the pro-democracy movement. Occupied colleges became co-ordination centres for the opposition movement. In Poland students fought to build a free students' union (the NSZ, the student wing of Solidarnosc), in the face of massive state repression.

And in China the workers' and students' movement for democratic reform was even strong enough to take control of

a part of Beijing for a time. It scared the state authorities so much that they sent in troops to massacre the thousands of hunger strikers in Tiananmen Square.

As with France '68, here were glimpses of what is possible, but students were only able to move the forces they moved because they took their struggles to the factory gates. Everywhere, from Central America to Israel/Palestine, to the fight against apartheid in South Africa, students who stop and think, who want to fight, and to fight with the working class, can play a great part in changing the world.

And in Britain? Today, there is a low level of student political activity. The National Union of Students is run by careerist Blairites. It may be hard to see

students in Britain in 1996 in the same light as the French students of 1968. But we do not have to look that far back for a different picture. Look at what students did in the miners' strike of 1984-5, that bitter year-long fight to save jobs and communities in the face of Tory determination to smash the British labour movement.

Students collected money, visited the picket lines, ran strike support groups with trade unionists and Labour Party members. They helped build Women Against Pit Closures and Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. Some colleges were twinned with pits.

They took the fight into NUS, demanding that the union pay legal fees for students arrested on the picket lines, and forcing the leadership to agree to donate money to the striking miners.

If the miners had won, it would have given others the courage to fight. Their defeat has meant demoralisation for the labour movement for over 10 years now, and opened the way for attacks on the welfare state.

RIGHT now, class struggle in Britain is still at a very low level — last year saw the lowest level of strikes since records began — but it is reviving: this year's strike figures will be the highest in a decade. The majority of people believe that a Labour government will deliver for them, that at least Labour will restore the cuts. When they fail to deliver, as they will, two decades of working class frustration will begin to come to the surface. The bureaucrats may well have a year or so of being able to say "Give us time", but when it becomes clear they have no intention of being any better than the Tories, the working class will fight.

Because students are in a position to stand back from society and see it clearly, and because students have not suffered defeats on the same scale as the labour movement, they are likely to be among the first to move against a Blair government.

"New Labour" has already signalled its plans for students — their stooges in NUS engineered the scrapping of NUS policy for decent grants, replacing it with commitment to student loans.

But we must prepare the ground now. Everything may depend on that. A big national demonstration this autumn and activists' groups to co-ordinate action in every college will be just the start of building a movement that can win back for students everything that's been taken away. And beyond that, who knows? There is a world to win!

ent to win back for students everything that has been taken away. ”



A question of priorities

FUNDING students and their education is the new 'policy briefing' from the National Union of Students.

It is introduced by NUS President Douglas Trainer and Vice President Education Lee Findell as "an agenda for real change".

"Real change" requires a *political content* that would make a real difference to the crisis in further and higher education, and *some sign of a willingness to fight for it*. Both are noticeable by their absence from this document. What remains is rhetorical pretension to "radicalism", dressing up an acceptance of the conventional Tory-New Labour notion of an elitist, middle-class favouring, pay-to-learn education system.

Right-wing policy dressed up in "new", "modern" packaging: perfect for young Blairites with big political career ambitions; not so good for students.

Funding students claims to base itself on 'core principles' of "access, quality, lifelong learning and an end to student hardship." The only way to realise such principles is free tuition and a living grant for all students in post-16 education. Instead, the new NUS policy proposes abolishing grants, and making graduates "contribute, on an income-contingent basis, to an 'Investment in Education' scheme."

Yes? From what? In today's system, students finance their years of study by repayable student loans and by bank overdrafts. They are saddled with debt for years after graduation. Students pay towards their maintenance by outside jobs. 40% of students are now employed during term time. They are getting deep into debt. Many drop out. Millions of working-class people pay the price of a lack of student financial support by missing out on higher education altogether.

NUS's own research a few years ago took a detailed look at four overseas student loans schemes, and concluded that "negative attitudes to loans by sections of society that do not traditionally borrow have adversely affected working-class and low-income participation in further and higher education."

Some of the young Blairites who have engineered NUS's policy change

Janine Booth looks at the NUS leadership's proposals for a graduate tax

openly claim that free education is neither achievable nor affordable. Not so long ago ideas like that were nakedly proclaimed only by the loony right of the Tory Party!

Do the resources exist to provide further and higher education to all?

Yes, they do. Human society is capable of constructing buildings, equipping lecture rooms, libraries and laboratories, teaching students, and maintaining their standard of living during their study time. Further, it is easily possible to do this for everyone who wants to benefit from higher education.

That the resources exist to provide general post-16 education is not actually

"The problem is not that resources do not exist."

in dispute. The NUS document accepts that the resources are there: it calls for a funding system which "must ensure wide and equal access for everyone who wishes to enter post-16 education... [and] provide sufficient resources to maintain and enhance the quality of further and higher education."

The problem is not that resources do not exist, but that they are not organised to provide services such as education: instead, they are hoarded and wasted by a wealthy elite.

The document gives no real argument against grants for students. Its closest attempt is to claim that giving students grants "would require additional expenditure in excess of £10 billion — a sum which no government could justify."

Leaving aside the fact that the Tory government has "justified" giving away greater sums in tax handouts to the rich, this begs the question "justify to whom?"

It might indeed be hard to explain to the rich that they will be taxed. Nor would Tony Blair as Labour Prime Minister relish the prospect of "justifying" to

big business that he is going to tax to fund ordinary people's basic rights to education, healthcare and housing.

But it would not be difficult for a Labour Government committed to the needs of working-class people to "justify" student grants. Working-class people are not going to rise up in outrage at the prospect of themselves and their children being able to go to university.

No, the easier option for a New Labour government is to "justify" student hardship, long-term debt, and the continuing disgrace of millions of working-class people denied the opportunity to fulfil their potential through learning.

The issue here is: who should a Labour government justify itself to? To whom is it accountable? Our answer: to the labour movement and to the interests of working-class people.

The same issue is replicated in NUS: who does the union exist for?

AN NUS leadership that advocates the policies expounded in *Funding students and their education* is scabbing on the interests of students. It does not even aspire to represent a membership which has an interest in free education and which, with a lead, would be willing to fight for it.

What makes this document truly remarkable is that it does not even try to give the impression of being on the side of students. Instead, it speaks of a "partnership between the government, institutions, business and students" as if each were equally deserving, with equal power, responsibilities and humanity.

NUS's New Labour leaders see themselves not as leaders of a student movement, but as junior partners of those who administer the system. They fawn on those who attack young people's right to an education and student interests. They want to turn NUS from a "campaigning union" into a sub-section of the Department of Education under the next Labour government.

There will be a day of reckoning for this NUS leadership. Students will say to them: make room for the student movement to be led by people who actually want to fight for students!

The economics of the New Depression

SINCE 1983 a new pattern has emerged in the world economy, different both from the "golden age" of the 1950s and '60s and from the up-and-down seventies. It is a pattern of high profits and rapid technological advance, yet low growth and high unemployment.

The facts in the accompanying table show that the new pattern challenges not only orthodox academic economic theory (one prominent British economic forecaster, Paul Ormerod, was recently moved to write a book entitled *The Death of Economics*), but also Marxist theories.

Geographical expansion of the world market: many Marxists, including Marx and Engels themselves in many passing remarks, have argued that geographical extensions of the capitalist world market are central to periods of capitalist upswing. They have deduced that the exhaustion of that geographical expansion (through the natural limits of the globe) or its reversal (through revolutions taking territories out of the world market) will push capitalism into crisis. These arguments are derived from the basic idea of capital's inbuilt, insatiable drive to expand into fresh fields. Nevertheless the evidence is that to identify expansion with geographical expansion is radically misleading. During the "golden age" vast areas were withdrawn from the capitalist world market by Stalinist or nationalist-autarkic revolutions, yet capitalism boomed. Since the 1980s, the capitalist world market has been greatly expanded, geographically, by the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the USSR, and by the opening-up of China. China, Taiwan and Hong Kong now take 6% of all the world's imports, and make 7.1% of all the world's manufacturing exports, making China, overall, a bigger factor in world trade than any other country except the US, Japan and Germany. Yet overall capitalist growth has been slow.

"Long waves" and technological advance: some Marxists have seen capitalism as moving in "long waves" of



Through what stage are we passing? Martin Thomas sketches an answer.

expansion (with sizeable booms and small slumps) and depression (with smaller booms and bigger slumps), with technological revolution as one of the key elements for a "long wave" of expansion. The archetype was Britain's railway boom in the 19th century. Since the 1980s there has been a far-reaching technological revolution based on microelectronics, modifying almost every industrial production process, changing some completely, drastically transforming office work, and creating a wide range of new mass consumer durables. The "golden age" was much more a period of widening the use of already-existing technologies (production lines, artificial textiles, plastics, car production, television production...). Arguably its most important technical innovation was putting things in boxes ("containerisation", which helped reduce freight costs). In short, the evidence is that there is no necessary correlation between technological revolution and capitalist prosperity.

The (non-Marxist) mirror-image view — that technological revolution necessarily generates, not capitalist prosperity, but mass unemployment — is not supported by the evidence, either. Detailed studies in countries like Britain have found relatively few job losses directly attributable to new technology, and even if they had found more, the question would still remain, why, over the medium term, those losses were not counterbalanced by new jobs generated by expansion. In general, the more technologically advanced a capitalist country's economy, the lower its unemployment rate tends to be.

PROTECTIONISM: From the early 1970s, almost all Marxists (including me) repeatedly predicted resurgent protectionism. Countries would impose stricter controls and higher taxes on imports. But on the whole, slowly and erratically, trade has become freer. The European Union, the North American Free Trade Area, and the trading network round Japan in Asia are not closed-off trade blocs in the manner of the first half of this century. They might become such in the event of a cataclysmic disruption of world finance, but at present they are moves to create wider "home markets" within a relatively free-trade world. They are linked together by a strong network of trade agreements and by very high levels of cross-trade (across the Pacific and the Atlantic, for example), much of that cross-trade being trade within multinational companies, from one unit of such a company to another unit within the same company.

Some Marxists have swung over to seeing capitalism today as so "globalised" that the main actors are transnational companies, international banks, and so on. States play only bit-parts, and the rebuilding of high economic barriers between countries is pretty much inconceivable — see, for example, the book *Postimperialism*, by David Becker and others. Yet almost all transnational companies, and certainly all banks, have a

definite national home base. The state of every capitalist country still organises or regulates a very big part of its economic activity (see further David M Gordon, "The Global Economy", in *New Left Review* no.168).

That free trade has continued and increased does not mean that protectionist pressures are so weak as to be irrelevant, or that "globalist" capitalist interests are all-powerful. It does mean that those "globalist" interests have dominated so far.

The falling rate of profit, and "waiting for the crisis": In the 1950s and '60s, almost all Marxist perspectives were oriented around looking forward to "the crisis". A justified denial of the consensus view that capitalism had found the key to steady, solid, balanced growth was conflated, in different ways and in different degrees, with a vision of "the crisis" as the moment of truth for capitalism, stripping away all compromises and cover-ups — and sometimes also with irrational or crazy claims about the crisis being just round the corner or already under way.

In the 1970s, a series of studies, starting with Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe's *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profit Squeeze*, showed that the high profit rates of the 1960s had begun to dip before the 1969-71 downturn, and were continuing to decline in the 1970s. A straightforward scenario followed. "The crisis" was due to falling profits. Profits would continue to fall, and the crisis would worsen, until a huge confrontation between labour and capital produced either socialist revolution or a big increase in exploitation, allowing revived profits and a revived capitalist boom. Several different explanations were suggested for the falling profit rates (wages pressure, exhaustion of the productive potential of "Fordism", increased proportions of capitalistically unproductive labour, and the classic Marxian argument about increased organic composition of capital), but the scenario was more or less common.

The outcome has been more complex. Revived profits have produced no restoration of the capitalist "golden age". A pro-capitalist ideologue like Australia's former Labor prime minister, Paul Keating, says of the current slow growth, increasing inequality, and mass unemployment that "this is as good as it gets" in today's world system, while Marxists are more likely to look to an upturn which will boost workers' confidence and drain the pool of jobless despair than to hope for further slumps. The last twenty years have confirmed Leon Trotsky's partly-forgotten ideas about the

complexity of the relations between economic crisis and class struggle: "After a period of big battles and defeats, a crisis has the effect of depressing rather than arousing the working class. It undermines the workers' confidence in their powers and demoralises them politically. Under such conditions, only an industrial revival can close the ranks of the proletariat, pour fresh blood into its veins, restore its confidence in itself and make it capable of further struggle" (*My Life*, p.223).

A CAREFUL recent study of *Marx's Theory of Crisis* by Simon Clarke reinforces this point by demonstrating that after Marx had systematically studied capitalism, his focus was no longer on "the crisis as catastrophic event... the ultimate truth of capitalism". "The theory of crises plays a rapidly diminishing role in Marx's work after 1862, to be replaced by an emphasis on the secular [long-term] tendencies of capitalist accumulation, just as the conception of revolution as the culmination of struggles unleashed by economic crisis is replaced by a conception of revolution as the outcome of an extended period of class development... [This is the] theoretical reflection of [Marx's] return to a more active involvement in working-class politics".

Clarke also shows that the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall" was not for Marx, and could not be for any rational analyst, central to crises (on this, see also the pamphlet *The Tendencies of Capital and Profit*, published by *Workers' Liberty*).

"Finance capital": Marxists in the period before the First World War argued that capitalism was then shifting to a pattern of dominance of "finance capital", notably banks, rather than of industrial capital. The idea was first developed by Karl Kautsky, picking up on comments by Engels in his later years, extended by Rudolf Hilferding, who argued in his book *Finance Capital* that "taking possession of six large Berlin banks would mean taking possession of the most important spheres of large-scale industry", and repeated by Lenin in his pamphlet on imperialism. When, after Lenin's death, a dogmatic system of "Leninism" was constructed, it became an article of faith for many Marxists that all modern capitalism was dominated by finance capital. In fact the "golden age" saw a shifting of the initiative away from banks to great manufacturing multinationals and to the state.

Today, however, we have a new epoch of finance capital. The Michael Mil-

ken, Robert Maxwell, Barings and Sumitomo scandals illustrate the vast role of money-juggling, as distinct from production, in capitalism today. Privatisations hand the initiative to the money-jugglers in areas which used to belong to the state, and international money-juggling becomes almost as important a part of the manufacturing multinationals' business as making and selling things. The long-term flows of capital across national borders today are large but not unprecedented — the speed and size of short-term flows is unprecedented.

The pre-1914 epoch of finance capital was tied up with the growth of cartels, colonial empires economically geared mainly to acquisition of raw materials, increased tariffs, and an increased economic role of the state. Today's new epoch of finance capital brings different trends, showing that the pattern of capitalism, and the genesis of boom and slump, "golden age" and depression, cannot be deduced from changes in the "shape" of capital in the leading countries alone, but only from the entire regime of the world economy, which has a structure of its own, more anarchic and complex than the structure of any national capitalist economy.

A thorough analysis of the new regime in the world economy has not yet been written, and is beyond the ambitions of this article, but the evidence suggests that the new dominance of finance capital is a big factor, at least, in maintaining stagnation. It creates a bias towards "short-termism" — going for whatever business yields most short-term profit, maybe at the expense of long-term investment — and puts pressure on each national government to keep interest rates and dividends high and to restrain any productive investment boom which might worry the balance of payments by pulling in imports. Under today's conditions, the "flight of capital" which punishes any breach of those rules can be much faster and more drastic than in previous decades.

Even the stagnation is not stable. The whole "casino economy" still depends on the US as world banker, yet the productive superiority of the US continues to decline. The US has been running a big current account deficit since 1983. It was \$153 billion in 1995. The US depends on inflows of often very footloose capital to balance that deficit. If those inflows stop, and if international financiers move wealth out of dollars on a large scale, the US's official reserves could be overwhelmed, and the world trade system wrecked, within days. That is a constant possibility.

The "golden age": 1945 to ca. 1970

JOB

Unemployment low, at about 3%, in advanced capitalist countries (ACCs), and lower in Stalinist states. Increases to maybe 25 to 30% in Third World cities, as people move from the country to the cities. Big shift everywhere from peasant farming to wage labour.

GROWTH

Much faster than ever before, not only in ACCs but also in Third World and Stalinist states. An average of about 5 or 6 per cent a year.

PROFITS

High and fairly stable.

TECHNOLOGY

Expansion of production-line technology, notably in consumer durables (cars, televisions, white goods). Technical improvements make trade cheaper: 70% fall in ocean freight charges (to 1960); 85% fall in air transport costs (to 1980).

BOOM AND SLUMP

Synchronised upturn in ACCs in Korean war boom (1950-53). Downturns mostly shallow and not synchronised.

THE STATE

Much increased role in the economy everywhere. Liberalism in ACCs; many Stalinist and/or nationalist dictatorships elsewhere. End of old colonial empires (outside Eastern Europe).

WORLD TRADE

Grows faster than output, and especially between ACCs. Fixed exchange-rate system with US as banker. Dollars flood the world, especially during the Vietnam war. Third World countries lose out as primary-product prices and trade decline relatively, but from about 1960 manufacturing for export begins to grow in Third World countries.

CAPITAL FLOWS

Big, especially of direct investment between ACCs.

The seventies, to about 1983

JOB

Unemployment in ACCs rises to 8.4% in 1983; remains high in Third World.

GROWTH

Lower — average 2.5 per cent a year.

PROFITS

Sharp decline, from circa late 1960s to circa 1982.

BOOM AND SLUMP

Big synchronised downturns in ACCs: 1969-71, 1974-5, and 1979-83. The 1979-83 downturn is the first real world-wide slump, drawing in both Stalinist and Third World states. Some Third World economies, like South Korea, however, maintain an almost continuous boom; others, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, permanent depression.

THE STATE

Attempts to continue same regulating role dogged by uncontrollable inflation and, in Third World and Eastern Europe, big foreign debts which lead to "debt crisis" from 1982.

WORLD TRADE

Fixed exchange-rate system with US as "banker" breaks down. Exchange rates "float" erratically. Flood of dollars multiplies. World trade continues to expand, but more slowly (1974-84). Eastern Europe pulled in. Big flow of oil surpluses after OPEC price rise speeds growth of manufacturing in the Third World. The Third World share of manufacturing exports rises from 4% in 1960 to 5% in 1970 and 9% in 1980.

CAPITAL FLOWS

Dominated by flow of oil surpluses via international banks, including to Third World.

The new depression, 1983 to date

JOB

Unemployment in ACCs steadily averages 6% to 8%, including, from about 1990, in previously low-unemployment countries like Sweden, Austria and Norway. Japan is the only major exception bringing the average down, with its unemployment rate about 3.5% (though even that is much higher than the 1960s). Unemployment remains high in the Third World, and especially high in the 1980s during the debt crisis; it balloons in the ex-Stalinist states (after 1989-91) and in China.

GROWTH

Even lower — average 2 per cent a year.

PROFITS

Sharp increase, though not yet to 1960s levels.

TECHNOLOGY

Tremendous new industrial revolution through microelectronics and cheaper telecommunications.

BOOM AND SLUMP

1979-83 downturn followed by a very slow and hesitant upturn in the ACCs. A new (shallow) downturn in 1990-2.

THE STATE

Drive for privatisation and welfare cuts everywhere, though the state remains very important economically. Collapse of Stalinism outside China, and collapse or easing of several Third World dictatorships.

WORLD TRADE

Very rapid growth of trade from 1990 especially. Many Third World countries cut imports drastically after debt crisis, but their imports increase again from about 1990. Third World manufacturing exports increase from 9% of world total in 1980 to 22.5% in 1994. Manufacturing as a percentage of Third World exports has increased from 20% in 1960 to 60% in 1990.

CAPITAL FLOWS

Vast increase in short-term flows: foreign exchange deals multiply 25 times from 1980 to 1993, and are now about \$1 trillion a day, 100 times as much as world trade flows. Direct investment flows from ACCs to the Third World increase after 1990 (from \$20 billion a year in 1981-5 to \$91 billion in 1994). Direct investment flows from some non-oil Third World countries become substantial.

When Stalin murdered the revolutionary generation

Frank Higgins analyses the greatest frame-up in history.

IN the Stalinist counter-revolution there was a pervasive quality of nightmarishness. It received its craziest and most bizarre expression in the Moscow show trials of 1936-8, the first of which took place 60 years ago.

In nightmares, things change; and yet remain the same, even when they have turned into their opposite. Everything is fluid, moving, seemingly lawless and arbitrary. Content separates from form. Friends take on the role of enemies, enemies the role of lovers. Familiar figures appear in startling, unexpected, world-turned-upside-down guises. The everyday benign becomes terrifyingly threatening.

In the USSR, a new ruling class overthrew the workers' state set up in 1917, subjecting the workers and working farmers to savage exploitation and tyranny. But the new ruling class still proclaimed themselves to be the working class in power. They developed economic productivity by slave-driving the workers, and said that this was building socialism.

Taking society back to pre-capitalist levels of exploitation and savagery, they proclaimed their system to be the beginning of a classless society. They operated a system of gruesome inequality and remorseless class privilege — but within a collectivised — “socialist” — economy. The state-owned economy, which they said was socialism, was the private property of the ruling class, who collectively ‘owned’ the state which owned the means of production. They organised “trade unions” — that served the exploiters to control the exploited.

Stalinism's especially intense and all-pervasive tyranny was proclaimed to be a breakthrough for humankind into an expanded liberty of a special kind!

The list of nightmarish paradoxes and contradictions could be multiplied enormously, yet everywhere workers who wanted socialism accepted those who ran the Soviet Union as the heirs and custodians of the October revolution. Everywhere armies of rebel workers followed the stolen banners of October held in the bloody hands of those who had murdered October and enslaved the people of the USSR.

This chaos and nightmarish confusion wreaked havoc with socialism. Only now, when European Stalinism is buried in the darkest bog-hole of history, do we have a chance once more to create order again in socialist affairs.

In the Moscow trials the welter of swirling lies and contradictions that was Stalinism took the form of a dramatic theatrical production, startling in its concentrated lunacy. The Supreme Court of the USSR was transformed into a bizarre theatre, with the representatives of the world's press as audience. The crazy spectacle was enacted by live actors, who were then handed over to real jailers and all too real executioners, but lunatic political theatre it was.

The first trial opened in August 1936. Lenin's closest collaborators, from the 1905 revolution onwards — Zinoviev and Kamenev — together with other builders of the Bolshevik

Party, leaders of the 1917 revolution and founders of the Communist International were charged in Moscow with conspiring to “restore capitalism” — and with having been the paid agents of foreign powers even when they were helping Lenin do his work!

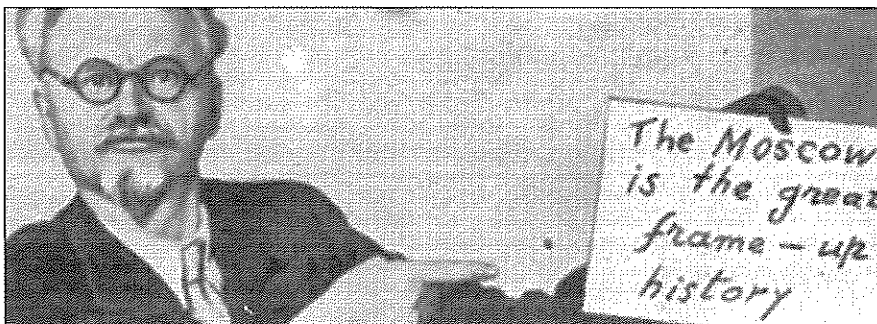
They confessed to all the crazy charges, heaping abuse and denigration on themselves! Chief Prosecutor Vyshinsky called on the court to “shoot the mad dogs”, and the court obligingly condemned Lenin's companions in arms to death. They were shot almost immediately in the cellars of the Stalinist police.

Vyshinsky — like many in Stalin's entourage at that time — had been a right wing Menshevik in 1917 and had spent the years of civil war (1918-20) supporting those who tried to overthrow the workers' state in arms.

In all the fantastic stories of treachery and sabotage presented to the court, Trotsky — then living in Norway — was presented as the chief conspirator: they all acted under the direct orders of Trotsky. Though he had organised the October insurrection and then built the Red Army and led it through the civil war, Trotsky had, all through his career, been a double agent. Now he worked for fascist Germany.

A year later in July 1937 there was another trial, involving figures like Karl Radek and Yuri Pyatakov.

In February 1938, the third Moscow trial was staged, with central founders and leaders of the Soviet state as its chief victims: Nikolai Bukharin, Alexei Rykov, the broken, 70 year old Left Oppositionist, Christian Rakovsky, and others. Most of those on trial had been on the right of the Bolshevik Party, and Trotsky's inveterate enemies: they too confessed to having worked for Trotsky as agents of foreign powers all through the years when in fact they helped Lenin and Trotsky lead the revolution and build the soviet



Lenin's General Staff of 1917

STALIN, THE EXECUTIONER, ALONE REMAINS



Contemporary poster depicting the old leaders of the Bolshevik Party and their fate under Stalin's reign of terror

state. They too heaped abuse and condemnation on themselves, and praise on the all-wise leader, Joseph Stalin. Most of them were sentenced to be shot, and duly shot.

FROM trial to trial the scenario developed and changed as the elements in a soap opera change and retrospectively rationalise to "explain" each new development.

In the first trial Trotsky had been presented as primarily an agent of fascist Germany: Stalin was then working for an alliance against Germany. By the third trial Trotsky was presented primarily as an agent of British imperialism. Stalin was now angling for the alliance with Germany which would be realised in the Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939. The defendants in the 1936 trial had been depicted as "Trotskyite"; those depicted in the '38 trial as Trotsky's agents and dupes had been right Bolsheviks, his political enemies. So an imaginary "bloc of rights and Trotskyites" was uncovered to make political sense of the nonsense.

All these mad, ever-changing tales were made into articles of faith for the world "communist" movement and would remain so for 20 years, until, in February 1956, Nikita Krushchev, Stalin's successor, exposed some of it for lies, at the so-called "20th Congress" of the "Communist Party of the Soviet Union".

Everywhere the Stalinists had the strength to do it, Trotskyists were per-

secuted and suppressed and, in many countries, murdered. In the second world war British Stalinists — fervent supporters of Winston Churchill's coalition government — distributed leaflets in factories calling on the workers to "treat a Trotskyist as you would a fascist". As late as 1961, Trotskyists were being attacked outside Communist Party meetings in Britain. It was as late as 1968-9 that the French Stalinists lost the ability to use physical force to suppress Trotskyists.

Against the great polluting tide of lies and lunacy, Trotsky and his comrades waged a heroic but largely unavailing war of exposure and counter-propaganda — Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son who would be murdered in Russia in 1936, and Max Shachtman produced books which exposed the trials in detail.

An independent commission of inquiry, under the chairmanship of the great American educationalist and philosopher John Dewey, held public hearings into the allegations of the trials and proclaimed Trotsky not guilty.

But in fact, the trials were only the public shadow of the giant purges going on throughout the USSR. Millions died, or were sent to slave labour in Siberia. In 1937, without public trials, the main leaders of the USSR's so-called "Red Army" were tried and shot — massively weakening the state's defences.

The central rulers of the USSR could risk no opposition. Stalin saw all

the leaders of all the defeated factions of the old Bolshevik Party as potential rallying points for an opposition to his regime.

Soon Stalin came to see his own supporters in the work of subverting and burying the Bolshevik Party as a threat: they too were slaughtered. The Stalinist Party Congress of 1934 had been called the "Congress of Victors": they had crushed both the working class, and those Bolsheviks who reflected it in any way, and also crushed the renaissance bourgeoisie, carrying through collectivisation and industrialisation at a breakneck speed. Victory. By 1939, up to 80% of even these had been slaughtered or jailed...

In 1938, the imprisoned Trotskyists were "concentrated" in a prison camp at Vorkuta and systematically slaughtered. That Stalinist extirpation of socialists in the USSR is a major reason why real socialism has not yet become a serious force in the former USSR.

Why did the old Bolsheviks confess? For varying reasons: Bukharin thought to save the life of his wife and baby son; Zinoviev and Kamenev were ill-treated; others hoped to save their own lives.

Today, when we mark the 60th anniversary of the opening of the first Moscow trial, it is as part of our work of burying the legacy of Stalinism. Those who know history have a better chance of reversing and undoing the horror it sometimes inflicts.



Is there life in space?

BACK in the '50s, the Posadas group, an odd offshoot of the Fourth International, saw the existence of flying saucers as proof of the existence of communism elsewhere in the universe, since only a workers' society would be advanced enough to master interstellar travel. Now it seems that we have been visited by the inhabitants of a red planet, albeit single-celled and unfortunately some 3.5 billion years after their death.

Even without the possible presence of fossil bacteria, the story of meteorite ALH84001 is strange enough. The rock it came from was formed about 3.5 billion years (3.5Ga) ago on Mars. Approximately 15 million years (15Ma) ago, something, an asteroid or another meteorite, slammed into the surface of Mars with enough force to knock the bit of rock now known as ALH84001 into space. It floated round the Solar System until about 13,000 years (13ka) ago when it was captured by the Earth's gravity and plummeted into the Antarctic ice-sheet. 12 years (12a) ago, it was found by scientists and has been under investigation since.

The present revelations come from a team of US scientists, led by David S McKay, of the Johnson Space Centre. Their findings are published in the US magazine *Science*, following press conferences and world-wide excitement. Taking precautions not to contaminate the meteorite, they fractured it and examined the appearance and chemical make up of the fresh surfaces. Their evidence for life on Mars consists of the following:

(i) the presence of chemicals called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). This is not decisive; PAHs have been found in meteorites not from Mars (but see below). However, they can be and are produced by the decomposition of dead organisms.

(ii) the presence of carbonate globules, formed in the presence of water. The carbon isotope composition is similar to that produced by living things (which tend to reject the heavier carbon-

13 in favour of carbon-12). Shapes in the carbonate are reminiscent of those produced by Earth bacteria but are rather small.

(iii) the presence within these globules of magnetite and iron sulphide crystals. Many of these are asymmetrical, suggesting production by living things. Similar crystals are produced by some micro-organisms on Earth and have been found in fossil bacteria. Each observation could have a non-biological explanation, though the conditions necessary would be rather special. Taken together, they suggest the presence of tiny bacteria on Mars 3.5Ga ago.

Of course, what would be more interesting would be the presence of living bacteria (and even bigger life forms) on Mars today. Mars appears a very inhospitable planet, bathed by ultra-violet light from the Sun, average surface temperature -23°C , atmospheric pressure one two-hundredth that of Earth, with no liquid water on the surface, which is whipped by ferocious sand storms. However, it was not always thus. Pictures sent back by the Viking I orbiter show channels that can only have been formed by rivers and flash floods. The composition of the atmosphere indicates a massive loss throughout the life of Mars, with lighter molecules escaping into space, leaving heavier ones, such as carbon dioxide. Gravity on Mars is a bit over a third that of Earth so more molecules would have possessed the escape velocity. Even on Earth, hydrogen and helium move fast enough to escape into space.

With a thicker atmosphere, Mars would have been warmer and more conducive to the evolution of life. It is interesting to note that the Martian micro-fossils date from a time when life had only recently evolved on Earth. The effect of vulcanism could also have assisted life by melting frozen ground water and increasing the pressure of the atmosphere. Mars possesses the Solar System's largest volcano, the 15 mile-high Olympus Mons, which last erupted

only 200Ma ago.

In the opinion of some scientists, given the mixture of gases present at the formation of the planets and the presence of liquid water, the evolution of life is almost inevitable. Some are hoping to find life on Europa, one of Jupiter's moons. It's also been suggested that life may evolve on Titan, Saturn's largest moon, when the Sun becomes a swollen red giant in 6Ga from now. Our descendants will have been incinerated, unless they can escape first. Whether "higher" forms evolve is another matter. On Earth, it took perhaps 2.5Ga before animals developed (1Ga ago), by which time photosynthetic bacteria had transformed the atmosphere by using up lots of CO_2 and producing oxygen. By this time on Mars, the atmosphere had become thinner and volcanic activity had waned, removing another source of heat that, on Earth, helps provide niches for living things.

Does this mean that life on Mars has died out, though? Many scientists take comfort from knowledge of the many apparently inhospitable environments on Earth where life survives. These include hot mud pools and springs, "smokers" (vents on the sea bottom where superheated water rich in chemicals pours out from volcanic rocks), inside rocks hundreds of metres below the Earth's surface, and in pools of liquid water many metres below polar ice sheets.

A final point for speculation: did life here arrive from Mars? A minority position held by astronomers Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe is that life evolved in deep space and then "seeded" fertile planets by arriving on meteorites. That is pure speculation at present but we know that meteorites can reach us from Mars. More than a dozen have been recognised, including one that killed a dog in Egypt in 1911. The return journey is much less likely, because of Earth's greater gravity.

Les Hearn

Trotsky's contribution to Marxism

By Max Shachtman

LEON Trotsky belonged to the school of Karl Marx. The difference between these two titans of the revolutionary socialist movement can be found not so much in a comparison of their respective intellectual attainments as in a comparison of the epochs in which they made their mark and which could not but leave their mark upon them.

Marx was the incomparable analyst, critic and revolutioniser of capitalist society. With a pitiless scalpel, he disclosed the immanent contradictions which doomed the contemporary social order to collapse and which at the same time generated the living force that had the destruction of the old society and the building of the new as its historic mission. In the more than ninety years since his views were first presented systematically if briefly in the *Communist Manifesto*, they have successfully withstood every effort to demolish them. The crashing noises of capitalism collapsing throughout the world at this very moment only give us the grimmest and most emphatic confirmation of Marx's analytical insight.

What Marx miscalculated — it was his only serious error — was the rate of speed at which the inexorable process of disintegration would take place. Even there, his error was that of a genius, in that he foresaw with such penetration what was to occur long after his time had passed. But the error was nevertheless the error of an epoch. After his death, world capitalism reached new heights of development and expanded beyond the dreams of his contemporaries; the proletariat, on the other hand, did not move directly towards the revolutionary maturity that would make possible the execution of its historic mission.

Marx's time was not the epoch of the proletarian world revolution, the Vienna uprising and the Paris Commune notwithstanding. It was the epoch in which the great bourgeois nations of Europe and America were finally established and consolidated. The founder of the scientific socialist movement was born on the morrow of the Great French Revolution and the revolution of the thirteen American colonies against English sovereignty. He died on the morrow of the consolidation of the numerous Germanic states into an independent imperial nation, liberated from Franco-Russian oppression and semi-feudal dismemberment.



The struggle for national unity

THE struggle to form the great independent nations of the modern world characterised the end of the 18th and most of the 19th centuries. It was a progressive and even revolutionary struggle, and in the course of it, feudalism was destroyed. The feudal system had become a barrier in the path of further social progress. Capitalism and the then young and militant bourgeoisie had to find a large framework, a more extended soil for its development than were permitted them by the outlived feudal regimes. The new ruling class ruthlessly razed the suffocating frontiers of Popes and princes and dukes and counts so that the new economic system might have a whole nation in which to expand freely. At the same time, the new national frontiers which it erected were raised less for the purpose of confining themselves than for protecting the new order from the encroachments and invasions of dying but still vicious reaction, at

the beginning from the Holy Alliance and towards the end from the Gendarme-Tsar.

Marx, who was not and could not by his whole spirit be a mere sentimental anti-nationalist, was altogether on the side of the struggle for national independence. He was not, to be sure, a bourgeois democrat, but a socialist revolutionary. He saw in the fight for the free bourgeois-democratic nation the pre-condition for developing the independent struggle of the young proletariat for its own social emancipation and thereby the emancipation of society from all class rule. The bourgeoisie never erred, even in its most revolutionary period, in its judgment of Marx and his ideas, and it never hesitated to turn to an alliance with hated reaction against them. It never mistook Marx for a bourgeois democrat or a German nationalist — as venomous critics have tried to picture him — for its class interest gave it sufficient perspicacity to understand more clearly even than did the follower of Marx, what the latter meant by the war-cry: "The revolution in permanence!"

There are few things so tragic, and sometimes disastrous in politics as the inability of men to understand when an old situation has changed to a new one, when ideas and slogans suitable for one set of circumstances have become the very opposite of suitable in other circumstances. Marx's conception of the revolution in permanence embraced this set of ideas: the struggle for the

independent bourgeois nation was progressive; the bourgeoisie conducting that struggle against feudalism and reaction was playing a progressive role; the working class, no matter how young or immature, must make a practical fighting agreement with the bourgeoisie in this struggle, but an agreement in which the working class maintained its full class independence and did not suspend its revolutionary efforts once feudal reaction was defeated and the bourgeoisie installed in power.

Capitalism as an international order

THE years that followed Marx's death marked a period of such comparative social peace and organic capitalist expansion, as to create an atmosphere in which his disciples, while maintaining the externals of his ideas, gradually disemboweled them of all revolutionary contents.

In the period preceding the first world war, capitalism had undergone profound changes. National frontiers, which had first constituted a necessary field in which the productive forces could be expanded by capitalism, had now become a barrier to their further development. The bourgeoisie, once a revolutionary class which had organised and directed the expansion of economic life, had now become reactionary and parasitic. The great enterprisers had become coupon-clippers; the descendants of Robespierre had become comrades-in-arms (or mercenaries!) of the Tsar.

A concomitant degeneration had taken place in the socialist movement in almost every country. Its leaders had carved up Marx's essentially revolutionary internationalism into so many national segments, the simple arithmetical total of which in no way resembled the original indivisible whole. The defence of the nation, even after the very concept of a nation (at least so far as the big countries of Europe and America were concerned) had become economically and politically reactionary, became an end in itself. The practical agreement with the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the feudal reaction turned into class collaboration with a decadent bourgeoisie which had long ago fused with that same feudal, monarchical and clerical reaction. When the war broke out, the corruption of socialist internationalism into social patriotism was sensationally revealed. With the collapse of the Second International, of official socialism, an epoch came to an end and a new one began.

What raises the great man above the level of his contemporaries is not so much that his time leaves its mark upon him as it is that he leaves his mark upon his time. The deepest, most lasting marks left on our time were carved by two revolutionists. One was Lenin; the other Leon Trotsky.

The greatness of Trotsky's contribution to the socialist cause lay in the fact that it corresponded so perfectly with the most urgent need of our period: internationalism. He was its greatest prophet, not merely as an ethical or humanistic ideal but as an unpostponable economic, political and cultural step, made possible and imperatively necessary for society if it is not to fall back into barbarism. A Marxist to the marrow of his bones, he did not derive his internationalism from some eternal morality which mankind would attain some day when the necessary chemical changes took place in its soul, but rather from a thoroughgoing analysis of the changes taking place in the way in which men are related to produce the things they live by and in the elaborate institutions developed to maintain these relations. This analysis, not made overnight but developed throughout a lifetime of study and struggle, is summed up in the theory which will always be associated with the name of Leon Trotsky, the theory of the permanent revolution. It is his unique contribution, it is his own addition to the legacy of Marxism which he legitimately took over and which he

left to a new generation as a vastly enriched heritage.

Trotsky and 1905

TROTSKY began to develop his theory in systematic form following the experiences of the first Russian revolution in 1905. Knowing as we do how the proletarian revolution triumphed in Russia in 1917, it is impossible to read or re-read Trotsky's first thorough analysis of class relations in the country and his forecast without being startled by them. No wonder they met with almost universal scepticism and even ridicule when they were first put forward!

According to the theory prevalent in the Russian social democracy of the time — in both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions — Russia differed from the advanced West-European countries in that it faced not a socialist but a bourgeois-democratic revolution. What had long ago been accomplished in the West still lay ahead in the East: the ending of feudal or semi-feudal relations in agriculture, democratic rights for the people, a democratic legislative assembly for the nation, the right of self-determination for the national minorities in the empire etc.

On this score, there were not and could not be any serious differences among socialists. Where the division developed between the two major factions was, essentially, over the question of who would lead the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The Mensheviks, operating formally on the basis of the same party programme as the Bolsheviks, declared that the bourgeois revolution in Russia would be led by the bourgeoisie, supported by the peasantry, and that the working class would play the role of a left-wing spur urging the bourgeoisie on to accomplish its historic mission. The revolution once accomplished and normal, modern democratic conditions established, the working class would take up a position similar to that occupied by it in such countries as England, France, and Germany. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, refused to attribute a revolutionary role to the Russian bourgeoisie. The revolution in Russia, they declared, would be directed not only against the Tsarist bureaucracy but also against the Russian bourgeoisie, more miserable and cowardly than the German bourgeoisie of 1848 whose social rule had to be established finally by a Junker prince. There were, they continued, only two revolutionary classes in Russia, the proletariat and the peasantry, and their victory would take the form of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." In Lenin's strategical concept of the Russian revolution, the democratic tasks facing the country would be solved by the lower classes in the most radical, plebeian, "Jacobin" manner. Neither of the two socialist factions entertained the possibility of an immediate socialist perspective for Russia.

The Permanent Revolution

IN his study of the revolution of 1905 and in the furious polemics written between the two revolutions, Trotsky developed his own audacious theory. Russia, he acknowledged, is a backward agricultural country which has not even solved its democratic problems. But precisely because the latter were posed so belatedly, the class which had directed their solution in other countries, generations ago, had appeared just as belatedly on the Russian scene. The Russian bourgeoisie could not and would not play a revolutionary role. It was already inextricably bound up with the old Tsarist bureaucracy and the landowning class, and more important than that, it faced two revolutionary lower classes which it preferred to struggle against rather than to arouse and collaborate with. The democratic revolution in Russia would therefore be directed against the bourgeoisie as well, and it would be led by the workers and

the peasants.

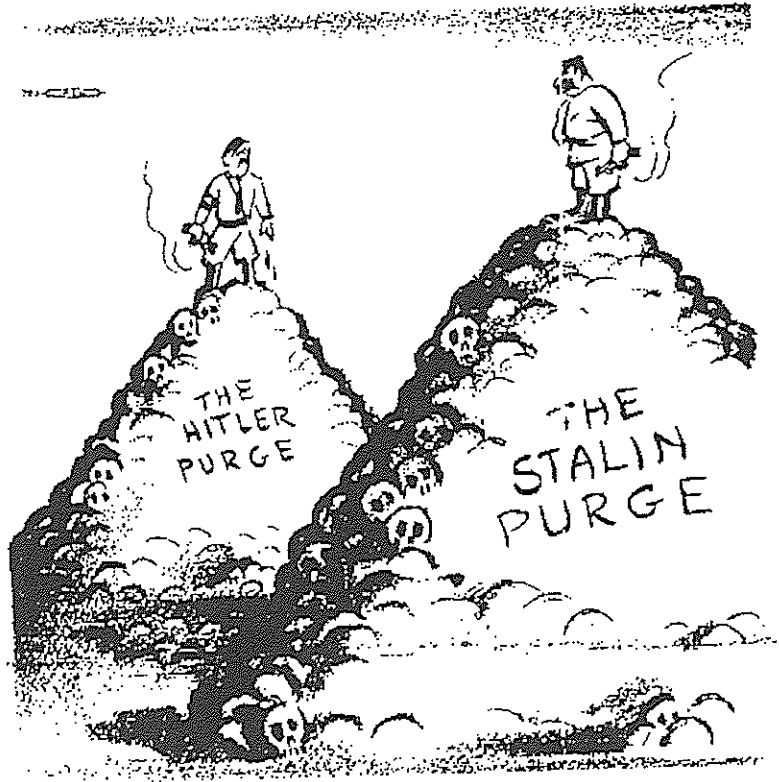
Thus far, Trotsky's theory was sufficient to bring him into irreconcilable conflict with the Mensheviks and into fundamental solidarity with the Bolsheviks. But his agreement with the Bolsheviks on the role of the bourgeoisie was at the same time the point of departure for his disagreement with them.

While the democratic revolution will be carried out by the working class and the peasantry, Trotsky continued, it must be borne in mind that these two classes are not socially or historically equal. One is a propertyless class; the other is or seeks to become a propertied class. One represents the economy of tomorrow; the other the economy of yesterday. Historically, the one, as it takes the form of a class for itself, is socialist; the other, in so far as it can express itself as a class is bourgeois or rather petty bourgeois. By its position in society, the one is international; by its very position in the economic life of a country, the other is national. The one is a progressive class with a clearly-defined historical mission; the other is a divided and doubtful class which plays a reactionary role when it is led by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat or a revolutionary role when it is led by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.

The decisive question, therefore, is which of the two revolutionary classes in Russia, combined in a bloc against Tsar and bourgeois, will have the leadership in the struggle? Which of the two classes will make the decisive imprint on the coming revolution? The peasantry cannot lead, it must follow one or another of the urban classes. But if the proletariat is to lead the revolution, it cannot, once it comes to power with the mighty aid of the peasantry, confine itself rigidly to its minimum programme, that is, to the solution of the democratic tasks. The very peculiarity of class relations in Russia would impose upon the proletariat-in-power those "despotic encroachments" upon private property about which the *Communist Manifesto* had spoken. It would be compelled to initiate distinctly socialist measures; the democratic tasks of Russian society would be solved essentially as a by-product of a socialist reorganisation of the country. The democratic revolution would pass directly into the socialist revolution. In accordance with what Trotsky called the law of combined development, the very backwardness of Russia would compel it to take a long leap forward, and momentum once gained, would bring it to a socialist, proletarian dictatorship. Russia would experience a continuing revolution, the revolution in permanence!

That much Trotsky already made clear as early as 1906. The international aspects of the permanent revolution he developed in the following years, particularly during the war. Lenin, who looked forward to a more or less durable democratic revolution in Russia, emphasised that not even a democratic revolution could be maintained in the country unless it was speedily followed by a socialist revolution in the more advanced countries of Europe. In this Trotsky was naturally of Lenin's view. He added only, in accordance with his own theory, that the proletariat could not remain in power in Russia, much less realise a socialist society, without the "state aid" of the workers in the west, that is, without the victorious revolution in countries like Germany, France and England.

Russia's very backwardness would thrust her forward in the revolutionary scale and bring her under the rule of the working class perhaps before any of those countries which, because of their economic maturity, were commonly regarded in the socialist movement as the first ones to see the socialist victory. But this same backwardness, after having forced the proletariat to the front, would overtake it and drag it down unless it received the support



Trotsky's internationalist politics tried to arm the workers against both Stalin and Hitler

of its brothers in other lands. That this support would come in the form of the socialist revolution in the west, was never doubted by the irrepressibly optimistic author of the theory.

The permanent revolution was thus elaborated not so much as a theory of the Russian revolution, but as a theory of the international revolution having its likely origin in the old Tsarist empire.

Trotsky and the First World War

THE war offered Trotsky the opportunity to give his views wider scope than they had had before it. Official social democracy had rushed to the defence of the nation in every country. The earlier internationalist and anti-war commitments, made so solemnly and meaninglessly, were discarded on all sides. Only a handful remained loyal to internationalism. Trotsky was among them. He was too much the authentic, the orthodox Marxist, if you please, to be taken in by the social patriots who quoted Marx on the struggle for national defence. As is often the case in such polemics (and who knew that better than Lenin, who nevertheless chided him for it!), Trotsky sometimes bent the rod too much in the other direction; as a rule, there is no other way of straightening a crooked rod. But fundamentally, he was quite correct.

The war itself, he pointed out, was only the most terrible form of a crisis produced by the conflict between the development of the productive forces of the nations and the national frontiers which had become a suffocating barrier to their further development. To defend, that is, to try to perpetuate these frontiers, economically outlived and therefore reactionary, meant only the perpetuation of war and the retardation of the socialist revolution. In place of the war-cries of reaction, echoed by nationalistic social patriotism, Trotsky put forward the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe. It would be a Europe freed of monarchs and autocrats, liberated from exploitation by a union of working-class republics, the mounting tariff walls torn down, and a peaceful and

fruitful collaboration of the peoples established on the basis of free economic and cultural intercourse. The United States of Europe, in turn, could only be conceived as the forerunner of the Socialist United States of the World, a free federation of the freed peoples of the world in which each group participated harmoniously in an international division of labour.

Trotsky's views, especially when he first formulated them in Russia, can hardly be said to have met with universal acclaim in the socialist movement! The Mensheviks simply denounced them as fantastic; the harsher among them said they were the vaporings of a madman. Lenin attacked them with a violence that was really directed at Trotsky's conciliatory position in the fight of the two factions. While the epigones later outrageously exaggerated the differences, even on this question, between Lenin and Trotsky, there is no doubt that the differences were sharp. There is also no doubt that, in the main, Lenin was wrong in the dispute. Lenin constantly put Trotsky on the defensive with regard to the enormous importance of the role that would be played by the peasantry in the revolution. While Trotsky continued to declare that the peasantry was an indispensable element in his revolutionary perspectives, it is true, and quite understandable, that in his polemical emphasis on the dominant role that the proletariat would have to play he seemed to facilitate Lenin's disproportionate criticisms of his theory. Likewise, it is true that he did not foresee with exactitude the concrete forms that would be taken by the transition between the democratic and the socialist periods of the revolution. But then again, neither did Lenin. And between the two, it is absurd to contest the fact that while Lenin had to abandon his theory of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," Trotsky had only to revise his bold and amazingly confirmed forecasts in what were, after all, mere historical details. What better proof of this is required than the fact that Lenin's "Old Bolshevik" collaborators chided him for his "Trotskyism" after he made public his *April Theses* in 1917? That the reaction against Leninism in Russia took as its battle-cry the slogan of "Down with the permanent revolution?"

Trotsky was an internationalist

THE sole virtue of this reaction, which set in just before Lenin's death, might be said to lie in the fact that it compelled Trotsky to reconsider the old pre-war polemics on the question of permanent revolution, to renew and amplify his theory and bring it up to date. In the course of struggle, ideas have a power of their own which is often stronger than its proponents. Reluctant to revive the old dispute with Lenin, Trotsky nevertheless found that the theory of the permanent revolution was the only consistent and revolutionary reply to the theory of nationalist reaction put forward by the bureaucracy under the name of "socialism in a single country." The Stalinists, so to speak, forced his hand. It was good that they did. The theory proved to have a far greater vitality and a more universal applicability than could even be dreamed of by its author when he first formulated it. In a word, it proved to be the finished expression of the needs of our whole epoch. No man can be expected to

make a greater social contribution than this.

Internationalism found in Leon Trotsky not merely its most consistent ideologist but its most persistent and courageous warrior. From the time when the Zimmerwald movement was launched by the left-wing socialists at the beginning of the First World War, to the formation of the Fourth International which he led to the day of his death, Trotsky's record of struggle is a single unbroken line from which he never departed. It would have been fairly easy for him to retain his enormous power in the Soviet Union at the expense of principle, but that was a cost he could never pay for anything.

Together with Lenin, he fought the international bourgeoisie and its social-democratic handmaiden for the leadership of the working class of the world. He left an imprint on the early, bright years of the Third International which all the efforts of the usurpers have not succeeded in eradicating. Already shorn of his official power, he left a deep mark on the great Chinese revolution of 1925-27. It was really in connection with this tremendously significant upsurge of the Orient that the theory of the permanent

revolution was revived and renewed, that it proved its eminent contemporaneity. In the retarded East, more backward than was Tsarist Russia, the proletariat will triumph only under the banner of Trotsky's theory, only with the weapons he forged in the heat of the struggle against the backsliding Soviet bureaucracy.

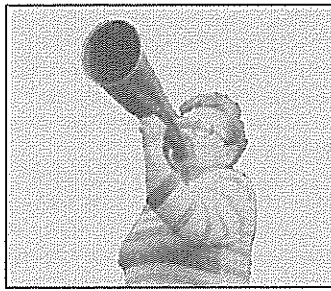
But not only in the East. Those brilliant contributions he made to the struggle of the workers in a whole series of modern capitalist countries were all made from the comprehensive angle of view of the theory of the permanent revolution. The German working class will recuperate and regain its

sapped strength, they will wreak the vengeance of the victors upon overturned fascism, only along the lines of those magnificent — and alas ignored — directives contained in Trotsky's writings on the German crisis from 1931 to 1940. The British working class has had no outline of the path it must blaze to freedom that is worth mentioning in the same breath with Trotsky's analyses. The same holds true in greater or lesser degree for every important country which was in the forefront of the class struggle in the last two decades, more particularly in the decade since Stalin thought to bury Trotsky alive by banishing him to Turkey.

There may be journalists — Karl Radek was one; but there were not many others — who might write more brilliantly about one or another episode of the class struggle. None compared with Trotsky in point of systematic, sustained analysis and programme of action. No one, not even Lenin, we think, had so highly developed a gift for generalisation as Trotsky. Few if any had his consummate ability to dispose of incidental or accidental detail and to go directly to the heart of a situation or of a problem. These talents, which seemed to be native to Trotsky, were enormously enhanced by the fact that he saw all situations and problems through the penetrating fluoroscope of his comprehensive theory of society and of our epoch. More than anything else, that made it possible for him to express so eloquently and accurately the needs of both.

● First published September 1940

● Max Shachtman's discussion of Trotsky's Marxism will be continued in the next issue of *Workers' Liberty*.



Excluding children

PERHAPS my article about the exclusion of Richard Wilding in *WL* 31 bent the stick a bit too far in supporting the teachers who threatened to strike at Glaisdale school in Nottingham. In which case Chris Reynolds in *WL*

32 was justified in trying to look more sympathetically at pupils who have been or are likely to be excluded. Do we want to be on the side of those right-wing shits who go on about the dangers of the "underclass" — all those curfew-mongers and hit'em-hard merchants?

After that possibly valid response, his case weakens and seems to rest upon a 25 year-old anecdote about a situation he was involved with when he first started teaching. The anecdote will have a familiar ring to it with teachers who are sympathetic to students. It is a situation they come across many times in the school year — that of an unjustifiably persecuted pupil who has to be defended against the prejudices of reactionary teachers. However, this was not the case with regard to Richard Wilding, despite the fact that the threatened strike was by members of the NASUWT, a union hardly known for its enlightened views.

At my school, there were 72 exclusions this year, the majority of them from Year 7 and Year 8, predominantly from Year 7. This is a situation that would have been unheard of 10 years ago. Then the new or less experienced teachers would have been given classes of younger pupils. Now it is the other way around. Many of the exclusions this year were for serious offences such as threatening with weapons like knives or air pistols, violent attacks on staff or pupils, intimidation, and so on. There is a problem here and it needs to be addressed, not in order to give teachers a quiet life, but for the benefit of everybody involved with the school — students, teachers, ancillary workers, support staff.



Perhaps the causes are to be found in pressure created by the National Curriculum, league tables, open enrolment, Standard Assessment Tests and exam performance. Perhaps the causes are to be found in unemployment, pressure of work on parents, in the modalities of a more violent dog-eat-dog society. At the moment, we can only guess at the possible causes. But there is a desperate need to find answers. This is a predominant problem in all mainstream schools, and a

national response is needed. It is not good enough to say, as Chris Reynolds does, that the first resort should be to demand more resources within the individual school to help deal with disruptive students. The case of Richard Wilding showed that the existing resources within the school had been used up. What do we do then? It is true that exclusions cannot provide a long-term, or even a medium-term, answer. At 72 exclusions in a year, it is clear that it is not all that effective in my school. And what happens if it goes up to 150 next year? But in a situation where the local authority pushes a violent and disruptive student back into

a school against the wishes of both staff and other students, what other options in the current situation have the teachers got but to strike? In the meantime, we must also fight against the underlying causes that create such problems.

There is some misunderstanding in Chris Reynolds' article about the nature of exclusions. They do not necessarily mean that "you are branded as permanently unfit for ordinary human society." It can be a way of giving a student a new start and a chance for self-evaluation. As well as excluding students, we also accept into our school many that have been excluded from other schools... The vast majority of them, enjoying a fresh environment, stay in our school until the end of their school life.

This is one of those subjects on which everyone has an opinion — from the hang'em-and-flog'em brigade, with their demand for more school assemblies of a "broadly Christian character" and stiffer punishments, to those who see school solely as a conditioning mechanism for capitalism and therefore bracket all

teachers as agents of oppression. (Which misses out on the most important role of education — to encourage an enthusiasm for learning!) Unfortunately, where there should be a progressive response from the Labour Party leadership they offer just some more reactionary claptrap. Their policies, such as curfews and fast-tracking, will only make our problem worse — much worse.

But Chris Reynolds' approach won't work either: we need to find real solutions that will benefit everyone involved in schools — not propound sentimental nostrums that miss the point and get us nowhere.

William Irons

The USSR was state capitalist!

THE article from Max Shachtman reprinted in *WL* 33 is good on why the "degenerated workers' state" description of the USSR was unsustainable as early as 1940. Its "ridicule" of the idea that the USSR was state-capitalist is, however, facile.

Shachtman appeals to a motley consensus — Trotsky, Hilferding, and "capitalist[s] anywhere in the world". Yet Trotsky argued against "state capitalism" concretely, from the radical divergences (as he saw it) between the USSR's economic development and that of staid capitalism (in Italy, for example), between the anatomy of the USSR's bureaucracy and that of a consolidated state-capitalist class. He never argued that the sham of administered prices had transformed the workers in the USSR into something other than wage-labourers. Hilferding, in contrast, argued that state capitalism was *logically impossible*. Shachtman's other authority, private-capitalist "common sense", would agree.

"No capitalist class, no capitalist private property, no capitalist profit, no production of commodities for the market, no working class more or less free to sell its labour power on the open market", exclaims Shachtman. In any integral state capitalism, such as envisaged as a theoretical possibility by Engels and others, of course there would be no individual capitalist property and no individual capitalist profits, and the workers would be to a considerable extent state slaves as well as wage-slaves. If Shachtman's argument from these points is right, it proves not

that the USSR was not state-capitalist, but that state-capitalism is logically impossible.

As for production of commodities for the market, there was plenty of that in the USSR. There were shops, money, wages! The workers fought for wage rises; the industrial managers offered piece-rates and bonuses, and battled for extra credits from the central authorities; the central bureaucrats wrestled with inflation. It was a stasised economy based on wage labour.

The one conclusion of any political weight from Shachtman's logic-chopping was that the USSR, not being capitalist, must be post-capitalist. Yet after 1989-91, it is plain that the Stalinist USSR was an aberrant episode *within the capitalist era*. That the compounding of wage labour with state-slavery in the USSR did not so transform it as to make it not wage-labour at all, and thus lift the economy out of the capitalist era, is proved not by abstract deduction, but by historical experience, including the development of the working class.

Martin Thomas

Socialists and football

IAN White's letter (*Workers' Liberty* 33) took a position on the development of football that I have not come across before. He makes some important points about the political implications of the closing of the terraces, but in doing so I think the "living collective" of the football terrace is over-glorified.

White says it is a great feeling to be part of a crowd made up of working-class people and this demonstrates what working-class collectivity and feelings of solidarity and unity would be like. He also describes how the football terraces can become places for positive political expression — the example Ian White uses is of Port Vale during the miners' strike.

However, the fact is that a hell of a lot of the political expression from football terraces is anything but positive. When Tottenham fans (and fans from other clubs) sang "you'll never work again" or "on the dole, on the dole, on the dole," to Liverpool fans, it was anything but a show of working-class unity.

At worst, the football terraces can be fascist recruiting grounds and at best they are usually a reflection of reactionary ideas such as racism, sexism and nationalism.

These things are all prevalent in British culture and in working-class culture and so coalesce around a massively popular game such as football. This is not a good thing. I am a football fan (although not as much as some) but I get annoyed when people over-glorify the game and culture that surrounds it, a culture that on the whole acts as a receptacle for reactionary rather than progressive political ideas.

Such a thing happened after a debate on the "politics of Euro-'96" at the recent Work-

ers' Liberty event "Ideas for Freedom". The debate quickly turned into a debate on whether English anti-nationalists should have supported England.

I personally did support England. A lot of people who really like football and follow the game in England would have a hard time supporting another team, because the England players are the ones they follow and know. The alternatives are to pretend to support another team or not to watch the games — both of which are stupid proposals.

However, socialists who were football fans in that debate were so desperate to defend their right to support England at football that ridiculous arguments began to emerge. Nationalism wasn't such a problem since more Europeans play in England. There wasn't then a significant amount of anti-German feeling around Euro-'96? Oh yeah! Sure... All the St. George's Cross hair-dos and flags weren't significant and the Tories' poll increase didn't matter! Okay, there were no riots and a lot of people thought the *Daily Mirror* was over the top (e.g. "We're Making Football War on Germany") but could any German fans really have sat chchering their team in most English pubs?

The nationalism increased the further England progressed in the competition — if they had reached the final it would have been unbearable.

One of the problems highlighted at the "Ideas for Freedom" debate was that England supporters who are socialists aren't immune to nationalism, to feelings of solidarity on the basis of nation rather than class. One person even said to me that in games like football nationalism wasn't always a bad thing! I suppose he meant so long as it was a nice gentle nationalism that shook hands with the Germans after the match.

Socialists can't just shake off ideas that are pervasive throughout society and nationalism affected all England supporters in that debate. We need to accept this and challenge these and other reactionary ideas that are part of the culture around the game. We shouldn't pretend they don't exist in order to defend ourselves for liking football.

Football is a massively popular sport world wide and, more importantly, a massively popular working-class sport. I think what sometimes happens in the debate to which I have referred, and to a greater extent in Ian White's letter, is a glorifying of the culture around the sport simply because it is working class, not because it is working-class socialist or even progressive.

Rosie Woods

Unite Arab and Jewish workers

READ with interest the contributions from Jim Higgins, Sean Matgamna and Ray Challinor on the Israel/Palestine

conflict in the July issue of *Workers' Liberty*. It was refreshing to see the issues clearly debated as opposed to the ritual sloganising which often accompanies debate on this issue.

I think the problem for those who argue for the "Democratic Secular State" position or its variant the "destruction of the Zionist state" is the actual practical alliances they are forced into in the real politics of the Middle East.

For most of the Palestinian nationalist movement until quite recently their version of these demands included the quite specific aim of "repatriation of the Jewish population to their country of origin." In other words, the Palestinian state created would simply offer democratic rights to some tens of thousands of Jews of Palestinian origin.

The idea that this programme could lead to unity of Arab and Jewish workers is clearly nonsense. The overwhelming majority of the Jewish working class in Israel are oriental Jews, descended from the million or so immigrants who came to Israel from Morocco, Iraq, Yemen and other Arab countries. Are they really going to accept repatriation? Isn't it a sign of progress in the thinking of the PLO that this is no longer their position? The position of the Islamists like Hamas can only be interpreted by Jews as a call for extermination, let alone repatriation.

While it cannot be denied that Zionism has allied itself with imperialism against the popular and progressive movements of the Middle East, it is also undeniable to anyone who isn't simply a

Remorse for intemperate speech

I ranted to the knave and fool,
But outgrew that school,
Would transform the part,
Fit audience found, but cannot rule
My fanatic heart.

I sought my betters: though in each
Fine manners, liberal speech,
Turn hatred into sport,
Nothing said or done can reach
My fanatic heart.

Out of Ireland we have come.
Great hatred, little room,
Maimed us at the start.
I carry from my mother's womb
A fanatic heart.

W B Yeats

doctrinaire sloganiser that there is a Jewish-Israeli nation which speaks a different language, has a different culture and religion to the Palestinians. The route to unifying the working class is not to crush the national rights of this group. By the same token only the granting of full self-determination to the Palestinians and the de-coupling of Israel from the influence of imperialism can lead to the sort of voluntary federation which the economics and history of the region demands.

John Laurence

PS. Raymond Challinor's letter is full of irritating factual inaccuracies which make me even less sympathetic to his arguments. Just a few:

1. The Zionists did not rename Jaffa as Haifa as he claims. Jaffa is just outside Tel Aviv and still exists (and still has a significant Arab population). He means Acre not Jaffa.

2. A Palestinian has headed the Israeli government — Yitzhak Navon, a Palestinian Jew, was President. He would have been more accurate to say no Palestinian Moslem or Christian has!

3. Benjamin Disraeli was not a Jew when he became Prime Minister but had long before been baptised in the Church of England. Britain hasn't even had a Catholic Prime Minister!

PPS. Why is Israel-Palestine the only area of the planet where the SWP (and Jim Higgins) call for a national democratic revolution as opposed to a socialist one? How does this square with their allegiance to the theory of Permanent Revolution? After all, in South Africa and Ireland they have for years argued that only socialism can solve the national question, downplaying democratic demands as a means to mobilise the masses.

Is there any possibility of economic assistance coming from somewhere in the Middle East? After all, Jim, didn't you spend quite a while working for the Libyan financed magazine *Events* after Cliff fired you as industrial organiser of the SWP?

It isn't Trotskyism as we know it, Jim.

Labour and Welsh Home Rule

THE Labour Party's recent announcement on devolution for Wales (i.e. an assembly, voted for by first past the post and funded by Westminster) was received with much castigation, but those who follow Welsh politics should not be so surprised by this latest development. Since the process of structuring the policy began, the emphasis has been on doing as little as possible with as much noise.

The Wales Labour Party set up a roving policy commission chaired by Ken Hopkins, a member of the Welsh Executive, and a safe

pair of hands with which to deliver the desired outcome. The debate within the Party had its parameters set by a discussion paper. A series of questions were posed and members were guided by multiple choice answers. Therefore no discussion took place outside the guidelines and the outcome was more or less secured from the beginning. The concession to Welsh nationalists was the smallest possible and had the least impact on WLP unity.

Even this small offering was, however, a step too far for some Welsh Labour MPs and trade unionists. People like Llew Smith, Ted Rowlands, Ray Powell, Kim Howells, Allan Rogers and Roy Hughes have all made anti-devolution rumblings, some on the principle, others on the formula but these few are only the tip of the iceberg and represent a large number of discontents within the WLP.

Whatever Blair's reason for this policy change (and there is no doubt that the decision was his, Ron Davies, the Shadow Secretary for Wales was only informed after the fact) it will open the floodgates for a yes/no debate of the kind we saw in 1979. It is my belief that unless the policy is formulated and fronted by someone who is a true devolutionist and is fully backed by the leadership then the "no" brigade will probably be triumphant. The protagonists on the "anti" side would also be able to count on assistance from the leaders of the newly elected Unitary Authorities. These men (and they are all men) have a real fear that their freshly anointed powers will soon become the prey of an ever-expanding Welsh Assembly hungry for a sense of purpose. People like Russell Goodway, leader of Cardiff Council, and Billy Murphy, leader of the hybrid authority of Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, both have an interest in supporting the status quo. Between them they have a third of the Welsh electorate within their borders and could probably swing the vote either way.

Whatever the motivations behind recent developments, Tony Blair has succeeded in awakening what was previously the loyally dormant dragon of the Wales Labour Party — the burning question must be just who is going to get scorched?

Theelia Wheed

Mistaken about peace

IT seems as if two types of mistake are being made about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

One is to fail to see what is new, positive and potentially positive in the Israeli-PLO agreement. The other is to want to take some responsibility for what, after all, is a lousy deal.

The first error concentrates too much on what the current situation has in common with the past — continuing Israeli repression and lack of full Palestinian national rights. It downplays or misses what is different and new.

The second type of mistake — an example of which was made by Richard Sutherland in *WL* 32 — is simultaneously

more appealing and worse. Wanting to vote for Peres against Netanyahu is appealing because it is true that Likud may well wreck the 'land for peace' process — and because I also want to see something "practical" done to stop Likud. But it is also a bad mistake to make because it contradicts what should be our consistent advocacy of the need for independent working-class politics. A situation must be particularly desperate and hopeless for us to even consider voting for a straightforwardly bourgeois party like the Israeli Labour Party.

As we said at the time the deal went through (*Socialist Organiser* editorial, 9 September 1993): "the Israel-PLO deal is, despite everything, a breakthrough for the Palestinians" because "this accord can be the thin end of the wedge for an independent Palestinian state" and the "present accord is an enormous breakthrough in principle insofar as it involves mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO — recognition, if not yet of two states, at least of two entities."

The Palestinians are weak and had no real alternative. However given that in the deal the Palestinians got far less than is rightfully theirs, the editorial also rightly said "socialists can not take responsibility for an agreement such as this."

Richard Sutherland asks not just for critical backing for the deal but backing for the capitalist party that made that deal — Labour — in an election.

And that's worse. It means getting caught up with the other awful policies which Labour has been responsible for. It is not true that the only issue in the last Israeli elections was the 'land for peace' process. Labour in government attacked workers' living standards. And that's not surprising, as Israeli Labour is paradoxically the central party of the Israeli bourgeoisie. It's not true that the only issue in Israeli politics is the national question.

So if socialists endorse Labour — however critically — they discredit themselves in front of, for example, the poorest Jewish workers, former residents or descendants of residents in Arab countries, who quite rightly hate the Labour Party for class reasons (and often, unfortunately, vote Likud).

I could understand the position more if there was no labour movement in Israel — no one to appeal to, to work with or to look to. But there is. So there is no compelling, overwhelming reason to abandon the advocacy of independent working-class politics (temporarily, for the duration of the election, perhaps) in favour of the lesser evil.

If socialists like Richard Sutherland advocate that the Israeli far-left should vote for Peres, what he gains is a handful of votes; what he loses is being right (and so diminishes the possibility of substantially affecting the course of working-class politics in Israel in the future).

Dan Katz

I am an anti-Zionist because I am an anti-racist!

Jim Higgins continues a debate on Israel and Palestine.

ARGUING with Sean Matgamna is rather like wrestling with a warm jelly and, despite my long-term experience with the gelatinous character of his political method, I was foolhardy enough to agree to his request to enter the debate flowing from his article: Paul Foot: Philo-Semite (if I am not mistaken this means a lover of Jews). This I did, under the proposed headline: Sean Matgamna: Philo-Pede which means lover of feet. The article actually appeared with another, quite inappropriate headline: A Secular Democratic State says Jim Higgins.

This is inappropriate for two reasons.

1. Nowhere in my article do I call for a secular-democratic state. 2. I do not believe in a secular-democratic state. The reason for the headline is presumably to justify such absurdities as Sean's accusation that I am, along with Foot and Cliff, a sufferer from "vicarious Arab chauvinism."

It would seem that if the PLO has the demand inscribed on its banner then, according to Sean's brand of chop-logic, anti-Zionists must adhere to it as well. I do not know if Tony Cliff or Paul Foot subscribe to the secular-democratic formulation. If Cliff does I would lay a fair shade of odds that Foot does too, but what either of them think is a matter of supreme indifference to me. I am, though, virtually certain that Cliff and Foot are not anti-semitic and I know for sure that I am not and I take strong exception to Sean suggesting that this is the case. One of the reasons I have agreed, after further urgent representations from Sean Matgamna, to write this piece is to take the opportunity to protest at his inability to debate without characterising his opponents as racists. I am an anti-racist and that is the primary reason why I am also anti-Zionist.

I was not seeking in my piece in *Workers' Liberty* to write a history of Arab-Jewish relations in the Middle East, merely responding to various dubious statements by Sean. He wrote in *Workers' Liberty* 32: "In fact Israel was proclaimed in May 1948, in territory allotted by the UN, without any Arabs being expelled. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs did flee — the great majority not expelled — after Arab states, with the backing naturally enough of the Palestinian Arabs, invaded Israel."

In my reply I pointed out that in April

1948, according to a strategy worked out in January of that year, the Irgun bombarded Jaffa for three days, Haganah attacked the Arabs in Jerusalem, and the Irgun and the Stern Gang carried out the massacre at Deir Yassin. It was these three events that set in motion, as was the intention, the Palestinian refugees. Sean does not dispute the facts that make nonsense of his original assertion, his response to his mildly expressed correction is pure bluster: "Jim offers us only tales of Haganah attacking the Arab community in Palestine... Tell me Jim," he says, "should the Jews in 1948 have surrendered?" How about that for a piece of bare-faced impudence. In April Israeli forces attack and Sean thinks their only alternative was to surrender. How about the alternative of not attacking the Arab community in Jerusalem? How about not shelling Jaffa? What say you to not killing 250 men, women and children in Deir Yassin?

Why, readers of *Workers' Liberty* might as, do people go on about Deir Yassin? After all, they might say, 250 dead Arabs is terrible enough, but it is a mere drop in the ocean compared to the millions of Jews lost in the Holocaust? The reason why Deir Yassin is so important and why the deaths should not be forgotten, or brushed aside as a matter of little consequence is that these people died because they were Arabs. They had done nothing to offend the Zionists. Nothing at all. The villagers had refused to allow Arab irregulars to fortify the place. They had a non-aggression agreement with Jewish settlers in the area. An agreement they faithfully carried out.

It was precisely because of this, because they were Arabs living at peace with their Jewish neighbours, that they were killed and their houses reduced to rubble. It is worth repeating, they died because they were Arabs. The few pathetic survivors of Deir Yassin were paraded in triumph through Jerusalem, what any survivors of Hitler's death camps thought about this one can only speculate. (For those interested in a fuller discussion of the Deir Yassin massacre there is a wealth of documentation, but the one that may be most authoritative for WL adherents is by Hal Draper in Israel's Arab Minority: *The Beginning of a Tragedy*, *New Internationalist* Vol XXII No2 1956 from which this account is taken.)

It is absurd, but apparently necessary, to have to tell Sean that racism is indivisible. Just one dead child because he or she is an Arab, or a Jew, or Irish or a Red Indian is exactly one more than any self-respecting socialist can countenance and is quite enough to condemn the perpetrators. If Sean thinks that Deutscher's analogy, of the man jumping out of a burning building and landing on some innocent pedestrian, is appropriate to Deir Yassin, or any of the actions of April 1948, then I can only suggest that he seeks urgent advice about the moral vacuum in his consciousness. The analogy would be better if it involved a man burning down another man's house and when the owner rushed out to avoid the flames, directing him to a tent on the other side of the Jordan.

I have neither the time nor the inclination to follow Sean through every irrelevancy with which he chooses to pad out his reply. Nevertheless, I would like to take up a couple of his additional attempts to rewrite history included in his two nations piece. The Comintern he suggests, in its brave days, was not opposed to Jewish immigration into Palestine. Wrong. At the second congress of the Comintern, *The Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, drafted and introduced by Lenin, says in part: "...Zionism as a whole, which, under the pretence of creating a Jewish state in Palestine in fact surrenders the Arab working people of Palestine, where the Jewish workers form only a small minority, to exploitation by England." Or the ECCI statement of July 1922 on the question of Poale Zion: "...the attempt to divert the Jewish working masses from the class struggle by propaganda in favour of large scale settlement in Palestine is not only nationalist and petty bourgeois but counter-revolutionary..." (Degras Vol 1 p144 and p366). In late 1923 the Palestine Communist Party was formed, and admitted as a section of the CI, on a programme of opposition to the "Anglo-Zionist occupation." Where Sean gets the idea that the CI was not opposed to Jewish settlement in Palestine is a mystery.

Next we have Sean co-opting Trotsky as one of those not opposed to Jewish immigration to Palestine. Wrong again, Sean. All his life Trotsky was firmly opposed to Zionism and on occasion wrote and spoke against it with some

vigour. Around the beginning of 1937 he reformulated his ideas after seeing the extent of anti-semitism in Germany and Russia. He came to the view that the Jews, even under socialism, would require a "territorial solution." According to Deutscher: "He did not believe, however, that this would be in Palestine, that Zionism would be able to solve the problem, or that it could be solved under capitalism. The longer decaying bourgeois society survives, he argued, the more vicious and barbarous will anti-semitism grow all over the world." (Deutscher *The Prophet Outcast*, footnote p369).

Sean does not even acknowledge the

client status that Zionism gladly performed for first British and then American imperialism, a fairly serious omission for a socialist you might think. He ignores the fact that Israel's existence has had a profoundly reactionary effect on the region and that is one of the reasons that the major powers conspired in its founding. The Arab revolution has been put back and the Arab masses have suffered every kind of repressive regime, from the pre-feudal primitives of the House of Saud to the murderous tyranny of Saddam Hussein, taking in on the way the clownish Arafat whose tiny statelet requires several police forces and where

even the fire brigade maintains its own jail. All this, one assumes, should be of concern to socialists, even those of the bureaucratic collectivist persuasion. This legacy of 1948 and the previous 50 years of Zionist endeavour have destabilised the region in which Israel has pursued an aggressive and expansive nationalism and where Israelis live in neurotic insecurity that is in no way strengthened by possession of nuclear weaponry.

In July 1940 Trotsky wrote that: "...the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system." It is just as true today as it was 56 years ago.

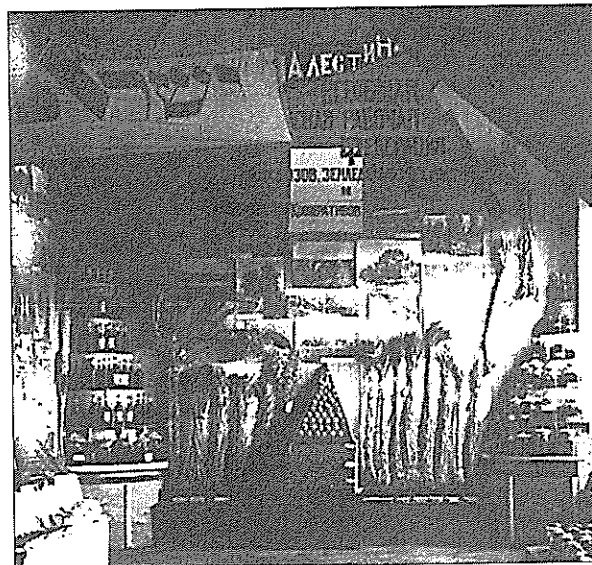
Anti-racism is indivisible

By Sean Matgamna

LET us start where this debate started, with Cliff and the SWP. There was a sea-change on the Israel-Palestine question in the post-Trotsky Trotskyist movement in the middle and late 1940s. Tony Cliff, who left Palestine in September 1946, played a central role as an ideologist of this change. His pamphlet *Middle East At The Crossroads* (1946) was published in at least three languages; he was boosted in the SWP-USA's internationally-circulated *Militant*, after the Cannonite fashion, as one of the Great Marxists whose "method" allowed him to understand things obscure to everyone else, etc. etc. In the SWP-USA internal bulletin Cliff functioned as a hatchet-man against an opposition (Goldman-Morrow) sharing the Shachtmanite Workers' Party's support for free Jewish immigration into Palestine, which was a big issue between the WP and the SWP-USA.

Cliff's 1946 pamphlet does not deal at all adequately with the political questions in the Middle East, having more to say about the price of oil than about the rights of national minorities. Where concrete politics should have been, there was a vacuum; and, to fill that vacuum, the "official" Trotskyists took the Arab nationalist line against the Jewish minority in Palestine. In the US *Militant*, for example, it was said candidly that any line other than opposition to Jewish immigration and to a Jewish state would isolate the Trotskyists from the "Arab Revolution". This catch-penny opportunist adaptation to Arab chauvinism foreshadowed later attitudes.

Between 1948 and 1973, however, there was in the Trotskyist press a tacit



The Histadrut trade union organisation exhibits in Moscow in 1923

acceptance of Israel's right to exist. In 1967, after the Six Day War, Tony Cliff wrote a pamphlet which is closer in its political conclusions and implied conclusions to what *Workers' Liberty* says than to what the SWP and Jim Higgins say now. The decisive shift came after 1967, and was brought to the present level of nonsense after the Yom Kippur war of 1973. The "honour" of having established the post-1973 IS/SWP line belongs, I think, to none other than Jim Higgins (in an article in *IS Journal*).

Obviously, the "objective" explanation for the shift is the fact that pre-partition Palestine had once again been united, but under Jewish rule — brutal, predatory colonial rule in the Arab-majority areas. It had, however, been prepared for by decades of ambivalence and confusion. There was a general

drift on the left, an often unexamined acceptance of the new Palestine Liberation Organisation policy of a secular democratic state as the solution.

We (the forerunners of *Workers' Liberty*) went along with the drift, for the same reason, I guess, as everybody else — hostility to Israel's brutal colonialism and wishful thinking about what a secular democratic state meant. In my own case, that was the culpable delusion that it could mean a state in which Jew and Arab could be equal citizens.

Cliff's personal role in this history has been a big one, and not only in Britain. Now I don't share Jim Higgins's feelings of being cheated and betrayed by Cliff, since I was never other than politically antagonistic to him. The old factionalism in IS was by its nature often nasty, but there was not on Cliff's part much gratuitous nastiness. God knows what 25 years of being Tsar and Caliph of the SWP has done to his head by now, but I found him then a more than halfway decent human being.

Yet Cliff has been a carrier of a poison to the left he influences. He gets away with it, to a large extent, because of his origins in Palestine. In practice he is an unteachable Arab chauvinist. That is paradoxical only if you don't know the history of the Communist Party of Palestine, in which Cliff claims to have received his political education. Take Cliff at his word that he was in the CPP in the mid 1930s, and you have a self-portrait of someone who, a Jew, was part of an organisation in which young Jews were heavily brainwashed into extremes of hostility to the Jewish community.

Cliff first appears in the English-language Trotskyist press in 1938-9, in

discussion pieces in the American magazine *New Internationalist*. It is serious work by a young man trying to think things through. The political conclusions are vague and unclear, yet he is for the right of Jews to go to Palestine as a refuge from persecution.

He next appears in the English-language press in 1944, in the British *Workers' International News* (it is an unsigned article, but the scissors-and-paste technique, incorporating bits of his 1930s articles, strongly suggests Cliff) as a fierce, almost modern-day, "anti-Zionist". In this article, aimed to influence British labour movement opinion, much is made of a Jewish demonstration against Arab produce being on sale in what they wanted to be a Jewish-only area. This, in a world where the Holocaust was still going on, and where Jewish refugees were being killed and interned, as a result of British state policy, when they tried to get into Palestine! Cliff would regale audiences in the late 1960s with the same story. The sense of proportion and perspective are, as always, crazy. The publication of that article then in the Trotskyist press was, in my opinion, evidence of the movement's radical disorientation.

Later, with the 1946 pamphlet, Cliff became one of international Trotskyism's two "authorities" on the Palestine question (or, with Ernest Mandel, three). The other was Abram Leon, who died at the hands of the Nazis in 1944, and whose unfinished historical writings, shaped and edited by Ernest Mandel, were published posthumously, eventually in book form (*The Jewish Question*). Neither the dead Leon nor the living Cliff had much to say about the politics of national conflict in Palestine.

Leon had an account of Jewish history which quickly became an article of factional faith for people who had no independent means of judging it (though in my view Maxime Rodinson makes a convincing case against Leon's thesis). Cliff offered mainly an economic analysis, slotted into Arabist anti-imperialism.

Whatever intrinsic merits they may have had, for the purposes of politics the writings of both Cliff and (though the dead man, unlike Cliff, can hardly be blamed for it) Leon were a species of pseudo-knowledge, offering no political answers. The political conclusions were filled in by chameleon adaptation to Arab nationalism, which was seen as part of the "colonial revolution" segment of the imminent world revolution. There was a clear parallel between the method of the disoriented Trotskyists and that of Third Period Stalinism after 1929. Post-Trotsky Trotskyism, in its degeneracy, had found a use for the personal history and prejudices of Tony Cliff!

Cliff separated from Mandel and the "official" Trotskyists in 1950. After a silence of two decades on the Israel/Palestine question, he resumed in

1967 and after as if he were still in the 1930s, fighting old factional battles with Zionists in Palestine. At the end of the 1960s, he revived what had been mid-1930s CPP policy on Palestine. Others did the same, but Cliff had a special authority. Cliff could get away with bias, double standards, Arab chauvinism, and outright hatred of the Israelis, where others could not.

It is to Cliff's credit that as a youth he sided with the most downtrodden people around him, the Palestinian Arabs. It was not enough, however, and his present attitude probably has twisted roots. Cliff is obviously guilt-stricken about the fate of the Palestinian Arabs, but that does not explain his savage hostility to the Palestinian/Israeli Jews. Isn't there in his attitude also guilt about surviving the Holocaust, safe, as it turned out, in Palestine? His feelings about the Jewish national minority in Palestine were, after all, formed for the pre-1946 Palestinian-Jewish national minority — those who, like himself, survived; and he experienced a violent and, in the circumstances, startling shift between 1939 and 1944. Cliff's vicarious Arab chauvinist hatred for Israel may well be a somewhat unusual form of self-hatred. Long-range "assassin psychoanalysis" is of course of limited use, though Cliff's role demands and licences it and strips away his right to privacy on this issue.

II

IT is a pity that Jim Higgins's 'humour' has gone and is replaced by choler, rododomontade, unleavened abuse, some of it purely personal, and by evident social embarrassment before his SWP friends and former comrades. Protesting that Paul Foot, Tony Cliff, and the SWP are "a matter of supreme indifference" to him, he is nevertheless at pains to explain publicly how he came to get involved in a discussion with vile people like ourselves. He seems to offer an over-the-shoulder apology for it. Who to, I wonder?

It did take a long argumentative letter from me to persuade him to reply to my reply. I hoped for serious argument. In vain. He declines to take up the reasoned case I made over three pages of the last *Workers' Liberty*, and focuses instead on repeating points made or conceded, and on red herrings. He has neither time nor space to deal with the central thing I said, and argued in some detail — that the appearance of a Jewish state in the middle of the 20th century can be understood only in terms of a complex history and not in terms of a demonised devil-ex-machina "Zionism." I asked the serious, and not entirely rhetorical, question why the Jewish minority, a third of the population of Palestine in the 1940s, did not have national rights there. He declines to reply. Did they or didn't they? If not, why not? If they did, then they had a right to defend themselves in 1948, and the entire

elaborate scheme in which "Zionism" is the cause of all evil dissolves into a series of concrete questions, on each of which Israeli policy can be evaluated and if necessary denounced — as we denounce Israel's behaviour in the occupied territories, for example.

Jim Higgins does have time and space, however, to protest that I killed the very obscure and never very strong joke he put as a headline on his piece. (It was in Latin: Tridentine Trotskyism?)

With more justification, he is angry about the headline we put on his piece. He says we misrepresented his position. That is true, but it was editorial mishap, not deliberate misrepresentation. I offer him my apologies. But I can not see that the mistaken headline strengthened the case for my allegation that Jim Higgins (and Cliff and Paul Foot) are Arab chauvinists.

III

JIM Higgins wrote — and, of course, we printed — "What is needed is a secular Arab-Jewish state based on socialism and democracy in all of Palestine". I take it that he means by socialism what I mean: democratic working-class power. If so, then there are two problems.

Everywhere the Arab working class is in the grip of Islamic chauvinism, or at best secular populism. It has been and is crushed, politically, under the weight of dictatorial states. It is potentially very powerful, but it has as yet scarcely begun to realise itself politically, or to emerge as a "class for itself". It will, but we cannot gauge how soon.

Therefore, as any sort of immediate solution, socialism in the Middle East — if you mean working-class socialism — is a non-starter. Suppose, however, that there were a powerfully organised and more or less international-socialist working-class mass movement in the Middle East now, with a real possibility of taking power in the short or medium term. What would be its programme for the smaller non-Arab nationalities in the Middle East — Jews, Kurds, Armenians? What programme would we advocate? One of two things: either this mainly-Arab socialist working-class mass movement would be suicidally poisoned by Arab (and probably Muslim) chauvinism and obscurantism, or it would have a Leninist policy on the non-Arab peoples.

"Socialism" would resolve the issues in Israel/Palestine only if the mainly-Arab socialist mass movement had such a Leninist, that is a consistently democratic, working-class programme. The Bolsheviks in 1917 did not only say to the oppressed nationalities in the old Tsarist empire: "Socialism is the answer". They had a democratic — Leninist — programme on the national question. They advocated the right of self-determination for all peoples where they were the compact majority; preached the indifference

of consistent democrats and socialists to existing state borders; repudiated all national revanchism. On that basis, they built the unity of the working class across all national and communal divisions, and consistent socialist politics.

Jim Higgins will agree with that in general — but he will exclude the Israeli Jewish nation from the application of the general principles. For them, the film of 20th century history will be rolled back. To the Israeli Jewish workers, though to the workers of no other nation, international socialism will be presented as an ultimatum. Dissolve your national state — instantly! now! — or be forced to. Surrender your right to be a compact nation, or be forced to.

The secular democratic state meant — whatever various left-wingers understood it to mean, and wanted it to mean — an Arab Palestine with religious (not national) rights for such Jews as survived the process of Arab conquest necessary to get their state dismantled. If the solution Jim Higgins favours — “a secular Arab-Jewish state based on socialism and democracy in all of Palestine” — is really democratic in the sense that Lenin’s, Trotsky’s, and the Communist International’s national programme was democratic, then, even after the working class in the whole region has taken power, it will include the right of the Israeli Jewish nation to keep its own state, and the right of the Kurds, Armenians, and others to set up their own national states. If it does not do that, then it will be neither democratic nor socialist.

The “smash Israel” policy can not be squared with socialist or democratic politics by reference to the Palestinian Arab refugees. For here, too, the “solution” favoured by many socialists is unique to Israel. Nobody on the left argues that the Poles, in what is now western Poland, should make way for the ten million Germans driven out of what was then East Prussia in 1945, or for their many millions of descendants — or that we should

insist on a joint Polish-German state to allow for it. Nobody on the left argues for reclaiming the Sudetenland for the three million Germans driven out of what was then Czechoslovakia in 1945, or their many millions of children. Nobody on the left has any time for the German revanchists who talk of such things. Israel is special.

Socialism in its early stages will radically soften national antagonisms, but it will not dissolve nations. The socialists who would inscribe on their banners or their VDUs the demand that nations should immediately dissolve — in this case, that one nation amidst competing nations should dissolve — would be not Marxists but anarchists. Their attitude would be wildly ultra-left in theory, and in practice mean vapid self-removal from real politics, leaving a vacuum to be filled by something other than the consistent democracy in these affairs which Leninists argue for.

The entire tenor and substance of what he wrote in WL 33 — malignantly anti-Israel and wildly prejudiced comic-book history — suggests that Jim Higgins agrees with the SWP, whose essentially meaningless “socialist” solution leaves them free to back Arab chauvinists and militarists against Israel?²² Or does he have nothing to say at all about immediate politics except “socialism is the answer”? The outright Arab chauvinists, Cliff and Foot, draw their conclusions. When Jim Higgins says that their practical politics do not define them as Arab chauvinists, that seems to brand him as one too. Can it be that you don’t know that, Jim?²³

IV

The pre-1929 Communist International rejected, opposed and denounced the Zionist project. I said this, and then asserted that nevertheless neither they, nor Trotsky in the 1930s, opposed Jewish migration into Palestine, as the post-1930 Stalinist and the “orthodox” Trotskyists from the mid-’40s

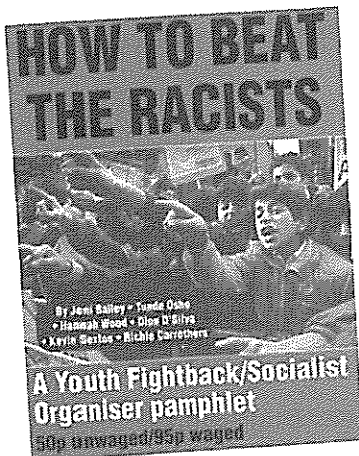
did. The Leninists and Trotskyists believed in the free movement of workers to Palestine as elsewhere in the world. Higgins replies by citing evidence for what I said, in the form of quotations. Thank you Jim! The political descriptions and denunciations he cites are about Zionism as a political ideology and a practical project which involved a favourable attitude to British imperialist occupation of Palestine. Of course the Communist International was against British occupation, which the Zionists then favoured — and that is what the quotation about “Anglo-Zionist occupation” means.

When the Communists appealed to Jewish workers to stay in the class struggle in the countries where they were, and not to go in for utopian-socialist colony-building in Palestine, Higgins equates that with advocacy of the exclusion of Jews from Palestine. In doing so, he is reading later attitudes backwards, anachronistically. Jews were not, and were not considered to be, identical with Zionism. Most Jews, including Jews fleeing persecution, were then, unlike now, not Zionists. The Communist International’s opposition to Zionism did not take the form of advocacy of or support for the exclusion of Jews, still less of support for Arab/Muslim chauvinism against them.

The Communist Party of Palestine was throughout the 1920s almost entirely Jewish, beginning as a break from the socialist Zionists, Poale Zion. Against Zionism, they advocated Jewish-Arab worker and peasant unity in Palestine. Demonisation was not part of it, though rough polemic was. The Histadrut could, for example, take a stall at a workers’ gathering in Moscow in 1923.

The Communist Party of Palestine competed with the Zionists for the allegiance of the Jewish workers: they advocated neither their own expulsion — though the British were normally eager to expel Jewish Communists — nor the exclusion of Jewish workers who, for whichever of many possible reasons, wanted to enter Palestine. According to one report, when the anti-Jewish movement began in 1929, the small Executive Committee of the CP, all Jews, was meeting in an Arab village and had to be rescued by the Jewish defence force, the Haganah; the CP turned over guns to aid the Jewish self-defence. Then the line was changed in Third Period Moscow and the pogroms were redefined as part of a holy anti-imperialist crusade. After a post-1929 Stalinist “Arabisation” drive which insisted that the main leaders be Arabs in a party of supposed equals, most of whose members were still Jews, Jews were made second-class citizens in the Communist Party of Palestine.

The Trotskyists at the time opposed the Stalinist line on the 1929 Arab movement (see Max Shachtman, *Militant*, October 1929). Later, in the 1930s, the



HOW to BEAT the RACISTS

95p / 50p CONCESSIONS
+ 31p p&p

From: WL Publications,
PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA.

SWP-USA's *Socialist Appeal* (6.6.39) published an outraged report, based on an article by ex-Stalinist Malech Epstein in the social-democratic Yiddish daily *Forward*, that the Communist Party of Palestine was sending young Jewish members to plant bombs among Jews.

V

The Deir Yassin massacre was denounced by the mainstream Zionist leaders when it happened. I neither defended nor justified nor excused it, though I did put it in its historical context. Deir Yassin was the work of a Jewish group against which the mainstream Zionists were prepared to wage civil war a few months later!

Higgins raises it again because it is easier to beat the reverberating drums of big atrocity than to reason about the overall picture. He says he raises it because it was an act of racism — “these people died because they were Arabs” — though how to distinguish between ideological racism and nationalism in a “civil war” situation like that of 1948 might perplex a more cautious man. “Racism is indivisible”, he says. “Just one dead child because he or she is an Arab, or a Jew, or Irish or a Red Indian, is exactly one more than any self-respecting socialist can countenance and is quite enough to condemn the perpetrator.”

Agreed! I'll vote for that with both hands; and, if it will carry greater conviction, prick my thumb and sign a resolution to that effect in my own blood. But what is this fine universalist principle doing in this debate, in the mouth of someone who is a passionate partisan of one side, to the extreme of wanting to force “the other” people to dissolve as a national entity? How does it square with the double-standard-skewed one-sidedness of what he says about the Arab-Jewish conflict? Can Jim Higgins really think that no Jews have died because they were Jews at the hands of Arabs and Muslims? In which case he needs only to be reminded that, for example, 60 Jewish religious teachers and pupils were massacred in Hebron in 1929 — they were not Zionists — and he will change sides, or understand that socialists need an overview and an overall programme for the whole complex of issues.

In fact, though, the universalist principle is just empty rhetoric, isn't it? It is a common enough gambit. The Provisional IRA's paper, *An Phoblacht* has, for example, a convincing line in anti-sectarianism — directed against the other side and used to bolster with self-righteousness bigoted and sectarian attitudes on its own side.

Anti-racism is indivisible, Jim, but someone who uses talk of its “indivisibility” as a means of damning one side in the interests of the other, which has also killed children, is a hypocrite.

It is “absurd but evidently necessary”

to point out to you, comrade Higgins, that though one dead child may be and is enough to condemn its killers, the idea that their cause — or in this case the entire people to which the killers belonged — is thereby condemned, is either the theme of a note resigning from the sinful human race before going into the desert to found a utopian-socialist colony, or something you write just before you blow your brains out. Otherwise it is a lot of flabby-minded old guff. Hypocritical or hysterical guff.⁴

I accused Jim Higgins of being “awash with prejudice”, citing his demonising “history” as proof and refuting it. Now he passionately defends himself — and, I think, some of his old friends in the SWP — against a charge I never made, that of “racism”. No, Jim, I don't think you, or the SWP, are racist, or that you subscribe to zoological theories about some peoples being inferior, or that you are predisposed to be hostile to individual Jews. I know that I was not a racist when I held views very like yours.

The views you hold about Israel do, however, commit you to a pretty comprehensive hostility to Jews who will not endorse your fervently held anti-Zionism or join you in branding Israeli-Jewish nationalists as racists — Jews into whose identity Israel has been incorporated and who will, not always gently, defend Israel's right to exist. Your views commit you to making the Israeli Jews an exception to the general principles you proclaim for every other nation. They commit you to advocating the destruction

of the Israeli-Jewish state: you can not believe that in the calculable future the state of Israel will voluntarily be liquidated and subsumed into something higher. They commit you to an emotion-charged propagation of Arab-chauvinist myths and thinly made-over old-fashioned anti-semitic caricatures of Jews.

All that, Jim, may not be anti-Jewish racism, but it shares the essential element common to all the various anti-semitisms of history, be they religious, nationalist, or zoological-racist: comprehensive hostility to most or all Jews alive. The tub-thumping and fulminating that you are not a racist can not suppress the fact that your attitude is a form of anti-semitism. Since you want Jews to “convert” from the identification with Israel which a terrible history has stamped on modern Jewish consciousness, your attitude has more in common with the old Christian anti-semitism, which wanted to save the souls of Jews even if it had to burn their bodies, than with the racism of the 19th and 20th centuries. Insisting that you are not a racist is here a means, and perhaps also an internal psychological mechanism, for evading the plain implications of what you say. Even if you draw no practical conclusions from your demonisation of Israel, others will and do. At best there is a division of labour.

Higgins in an earlier contribution to *Workers' Liberty* showed undisguised bitterness towards Tony Cliff. He doesn't seem to notice that the worst thing Cliff did to him was to poison him with anti-semitic anti-Zionism.

Footnotes

1. My original article confused things by hanging the story on the date of Israel's declaration of independence. I argued that this was of no consequence for the process described. Jim Higgins ignores that, but repeats the point. Yet he himself made a similar inconsequential slip, seeming to date the United Nations resolution on partition not in November 1947 but in April 1948.

2. You might, developing Lenin's analysis of “Economism” and then “Imperialist Economism”, call this line “Arab Nationalist Economism” — a happy marriage of the general economistic method of the SWP with Cliff's personal prejudice.

3. Of course I hold no brief for the idea that the ousted one-time leaders of the IS/SWP possess special, or even ordinary, levels of sharpness in political understanding. Rather the opposite. In a reasonably wide experience I have never elsewhere encountered anything like the Malvollo-like snobbery, self-satisfaction, and brain-pickling collective conceit, built on small achievement, that I saw in the leading circles of the IS group. Disdaining any attempt to be consistent Leninists, this group of eclectic sectarians found themselves in the late 1960s, unexpectedly and against all their previous expectations, in very favourable circumstances. They blundered about for a while, helped Cliff create a monstrosity of an organisation, wasted a tremendous and perhaps unique opportunity, and then, most of them, abandoned the field of politics to Pope Tony and his toy-town Bolshevik “party”.

They could not understand what was happening in the organisation they “led”, not even when it was pointed out to them in reasonably plain English; and they have not understood it yet. But Jim, even you can not but know that if socialism and democracy is the answer, then it can only be in the sense of working-class politics and equal rights for all nations, and therefore that demonisation of Israel is no part of it. You can not but know that what you write is grist to the mill of the SWP who would back Saddam Hussein and Assad of Syria against Israel.

4. There is a subtlety in this discussion: repeated attempts to cite Hal Draper as a high authority for us against what we say now. This is a misunderstanding. On the concrete questions of the Jewish-Arab conflict such as the right of Jews to go to Palestine, the Shachtman organisation was right, in my opinion. Draper was generally right in his criticism of Israel, though a lot of what he wrote on Israel reminds me of the legendary bird without feet unable to alight, doomed forever to hover high above the ground. Draper was on our side as against Cliff, Higgins, et al. He was in favour of Israel's right to exist. James D Young tells a story of an encounter between Cliff and Draper on the question in the late '50s. After a meal in London, Draper, Cliff, Young and others are sitting around a table, the taciturn Draper silent, the talkative Cliff talking — about Israel. Suddenly Draper turns on Cliff in irritation and repudiation, and accuses him: “You want to destroy the Israeli Jews! I don't!”



Lenin, Trotsky and World War Three

IT is well known that in 1917 Lenin won the Bolshevik party to the revolutionary strategy summed up in the slogan "All power to the soviets!". It is nearly as well known that in doing so Lenin was getting the party to adopt in practice a strategy that it had long opposed in theory: namely, Trotsky's conception of permanent revolution. This allowed Trotsky to join the Bolsheviks, a move which in practice meant Trotsky recognising that on the question of party organisation Lenin had been right all along and he had been wrong.

Exactly as Trotsky had predicted, events showed that the working class could not lead the revolution against Tsardom and then artificially hold back from overthrowing the class power of the bourgeoisie. The only perspective available to the revolutionary class in Russia was to seize power in the hope that a working-class victory in that backward country would act to spur the workers of the more advanced western Europe into action. Without that help from the west the revolution was doomed.

After Lenin's death the ideologists of rising Stalinism, glorifying the isolation of backward Russia — an isolation which was to prove the root of the rising bureaucracy's class power — started a campaign against "Trotskyism" in general and

"permanent revolution" in particular. Their key ideological weapon in this campaign was to counterpose their version of "Leninism" to the real revolutionary strategy of Lenin and the early Communist International, which they renamed "Trotskyism".

Lenin and the Myth of Revolutionary Defeatism deals with one small part of the intellectual confrontation between "Trotskyism" and the official "Leninism" of Stalin and the rest of his coterie. In painstaking detail Hal Draper exposes the myth of Lenin's so-called revolutionary defeatism. He shows that Lenin's enthusiasm for the proposition that "In a reactionary imperialist war revolutionaries should consider the defeat of their own government the lesser evil" was misplaced. What's more, Lenin quite correctly abandoned this slogan in practice in 1917 when the Bolsheviks — looking to a workers' revolution in Russia — were not exactly enthusiastic about a German victory!

Draper also clearly demonstrates the superiority of the alternative socialist perspective on the war represented by Luxemburg and Trotsky, who argued that socialists should prosecute the class struggle regardless of its consequences on the war effort, but should not pose the issue in terms of "lesser evils" or the beneficial effects of defeat in imperialist war.

If you ever wanted to appeal to the textual authority of the "classics" to try and convince the more demented kitsch Trotskyists like the WRP or RCP that shouting "victory to Iraq!" is not a very revolutionary policy, then this is the book for you. I wish you well.

WHAT'S strange about the republication of this text, over forty years after it was originally published, is that headbanging with nutcase anti-imperialists should not exactly top any serious revolutionary socialist

agenda. More interesting are the issues that prompted Draper to write this set of articles in the first place.

For when Draper put pen to paper he was not just "digging for quotations," he was trying to work out a socialist policy on what seemed to everyone at the time to be the impending Third World War between Stalinism and the imperialist democracies.



Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev during the early days of the Russian revolution. Draper's book disentangles Stalinist myths about debates involving Trotsky and Lenin

Draper wished to defend a traditional Third Camp line of putting an equals sign under both sides. Max Shachtman, the main theorist of the Third Camp socialists, was tending towards a sort of "proletarian military policy" for the western imperialist democracies, in which — just like in World War Two, with the threat of fascism — socialists would not simply remain neutral faced with the prospect of an expanding Stalinist regime liquidating the independent labour movement and its democratic gains.

It seems to me that though Draper's work is an excellent piece of textual exegesis, it failed to shed any real light on the substantive issues underlying the formal debate. What's worse, as it has been reprinted it does not deal with Shachtman's ideas at all fairly. To say that when Shachtman even considered not equating Stalinism and the imperialist democracies, he had already sold his soul to the devil, is a slander.

The republication of

Draper's work over forty years later and minus the key section dealing with Shachtman's ideas, in other words, the section that provided the work's political *raison d'être* in the first place, seems strange to say the least. To rip the work out of its original political context is to provide a sort of dead textual "Marxism" devoid of relation to the political class struggle. Not a

priority at this or any time. A far more interesting and enlightening work would have dealt with the debate between Shachtman and Draper in the light of the historic evolution of Stalinism and its collapse in its Russian homeland. But to do this Draper would have to confront the fact that though the bureaucratic collectivists had a basic theory clearly superior to the absurdities of state capitalism or the "degenerated workers' state" labels, neither he, nor Shachtman, nor anyone else for that matter, had a coherent view of Stalinism's place in history. After all, it was Shachtman's fear of a new Ice Age of Stalinist barbarism that fueled his thinking on World War Three, not his theoretical misunderstandings of defeatism.

Tom Rigby

War and Revolution — Lenin and the Myth of Revolutionary Defeatism, by Hal Draper, edited by Ernie Haber Kern, Humanities Press

Verse and worse

WEST in Her Eye is edited by Rachel Lever, proprietor of the Hen House, a well known feminist women-only country retreat. It will be of special interest to readers of *Workers' Liberty* because before she became a convert to the theory of socialism-in-one-country house, Rachel Lever edited or helped edit no less than four of our predecessors: *Workers' Republic*, *Workers' Fight*, *Workers' Action* and, in its first four years, *Socialist Organiser*. She also produced and edited *Women's Fightback*, the spin-off publication initiated by *Socialist Organiser*.

In *West in Her Eye* she has brought together a fine collection of verse. "Women's verse" she says, but in fact, apart from being written by women, almost all the poems here are detachable from the ideological matrix this collection unobtrusively and loosely tries to fit them to.

I can eat chilli con carne
As children die or watch
While prams and handcarts
Cross in Europe.

I drink a rouge at sunset
While cities burn and
Living skeletons
Suck earth.

I see
The futility of half of
humanity
In the frame in authentic
colour
With dinner.
(*Dinner Time* by Eirene Gray)

Her smile
licks its lips
like
the cat with the cream;

his cream, poured
into a vessel
shaped for their delight.

Kitten like she purrs
and dreams
whilst he swaggers
in tight jeans,
like a pride of lions.
(*First Time* by Anne Garner)

These are poems by women about common human experiences and predicaments; those that deal with experience specific to women easily take their place here in the broader human context of which they are a natural part.

Too many of the poems read, in the popular modern style, like translations — a few are translations — of good poems from foreign languages, where the translator has not attempted to recreate meter or rhyme, but nevertheless manage to convey something of the feel and tone and human substance of the more elaborated work. Almost all of them, however, do have substance, and therefore there are very few duds here.

LOOK Left Again, edited by Kerrie Pateman for *Poetry Now*, is a different can of alphabet soup altogether. Here, there is almost nothing but duds. The collection is devoid of socialist feeling, working class experience, radical ideas, and of poetry or good verse on any level. Reading *Look Left Again* is like wandering through a wasteland. Read this and you run the risk of coming away thinking that both socialism and poetry are dead and buried here in this one shallow grave!

Tony Blair, is so dynamic
Lots of go and empathetic
He fights for what he thinks
— is right
His constituency, and
pensioners' plights

He's young, he's ambitious
He has a goal
May he, achieve, his ambition
To be, our next leading —
politician
(*To the next Prime Minister*
by May Read)

I liked "A curse on the Gov-

ernment" by Jean M Cooper.

One of the best things here is oddly a piece from Norman Willis, former General Secretary of the TUC, reflecting on an encounter with a young zealot at a meeting. But even that is flat and cerebral: an old fellow thinking himself into the politics of his youth, about which he has wry feelings but seemingly no sense of loss or diminution, nor any regret.

Why, for example, would anyone write, let alone publish this (except perhaps as a doodle at a boring meeting to be thrown away afterwards):

A tear from the rose,
when John Smith died,
a nation in shock,
took time out to cry.

The leadership battle,
fought and won,
Tony Blair,
our favourite son.
(*A smile for the rose* by Paul Holt)

Or, though the politics
are better, this:

Clause IV is out of date,
The times have changed and
so must we!
But socialists will still debate
The issues that set people
free...
(*Clause IV Concern* by Percy Lea)

Or this:

Politics or party tricks, tell
me if you can,
Do they help or hinder, the
average working man...
(*The government of today* by Fran Zubek)

Why are the poems in this collection so bad? The model seems to be greeting card verse and the thought and feeling are correspondingly naive and conventional. The writers here wear paper masks; everything is facade, people going through their expected paces, putting on a Christmas card, poetic voice. God knows what they really think or feel about anything.

Jackie Cleary
West in Her Eye, edited by
Rachel Lever and *Look Left*
Again, edited by Kerrie
Pateman

The memory of our class

WHEN conquerors try to strip a conquered people of their identity, what do they do? They try to suppress the language of the vanquished — and to strip them of their collective memory, their history. So it is too in the war of classes. The victorious bourgeoisie work tirelessly to deprive the working class of our history, to falsify and suppress it.

Anybody who has been in politics even a decade or so will have experienced the relentless drive to suppress by distortion and lies a *working-class perspective* on recent widely remembered history — on the miners' strike, for example.

On our side, the class-conscious proletarians work to understand, preserve and spread knowledge of our own real history, and the history of "the common people" in general, in the working class.

The selection of William Morris's writings on history in this little book helped perform this work for the first generation of British socialists, those who, over a hundred years ago, shaped and trained the generation that built the foundations of the modern labour movement. They can help train and shape a new generation, too.

Morris, writing when general concern with history was much greater than it is now, surveyed English history back to before the Norman Conquest, stripping away the lies and pretensions of the ruling class.

It includes a short account of their recent history — the Paris Commune of 1871. If you found school history "boring", try this!

Fergus Ennis
William Morris on History,
edited by Nicholas Salmon,
Sheffield Academic Press £6.95.

Capital and Marx's vision of communism

By Tom Rigby

KARL Marx's *Capital* can only be understood when we grasp that his critique of political economy, his understanding of alienation and his vision of a communist society are integrated parts of a single world outlook.

Everything Marx wrote is informed by his belief that human beings are capable of achieving communism. By communism he meant not Stalinism and the Gulag, but their opposite — a society in which the freely associated producers rationally regulate their relations with each other and with nature for the purpose of the self-development of all.

Marx wanted to see an end to the state, money, class exploitation and the ruinous effects of the division of labour, especially, the separation between physical and mental labour. Working class victory in the class struggle would make possible the collective utilisation of advanced technology for the benefit of all humanity, rather than for the aggrandisement of a tiny class of exploiters. The first priorities would be to answer the basic social needs of the world's population for health, education and housing and to reduce the working week so as to create the free time needed to make democratic self-rule a reality. The human productivity freed in this manner would enable society to move rapidly to full blown communism, that is, a society able, as Marx put it, to inscribe on its banner: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs!"

Communism was conceived as a higher form of evolution for the social animal, Homo Sapiens. It wasn't just a more desirable state of affairs, a utopia that we could hope or wish for; it was a potential inherent in human beings as a species and in human social evolution.

When we describe capitalist society as inhuman for what it does to people, we are assessing it by reference to what we believe human beings are capable of. Only if you think communism is possible does it make sense to describe as inhuman a system that does not allow real self development and freedom. Otherwise the term is what it seems to right-wing philosophers, empty rhetoric.

What is inhuman about capitalism is the fact that all people — and the working class much more than anyone else — suffer under the condition that Marx described as alienation. What we are alienated from is our own humanity.

The modern wage worker is, like all human beings, a "social animal". We can live as individuals only in and through society. The basic social bond is labour — the purposeful transformation of nature to suit our needs. Labour is by definition social. Like language it could not possibly develop without human beings living together and working together.

Under capitalism labour takes the form of wage labour — a commodity to be bought

and sold. The means of production are the private property of the capitalist class. Lacking any other means of existence the wage workers are dependent on the capitalists to whom they sell their very life activity (in the form of labour power) in order to survive. As a result, the creative powers of social labour are reduced to a mere means of making money for the capitalist.

This subordination of wage labour to capital takes place under the veneer of the free, equal and fair exchange of commodities. To see how it works we have to look at the commodity, which is to capitalism what the cell is to the human body.

THE commodity is anything that can be bought and sold on the market. This is the form that human labour-power and its products take under capitalism. Things that are not the products of labour — like uncultivated land — only tend to become commodities when labour power itself has assumed that form.

The labour that produces commodities has a dual nature: it is both a concrete, useful thing, producing a particular use value, and also a part of the general pool of social labour.

Exchange is possible because the commodities exchanged are both different and similar. What they have in common is that they are all products of human labour. But this common element is not any specific, concrete kind of labour. (If things were the same, there would be no point in exchange.) Rather, each commodity represents a fraction of the total labour expended by all members of society. This is what Marx called Abstract Labour. It has no specific, concrete, qualitative properties — it is not brick laying, computer operating, or car building, but all of these, what all of them have in common — and so, it can only be measured quantitatively.

The only way to measure the quantity of labour is by its duration, that is by its expenditure of time. The measure of value of any commodity is the amount of labour time — on average across society — needed to produce it. This is what Marx called the socially necessary labour time.

Capital grows out of the exchange of commodities. The general formula for capital is M-C-M' — the exchange of money M for commodities C and then the sale of those commodities for more money, M'. The rationale for this circuit can only be the self expansion of capital. This relentless drive of capital towards self-expansion is the defining characteristic of the capitalist system. More and more economic activity is brought under its sway as the world market and factory production develop. This drive reduces human beings to mere appendages of machines,

destroys whole industries and communities, and puts at risk any form of social provision — like a free health service — that cannot serve profit-making.

Marx called the difference between the amount of money put into the capitalist circuit M-C-M' and that taken out, surplus value.

The origin of surplus value is labour power. The use-value of labour power for the capitalist lies solely in its ability to create new value. Its exchange value is the labour time socially necessary for its production (the labour time necessary to produce the goods the worker will buy with his or her wages in order to sustain and reproduce life).

In the process of capitalist production he who has purchased labour power, the capitalist, can use it for far longer than the period of time needed to produce the goods consumed by the worker and his or her family in the form of wages. The rest of the wage worker's labour time goes free to the capitalist. That's how capitalist exploitation works. The thing bought, labour power, has the unique, "magical", quality of being used and consumed and in that process somehow producing for its user, the capitalist, more than it costs him. What the capitalist buys is human creativity, human life.

Alongside this exploitation goes the phenomenon Marx described as "commodity fetishism". Human beings experience their relations with other human beings, with their own social product, and with the instruments of their own labour, not as simple and open co-operation between free individuals working to transform nature to gain common ends, but as relations between things. And, what's more, between things with strange powers!

If this sounds strange, think about the everyday language of capitalist society — people are treated like things and things are treated like people. Human beings are "worth" so much metal or paper, while money "leaves the country" and the market "makes decisions." Human beings lose control of their lives to things they create. This false consciousness reaches its most extreme form in the idea of the "hidden hand" of the market. The everyday relations of commodity exchange somehow combine together through the market to distribute goods in the most efficient way possible. The market becomes an All-Seeing, All-Knowing, All-Doing God. This is not just false consciousness. Capitalism really does lack any coherent, conscious social control of production. Instead it has the remorseless blind drive for profit, competition between capitalists, crises and mass unemployment.

The worship of the market practised by academic economists and the leadership of the Labour Party is really a confession of the lack of human control over the very activity that makes us human — social labour. Socialism is, fundamentally, about regaining human control.

Tube workers sold out

By a Hammersmith and City Line driver and a Northern Line guard

ANGRY is not the word for the feelings of tube workers after the defeat of their fight for a shorter working week. They are particularly bitter because they feel cheated. A majority of train crew workers who voted on the settlement rejected the £1,500 year pay cut demanded by the tube bosses to compensate them for the cut in hours.

Despite the vote against settlement on those terms, industrial action was called off because ASLEF voted by a narrow majority to accept the deal and the RMT leadership — who had a whopping 4-1 majority to continue the action — felt that they couldn't hold the strike together because ASLEF members would cross the picket lines.

How could this happen?

How has it come about that one of the most powerful groups of workers in Britain has gone down to defeat, when defeat was eminently avoidable, and victory still demonstrably possible?

We could have won this battle! London Underground management were on the ropes. Bosses across London were losing more than £100 million in profits every strike day. The tube itself was losing perhaps £20 million a day in revenue. Train crew were more united, across grade and union, than ever before. Public support remained strong despite the Tories' propaganda and the agitation of the *London Evening Standard*. Not even the ham-fisted intervention of Labour Front Bencher David Blunkett who called for binding arbitration, managed to dent the morale of the strikers.

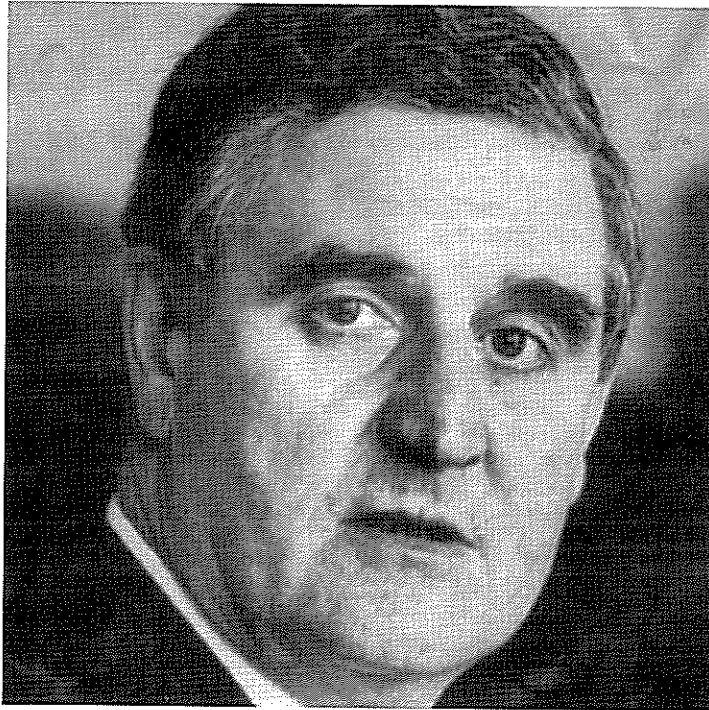
We were defeated, as so often before, by our own wretchedly disloyal no-guts trade union leadership. The ASLEF top brass are seriously infected with sectionalism, craftism and company unionism — that is, with more than their share of good old-fashioned fat-arsed trade union bureaucrat stupidity! Look at the record.

After half a dozen one-day strikes the dispute showed no serious signs of losing momentum. Then, for some unexplained reason, the ASLEF leaders decided to "take the initiative". These workers' leaders raised the truly bizarre proposal that their members take a wage cut to finance the shorter-working week for which they were fighting!

Things got even stranger when the RMT leadership, without any reference to rank-and-file tube activists, decided to go along with this, abandoning the union's crystal clear policy for a shorter working week with no strings and no loss of pay!

Thus, "negotiations" started. "Agreement" was, naturally, easy to reach once the tube union leaders had thrown out of the window their entire case for a shorter working week, paid for out of London Underground's enormous multi-million profits.

Senior negotiators of both unions set to working out "acceptable" pay cuts for their own members! ASLEF leaders thought they could get away with cutting a grand and a half from their members' pay packets. The "left" RMT alternative? The Socialist Labour Party's leading RMT activist Bob Crow preferred a



ASLEF leader Lew Adams: negotiated a wage cut!

cut of £800 or so: that is the measure of the wretchedness of the *entire* RMT leadership!

This avoidable and therefore tragic defeat illustrates perfectly one of the central problems in the trade unions today: the crisis of working-class leadership. It was not that the tube workers did not want to fight, or that they had no clear idea of what they wanted — the vote of the majority to reject the sell-out deal shows that the problem was that the leaders did not have the will and determination to defeat London Underground management. Nor did they have the political and economic arguments necessary to challenge London Underground head-on.

A victory for the tube workers could have radically transformed the balance of forces in the industrial class

struggle, giving heart and confidence to wide layers of workers, proving to them that militant direct action brings results.

What lessons can we draw from this experience?

We need a strong rank-and-file organisation on the tube, linking militants across the industry.

A tube workers' rank-and-file movement would focus on three things:

- On the need to democratise the main unions: ASLEF, TSSA and the RMT. Despite having an excellent rule book, RMT has a very bad history of calling off strikes without the voted consent of the rank-and-file.

- On winning all tube unions away from the politics of company unionism, and putting the interests of tube worker, and the wider working class at the top of their agenda.

- On promoting cross-union unity at all levels, as the first stage towards a proper industrial union for all tube and rail workers.

Beyond these immediate demands we have to re-orient the key layer of stewards, reps and union activists to the long-term goal of renovating the labour movement from top to bottom, and in particular to opening the unions up to real accountability and control by the members

Support the train guards and conductors!

As we go to press RMT guards and senior conductors have started a campaign of discontinuous strike action to win proper meal and toilet breaks.

The action is slowly spreading through the different Train Operating Companies. The key to victory is solidarity. Drivers must refuse to cover the critical safety work normally done by guards and conductors. If they do, trains will move!

Drivers: don't scab! Victory is still possible!