

Workers News



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Tories on the rampage

NHS

Organise the fightback

IN RECENT weeks, health workers across the capital have taken industrial action to protest against redundancies. Demonstrations have been mounted outside hospitals and through local communities, in complete contrast to the deafening silence from TUC headquarters. While one health authority after another, and also some newly-established trusts, declared budget deficits and redundancies, Norman Willis failed to issue even a single public statement condemning Tory policy towards the NHS.

Under pressure from rank-and-file members, officials from COHSE-NALGO-NUPE were forced to sanction a London-wide day of action for August 21. Privately, the leaders of all the trade unions organising health workers admit that many more cuts and closures are in the pipeline, as a direct result of the introduction of 'market forces' into the NHS. Yet they refuse to share this knowledge with their members. Instead of mobilising to defend jobs and services, they are using bulletins and education programmes in an attempt to reconcile stewards and activists to the break-up of the NHS and the introduction of local consultation and wage bargaining machinery. The task facing workers who already recognise the need for a national mobilisation and strike action is thus made all the harder.

The response of health workers to local calls for action in Bloomsbury and Islington, in Riverside, and at the Royal London Trust revealed some of the weaknesses of the present campaign. These cannot be ignored by serious militants who are anxious to give a lead in the fightback. They are the product of a series of defeats and missed opportunities over the last decade.

Throughout the 1980s, health workers fought attempts to hold down their wages, privatise ancillary grade duties and close hospitals. In 1984-85, there were strikes against privatisation at Hammersmith, Barking and Addenbrookes

hospitals, and occupations against closure at Thornton View geriatric hospital and the South London Women's Hospital. Union leaders made sure that these initiatives remained isolated, and finally withdrew official support from them on the grounds that they were 'unwinnable'. In 1988-89, nurses and ambulance crews took a bold stand in defence of their living standards. But the TUC leaders used every means at their disposal to prevent these disputes becoming the focus of mass action, successfully channelling them into harmless parliamentary protests.

In the NHS, as in other industries, the TUC's failure to mount effective campaigns against cutbacks and closures, poverty wage levels or the anti-union laws has resulted in a weakening of trade union organisation. This has come about in two ways. By abandoning health workers on the picket lines, the trade union leaders opened the door to further Tory attacks - 531 hospitals were to close, 23 per cent of beds taken out of service and thousands more workers condemned to the dole queue, causing a decline in union membership. Among those made redundant were some of the most class conscious workers, but there has also been a loss of shop-floor activists and a growing resistance to joining unions among the workforce through demoralisation and a feeling that the unions are impotent in the face of the Tory juggernaut. Last year, the combined membership of TUC-affiliated unions - in decline since its high point in 1979 - fell by a further 436,000 to 7,757,000.

Many of the lowest-paid health workers were forced to take part-time jobs to supplement the family income. What leaders such as Bickerstaffe of NUPE and Mackenzie of COHSE had to say to them became increasingly irrelevant. Divisions promoted by the union leaders' insistence that the strikes by nurses and ambulance crews were of no concern to ancillary workers

deepened, and were reinforced by some left-wing activists who found it easier to by-pass the growing reluctance of non-nursing grades to take action. Ancillary and clerical workers have borne the brunt of the cuts, have been in the forefront of industrial action, and have nothing to show for it.

The growth of a critical attitude towards trade union officials and leading lights in the Labour Party can have a positive side if militants respond to it seriously in discussions and mass meetings. If it is ignored or treated as evidence of an unwillingness to fight, as it has been in recent weeks by those impatient for results, it can only weaken the possibilities opening up for struggle. What health workers lack now is not so much confidence in their own abilities, but a leadership prepared to go all-out to defeat the Tories. They know only too well that Bickerstaffe and Mackenzie, backed by the TUC, spent most of the last decade with their feet firmly on the brakes. Having experienced the scale of the cuts, the force of the new disciplinary regime, and the disintegration of the NHS into self-managing trusts, they can see that the union leaders have neither adequate policies nor a taste for the fight. So while the scale of the crisis facing health workers has never been greater, an opportunity does exist for agitation around a programme of action which genuinely addresses itself to workers' needs.

But the recession and the setbacks of the last decade weigh heavily on workers, forcing them to think carefully before committing themselves to strike action. This is particularly the case in the NHS where ready-made strike-breaking forces exist in the ranks of professional bodies such as the RCN. The tasks facing health workers must therefore be patiently discussed with all grades in joint meetings and then widely distributed in the form of leaflets. The aim must be a mass mobilisation for indefinite national strike action.



The cumulative effect of the Tory changes to the NHS is approaching a critical point. On April 1, 1993, a third wave of trusts will be created and over two-thirds of the pre-1990 units will then stand outside the state-funded, nationally planned service. Immediately ahead lies the casualisation of health jobs, the removal of trade union rights, and increasing financial problems for both the rump NHS and the trusts.

In some ways then, there has never been a better opportunity to expose the Tories' false promises over the future of the NHS, and to link the struggle to defend jobs and services with those of other embattled workers in the public sector. It was claimed that the trusts would lead to greater choice and better treatment for patients because the new-style general managers would have control over their own budgets. At the same time, the NHS bureaucracy would be reduced in size, releasing money for direct patient care.

The reality is that large hospitals have survived at the expense of smaller ones, and numerous casualty departments, clinics and specialised facilities have closed. Patients and visitors now travel further to hospitals, and wait longer for treatment and for ambulances, than they did in 1979.

Far from being able to plan services in accordance with need, managers are forced to react with crisis techniques as the anarchic and disintegrating effects of the internal market make themselves felt. They have less control, not more, as decision-making is increasingly centralised in the Department of Health. But in contrast to the rest of the workforce, they have received substantial compensation. In 1985, there were 500 senior managerial posts; the number had risen to 9,700 by September 1990! The majority of these mana-

gers are earning between £30,000 and £45,000 a year, and some are making in excess of £70,000.

The problem comes down to this: unless urgent action is taken by health workers, the NHS will effectively cease to exist in April of next year. The task of defending jobs, trade union rights and services cannot be postponed. In order to rally workers on a national basis, it is essential to give the campaign for industrial action the broadest scope. Health workers must fight for the defence of a state-funded, nationally planned NHS, with the sole right to negotiate wages and conditions going to TUC-affiliated unions. An increasing portion of the health service budget disappears into the private sector. This must be answered by demanding the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries, and the end of private health care.

Joint meetings of health workers must be organised. These must become the forums for democratic decision-making, and for the election of strike committees based on the union rank and file. A campaign for mass recruitment to the TUC affiliates must be launched in every workplace, including areas such as doctors' surgeries which are currently unorganised. Within the health unions, left caucuses must be built to fight the bureaucracies. Effective stewards' committees must be established at all levels in the NHS and the trusts, with the task of linking up the fight with those of other public-sector workers. Health workers must be on their guard against attempts which the union leaders will certainly make to divert the struggle from its main objective: the smashing of the internal market and the fight for workers' control of the NHS.

The future of London's hospitals, page 2

INSIDE: The lessons of Zimbabwe - pages 8 & 9

Report calls for closure of eleven London hospitals

THE GOVERNMENT's drive to reduce public expenditure on health care received a boost in June with the publication of the King's Fund Commission's report on the future of London's acute health services. The report states in bald terms that hospitals, medical schools and research facilities should be closed and their services taken over by community health centres.

It recommends the withdrawal of 5,000 beds and the outright closure of at least 11 of the capital's major hospitals. Money for the construction of new health centres would be made available, it argues, by savings in the hospital budget and the sale of unwanted premises. It calls for the establishment of a 'task force' to oversee the changes by the year 2010.

Both the report and the proposal for a task force were given an enthusiastic welcome by Tory health secretary Virginia Bottomley within hours of publication.

The King's Fund was established in 1897 as a charitable organisation, but has largely ceased to donate money for health facilities, concentrating instead on selling management consultancy services to the NHS and running training courses for managers. In its latter capacity, it has been in the forefront of training a new breed of general managers who speak not of cuts and closures, but of 'opportunities for developing new service initiatives'. The Commission was chaired by BBC governor Marmaduke Hussey, chosen, no doubt, because of his experience in putting public service broadcasting on a commercial footing. He was ably assisted by Baroness Cumberlege, at least until April 14 when she resigned to join Virginia Bottomley's department as a junior health minister.

By any standards, the report is seriously flawed. Many of the statistics it draws on are years out of date. Three of London's major hospitals

are not listed, while three outside London are. Among the more fantastic of its claims is that 'Londoners' overall health status is as good or better than that of people living in comparable parts of England'. This was described by the consultant haematologist at University College Hospital as 'pseudo-statistical junk with no scientific basis whatsoever [which] would not pass peer review in any respectable scientific journal'.

The report argues that only 29 of the 44 major hospitals in London need be retained to provide an adequate and efficient service. But don't worry, your life is safe in the Commission's hands - we learn that the 29 'were chosen so that all of the Greater London population would be no more than 30 minutes' "blue light" travelling time from a local (!) acute hospital with an accident and emergency department'.

In some respects, the recommendations anticipate those of the official enquiry being conducted by Professor Tomlinson, which is due to publish its own findings in October. Leaks from these discussions indicate that Tomlinson will call for the closure of two major teaching hospitals; the immediate withdrawal of 2,000 beds; the scrapping of plans to build new hospitals; and the transfer to self-managed trust status of all London's health services. Cuts on this scale would be accompanied by at least 10,000 redundancies.

Because of its emphasis on the shifting of resources into the community, the King's Fund report has won approval from some NHS managers and trade union representatives. While no-one would oppose the increased provision of local health centres, this must not happen at the expense of the acute sector and medical research facilities. The essential aim of the report is not to provide better all-round health care for the capital, but to save money.

No to the Maastricht treaty! FORWARD TO A WORKERS' EUROPE

By Martin Sullivan

THE FRENCH referendum on Maastricht, to be held on September 20, is already giving rise to something approaching panic among the European ruling classes. At the time of writing, a *non* vote looks very much on the cards, with over 50 per cent of the French electorate opposed to ratification. Following on from the Danish vote for rejection in June, this would throw the bosses' plans for the economic and political integration of European capitalism into crisis.

Opposition to Maastricht in France is, of course, by no means consistently anti-capitalist. Organisations across the political spectrum have campaigned for a 'no' vote - from Le Pen's racist and semi-fascist National Front to avowed Trotskyists like the LCR and the Lambertists. Within the working class as a whole, both backward nationalism and class hostility to a bosses' Europe lie behind the anti-Maastricht movement. What is more, these contradictory sentiments undoubtedly coexist even in the minds of individual workers.

But at least French workers are getting the chance to make a decision on the issue. So deep is the Tories' contempt for elementary democratic rights that they use their parliamentary majority to rubber-

stamp ratification of the Maastricht treaty without bothering to seek a popular mandate. If they could get away with this, it was primarily because of the spinelessness of the Labour leadership. Smith, Kinnock and Co couldn't even bring themselves to advocate a parliamentary vote against Maastricht; instead they opted for passive abstention.

Socialists should require no convincing of the anti-working class character of the Maastricht treaty. In every respect a bosses' charter, its purpose is to establish a European super-state capable of competing against the US and Japan. Central to this is the plan for European Monetary Union, which requires national governments to slash budget deficits and reduce inflation. As a result, attacks on the welfare state will be greatly intensified. And the proposal for a common foreign and military policy, which will involve the formation of a European army, is a recipe for imperialist aggression against semi-colonial countries.

None of this excuses the 'little Englander' response among a section of the Labour left, of which Dennis Skinner is unquestionably the worst example. Hailing the Danish 'no' vote on television's *Question Time*, he made the notorious comment that 'there will be no chance now of some "Von Trump" standing for parliament in Cornwall West'. For a self-styled socialist to

come out with such nationalist garbage is nothing short of scandalous. It aligns Skinner with the most reactionary sections of the Conservative Party, headed by Margaret Thatcher. Thus Skinner found himself singing 'Wonderful, Wonderful Copenhagen' in the House of Commons with a backing chorus of right-wing Tories.

Nor should we have any sympathy with another section of the Labour Party, exemplified by the Euro-MPs Stan Newens and Ken Coates, who hold out the prospect of 'socialist' legislation through the Euro-parliament. Economic and political integration is a foregone conclusion, according to their reasoning, and we must fight for reforms within this inexorable process. Their argument finds a 'Trotskyist' echo in *Socialist Organiser*, which declares in favour of a united capitalist Europe (!) and sets itself the objective of 'democratising' the projected European super-state.

But since when has there been the duty of socialists to support the construction of a new imperialist state, even a supra-national one? The duty of revolutionaries is to fight for *working class* unity across Europe, and to fight *against* unification on a capitalist basis. The more obstructions we can raise to the bosses' plans, the easier our task of establishing a workers' Europe will be.

If the French vote goes against Maastricht, this will give a boost to the campaign for a referendum in Britain, which has so far failed to make much headway. As in France, the anti-Maastricht movement here has a mixed political character, with the running being made by extreme right-wing Tories. But this does not mean that socialists should abstain on this question. We should support the democratic right of the working class to a referendum on Maastricht, and call emphatically for a 'no' vote. Our task is to separate the *class* element in workers' opposition to a capitalist Europe from the nationalism with which it is frequently intermingled. There can be no question of co-operation with Tory 'Euro-sceptics' on this issue, and we must distinguish ourselves sharply from the chauvinism to be found among Labour lefts. We must fight for workers' solidarity internationally, and for a *socialist* United States of Europe.

Rail privatisation must be fought

By Daniel Evans

THE TORY assault on transport workers was stepped up in July with the publication of the white paper 'New Opportunities for the Railways: The Privatisation of British Rail'. It comes hot on the heels of London Underground's 'company plan', which entails the sacking of over 5,000 tube workers.

In the white paper, the government outlines plans to:

- Liberalise access to the rail system by removing BR's veto on who can operate trains;
- Franchise passenger services to private bidders;
- Sell off swathes of BR property, including stations;
- Privatised the freight and parcels businesses outright;
- Eventually turn what remains of BR into a privately-run track authority called Railtrack which in turn will contract out many of its responsibilities to other companies;
- Establish a regulatory authority to protect the interests of passengers and operators.

To make the railways more attractive to potential buyers, the government is anxious that the rail

unions should be further weakened. With this in mind, on August 1, BR management abolished the negotiating machinery established in 1956 and replaced it with an interim agreement much less favourable to the workforce. While far from perfect, the old arrangement gave rail workers at least some say in how the industry operated, and included the right to national pay bargaining across all grades.

Described by InterCity managing director Chris Green in a letter to employees as 'the most fundamental change since the bargaining arrangements were set up originally in 1921', the new agreement is a skeleton of the former negotiating machinery, and will disappear completely when the railways are eventually privatised. Yet Jimmy Knapp, the general secretary of the largest and most important rail union, is desperate to present it to his membership as a triumph of his negotiating skills.

While rail workers are facing their biggest challenge for decades, Knapp and the rest of the RMT leaders are preoccupied with a financial crisis caused by declining membership and burgeoning costs. Many hours of the RMT's recent

AGM were given over to discussion of a financial report which cost over £30,000 to produce, while the imminent threat of privatisation was virtually ignored. The leadership's solution to the financial problems will be to further reduce the number of branches, and end the practice of branches retaining a portion of their members' subscriptions to finance local activities.

Privatisation will be a disaster for workers and passengers alike. It will mean thousands of redundancies, and, for those kept on, new contracts of employment with private employers who will refuse to recognise their trade unions. Working conditions will deteriorate and rates of pay will decline; services in general will be reduced and many lines will close altogether; rolling stock will become even more run down; safety will take second place to profits; and fares will continue to rise. The possibility of creating a fully-integrated transport system will have been set back years.

The determination of the Tories to push ahead with privatisation is not in doubt - except, that is, for Jimmy Knapp. He is recommending that rail workers put their faith in the ability of the dozen or so RMT-

sponsored Labour MPs to successfully oppose the white paper in parliament. RMT workers must reject this cretinism and prepare for industrial action, and the left must establish an effective grouping within the union to fight the bureaucracy. The strikes of 1989, despite the treachery of the leadership, showed that united action is possible. Miners and other sections of workers are facing a similar threat to rail workers, and a fight must be waged to establish a joint campaign against the Tory vandals.

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Recession

No end in sight

By David Lewis
and Jon Bearman

THE CURRENT recession in Britain, which at two years is longer than any other downturn since the 1930s, has already brought wholesale economic devastation. The number of business bankruptcies in the first six months of 1992 was almost 40,000, up a third from the same period in 1991. Unemployment stands at an official 2.75 million (about four million in reality) and rising. Scarcely a day goes by without a piece of news which underlines the grim state of the British economy, and extends the date of an upturn. In August, the prediction by Barclays Bank that the recession could last until 1994 was followed closely by the announcement of the worst ever results by the biggest company in the country, British Petroleum. The prospect of a chronic slump now haunts businessmen and Tory politicians alike.

Since the start of the recession, 750,000 jobs have been destroyed in manufacturing and the CBI expects another 400,000 to go by the end of October. These losses reflect at least in part the huge drop in investment of 51 per cent since January 1990. Particularly badly hit has been the machine tool industry, with Matrix Churchill and the Beaver group both in receivership. Britain's share of world production of machine tools is now less than four per cent - to be compared with Germany and Japan, each of which

accounts for around 20 per cent.

The building industry has lost 250,000 jobs since the middle of 1989, and is expected to shed a further 50,000 by the end of the year. The slump in building has been intensified by the Tories' assault on local authority housing programmes, which has led to a virtual standstill in the construction of council housing. In the private sector, new starts are at their lowest level since 1981.

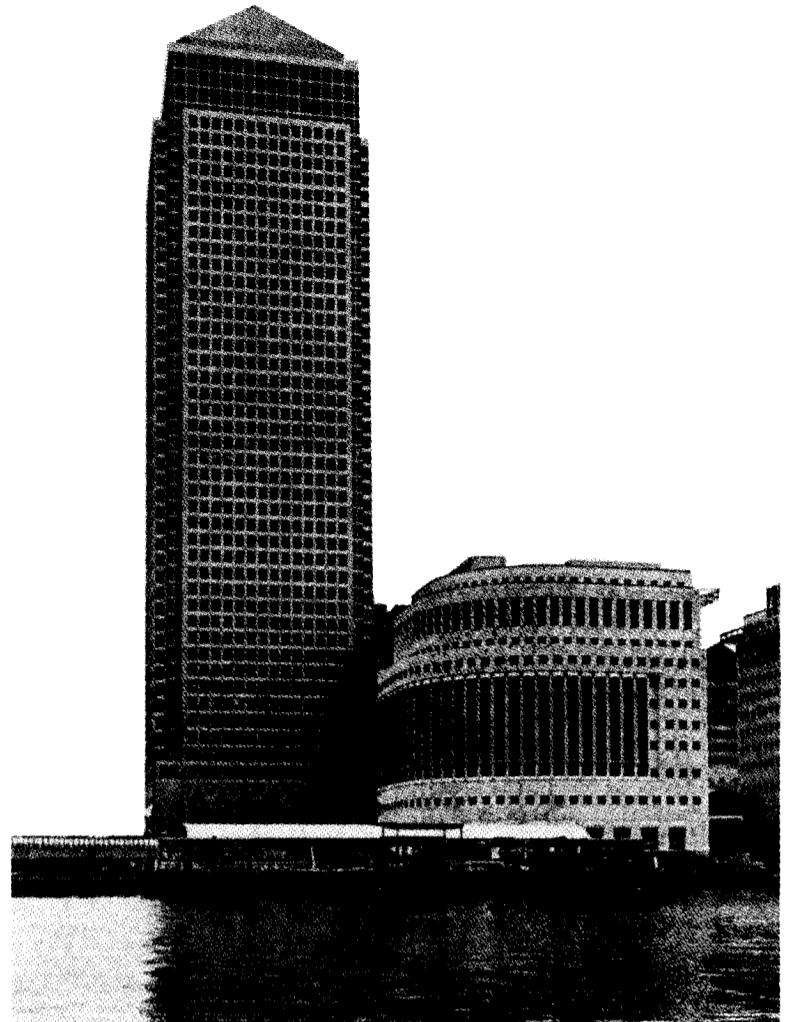
While the state of the British economy is inseparable from developments in the world economy, and particularly those in the United States, the recession here started earlier and is running deeper than in other advanced capitalist countries. The flimsy basis of the preceding upturn, hailed in its time as the 'Thatcher miracle', is now plain for all to see.

During the 1980s, under the banner of the free market, short-termism was brought to a fine art. The Tory government renounced any strategic obligations towards the economy, and towards manufacturing industry in particular. Deregulation of the financial market brought a vast expansion of credit, with unprecedented borrowing both personal and corporate. The consequent surge in consumer spending was fuelled by low interest rates during 1987-88, which further encouraged borrowing, while in early 1988 tax rates for the rich were cut from 60 to 40 per cent and the basic rate by two per cent. The boom produced a substantial growth in the service sector, but failed to reverse the de-industrialisation of the early

Thatcher years. Sooner or later, it was inevitable that the bubble would burst.

The mounting balance of payments problem which resulted from the Lawson boom has not been ended by the economy's slide into recession. The trade deficit was £5.1 billion for the first half of 1992, compared with the same figure for the whole of 1991. Even a recovery of domestic consumer demand would simply suck in more imports and aggravate the deficit. As the more critical bourgeois economic commentators repeatedly point out, what is required is a major restructuring of the British economy with an emphasis on the renovation of the manufacturing base.

But this is the kind of long-term strategic thinking which the British ruling class has never shown any aptitude for. Although Thatcherism, with its emphasis on privatisation, deregulation, marketisation, and de-unionisation, marked a sharp break with the previous period of welfare capitalism, its short-term outlook represented a continuation of the British bourgeoisie's traditional economic philosophy. Historically, the decline of British capitalism has been associated with the pursuit of immediate returns and a lack of concern for the future. This shows itself in under-investment in private industry, low spending on research and development and neglect of important basic public resources such as roads and rail. Dividends paid to shareholders in Britain are at least double those paid in Germany, while investment is expected to pay



All is not well in the enterprise economy

off here in less than four years compared with over ten years there.

The more light-minded economic analysts merely deny that any serious structural problems exist. According to *The Economist*, the news is not all bad and the labour market is picking up; home owners (those who haven't been repossessed) now have more spare cash due to the drop in mortgage rates and will soon regain the confidence to venture out into the high street and 'start splashing out again'; and 'British companies are in fine shape for any recovery'. *The Independent* of-

fers advice to the worried reader who wants to help bring about recovery: if your job is secure, your credit card balance low, mortgage manageable and house worth more, then buy a new car, take a holiday and replace your computer.

But as the current sterling crisis indicates, any recovery from recession in Britain will be a muted affair, and will rest on a low-wage, high-unemployment economy. For the one thing that Thatcher and her followers did not and could not do was reverse the descent into senility of British capitalism.

Royalty on the ropes

By our palace
correspondent

IT IS no secret that the monarchy has been going through a bit of a sticky patch recently. First of all, a biography of the Princess of Wales, serialised in *The Sunday Times*, revealed that she had been reduced to such misery by her marriage to the heir to the throne that she had made several suicide attempts. This was followed by eight pages of fuzzy photographs in the *Daily Mirror*, featuring a topless Duchess of York

in close consultation with her 'financial adviser'. The *Mirror* then found itself trumped by *The Sun*, which regaled its readers with the transcript of a telephone conversation between the future Queen of England ('Squidgy' to her close friends) and a male admirer. There has even been a suggestion that the present incumbent of the throne was enjoying a post-coital glass of wine with palace intruder Michael Fagan when he was discovered in her bedroom ten years ago. (Remembering the somewhat lumpen Mr Fagan from his days as a Workers Revolutionary Party member, we would have to regard this as a rather remote possibility.)

It takes an effort to recall that, back in the nineteenth century, political theorist Walter Bagehot saw the monarchy as part of the 'dignified' aspect of the British constitution. He argued that it had to be 'kept aloof from ordinary people', while being 'paraded like a pageant' on ceremonial occasions. Today, the royal family is 'paraded' like the stars of a soap opera, with millions of 'ordinary people' eagerly awaiting the latest twist in the plot. It is scarcely surprising that, according to an opinion poll, the majority of her majesty's 'loyal subjects' think it unlikely that the monarchy will still be around 100 years from now.

A monarch is not an essential feature of capitalist society; other countries make do with a president. But in Britain, ever since the Victorian era when it was consciously

built up into an institution of awe and veneration, the monarchy has played an important political role for the ruling class. It provides an ideological cement for the fraud of 'national unity', while legitimising the social hierarchy and vast differentials in wealth which are at the heart of class society. (The Queen herself 'earns' a cool £7.9 million a year tax free, though other royals have to scrape by on rather less.) Nor does the crown serve a merely symbolic function. It possesses far-reaching constitutional powers which, as the 1975 'Canberra coup' in Australia demonstrated, allow for the overthrow by royal decree of an elected government.

Because of the monarchy's constitutional importance, the capitalist press has in the past treated it with a certain deference. Even the 'Dianagate' tape gathered dust for over two years in one of Rupert Murdoch's safes, for fear of the damage it would do to the royal family's reputation. Yet, in the event, *The Sun* went ahead and published the contents anyway. One of the most reactionary capitalist newspapers thus made its contribution to weakening an important political and ideological prop of capitalist society.

What is going on here? Has there been an outbreak of republicanism among the British bourgeoisie? Scarcely. The motivation behind these exposures is merely the cut-throat competition between rival newspaper groupings. A slab of

salacious gossip about the royals does wonders for a paper's circulation - witness the 400,000 increase in the *Mirror's* print run which accompanied the publication of the 'Fergie' photos. What has happened is that certain capitalists in the publishing world have elevated their own profit-grabbing above the interests of the class as a whole. The 'market forces' which were given free rein in the 1980s, in order to undermine the collective strength of the working class, have evidently had the side effect of undermining the capitalists' own sense of collective self-interest.

This is to the advantage of socialists. We should have no time for liberal hand-wringing over the inva-



sion of the 'private lives' of those who publicly personify all the old claptrap about the sanctity of marriage and the family. The exposure of their hypocrisy should give impetus to our campaign to dump them into the dustbin of history, where they belong. We say: Down with the monarchy! For a socialist republic!

NEW FROM Prinkipo Press HOW THE BOLSHEVIKS ORGANISED THE UNEMPLOYED

By Sergei Malyshev

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution in Russia, thousands of workers in St Petersburg were locked out of their factories and victimised. This pamphlet, first published in 1931, shows how the Unemployed Council under the leadership of the Bolsheviks fought back, wringing concessions out of the City Duma and maintaining the unity of the working class. Its author was a local Bolshevik leader who was a participant in the struggle.

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The imperialists have big problems. Their economies are all either in recession or experiencing what's politely known as 'sluggish growth'. In the US, the crisis shows no sign of going away; in Britain, it shows every sign of getting worse. And in South Africa, the masses have forced the ANC/SACP to break off its treacherous negotiations with the De Klerk regime. Reasons to be cheerful? Yes, but only if we use the opportunity to press forward the struggle for socialism. The Workers News £10,000 Building Fund stands at £3,152.53, and please don't forget our £300 Monthly Fund. Send your donations to: Workers News, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE.

CIVIL WAR IN THE BALKANS

Philip Marchant replies to a letter criticising the WIL's support for self-determination for the minority peoples of the former Yugoslavia

UNDERLYING comrade Gelis's argument is the assumption that Serbia is waging a progressive war for the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and that – at least in the hands of the Serbian irregulars – this struggle objectively constitutes a defence of the gains of the working class. Consequently, demands for self-determination by minority peoples and republics of the former Yugoslavia are merely a ramp for imperialist intervention in the Balkans, and can in no way be supported.

In our opinion, the complexities of the national question in the Balkans today cannot be dealt with by loose analogies with the situation during the Second World War; they must be studied concretely. Otherwise there is a serious danger of the kind of wishful thinking that attributes to the Serbian forces motives which they themselves do not claim. Blindness to Serbian chauvinism is combined with the view that the national aspirations of Croats, Slovenians and South Slav Muslims are inevitably fascist and pro-imperialist in character.

The logic of comrade Gelis's position, which is close to that of the KDE of Greece, should lead him in the first instance to argue not with the WIL, but with Leon Trotsky. His objections to our defence of self-determination are very reminiscent of those levelled at Trotsky's support for an independent Soviet Ukraine – that it would weaken a workers' state, that it would aid imperialism, fascism and reaction, etc. And since it is undeniably true that when the Nazis invaded the Ukraine they were greeted as liberators, will he now come out and say that Trotsky betrayed the Soviet Union?

Unfortunately, comrade Gelis has misunderstood the dialectic of the national question. The Bolsheviks recognised that in order to maintain the unity of the Soviet Union it was necessary to make a compromise in the form of a federation, in which the right of secession was enshrined in the constitution. Fifteen years into the Stalinist degeneration, Trotsky recognised that the failure to resolve the pre-Soviet 'democratic' tasks of the Russian Revolution was giving the national question an acute character. If revolutionaries failed to champion the right to secede, the minority peoples would turn to reactionary nationalists.

Half a century later, comrade Gelis waves aside such considerations. But if the masses are presently under the leadership of reactionaries, is this not a consequence of their experience of Serbian 'socialism'? What are they likely to think of 'Trotskyists' who tell them – despite everything they have undergone – that there is no national question at stake?

When by their every action the masses of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have indicated their desire for independence from a unitary Yugoslavia (which in practice means a state dominated by Serbia), it is foolish in the extreme to imagine they can be dragooned back into it by wagging a finger and accusing them of serving the interests of imperialism. In fact the KDE ends up tail-ending the nationalism of the Serbs: 'Serbia . . . was the area of two social revolutions and the backbone of the South-Slav

union for many centuries . . . The Serbs are the largest nationality of Yugoslavia and live in all parts of the country. They constitute its main backbone . . .' (KDE discussion document, July 1992.) This is nothing short of a theory of Serbian 'manifest destiny'! And apparently the irony hasn't struck home that the same could be said of Russians in the Soviet Union. Or has Serbian chauvinism got an inherently different character to its Great Russian cousin?

Although comrade Gelis and the KDE cannot quite bring themselves to say it, it would be more honest of them to admit that they are opposed

What line should socialists take?

fact that he was threatened with the loss of the two most economically developed republics. By the time Croatia and Slovenia declared independence on June 25, 1991, Milosevic had recognised that creating an enlarged Serbia was his only option.

There isn't the slightest indication that the irregulars disagree with this strategy, or that they are any less committed to the restoration of capitalism than Milosevic. The partition of Bosnia was agreed last year in a meeting between Milosevic and Croatian president Franjo Tudjman; this decision was confirmed when leaders of Bosnia's Serbian and Croatian communities met in April – an odd move for anyone intent on defending the federation. The stated aim of the irregulars is to 'defend Serbs' by annexing as much 'ethnically Serbian' territory as possible and expelling 'disloyal' Muslims and Croats. Comrade Gelis

were not the only tendencies he identified within the bureaucracy. 'Between these two poles,' he wrote, 'there are intermediate, diffused Menshevik-SR-liberal tendencies which gravitate towards bourgeois democracy.' In addition, presiding over all these 'mounting antagonisms' was Stalin's Bonapartist clique. It was definitely not his view that a large section of the bureaucracy would move to the left, still less that it would make the political revolution – that was only possible through an insurrection of the oppressed Soviet masses under the leadership of the Fourth International. He stressed that the revolutionary elements were small in number and passive, whereas the fascist elements were growing, expressing 'with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism'. Today, it remains possible that *individual* Stalinists could find

predominantly nationalised, the decisive factor here is the absence of a state power which defends non-capitalist property relations. Milosevic accepts capitalist restoration, makes no claims to be defending 'socialism', does not challenge the future semi-colonial status of Serbia and allows monarchists to parade on the streets of Belgrade. The only substantial organised opposition comes from even further to the right. The economy is in ruins: 40 per cent of productive capacity was lost with the departure of Slovenia and Croatia; tourism, a major foreign currency earner and a vital source of employment, has collapsed; the land route between the southern Balkans and western Europe, which brought substantial income from tolls and customs dues, is closed; prices are at least doubling every month; unemployment is growing – exacerbated by half a million Serbian refugees from the breakaway republics; and the country is under imperialist blockade. The bureaucratically planned economy, in crisis long before the civil war, no longer exists.

There are no solutions to the Balkan problem this side of a workers' revolution, but it is crucial to understand how the fight for democratic principles interlaces with this task. The experience of Stalinism has created illusions in bourgeois democracy and strengthened the nationalism of Muslim and Croatian workers. We won't break them from this by counterposing their demands for self-determination with abstract internationalism; and especially not by calling on them to support the Serbs!

Finally it is necessary to answer comrade Gelis's clumsy accusation that our position constitutes a 'Healyite' pro-imperialist cop-out, tailored to nationalist ends. Let's be clear – what we call for is a consistent struggle against all existing nationalist leaderships combined with military resistance to the Serbian onslaught (and to Croatian annexation). We are for the defence of nationalised property and the gains of workers of all nationalities. We are for a Balkan Socialist Federation and are opposed to any imperialist intervention. In the event of a sustained attack on the Serbs by UN-sponsored forces, we would be for the defence of Serbia as a non-imperialist nation. Anyone who thinks that such a policy will be welcomed by Bosnian and Croatian nationalists and fascists is not living in the real world! It is a certainty that any group of Trotskyists upholding such a line would suffer sharp repression, and would in any case be illegal. As for the late and unlamented Gerry Healy, neither he nor the 'International Committee tradition' – from which the KDE is itself descended – ever developed any consistent programmatic position on the national question.

The continuing conflict in the Balkans will undoubtedly spawn additional national struggles. Vojvodina, the province in the north of Serbia, has a large Hungarian population; Kosovo, the province in the south which had its autonomous status revoked by Belgrade in 1989, is 90 per cent Albanian; one-fifth of Macedonia's population is Albanian, while there are Macedonians living in neighbouring Greece, Bulgaria and Albania. If Trotskyists fail to appreciate the importance of the national question in the post-Stalinist Balkans, they will be sidelined. Because of their proximity to the theatre of conflict, the comrades in Greece have a particular responsibility in this matter.

Dear comrades,

The capitalist media is full of stories about 'human rights', the defence of minorities (Kurdish, Croat, Muslim, etc), food relief for besieged and starving peoples, the burying of babies (Kuwait), and the suffering of children (Sarajevo). The monopoly of international events by US imperialism, side by side with the collapse of the USSR, has led in turn to general agreement on the need for Bush's 'new world order'.

For people and organisations which for years followed Healy, this has proved to be a testing time. From admirers of Saddam Hussein when he was butchering communists, they became admirers of the Kurds while the US was in Iraq. From admirers of Tito (Healy), they've become admirers of Croatia, Slovenia and whichever republic or nationality seeks human rights in alliance with US imperialism.

In the July 1992 issue of Workers News, we are told that Belgrade has 'expansionist aims' and is pursuing 'ethnic cleansing', at the same time as 'delaying' the restoration of capitalism. 'The call for western military intervention, though understandable (!) from those subject to murderous (!) artillery and sniper fire, is profoundly mistaken' are all phrases which could have come out of *The Guardian*, albeit with a few 'Trotskyist' corrections!

As in the bourgeois press, no distinction is made between the Serbian leaders in Belgrade, the federal army and the so-called irregulars. All are lumped together as if they were a single entity fighting for the same goal. The disintegration of a Stalinist state, Trotsky argued in *The Transitional Programme*, would lead to the fragmentation of the bureaucracy into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary camps. One cannot predict how the participants will change during the course of the war. But what we can say is that the Serbs are not exactly the same as imperialism

would have us believe. The history of the resistance movement against the Nazis is ingrained in people's minds, and that includes sections of the army. It's important to note that the imperialists have repeatedly asked Milosevic to control his army.

The fact that there are forces on the ground which are attacking imperialism (in its UN guise) and its puppets, and are resisting by force of arms the dissolution of Yugoslavia is of no interest to us because, after all, Trotskyists aren't leading this struggle. We cannot side with them, even critically – that's somewhat the position of the WIL.

No British left-wing papers have ever mentioned the US State Department's director of foreign broadcasts, Mr Souha, hoping that if he isn't referred to then maybe he'll go away. Even the bourgeois papers in Greece have published extracts from his speeches. If they are read, the aims and purposes of US foreign policy become crystal clear: the re-drawing of the borders of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece and the creation of a 'Balkan EC'. This can realistically only be achieved by direct imperialist intervention. The US, as it was in the Gulf, is confronted by a dilemma: to intervene will mean confrontation and defeat; not to intervene will mean the end of the 'new world order'. Either way, we are on the verge of major changes, which will have a significant impact on the working class movement internationally.

With the above in mind, a change in the direction of the WIL is called for on the Balkans. Other fragments of Healyism have already disintegrated. It would be unfortunate if, as a result of Balkan developments, the WIL followed in their footsteps.

Yours unpeacefully,
V.N. Gelis
July 18, 1992

to the slogan of self-determination at this end of the 20th century. And if they arrive at such a conclusion, could they also tell us when, how and under what circumstances this demand became historically defunct? In the meantime, let us propose as preliminary reading Lenin's writings on the national question, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism*, and Trotsky's articles on the Ukraine.

Having established to his own satisfaction that the Slovenians, Croats and Bosnian Muslims are 'in alliance with US imperialism', comrade Gelis goes on to present an idealised picture of the irregulars. Unlike the leaders in Belgrade, he says, they are 'resisting by force of arms the dissolution of Yugoslavia' and the attempt by US imperialism to impose its 'new world order' on the Balkans.

First, let us dismiss the notion that any of the power groups in Serbia are fighting to restore the Yugoslav federation. Though this may have been Milosevic's initial aim, it was rapidly overtaken by events, and in any case was inspired only by the

suggests that we have fallen for an imperialist disinformation campaign, but eye-witness reports confirm that this is indeed what they are doing. They have become the shock troops in the project to construct a 'racially purified' Greater Serbia, making them currently the most influential factor in Yugoslavia's continued disintegration.

Of course there are differences between the Serbian leaders and the irregulars, but only of degree. It's convenient for Milosevic and his millionaire prime minister, Milan Panic, from the point of view of diplomatic relations with the west, to pose as moderates. However, it was Milosevic who promoted the Greater Serbia project – through his supporter Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs. For the sake of consistency, comrade Gelis should also be hailing Milosevic as a 'fighter against imperialism'!

To say that Trotsky argued that the Stalinist bureaucracy would fragment into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary camps is just not true. In the first place, 'genuine Bolshevism' and 'complete fascism'

their way to Trotskyism, but it is far less likely than in 1938 that even a small revolutionary faction could develop, so thoroughly have Bolshevik traditions been eradicated.

To provide a historical precedent for the 'progressive mission' of the irregulars, comrade Gelis cites the struggle of the partisans against the Nazi occupying forces in the Second World War. This is romantic nonsense. Without detracting anything from their heroic war record, it is necessary to remember that the partisans were led by Stalinists, who mobilised in Yugoslavia as in the Soviet Union under essentially patriotic slogans. Presumably it is this same logic which rules out a genuine national question in Croatia, on the grounds that the Croat 'collective memory' is one of supporting the fascist Ustashe.

Even if Serbia/Montenegro were still a deformed workers' state, as comrade Gelis seems to believe, it would in no way justify Serbian policy. In our opinion, however, it ceased to be one in the summer of 1991 with the break-up of the federation. Though the economy remains

Brazil

Workers Party bids for respectability

From Portilho Simoes
in Sao Paulo

THE BRAZILIAN section of the LIT, Convergencia Socialista (CS), was recently expelled from the Workers Party (PT). Causa Operaria, the organisation linked to the Partido Obrero in Argentina, had been expelled previously, although in fact it had always been more outside the PT than in. Some small regional groups left the PT with the CS.

The justification given by the National Executive for the expulsion was the fact that the CS had its own headquarters, its own finances, its own paper, etc, and that therefore it 'was not abiding by the resolutions of the 10th Party Congress' held in November 1991. In reality, there was a political conflict which was expressed in the argument over whether to prioritise the parliamentary struggle or work in the mass movement.

The leadership of the PT has a 'political project' characterised precisely by its giving precedence to parliamentary action, negotiations with the employers, elections, and alliances with the bourgeois parties

– to the detriment of the mass struggle – on the basis of its evaluation that 'the mass movement is weak and cannot achieve anything'.

This 'political project' is nothing new. It goes back to the 1982 elections, when the PT was debating whether it should run its own candidates or whether it should back the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement), the party which represented the official bourgeois opposition to the dictatorship and which is not even socialist.

It was decided that the PT should run its own candidates. The result was that the party gathered strength in the mass movement every year, as well as increasing its seats in the Congress with each successive election. Giving the lie to initial charges that the PT would be politically unviable, it not only became the largest workers' party in the history of the country but also came close to winning the general elections of 1989, obtaining 30 million votes!

The expulsion of the 20,000 or so militants of the CS is a natural consequence of the Workers Party's shift to the right. By giving priority to the struggle on the parliamentary level and by expelling what it considers to be a 'radical' current, the

PT leadership is indicating to the bourgeoisie that it is in control, that the PT is a 'trustworthy' party. In the course of the PT's 12-year existence, the leadership has on several occasions threatened to expel the CS, and the CS has threatened to leave.

It so happens that the Argentinian MAS, the biggest party within the LIT, has just split. The CS leaders understand that this split could spread (or is perhaps already spreading) to their own ranks, and that the situation, therefore, is delicate. Expulsion from the PT may represent a way in which to keep the tendency together.

The CS is today pushing for the establishment of a 'Revolutionary Front' with some small regional groups, inviting all revolutionary currents to take part. It believes that this would be the embryo of a 'revolutionary party' – which is a great step forward considering that not too long ago the CS declared itself as the 'embryo of the revolutionary party'.

After the expulsion, the feeling within the CS was more of relief than resentment. The rightward shift of the PT meant that 'it was not possible to remain within the party any longer'. Particularly serious was



Police make an arrest during the bus workers' strike in Sao Paulo

the confrontation between the bus drivers' trade union (where the CS has some influence) and the PT-controlled municipal government, at the time of the bus drivers' strike in Sao Paulo. The repression meted out to the strikers was worthy of any bourgeois administration, with police violence, the arrest of activists, arbitrary sackings, etc. However, the PT's National Executive did not expel Luiz Erudina, the mayor of Sao Paulo, from the party.

On the grounds that the 'PT of struggle is dead', the CS decided to abandon the fight within the party. It considers that 'the PT is now as bureaucratized as the Socialist Party in France and the Labour Party in Britain, making it impossible to work within it'. Rather than putting up a sharp fight against the expulsion, it has decided to proceed with building the 'Revolutionary Front'.

Nevertheless, many leftists within the PT seem to disagree with the CS line. They have opted to remain in the PT to defend their positions, hoping to win the party over to the revolution in spite of its bureaucratization and the bleak prospects that exist today.

For its part, the PT leadership was worried that it might lose votes to such a 'Revolutionary Front' and offered to include any CS candidates in the coming municipal elections on a joint slate. The CS has accepted the invitation.

Available from Workers News

Critical Comments on the
Policies of the LIT

The Simon Bolivar Brigade

60p each including postage

Boris Yeltsin
(From Bolshevik
to Democrat)

By John Morrison
Penguin £8.99

Review by Daniel Evans

THIS IS less 'the first complete biography of Russia's new democratic leader' as claimed, more a journalist's-eye view of events in the Soviet Union from the emergence of *Glasnost* and *perestroika* to the failed August coup of one year ago, with Yeltsin in the central role.

Despite its superficial and prejudiced analysis, it is of some use as a condensed record of the events of that period by an outsider who had privileged access to many of the leading players. But Morrison plays down Yeltsin's 25-year career as a leading Stalinist bureaucrat because it doesn't conform with the heroic image he wishes to convey.

As a student of civil engineering in Sverdlovsk, Yeltsin had no connection with the Communist Party, nor, apparently, any interest in politics. But he was extremely ambitious. After graduating in 1955 and working as a labourer for a year in order to 'get to know the workers', he rose swiftly to become a chief engineer and accepted the offer of party membership that came with the job.

In 1963 he became the full-time official of the CPSU responsible for construction in the province of Sverdlovsk; in 1975, secretary to the provincial party; in 1976, first secretary of the Sverdlovsk party, appointed by Brezhnev; and in 1981, a CPSU central committee member. He moved to Moscow in 1985 to head a section of the central committee construction department.

As Gorbachev cautiously set about removing the 'old school' and formulating his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, he used Yeltsin to replace the Brezhnevite Viktor Grishin as head of the Moscow city party, a post which brought with it a place on the Politburo. Yeltsin later reflected on why he had been chosen as part of Gorbachev's team: 'He knew my character and no doubt felt certain I would be able to clear away the old debris, and that I was tough enough to carry out a wholesale clean-up of the personnel.'

Gorbachev represented that section of the bureaucracy which thought the first step to reviving the Soviet economy was the ending of corruption in the political and industrial structures. *Glasnost* was an attempt to harness the resentment against bureaucratic privilege, and use it in a controlled way to oust a layer of managers and functionaries. A path would be cleared for the limited introduction of 'market forces', which would improve living standards and thus assure the continued rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Yeltsin quickly established himself as one of the most enthusiastic champions of the project. Special benefits for leaders should be abolished, he said, 'wherever they are unjustified'. He soon earned the hatred of subordinates and colleagues by bringing the attack on privilege too close to home. Even Gorbachev took a step back, describing the lavish perks enjoyed by bureaucrats as the equivalent of a 'canteen in a factory'.

Yeltsin developed a populist im-

age; there are stories of him striding into shops and forcing managers to put on sale the goods he knew had been delivered that morning, but which were being reserved for the bureaucracy or for sale on the black market. 'An economic reform does not yield benefits if it stops halfway,' he was fond of saying.

But his zeal for change was beginning to pose a threat to the entire basis of Stalinist rule. The bureaucracy closed ranks, sabotaged his projects and organised to get rid of him. Under acute personal pressure he resigned from the Politburo in October 1987, following meetings during which he was ridiculed and humiliated, not least by Gorbachev. *Perestroika*, Yeltsin now claimed, 'had failed'.

After recovering from a heart attack, Yeltsin started work as first deputy of the state committee for construction – nothing but paperwork, but it was in Moscow. Meanwhile, the differences in the party had become a very public affair. *Glasnost*, previously of interest mainly to the intelligentsia, was taken up by workers, some of whom began to look to Yeltsin to resolve their problems. Having reportedly attempted suicide, Yeltsin's spirits now began to rise as he sensed that opinion was swinging in his direction. He later wrote that he developed 'an itch to be a real politician, not a supermanager'. 'New times were on the way, unpredictable and unfamiliar, in which I had to find a place for myself.'

That place was as the open advocate of capitalist restoration. How Yeltsin subsequently found his niche is dealt with at some length in

the book, but from the standpoint of someone who agrees that capitalist 'democracy' represents the only alternative to Stalinism. Whether Morrison actually believes that Yeltsin stood virtually alone during the attempted coup of August 1991, or just recognises that it makes better copy presented that way, is

not clear. But the result is that the collapse of the Soviet Union comes over merely as a struggle between larger-than-life personalities. Useful though it is in charting Yeltsin's transformation from a Stalinist bureaucrat into a capitalist politician, the book can have no more than an ephemeral appeal.

Strike action in Greece

From an Athens correspondent

A STRIKE by public-sector workers against the government's 'big bang' austerity measures brought Greece to a standstill on August 27. It followed a month of almost daily demonstrations by Athens bus drivers, all 9,000 of whom have been sacked.

As with the last 24-hour strike on August 7, the day that 30 per cent price increases were introduced, the large demonstrations of transport, postal, bank, power, water and telecommunications workers through the capital went off peacefully. They were firmly controlled by trade union officials to avoid the outbreaks of militant action that have accompanied some of the bus workers' marches.

With many union branches voting for indefinite strikes to start from September, the Pasokites and Stalinists have had to work overtime to prevent other public-sector workers from rallying behind the bus drivers in a direct challenge to the Mitsotakis government. Leaders of the General Confederation of Greek

Workers are attempting to channel the unrest – which has also seen streets blockaded by redundant workers in Patras – into a series of one-day strikes.

The sacking of the bus workers has set the tone for the government's attempt to resolve the worsening economic problems. Greece has one of the largest proportions of state employees of any country in Europe, and Mitsotakis has targeted them as a prime area for trimming government expenditure.

But the impact of the austerity programme has been so severe that many commentators are predicting mass riots within a short space of time. In addition to the steep price rises, the measures have meant increases in taxation, cuts in social services and a raising of the pensionable age. Still to come are legal curbs on trade union power, the abolition of national pay scales, wage restraint and the break-up and privatisation of much of the public sector.

EDITORIAL

Russia one year after the coup

THE AFTERMATH of the August 1991 coup was supposed to change everything. The old guard was thoroughly discredited and Gorbachev, the architect of measures which had alienated all sections of Soviet society, was unceremoniously dumped. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, war was declared on the half-way house of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Russian president Boris Yeltsin was the man of the hour and 'radical reform' placed at the top of the agenda. One year on, however, there is a strange parallel to the Gorbachev era. Even if the political centre of gravity has swung sharply to the right, Yeltsin, like his predecessor, is engaged in a balancing act.

This is not to say that major changes have not taken place. The resistance of that section of the Stalinist bureaucracy which dreamed of going back to Brezhnev, if not Stalin, has been swept aside, and it is now a disgruntled minority. A much larger section of the bureaucracy has passively or actively adapted itself to the new regime in order to reap the rewards of managing the transition to capitalism. A smaller portion, backed by Western advisers and supported by the imperialists, seeks the shortest route to capitalism via a crash programme of privatisation.

The bulk of the ex-Soviet officer corps, which watched from the sidelines in August 1991 to see which way the wind was blowing, no longer defends nationalised property even in its old 'contradictory' fashion. Its political allegiance is to a resurgent Russian nationalism. It does not aspire to the mantle of a 'Red Army' defending socialism. It wants its position protected in the post-Stalinist set-up.

A new Bonapartism has arisen upon the ruins of the world's first workers' state, with Yeltsin balancing between contending social forces, mediating between them, and, in part, ruling over their heads. But this is a weak Bonapartism resting on a crumbling economy; a restorationist regime without the support of a viable indigenous capitalist class. It has lent a new meaning to Lenin's phrase 'a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie'. Presidential decrees can be signed, but Yeltsin is finding out, like Gorbachev, that the pen is weaker than bureaucratic inertia.

Yeltsin is certainly a skilled political manoeuvrer, but he is economically hemmed in on all sides. Production has fallen by as much as 30 per cent since the coup, the IMF estimates that inflation may reach 1,000 per cent by the end of the year, and rouble convertibility has once more been postponed. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Western investment is little more than a trickle and that, like Gorbachev the year before, Yeltsin came away from the Group of Seven summit in July almost empty-handed. Only \$1 billion out of a \$24 billion aid package was made available, the remainder being contingent upon an IMF-controlled crash 'reform' programme. Echoing his words to Gorbachev, US president George Bush said: 'I don't know if there's enough money in the world instantly to solve the problem of the Russian economy.' Yeltsin's call for a two-year moratorium on the CIS republics' huge foreign debt and his offer to barter Russian state property fell on deaf ears. Japan added a further condition, demanding the return of the Kurile islands.

The first instalment of the shock therapy – the 'freeing' of prices in January – resulted in the real value of workers' wages falling to 40 per cent of the 1991 average. But this has done little to stimulate capital formation, since property remains overwhelmingly nationalised. On the other hand, administering the medicine of privatisation is almost as dangerous to the capitalist patient as leaving the disease unchecked. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, Yeltsin's government zigzagged on the central questions of economic policy during the first half of this year.

The contradictory pressures facing the restorationists are concentrated within the government itself. On one side stands prime minister Yegor Gaidar, a supporter of the fast-track approach, and on the other vice-president Alexander Rutskoi, a proponent of more gradual reform. Gaidar's policies are also strongly opposed by Arkady Volsky, who speaks on behalf of the managers of state-owned enterprises. They are demanding large subsidies to help keep their factories open and transform them into capitalist concerns. Central Bank chairman Georgy Matyukhin, who favoured tighter control of credit and money supply, resigned in July. Gaidar's ally foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev is at odds with army and KGB chiefs who, like Rutskoi, favour more active intervention and support to ethnic Russians in other CIS republics.

Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin is trying to be most things to most people – retaining and promoting 'conservatives' in the army, negotiating arms reductions, defusing conflicts in Moldova and the Ukraine, while promising 'liberals' more control over the defence, interior and security ministries.

IMF pressure succeeded inasmuch as the Russian parliament passed a privatisation bill on June 11, whose targets include the selling off of all small enterprises, one-third of medium to large ones and a considerable part of public housing in the 15 months after October 1. But the plan is based on the unreal scenario that the economy will have stabilised by the end of the year and that inflation will be reduced to 40 per cent. The IMF wants a reduction in the budget deficit and decisive action to break up collective agriculture before any large-scale aid is agreed. Faced with a rebellion by state and collective farmers demanding higher grain prices, however, agricultural subsidies have been raised, making an early reduction of the budget deficit impossible.

Not only is the timescale of the restorationists' plans highly optimistic, but it cannot be carried through without a massive attack on the working class. A major issue of share vouchers would also stimulate inflation, cutting across further IMF aid. Despite the influence of social democratic, syndicalist, 'self-management' and nationalist ideas, Russian workers remain wary of the reforms. But they urgently need to convert this into organised, independent action. At the same time, a nationalist-militarist coup cannot be excluded. One thing is certain: the Yeltsin coalition is increasingly unstable, and is piling up more explosive material under itself every day.

BEHIND THE Part Two

'Crisis? What crisis?'

THE LEADERS of Militant have attempted to pass off the devastating split in their organisation as no more than a minor inconvenience. Ted did sterling work in the past, they tell the membership, but he'd become old and set in his ways, and couldn't understand the tactical flexibility required by the new situation. And now it's business as usual.

The leadership majority under Peter Taaffe had obviously come to regard Grant as an albatross round their necks. ('I've had to put up with him for 25 years,' an exasperated Taaffe exclaimed at one point in the dispute. Truly a cry from the heart!) They evidently believed that, once they had off-loaded this conservative ballast, the tendency would surge forward to further victory-crowned achievements. Some, at least, among the Militant rank and file would appear to have swallowed this line. Questioned about the crisis in the tendency, they have responded blithely: 'What crisis?'

The more thoughtful of Militant's members, however, must find the leadership's story far from convincing. In the aftermath of the split Taaffe has reportedly been forced to lay off almost a third of the full-timers. And it is clear that the tendency has suffered a serious decline in numbers since the ebb of the anti-poll tax campaign, now finding itself overtaken by the SWP as the largest organisation on the left. Even in Militant's traditional heartlands on Merseyside, membership has fallen from perhaps 600 at the height of the struggle against rate-capping to little more than a quarter of that figure today. And in the May local elections the Broad Left won only one seat, losing heavily to official Labour or Liberal Democrat candidates. Only in Scotland would the tendency appear to be making any real headway.

Militant's problems are not, of course, a product only of its internal crisis. They also reflect the fact that, contrary to Taaffe's predictions of imminent working class radicalisation, and of great opportunities opening up outside the Labour Party, there is at present a historical low in the class struggle in Britain. This has left the Militant leadership floundering, looking around for ways to justify their claims of imminent mass membership. In addition to the usual trick of fiddling the figures, they have increasingly resorted to recruitment on a minimal political basis, resulting in the inevitable high turnover of members and a further lowering of their cadres' political level.

A return to orthodox Grantism?

For their part, Socialist Appeal supporters have shown a greater willingness to critically re-examine the recent past. They have publicly renounced the old sectarian methods whereby the tendency refused to work or even discuss with other left groups. While this is to be welcomed, it must be said that a more comradely attitude towards those formerly dismissed as 'the sects' will not of itself lead to a revolutionary orientation. And if Socialist Appeal supporters are to come to grips with the political origins of the split, they will have to delve very much further back into the tendency's past.

When the Grantite opposition coalesced in the summer of 1991, its leaders were initially content to repeat the familiar triumphalist rhetoric.

'Our correct strategy and tactics,' they wrote, 'have allowed us to build the greatest Trotskyist force ever seen in Britain, and probably internationally outside of the Russian Left Opposition!' Confronted with the harsh reality of the Taaffe regime, however, they were forced to argue that Militant had started to degenerate some years previously. Socialist Appeal supporters now say that the tendency began to go off the rails politically a decade ago.

According to this chronology, the tendency's problems arose during the period when Taaffe, while paying lip service to the papal infallibility of Grant, began pragmatically to revise the tendency's political positions in the pursuit of mass recruitment. The implied conclusion is that Socialist Appeal will reorient itself by re-establishing the traditions of 'orthodox Grantism'.

We would not deny that there were some positive features to Militant's political practice in its earlier phase – notably its commitment to patient, systematic work inside the labour movement, in contrast to the get-rich-quick schemes of Gerry Healy or Tony Cliff. But this was allied to a sterile propagandism which 'worked' so long as Militant remained a relatively small organisation. Once the tendency accumulated much larger forces, Grant's dogmatism proved incapable of providing a guide to action, and the 'practical' leadership around Taaffe increasingly resorted to manoeuvres. The opportunism of the 1980s, therefore, has to be understood not so much as a repudiation of the tendency's political traditions, but rather as the direct result of their inadequacies.

Furthermore, and this is the important point, the deficiencies of Grantism were not limited to its propagandist woodenness. It embodied explicit revisions of Marxism on a whole range of theoretical and practical issues. Unless a real attempt is made to grapple with this political heritage, the most critical of Socialist Appeal supporters, no less than the most unquestioning followers of Taaffe, will find themselves in a political cul-de-sac.



Ted Grant

Marxism and Labour

For many years, Militant's main distinguishing feature was its commitment to remaining inside the Labour Party, come what may. Grant was merely following this principle when he argued, in the run-up to the split, that the Militant MPs should pay their poll tax in order to avoid disciplinary action by the Labour right wing. The justification for this was provided by Grant back in 1959. 'All history,' he wrote, 'demonstrates that, at the first stages of revolutionary upsurge, the masses turn to the mass organisations to try and find a solution for their problems, especially the younger generation, entering politics for the first time'.



Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn lead a one-day strike of Liverpool council workers.

Political reality has always been more complex than Grant's dogmas would suggest, and demands more of revolutionaries than the passive expectancy he proposes. As the experience of the late 1960s and the 1970s demonstrates, an intensification of industrial struggles does not automatically find its reflection in the Labour Party. Revolutionary tactics and strategy require a conscious effort to overcome the limitations of syndicalist militancy and direct trade unionists towards a political fight against the Labour leadership. Yet during this crucial period, Militant attached little importance to work in the unions, preferring instead to remain ensconced in the Labour Party, waiting for the trade unionists to come to them.

Having for years endorsed Grant's entrant doctrines as the last word in revolutionary wisdom, Taaffe is unable to explicitly reject them now. Instead, he advances alongside the old perspectives an entirely new line which provides the real basis for the tendency's practical politics. Militant now registers formal acceptance of the idea that workers will move into struggle mainly through their traditional organisations, but bases its actual practice on exaggerated notions of imminent large-scale splits in the Labour Party. Either way, Taaffe is spared the task of evolving a strategy to remove the existing Labour leadership.

Militant and the state

Militant's central slogan, 'Labour to power on a socialist programme', also needs to be questioned. We think this has more in common with the old ILP call for 'Socialism Now' than it has with Trotskyism. It lacks any conception of the transitional method. What is more, it ignores the fact that a

THE CRISIS IN MILITANT

Consequences of the split



Demonstration against the Tories during the September 25, 1985

ple of this strategy in action. Reforms were carried out, it is true, particularly in the field of public housing. But the Council was seen as the seat of 'power', and the working class was mobilised only in a supporting role. Worse still, when a confrontation with the central state arose during the struggle against rate-capping in 1985, Militant accepted a rotten compromise with the Tory government, called off industrial action and left the miners' strike isolated.

As for the 'bodies of armed men' at the heart of the state apparatus, Militant regards them as 'workers in uniform'. It proposes to transform the class nature of the army and the police by establishing 'democratic control' and trade union rights for the rank and file. It is this anti-Marxist attitude to the organs of state repression which was responsible for Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan offering to 'name names' to the police after the poll tax 'riot' of March 1990. And, in a future revolutionary situation, it would completely disarm the working class in the face of a bourgeois counter-revolution.

A further ramification of Militant's adaptation to the state is its failure to confront imperialism. This has involved a class-reductionist approach in theory, and in practice a concession to chauvinism. In the north of Ireland, Militant evades the national question by calling for working class unity around economic demands. And it portrays the national liberation fighters of the IRA as fundamentally no different from the sectarian murderers of the loyalist paramilitary groups. No less scandalous was Militant's response to the Malvinas/Falklands war, when it refused to support Argentina against British imperialism and adopted a dual defeatist position. In the case of the Gulf war, *Militant International Review* did eventually come out in support of Iraq, but no attempt was made to put forward a defeatist position in *Militant*, which promoted a semi-pacifist 'stop the war' line akin to that of the SWP.

Marxism versus workerism

The same class reductionism traditionally characterised Militant's attitude towards women's struggles, from which it abstained on the grounds that they undermined the unity of the working class. Women's rights were dismissed as the province of 'middle class trendies' (the phrase itself was indicative of the tendency's crude workerism), and in the 1970s Militant completely ignored the National Abortion Campaign. Now, by complete contrast, women's issues regularly feature in the pages of *Militant*, and the tendency's main area of activity at present is the Campaign Against Domestic Violence.

The tendency similarly had a record of appalling indifference towards anti-racist struggles or campaigns for lesbian and gay rights – again, this was justified by the need to avoid dividing the class. When it controlled Liverpool council, Militant notoriously refused to adopt a programme of positive discrimination to counter the effects of decades of racist employment practices, and imposed its own nominee Samson Bond as head of the race relations unit in the teeth of hostility from the black community. 'Had we adopted the policies of positive discrimination,' Hatton explained, 'there would, I believe, have been a massive counter-reaction. How do you tell white kids out of work in inner-city areas that the reason someone else has been given a

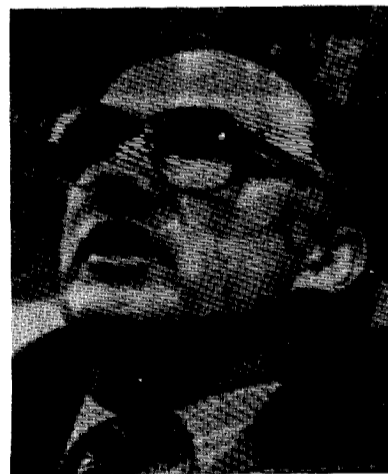
job with the council is because they are black and you are white'.

While Militant has not officially repudiated this sort of political backwardness, it has dramatically shifted its line, to the extent of launching a paper, *Panther*, which as the name suggests has taken up black struggles but adopted an extremely soft attitude towards black nationalism. Furthermore, *Militant* now includes lesbian and gay rights in its statement of political aims, which is entirely to be applauded.



Derek Hatton

What is astonishing is that these changes of line have been carried out without any accounting for, still less any criticism of, the diametrically opposed positions which Militant held for years, all the while maintaining that this was what divided 'the Marxists' from the 'petty-bourgeois radicals'. The Taaffeite leadership remains consistent only in their refusal to carry out united front work with other tendencies on the left, except when they themselves are in control. They prefer to set up front organisations whose purpose is to facilitate individual recruitment rather than to advance actual political struggles.



Peter Taaffe

As for Grant, he appears to be reverting to the old positions. He was able to criticise the Taaffites' campaign to release Sarah Thornton, on the grounds that it personalised the issue and lacked a definite class emphasis. But he seems incapable of developing an alternative, Marxist perspective. The only attention paid to women, or gays and lesbians, in the first four issues of *Socialist Appeal* has been one reactionary and anachronistic jibe against 'women's lib and gay lib'.

Stalinism and the August coup

Both Militant and Socialist Appeal remain saddled with Grant's mistaken theories on the question of workers' states. In the late 1940s, the Revolutionary Communist Party, of

which Grant was a co-leader, proved perhaps the most successful of the Fourth International's sections in grappling with the theoretical and programmatic challenge posed by the post-war expansion of Stalinism. But Grant subsequently lost his way, and began to see forms of 'proletarian Bonapartism' breaking out all over the planet. Both wings of the split are presumably committed to the view that, after Stalinism's debacle, workers' states still exist in Burma and Syria! And neither of them proved capable of developing a Marxist response to the crisis and collapse of the Stalinist regimes.

Like most of the left, the Taaffe leadership responded to the defeat of the August 1991 coup in the then USSR in a thoroughly light-minded fashion. Echoing the interpretation of events presented by the capitalist media, Militant regarded the coup's defeat at the hands of Yeltsin and his supporters as a victory for democracy. And in common with other 'Trotskyist' groups, Militant gave a left coloration to this view by painting an exaggerated picture of the role played by the working class in bringing about the collapse of the coup.

The Grantite minority was able to demonstrate that participation by Soviet workers in the opposition to the coup was at a very low level, and that the majority of the working class remained passive. Grant correctly argued that workers should place 'absolutely no trust' in Yeltsin, and should 'fight against the coup using only their own class methods, and trusting only in their own forces'. But Grant's assertion that 'no blocs, no agreements' were permissible in principle with the Yeltsinites was wrong. If the coup leaders had responded with military repression against the opposition (which did include sections of the working class, notably the miners), it would have been necessary for Trotskyists to combine independent mobilisation of the workers with a military bloc – however temporary – with the Yeltsinites.

An 'unbroken thread'?

One feature of the split was the emergence of a whole number of questions concerning the history of the tendency, which had previously been buried by the leadership. For their own opportunist reasons, the Taaffeite majority suddenly 'discovered' that Grant's line on entrism had undergone several shifts over the years. They pointed out that he had opposed entry during most of the 1940s and had only come round to it, on a purely pragmatic basis, in 1949.

The RCP debate on entrism in the 1940s, the majority announced, was 'worthy of thorough study in relation to the present debate within the tendency'.

What bare-faced cheek! Only a few years ago, Militant published a collection of Grant's writings, *The Unbroken Thread*, from which all passages concerning Grant's attitude to entrism in the 1940s have been cut! The purpose of the book, of course, was to bolster the Militant leadership's claim to be the sole representatives of Marxism, and Taaffe did not hesitate to engage in a Stalinist-type rewrite of history to accomplish this. Now, in order to further his struggle against Grant, Taaffe steps forward as the defender of historical accuracy.

We would agree that a principled re-evaluation of the question of entrism, which was made impossible both by Grant's dogmatism and by Taaffe's opportunism, is absolutely necessary. But it won't be assisted by majority supporters searching the historical record to find a justification for Taaffe's new turn. Nor will a reversion to the 'traditional' Grantite position offer a way forward. What is required is an honest and objective examination of the tendency's history, and a comparison of Militant's politics with those of Trotsky, whose legacy the tendency has claimed to defend.

Rebuild the Fourth International

In our opinion, such a study would demonstrate unequivocally the fraudulence of claims that the tendency ever represented the 'unbroken thread' of Marxist continuity. The reality is that Militant is a product of the programmatic disorientation which afflicted the Trotskyist movement in its entirety during the post-war period. To overcome this crisis requires both a return to genuine Trotskyism and a readiness to develop it in relation to the political situation in the world today. It means, above all, a struggle to rebuild the Fourth International. Genuine revolutionaries in Militant and Socialist Appeal will have to take up the challenge not only of discussion and joint political work, but of *regroupment* with revolutionary forces from other political currents, both in Britain and internationally. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency believes that it can play a positive role in this process. We would urge all comrades to study our publications.

Workers News invites contributions from our readers on the issues raised in these articles.

International fallout

LIKE most left groups with a sizeable following, Militant's conception of an International has been to produce smaller offspring across the world who are required to imitate the politics of the parent body. Where a social democratic party existed, Militant's affiliates did entry work there. In the absence of a mass reformist workers' party, the sections of the 'Committee for the Workers' International' were to enter nationalist formations. In South Africa, the Marxist Workers Tendency went into the ANC, while the Pakistani section joined the PPP.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the division in Militant has

been replicated throughout the International. Except in Spain and Italy, it appears that Taaffe was able to hold a majority in most sections, from which pro-Grant minorities have split or been expelled. Such was the suddenness of the schism in Britain that it is difficult to believe any real discussion was possible in the CWI. The confused nature of the international split is indicated by the fact that the Spanish, who are now working independently of the PSOE, went with Grant, while the majority of the Greek section, which still declares itself 'the Marxist tendency of PASOK', is allied with Taaffe.

With a negotiated settlement under way in South Africa, Ben Jordan re-examines the events of 1979-80 that led to majority rule in Zimbabwe

ZIMBABWE HOW THE MASSES WERE BETRAYED



Robert Mugabe

THE LEADERS of the ANC and the SACP would have us believe that with the formation of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) a major victory for the masses is at hand. According to their plans, within the next year there will be a Constituent Assembly election and majority rule in South Africa. Nelson Mandela will preside over a predominantly black government on the basis of a new democratic constitution. Apartheid will be finally dead and buried.

Of course there is an admission that many problems still have to be confronted – South Africa will have to be 'reconstructed'. But they insist that for the first time power will rest in the hands of the 'forces of democracy'. This will make possible the implementation of a policy of 'growth through distribution'. If we are to believe the existing leadership and their ideologues, this in turn means that the black masses can look forward to the steady improvement of their social and economic position under capitalism.

In 1979-80, Zimbabwe went through the experience of a negotiated settlement and elections that brought the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) to power. Today, the worsening position of the Zimbabwean masses testifies to the fact that it was a gigantic sell-out. The South African masses are currently experiencing their own Lancaster House agreement in the form of CODESA, and their own version of the Zimbabwe cease-fire terms in the form of the National Peace Accord. With the arrival of an Interim Government, they will have their own governor Soames, and with the Constituent Assembly elections, the equivalent of the 1980 elections won by Robert Mugabe.

The petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships of ZANU and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) provided the same kind of rationalisation for a 'negotiated settlement' then as the ANC does now. The same promises were made to the masses who supported them. However, 12 years later, the position of the black masses remains the same or has worsened. The old white exploiters continue to exploit; but they have been joined by new ones of colour.

The militant masses who provided the driving force for the nationalist struggle have been betrayed. Today in South Africa, from the point of view of the black working class and the oppressed as a whole, the same quest for genuine freedom and democracy is at stake. That is why the lessons of Zimbabwe are so important.

The background to the settlement

In 1979, imperialism not only faced a serious world economic crisis but was confronted by revolutionary situations in both Nicaragua and Iran. It feared the spread of mass revolutionary upheaval elsewhere in the world.

The Zimbabwean masses posed just

such a threat in southern Africa. The racist bourgeois regime had come under increasing pressure from the guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). The white working class and petty-bourgeoisie lived in a worsening state of paranoia and demoralisation.

The British bourgeoisie, in particular, desperately wanted to be rid of the political instability in its former colony arising from the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). An 'internal settlement' had formally ended white minority rule, producing a new government under Bishop Abel Muzorewa, but the Patriotic Front had been excluded from the April elections and the civil war was continuing. The British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, set about finding a solution that at the very least drew in petty-bourgeois nationalists with some mass support. A conference was arranged at Lancaster House in London, and in the course of 14 weeks of talks in the latter part of the year, the framework for the transition to majority rule – and the betrayal of the masses – was hammered out.



Lord Soames

ZANU's popularity and influence rested on the militancy of its stance on the armed struggle. But the fact that the chief site of the struggle was in the rural areas, and ZANU's active support base was the peasantry, undermined the possibility of a victory for the masses. The ease with which the sell-out was subsequently accomplished had everything to do with the fact that the Zimbabwean working class remained unorganised and largely inactive for the duration of the liberation struggle. For the workers in the towns and the semi-proletarian and peasant masses of the countryside, Stalinism's ideological influence in the form of guerrillaism and the two-stage struggle was to reap a bitter fruit.

The 'Marxist-Leninist' ZANU sacrificed the interests of the workers and peasants of Zimbabwe for access to government office. As soon as the guerrillas were integrated as 'non-political' forces into the existing standing army, their militancy evaporated

and they could quickly be put to use against the masses.

The significance of the Lancaster House agreement

The imperialists would have preferred an election result that was less of a landslide victory for ZANU, but they had clearly done their homework and carefully considered the possibilities. The Lancaster House agreement was the key to securing capitalist interests, whatever the outcome of the elections.

It was ZANU and ZAPU's own policy that placed British imperialism in the driving seat. Ever since UDI in November 1965, they had called on Britain to take action against the 'illegal' white settler colonialists. For them, Britain was the key to decolonisation; the armed struggle was merely the means to exert pressure to realise this end. Rather than the masses themselves winning independence and democracy, the Lancaster House agreement meant that the old colonial authority would resume power in the form of a governor. Assisted by the existing racist state apparatus, a high-level British team led by Lord Soames would ensure a peaceful and orderly handing over of the reins through democratic elections – but on condition that capitalism remained intact and that the masses were kept in check.

The Patriotic Front leadership of Mugabe and Nkomo agreed to the demobilisation of the guerrillas, while conceding a significant active role for the Rhodesian security forces. The existing bodies of armed men were not to be disbanded, but would continue to act as key defenders of law and order and as protectors of private property and the capitalist system.

The Lancaster House agreement also guaranteed capitalist private property relations for at least ten years – in the section headed 'Freedom from deprivation of property'. Furthermore, all of ZANU's rhetoric about radical land reform was negated when it agreed to accept white capitalist farmers as legitimate owners of the land they occupied. Whites were guaranteed 20 seats out of 100 in the new parliament; in other words, no more than 3 per cent of the population was automatically entitled to 20 per cent of governmental control. Rather than history wreaking vengeance on a privileged racist minority, the agreement protected and compensated them.

It was agreed by all parties at Lancaster House that there would only be eight weeks between the cease-fire and the elections. Thus the previously proscribed nationalist movements, with an exiled leadership and guerrilla armies of many thousands, were signatories to an arrangement in which there would be simply no time to mobilise the masses in a militant campaign around all their demands and aspirations. In the event, neither the ZANU nor the ZAPU leadership even attempted to do such a thing.

Mugabe's election victory speech

on March 4, 1980, fully confirmed the sell-out course on which ZANU had embarked by signing the Lancaster House agreement. 'We will ensure that there is a place for everyone in this country,' he said. 'We want to ensure a sense of security for both winners and losers. Let us forgive and forget. Let us join hands in new amity.' Any notion that the ZANU leadership had been exercising a clever manoeuvre, and that once 'in power' it would launch a campaign of mass mobilisation to secure the interests of the masses, was rudely dispelled by its orientation after the elections.

How petty-bourgeois nationalism fought the elections

Of course, ZANU did not fight the elections on a revolutionary basis. Its mass popularity sprang from the fact that it was prepared to take on the full might of the Rhodesian security services, which were backed to the hilt by South Africa, in a long and bloody bush war.

Hatred for white rule ran deep, and Muzorewa was clearly identified by the masses as a puppet. Rather than scaring voters, intimidation strengthened their resolve. The turn-out was over 90 per cent of the electorate, with thousands walking long distances to polling stations. However, despite this enthusiasm, ZANU's election campaign was dominated by leading personalities and party symbols. It had little political and programmatic content and was contested on the basis of empty rhetoric, posters and T-shirts.

The sole emphasis was on securing votes. A number of adverse factors – extreme poverty, illiteracy of over 50 per cent, and decades of gross oppression – undermined the political consciousness and militancy of the masses, especially the rural population. Both the rural masses and the urban working class were ready to vote for ZANU, but had not been brought to full political life through active struggle on the basis of their own interests and demands. 'First get us in and then we can implement changes,' was clearly the message from the leadership.

Free and fair elections?

Even by the standards of bourgeois democracy, the elections in Zimbabwe could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as free and fair, despite the overwhelming victory secured by ZANU.

The central point is that the elections would never have taken place except under the sell-out terms of the Lancaster House agreement. If, for example, ZANU had maintained a militant position and mobilised the workers and poor peasants on the basis of a consistently anti-capitalist programme, there can be no doubt that imperialism and its cohorts would

have resorted to far cruder tactics.

We now know that the Rhodesian security police, the Central Intelligence Organisation, included in its contingency plans a range of actions to prevent the 'terrorists' and 'communists' from coming to power, including the rigging of votes and even a military coup. Two assassination attempts were made on Mugabe in the run-up to the elections. Josiah Tongogara, a key ZANU leader, was killed under mysterious circumstances.

In the course of the elections, Muzorewa's United African National Council was given full material backing by the parties and supporters of white privilege, as well as by the South African regime. The latter poured tens of thousands of rands into Muzorewa's election campaign. Consequently, the UANC could quite easily switch to producing *Drums*, its party mouthpiece, as a daily for the election period.

The election was conducted under a state of emergency and martial law. All the security legislation aimed at defeating 'terrorism' and 'communism' was in place. Tight curbs were placed on marches, demonstrations and meetings, and strict curfews were enforced. Meetings were only allowed if a permit was obtained from the authorities at least 48 hours in advance. A list of speakers had to be provided and anyone not on the list could face arrest.

Those who made 'subversive statements' faced up to five years in prison. Anyone who sought to 'engender or promote feelings of hostility to, or expose to contempt, ridicule or disesteem, any group, section or class in or of the community of a particular race, religion or group' could be locked away. Thus the white capitalist class could not be singled out as the main enemy in the course of campaigning, and speakers at mass rallies could not rally workers and poor peasants against the system of racist capitalist rule.

The British governor, Lord Soames, also passed two ordinances aimed at preventing 'disruptive' activities during the election. These gave him the power to suspend people from participation in the elections and even to disenfranchise those regarded as disruptive. They were used to suspend ZANU's treasurer, Enos Nkala, from campaigning because of the content of a speech he had made.

The media remained in the hands of the Ministry of Information and the Zimbabwe Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation. Right up to the last day of the elections, South African propaganda in the form of a daily news bulletin continued to be transmitted. Furthermore, the old censorship laws remained in place and were enforced for the duration of the election period.

On the eve of polling, there were 705 people in detention and 1,280 held under martial law. Numerous ZANU (PF) and PF meetings were broken up by the police, often using tear gas. Large numbers of party workers, and even a few candidates, were detained. Many were quite arbi-

trarily excluded from the amnesty.

The question of an interim government was decided by the Lancaster House agreement: the governor and his team of advisers were to act as a caretaker regime, but it would base itself on the existing Rhodesian administration. The very apparatus of white racist capitalist rule, that had subjected the black masses to such vicious oppression, was given official blessing to continue its anti-democratic role during the elections. Anti-ZANU (PF)/Patriotic Front political propaganda was widely distributed by civil servants in the course of the elections.

The shadow of South African imperialism was also cast over the elections. Up until January 30, 1980 – only a few weeks before the election – South African troops remained stationed inside Zimbabwe near Beitbridge. ZANU (PF) complained repeatedly that SADF units maintained an intimidatory presence in other parts of Zimbabwe throughout the elections.

The governor chose to utilise armed forces known as 'auxiliaries' to assist the police in maintaining law and order immediately prior to and during the 1980 elections. These were the armed gangs, sanctioned by the Ian Smith regime, set up by Muzorewa's UANC and ZANU (Sithole) in the wake of the internal settlement of 1978 to fight the Patriotic Front 'terrorists'. The auxiliaries did not confine themselves to a 'law-enforcement' role during the election period. Indeed, they conducted a systematic campaign of action and propaganda against 'Marxism', which included the holding of forced meetings and a series of acts of violence. They also used every opportunity to rally support for the UANC.

The Rhodesian security forces, notorious for their violent methods over many years of white rule, did not cease operations during the elections. They brutally enforced the curfew and killed many civilians. The more covert wing stepped up its cowardly acts of terror, with a series of bomb attacks on ZANU members and sympathetic organisations. Dirty tricks were rife. A sophisticated pirate edition of *Moto*, a weekly pro-ZANU newspaper, was produced; and on the same day the paper's printing works and offices were destroyed in a bomb explosion. The security forces also distributed rather crude anti-Marxist leaflets, even using Rhodesian Air Force planes to drop them.

Such were the activities of these 'neutral' overseers of 'free and fair elections'!

The Lancaster House agreement grossly betrayed the interests of the refugees. The 228,000 who had been forced to flee the country, largely as a result of the atrocities carried out by the security forces, were amongst the worst victims of racist colonial rule. They were as many in number as the entire white population – but the vast majority were excluded from direct participation in the first elections contested by the political organisations which they supported. Only 33,340 were allowed to return to exercise their right to vote in the 1980 elections.

Setting the age for eligibility to vote at 18 was a slap in the face for the tens of thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds, especially those who were guerrillas. These young lions were prepared to sacrifice everything in the cause of the liberation armies. They played an important part in ZANU and ZAPU politics, especially in undermining the conservative influence of traditional authorities in the rural areas; and they were allowed to bear arms and fight the racist regime. But – thanks to the Lancaster House agreement and the complicity of their leadership – they could not vote.

The guerrillas were confined to assembly points during the run-up to the elections. In this way, the most militant section of the black population, and some of the best political fighters, were excluded from active participation in the election campaign.

Because of the power and influence of the white farmers and the backing they received from the election organisers, ZANU and ZAPU had great difficulty gaining access to farm workers and many 'protected villages'. Only the UANC had free scope to campaign in these areas.

Despite being declared 'free and fair' by all the international observers, it is clear that the dice were heavily loaded against ZANU and ZAPU. Those who claim that this did not matter because ZANU won over-

whelmingly anyway betray their bourgeois understanding of politics. While the intimidation, dirty tricks, inequality, etc, did not prevent a huge vote for ZANU, they did ensure that the masses were not drawn into militant action and purposeful campaigning.

The essential lessons for South African workers

1 A negotiated settlement cannot bring freedom and democracy for the oppressed masses. Place no faith in De Klerk and the international capitalist class, as Mugabe did in British imperialism. The masses must rely on their own strength, methods and organisations for securing their interests.

elections must not be about using the masses as voting fodder, as was the case in Zimbabwe. Instead they should be aimed at raising the militancy of the masses, and developing class consciousness through struggle and organisation.

4 Where the limits are set in advance by a sell-out negotiated settlement, along the lines of the Lancaster House agreement or the range of compromises struck by the ANC, elections will serve as a means for pacifying and demobilising the masses. Already in South Africa the most essential limits have been set – a commitment to capitalism and bourgeois law and order, and a recognition of white minority 'rights'. The masses themselves must fight to win all their demands. There can be no

can convene a truly democratic Constituent Assembly.

6 The power and influence of the white South African bourgeoisie is awesome. It has already resorted to diverse heinous measures to curb mass struggle and maintain a tame ANC. By comparison, what occurred in Zimbabwe was child's play. When the election comes there will be no end to its brutality, treachery, hypocrisy and deceit. The Inkatha hordes and vigilantism will continue to be put to use to violently attack and intimidate the masses in the townships and the bantustans. Millions more rands will be poured into all kinds of schemes to undermine the mass influence of the ANC and boost the counter-revolutionary parties of the bourgeoisie and its agents through-

isation. Where the masses are not drawn into active struggle on the basis of their own organisations and a revolutionary programme, the way is open for the petty-bourgeois leadership to entrench its position, ditch its dependency on the masses and feather its own nest. This is what the Zimbabwean experience teaches us.

9 State power is class power. While the means of production remain in the hands of the capitalist class and mass organs of power have not developed, the government will remain bourgeois in character, a tool in the hands of the ruling capitalist class. The ZANU government has amply confirmed this Marxist truth.

10 There is no national solution to the problems of the masses. This is one of the most important lessons of the collapse of Stalinism and counter-revolutionary developments in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. Like Stalinism, petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism have always been preoccupied with developments on the national terrain. The pressure exerted by Nyerere, Machel and Kaunda for ZANU/ZAPU to negotiate had everything to do with the short-term national interests of the governments of Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia and were a crucial factor in the sell-out. The struggle in South Africa must be aimed at the mobilisation of the entire working class of southern Africa, leaning on the support of the poor peasantry throughout the region, fighting for a Socialist Federation of Southern Africa and the world socialist revolution. The black working class in South Africa must be ready to make tremendous national sacrifices for revolutionary internationalist gains.

11 The black working class must wrest the leadership of the struggle from petty-bourgeois parties such as the ANC and the SACP. There can be no substitute for stubborn revolutionary class struggle led by the working class. Zimbabwe has demonstrated that guerrillaism, diplomatic manoeuvres and conciliation are the methods of petty-bourgeois opportunism and will never win the battle for democracy and socialism.

12 Like its Zimbabwean counterpart, the ANC/SACP leadership has taken the South African masses far down the road of a sell-out. In the heat of battle, in the course of the coming struggles, not least of all around the Constituent Assembly, an alternative revolutionary leadership must be built. A new Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party of the working class is a burning necessity. Only those who thoroughly learn the lessons of history will be able to tackle this task.

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ZANU guerrillas being transported to the election site, where they were to be confined to the election period.

2 In a number of key respects, the situation in Zimbabwe was more favourable than the present situation in South Africa. Today the international balance of forces is heavily weighted in favour of imperialism. The South African bourgeoisie, under the leadership of De Klerk, has long held the initiative, and the counter-revolutionary international developments have strengthened its hand. A negotiated settlement in the present circumstances could only produce an even more monstrous sell-out than in Zimbabwe.

3 Zimbabwe clearly demonstrates that bourgeois democratic elections are not in themselves a step forward for the masses. They remain only a test of the political strength of the working class and the masses as a whole. The coming South African

concessions to white privilege: a genuine end to white privilege and apartheid can only be realised in a fight for socialism.

5 No trust can be placed in the bourgeois state apparatus, especially its bodies of armed men. The capacity of the South African Defence Force and police to undermine the confidence of the masses through violence, intimidation and all manner of dirty tricks has been fully exposed over the years. There can be no role for the SADF, nor the imperialist United Nations, in convening a Constituent Assembly election in South Africa. Only the black working class and the oppressed masses as a whole have a genuine interest in free and fair elections; only they can win genuine freedom of movement, assembly and expression; only they

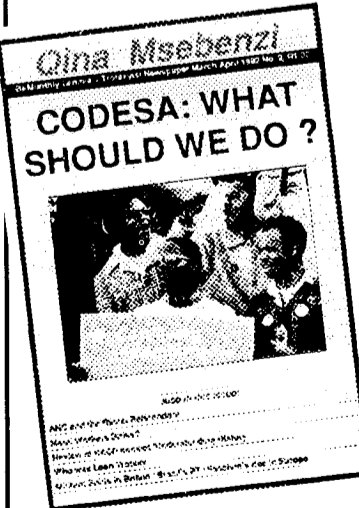
out South Africa – in the urban areas, in the bantustans and on the farms. A consistent battle must be waged against all these undemocratic forces to ensure genuine free and fair elections.

7 The youth and the guerrillas must not be excluded from full participation in the political life of the masses. Everyone aged 16 and over should be allowed to vote. The guerrillas in the camps must be able to return to join the struggle for free and fair elections and a Constituent Assembly convened by the masses. Special effort should go into drawing the youth, women and the rural masses into militant struggle.

8 Do not trust the promises of the leadership; place no faith in their petty-bourgeois illusions. Reformism and conciliation will only produce further disappointment and demobil-



Patriotic Front leader Joshua Nkomo at the Lancaster House conference



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

PART SEVENTEEN

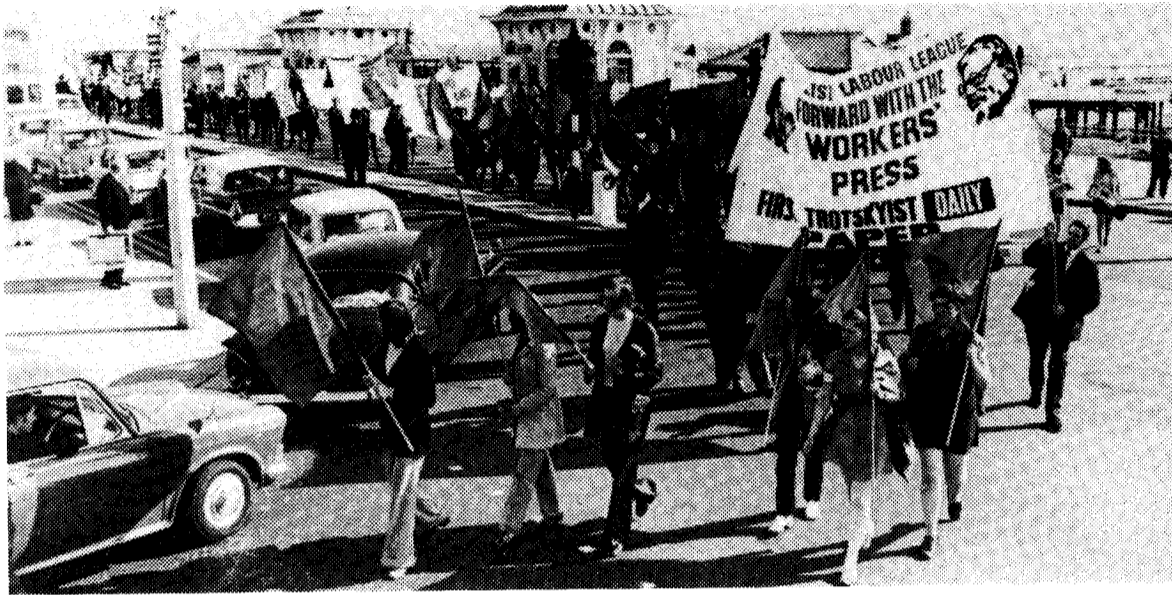
IF THE election of the second Wilson government in 1966 saw a partial reversal by Healy of the ultra-left turn which had accompanied the launch of the independent Young Socialists, this proved only temporary. During 1968-69, Healy suffered a renewed outbreak of leftist delusions. He became convinced that the SLL was about to replace the Labour Party as the political leadership of the working class and that the struggle for power was on the immediate agenda. This was underpinned by the usual nonsense about the capitalist economy heading towards its final collapse.

Mike Banda would later compare Healy's economic perspectives to the 'breakdown' theory of early German social democracy, citing the front page article by Healy headlined 'Crisis, Panic, Crash' with which *The Newsletter* responded to the threat of dollar devaluation in March 1968.¹ 'Every serious attempt to analyse world economy was frowned upon,' Banda wrote, 'and the intellectuals were forced to toe the Healyite line: apocalypse now!² Not that some of them required much forcing. Geoff Pilling, for example, had apparently been happy to endorse Healy's belief that the growth of automation was plunging world capitalism into 'deepening crisis, if not total destruction',³ and it was he who had pioneered the line (enthusiastically adopted by Healy) that the mounting instability of the international monetary system would sound the death knell of capitalism.

The only intellectual prepared to take a stand against Healy's catastrophism was Tom Kemp. At the 1967 SLL conference Kemp submitted an alternative document on economic perspectives which, as Robin Blick recalls, 'criticised cataclysmic projections and said that the economy was perfectly capable of sustaining various recoveries, and that the end was far from being in sight. He got up and defended the document, and the only person to vote for it was Tom Kemp - and he wouldn't back down, he wouldn't yield. And Pilling was the main torpedo fired at him, of course . . . Healy lambasted him in a knockabout manner - "lacking faith in the revolutionary perspective" and all this - but Pilling actually tried to take it apart, nuts and bolts'.⁴ As a result of his defiance, according to Banda, Kemp was 'virtually driven out of leadership and almost out of the party'.⁵

Healy's ultra-leftism was also fuelled by the gains the SLL was making in the unions. Though he had previously denied the need to build a specifically industrial organisation, in February 1968 Healy launched the All Trades Unions Alliance as the 'political arm of the SLL in industry'. This repeated on a larger scale the mistakes of Healy's attempt at establishing an industrial base in the late 1950s, using impressive conferences aimed at individual recruitment as a substitute for organising a real movement within the unions.⁶ Nevertheless, Healy did succeed in winning a number of militants and extending the SLL's influence in industry. When the Wilson government produced its white

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy



SLL demonstration in Brighton in October 1969 to launch the daily 'Workers Press'

paper *In Place of Strife* in January 1969, which outlined plans to impose legal shackles on the trade unions, the SLL took the initiative in calling for a May Day strike against this, which was supported by almost a quarter of a million trade unionists.⁷

The fact that militant workers were bitterly opposed to the Wilson government's anti-union policies, together with a more general disillusionment with Labour's record in office - reflected in large-scale abstentions by Labour voters in by-elections - was enough to persuade Healy that social democracy had now run its historical course in Britain. The SLL's 1969 conference proclaimed that 'the desertion of the reformist party' was 'almost complete', and stated unequivocally that 'no section of the working class will ever again look to the Labour Party for leadership'.⁸ As for the Labour government, Healy declared that it was 'out to destroy the trade unions' - an objective which Trotskyists have traditionally regarded as the defining feature of a fascist regime.⁹ The SLL's task, therefore, was 'to fight now for socialist policies against the Labour government, to bring it down'.¹⁰

The French events of May-June 1968 were taken by Healy as confirmation that revolutionary battles were imminent in Britain. SLL central committee member Cyril Smith was doubtless echoing Healy when he told students at the London School of Economics that there were 'perhaps 18 months in which to prepare for a struggle similar to that in France'.¹¹ A developing political crisis would 'carry us in the immediate future into the struggle for power', a resolution at the 1969 SLL conference asserted.¹² And *The Newsletter* explained that the working class faced the stark choice: 'EITHER the dictatorship of Wilson and, after him, a right-wing semi-fascist dictatorship of Tories, OR a workers' government based

on workers' councils and the trade unions with a socialist home and foreign policy'.¹³

Healy's grotesque misreading of the political situation prevented the SLL from intervening effectively in the real crisis which the Labour leadership faced in its attempt to impose *In Place of Strife*. The Communist Party was denounced for raising 'the illusory hope that Wilson's government can be forced to adopt different policies by pressure', and for failing to recognise that 'only a general strike would halt Wilson'.¹⁴ In the event, faced with a revolt in the party and the trade unions (which, however, fell far short of a general strike), the government was indeed forced to back down and withdraw the proposed anti-union laws. This did not prevent Healy from announcing smugly that 'the perspectives of every group and party except ours are in ruins'.¹⁵

It was a measure of the SLL leaders' political disorientation that in the following months they were increasingly reduced to issuing bombastic, pseudo-revolutionary declarations which avoided addressing any programmatic or tactical questions. A political committee statement of October 1969 was typical. This rambling, disjointed piece, evidently written by Healy himself, contained 'not a single transitional demand, not a single policy on which militants might fight in any union or industry, not even a suggestion as to how to organise such struggles', as one contemporary critic pointed out.¹⁶ Healy's only practical proposal was that workers should join the SLL and build the revolutionary party.¹⁷

It was against this background of galloping sectarianism that Healy's plan to transform *The Newsletter* into a daily finally reached fruition, with the appearance in September 1969 of *Workers Press*. 'The daily paper was Healy's prestige project, his Aswan Dam . . .', Tim Wohlforth writes. 'Healy appeared to be unaware that the physical production of a daily paper was the easy part of it, especially with modern web offset printing. The real problem was sustaining it financially and maintaining a meaningful circulation which could make the effort worthwhile.' But the print run for *Workers Press*, in Wohlforth's estimation, was no more than 6,000 during the week and 10,000 for the weekend edition.¹⁸ Healy was immune to such considerations. 'We have only just begun,' he told a rally celebrating the launch of the daily. 'We are going to tear down the capitalist system shred for shred. We are now going to use this paper to build the mass revolutionary

party'.¹⁹ Another product of Healy's ultra-leftist lurch was his attempt to mount an electoral challenge to Labour. This policy was first agreed at the SLL's 1968 conference, which proposed to stand candidates in the next general election with the aim of 'exposing and defeating the "parliamentary" leaderships of the working class'. It was given a trial run in the Swindon by-election of October 1969. The Young Socialist candidate, Frank Willis, was a well-known local trade unionist, and a six-month campaign was organised which brought in YS members from all over the country. Yet Willis received only 446 votes (1.1 per cent), a result which completely demolished the argument that large sections of the working class were breaking from Labour to the left. Healy, however, pronounced the intervention to have been 'absolutely correct', while *Keep Left* went so far as to declare it 'a great victory'.²⁰

As it became clear that, with a general election and the threat of a Tory government looming, workers were rallying to the Labour Party, Healy executed a characteristic about-turn. At the SLL's 1970 May Day rally, he denied that he was one of those revolutionaries attacked in the capitalist press for believing that revolution was 'just around the corner' - they must have been thinking of Tariq Ali of the IMG, Healy remarked disingenuously. And in the run-up to the June general election the SLL reverted to its demand for a 'genuinely socialist Labour government', calling for a Labour vote on the grounds that returning the reformists to office would provide 'the best conditions for defeating Wilson and his anti-working class policies and replacing him with a socialist leadership'.²¹ As for Healy's plan to stand SLL candidates against Labour, it had been quietly abandoned.

If this account of Healy in the late 1960s has been lacking in an international dimension, it is because there is so little to say on this score. For, in Healy's view, his political activity in Britain was his international work. As he put it in 1966, by transforming the SLL into a mass revolutionary party and leading the British working class to power he would 'inspire revolutionists in all countries to build similar parties to do the same'.²² This Anglocentrism would later provide the method behind Healy's construction of his own 'International', consisting of groups modelled on, and completely dominated by, the SLL.

But it was impossible for Healy to exercise such control over the Lam-

bert group in France, which had its own political positions, few of which tallied with those of the SLL. The French section's dual defeatist line on the 1967 Middle East war was diametrically opposed to the Healyites' support for the 'Arab revolution', while Banda's backing for Mao and Ho Chi Minh was anathema to the bitterly anti-Stalinist Lambertists. And the latter's emphasis on the need to 'reconstruct' the Fourth International, which they correctly argued had ceased to exist as a centralised world leadership, was an implicit challenge to Healy's bogus theory of continuity.²³ Under the common 'anti-Pabloite' banner of the International Committee, the two groups in fact carried out their own political activities completely independently of each other.

Their relationship became somewhat warmer at the time of the 1968 struggles in France, in which the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (as the Lambertists had become) achieved some prominence. Healy now publicly acclaimed the OCI as the SLL's sister organisation, campaigned against its illegalisation by De Gaulle and raised a £1,000 support fund. But the dramatic growth of the OCI - by February 1970 it was able to hold a 10,000-strong youth rally at Le Bourget airport outside Paris - threatened to make it the major force within the IC, and Healy's attitude cooled again.

In an attempt to find some programmatic agreement between the two sections, in September 1969 the OCI submitted a document entitled 'For the Reconstruction of the Fourth International' to the IC pre-conference, which eventually met in July the following year.²⁴ At this meeting, Blick recounts, Stephan Just of the OCI tried to open a discussion on the document. 'And do you know what Healy talked about? He talked about philosophy, for about four hours.' Tim Wohlforth, who had actually tried to address the programmatic issues raised in the French document, was hauled off to Healy's office at the end of the first session and told to stick to philosophy. 'That was the only way they could stop a discussion, you see,' Blick comments.

When the meeting resumed, the OCI attempted to discuss the Transitional Programme, the workers' united front and the political struggle in Europe. 'And Healy, and Slaughter - and then Wohlforth got up and did his thing - all talked about method and philosophy. There were two worlds which never met. So at the end of the conference, with time ticking away, and Just looking at his watch and saying he had a plane to catch, there was a one-paragraph resolution passed which said that the French document was within the traditions of orthodox Trotskyism, and that discussions would continue upon it. Which they never did, because not long after that the two organisations split'.²⁵

To be continued

NOTES

- The Newsletter*, March 19, 1968.
- Workers Press*, February 7, 1986.
- Fourth International*, January 1966.
- Interview with Robin Blick, August 15, 1992.
- Workers Press*, February 7, 1986.
- One critic wrote of the ATUA at this time that 'its main "activity" seems to be the frequent conferences. These, however, very rarely get down to any discussion of building a movement, either on a national level or on that of one industry . . . the leaders don't really want to build a movement . . . rather than have an oppositional movement of the masses of workers in any particular union, the League wants to recruit a few individuals' (T. Whelan, *The Credibility Gap*, IMG, 1970, p.45).
- A. Thornett, *From Militancy to Marxism*, Left View Books, 1987, pp.139, 143.
- Quoted by R. Black, *Fascism in Germany*, Steyne Publications, 1975, p.1077.
- The Newsletter*, January 11, 1969.
- Black, op. cit., p.1077.
- The Newsletter*, June 18, 1968.
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- The Newsletter*, April 19, 1969.
- Ibid.*, April 19, May 3, 1969.
- Black, op. cit., p.1075.
- Whelan, op. cit., p.41.
- Workers Press*, October 25, 1969.
- T. Wohlforth, *Memoirs*, unpublished draft.
- Workers Press*, September 30, 1969.
- For the Swindon by-election, see Whelan, op. cit., pp.2, 62-70.
- Workers Press*, May 28, 1970.
- C. Slaughter, ed., *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, 1974, vol.4, p.270.
- Slaughter, op. cit., vol.5, pp.84-132.
- Ibid.*, vol.6, p.47.
- Interview with Robin Blick, August 14, 1992.



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THE ARTIST AS ACTIVIST

John Heartfield
Barbican Art Gallery

Review by Lizzy Ali

'IN THE early hours of a May morning in 1916, sitting in my Berlin studio, John Heartfield and I invented photomontage,' wrote the artist George Grosz in 1928. Showing at the Barbican gallery until October 18 is the most comprehensive exhibition ever mounted in Britain of Heartfield's work. It is evidence that, if perhaps not the 'inventor' of the technique of photomontage, he was undeniably its leading and most creative exponent.

Born in Berlin in 1891, Helmut Herzfeld studied art in Munich, where he became interested in commercial design. He adopted the English-sounding name of John Heartfield during the First World

War in protest against German nationalism, in particular against the popular slogan of the day 'Gott strafe England!' ('May God punish England!'). His growing radicalism led him to Dada, the 'anti-art' art movement which he later described as the 'systematic and conscious pursuit of art propaganda in the service of the workers' movement'. Together with his brother Wieland, George Grosz and Erwin Piscator – fellow members of the Berlin Dada group – he joined the newly-formed Communist Party of Germany (KPD) at the end of December 1918.

Heartfield developed his skills by working in a number of different fields – designing book covers, type-faces and stage sets, and editing and laying out KPD periodicals. But if his pioneering work in photomontage consisted of pasting pictures together in Grosz's studio, it wasn't until 1924 that he produced the first poster in what was to become his

trademark style. By combining and juxtaposing photographs and adding frequently ironic captions, he found that he could produce a satirical, unexpected or unsettling result. By the end of the 1920s, his technique had developed to maturity and the political content of his art had been given a special relevance by the rise of fascism.

His best work was undoubtedly the series of 237 full-page photomontages produced between 1929 and 1938 for the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*Workers' Illustrated Newspaper*). The third-largest circulation newspaper in Germany, AIZ supported the Communist Party but was not affiliated to it. The KPD's line may have been 'After Hitler, our turn', but Heartfield's images have a real sense of urgency about them – 'The Meaning of Geneva', for example, with its cruelly bayoneted dove of peace; or 'Goering: The Executioner of the Third Reich' in which the Nazi leader is depicted as a crazed butcher, complete with bloodstained apron and dripping cleaver. Others make their serious point through humour – 'The Meaning of the Hitler Salute: Millions Stand Behind Me' has a giant capitalist standing behind an insignificant Hitler, thrusting a wad of banknotes into his raised hand; and in 'I Will Lead You to Glorious Bankruptcy' we find Hitler dressed as Kaiser Wilhelm. With these striking anti-fascist images, Heartfield's art had reached its peak, and at the same time a mass audience.

The political degeneration of the KPD had not, however, left Heartfield untouched. The exhibition includes works with a specifically Stalinist message. Before 1933, he produced some Third Period-style attacks on the Social Democrats, just as later he was to support the Popular Front. This is not surprising as Heartfield was a major KPD artist: if anything, the surprise is that despite these negative influences there remained such a strong revolutionary content to his work. This is partly explained by the medium Heartfield was using, which was at odds with the official Stalinist policy for the arts. He was criticised by various Stalinist cultural gurus for 'formalism'; Georg Lukacs dismissed photomontage as nothing more than a 'good joke',



'Adolf the Superman: Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk', 1932

An Englishman abroad

Arthur Ransome in
Revolutionary Russia
Redwords £12.95

TO ANYONE who read Arthur Ransome's children's books, it may come as a surprise that the author of *Swallows and Amazons* was an enthusiastic defender of the Russian revolution during its heroic period.

This attractive boxed set, comprising his pamphlet *The Truth about Russia* and his two short books *Six Weeks in Russia 1919* and *The Crisis in Russia 1920*, makes available his main writings on the revolution, which have been out of print since the 1920s.

Ransome was an English gentleman liberal in the best sense of the word; a social type which vanished over half a century ago with the rise of fascism and the development of Stalinism. But even this category fails to do justice to this remarkable person. Who else in the midst of the wars of intervention and the Western blockade could have been a friend of Karl Radek's, been on intimate terms with most of the Bolshevik leadership, married Trotsky's secretary and yet have no ideological commitment to socialism?

But Ransome was no dilettante or radical tourist. He fought attempts to censor his articles on Russia for *The Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News*; he refused to capitulate when the British secret services earmarked him for a possible treason trial; and he defended the Bolsheviks' suppression of the Constituent Assembly when all 'democratic' Europe was howling. Even though he devoted himself almost entirely to writing children's fiction after 1929, when he came many years later to writing his unfinished *Autobiography*, he gave over by far the largest section of it to his years in Russia. From the warmth with which he wrote, it is apparent that even in old age he considered this to have been his most important experience.

And what of the books themselves? It must be said that they stand head and shoulders above almost all those of his British contemporaries – Ethel Snowden, Bertrand Russell and the TUC leaders – in the honesty and vitality of their reporting. Ransome had no particular axe to grind, but he developed a real empathy with the Russian workers, raised as if by a miracle to the status of a ruling class, and admired their straightforward Soviet democracy.

Hammered out in a mere 36 hours in 1918, *The Truth about Russia* is a stirring appeal for an understanding of the revolution – combined with some odd reasoning about it being in the interests of the West!

Six Weeks in Russia 1919 is the product of his return to the country in the spring of that year. It portrays vividly and without romanticism the problems of the economy, culture and politics during the civil war. It contains notes of his meetings with Lenin, Bukharin and other Bolshevik leaders, together with a discussion of many aspects of their policy.

The Crisis in Russia 1920, as Paul Foot notes in his introduction, is Ransome's best work. It shows him to have been keenly aware of the difficulties the revolution faced – hunger, cold and what he called 'the appalling paralysis which is the most striking factor in the economic problem today'. Some of the chapter headings – 'The shortage of things', 'The shortage of men' and 'Industrial conscription' – convey the thrust of his realist appraisal of the situation, while his account of a conference at Jaroslavl, Communist voluntary work on Saturdays and a propaganda train show the mighty efforts of the revolutionaries to overcome the problems.



Goering in a Hamburg Beer Hall: „Erz hat stets ein Reich und eine Welt, die haben höchstens ein Volk.“

— from the *Illustrated* 4 June 1935

incapable of representing reality. On the other hand, his admirers included writers and artists of the calibre of Bertolt Brecht, Sergei Tretyakov, Walter Benjamin and Paul Signac.

If Heartfield's best work was anti-fascist and anti-capitalist, he was weaker when it came to positive propaganda for socialism. Here, he tended to fall back on idealised images of 'building socialism' in the Soviet Union.

With the coming to power of Hitler in 1933 Heartfield was forced to flee Germany for Czechoslovakia, where he continued to work for AIZ, itself in exile. His contributions to a caricature exhibition in Prague the following year, particularly 'Adolf the Superman: Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk', prompted the German government to issue a formal protest. After a degree of posturing by the Prague government, the offending items were removed from display. His life now in considerable danger, he was given the opportunity to move to Moscow and work for *Krokodil*. The topics he was asked to consider for the magazine were 'fascism, danger of war, labour, exploitation, proletarian resistance . . . but no personal depictions, e.g., Goering, Hitler!' He declined the invitation.

In late 1938, with the Nazis demanding his extradition to Germany, Heartfield moved to England – where he was briefly interned in the summer of 1940 as an 'enemy

alien'. After the war, ill-health prevented him from returning to what was now Stalinist East Germany until 1950. When he got there he was treated with suspicion because of his lengthy stay in the West, and his art was once again labelled 'formalist': it was not until 1956 that he was readmitted to the Stalinist party. From then until his death in 1968 he served as a loyal cultural figurehead in the GDR, but his art had lost the drive and innovation that characterised it in the 1930s.

The exhibition at the Barbican was originally mounted by the Akademie der Kunst zu Berlin to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Heartfield's birth, and will subsequently be shown in Dublin and Edinburgh. Well researched and presented, it contains over 300 of the artist's photomontages for posters, book jackets and journals, including a good selection of his work from the 1930s. There is also a fascinating reconstruction of the room in which Heartfield and Grosz exhibited at the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920.

■ Accompanying the exhibition is a book entitled *John Heartfield* published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, at £19.95 for the paperback edition and £65.00 for the hardback. Extensively illustrated, it is highly informative on Heartfield's life and work, containing a number of well-annotated essays on the artist and on the principles of montage.

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South Africa

After the week of action WHAT NEXT?

WITH THE breakdown in negotiations and the adoption of a programme of mass action, the struggle in South Africa took an important new turn. A measure of political space, that has not existed for two years, opened up.

The hand of the ANC-SACP-COSATU leadership was clearly forced by pressure from below, especially from militant shop stewards and restless township youth following the Boipatong massacre. The confused and vacillating character of the petty-bourgeois leadership of the mass movement was reflected in the decisions adopted at two key meetings.

On June 30, COSATU's Living Wage Conference was converted into a planning meeting for the programme of action. On July 7, the Congress Alliance, comprising the ANC, the SACP and COSATU, met for the same purpose.

The leadership wanted to avoid a showdown with the regime at all costs. It hoped that the mass action would be limited to a passive demonstration of strength, along the lines of the anti-VAT general strike of last November; it certainly did not consider it as a means for preparing the battle for power. Despite the militant tone of the demands and forms of action, for the Mandelas, Hanis and Naidoo the exercise was aimed at the earliest possible return to talks with the De Klerk regime on the basis of restored prestige.

The minuted conclusions of the COSATU conference explicitly stated that the aim of the general strike and the programme of mass action was to 'remove the De Klerk regime'. However, in the very next line, it was to 'force De Klerk to come back to the negotiating table'. The obvious contradiction in the two positions expressed real tensions: between a leadership that fears the might of the bourgeoisie, that is committed to the reformist path and can no longer even pretend it wants to overthrow the ruling regime; and a rank and file that is losing faith in the idea that negotiations can bring freedom and wants to determine things for itself.

Both meetings demanded a ban on the carrying of dangerous weapons and no indemnity for those who participate in acts of violence. At the same time there was a call to 'openly canvass for the building of defence units'.

The first two calls were directed at the De Klerk regime and presumably meant that there should be some kind of armed force to ensure a ban on dangerous weapons, and arrest and prosecute those that engaged in acts of violence. If the masses were to be denied the right to be armed, then under present circumstances the only organisations capable of carrying out such a task would be the South African Defence Force and the police. There was reference to eventually securing 'interim mechanisms', which would include 'the monitoring and control of the security services by local and international forces'. Meanwhile, the implication was that De Klerk's men would have to do the job.

In which case, what possible role could defence units serve? If they were to perform the function of stopping Inkatha violence, they would surely have to be armed with dangerous weapons and engage in acts of violence! Clearly, the proposal was never intended to be put into practice. It was nothing but a verbal sop to the masses, an attempt to placate their anger at having been subjected to a two-year campaign of terror and butchery while the ANC-SACP leadership stood idly by and merely pleaded with De Klerk to 'stop the violence'.

Thus it can be seen that the reactionary demands for the banning of weapons and for the rejection of indemnity are in no sense offset by the 'radical' call to campaign for defence units. The leadership is as committed as ever to the National Peace Accord, which accepts the authority of De Klerk's police and army. It has no intention of mobilising the rank and file of the MK in an armed struggle. It remains terrified that the masses will take it upon themselves to meet the bloody onslaught of Inkatha and the security forces with AK47s in hand.

The decisions of the two meetings also indicated a growing emphasis on a role for the 'international community'. Mandela's participation at the United Nations, the visit of Cyrus Vance and the arrival of the UN monitoring team are the thin end of an ominous wedge. With the Congress Alliance leaders under pressure to act decisively, but baulking at calling on the masses to fight to convene a democratic Constituent Assembly themselves, turning to the UN is about the only option open to them. Despite the carnage caused in the Gulf, the hypocrisy of its involvement in the Balkans, and the fact that it was never more obviously a tool of the leading imperialist powers, the UN is being

invited to 'oversee' the birth of freedom in South Africa.

Nevertheless, the kind of mass action proposed was exactly what has been necessary all along but which the leadership had sought to prevent for over two years. The COSATU conference called for the general strike to last between three and seven days; the Congress Alliance meeting went further, specifying at least seven days.

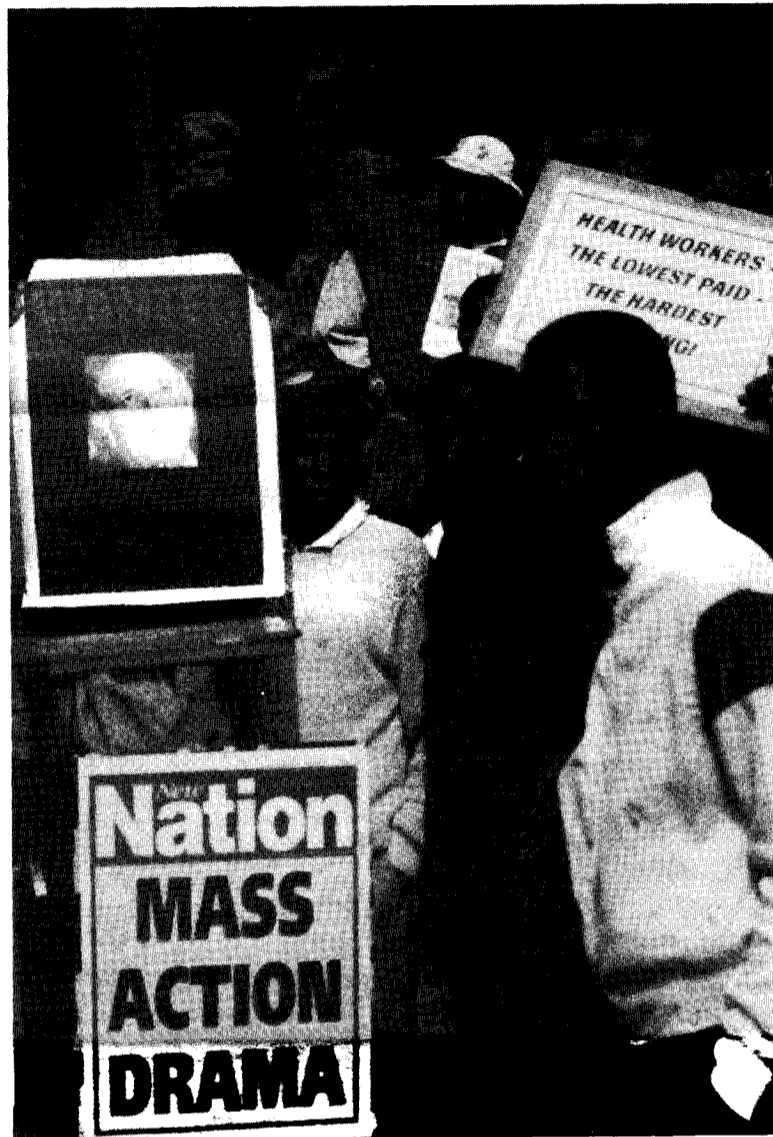
All the key demands of the masses were incorporated into the programme of action: majority rule, an end to the violence, a moratorium on retrenchments (lay-offs), an end to unilateral restructuring (privatisation, deregulation, etc), lower food prices, above-inflation wage increases, an end to the bantustan system and the reincorporation of the TBVC (Transkei, Bophuthatwana, Venda, Ciskei) states into South Africa.

The call was made to form regional and local 'action councils' and to revive the organs of people's power of the days of 1984-86 in order to co-ordinate the mass action. The linking of all existing living wage struggles was to occur by forming joint strike committees and presenting common demands. The occupation of factories, mines, shops, government buildings and city centres would take place, and copies of the Freedom Charter would be prominently displayed. Local organisations in the rural areas would be built to tackle the question of the drought.

On paper things looked extremely promising. The oppressed masses, led by the organised black workers, were squaring up for a direct clash with their exploiters. However, the leadership quickly stepped in to blunt the threatened militancy. First, the COSATU leadership embarked on a ludicrous project to draw the bosses into an alliance against the De Klerk regime; they offered them the hand of 'friendship' and asked them to join in the general strike! This was in spite of the fact that many of the demands of the mass action were directed at the employers, and that the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union, the Media Workers of South Africa and the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa were all in dispute. But with the mood of workers clearly combative, the bosses, realistic politicians that they are, chose to remain 'neutral'.

Then the general strike was limited to two days and, contrary to the proposal of the COSATU conference, students were asked not to boycott classes.

On the eve of the strike, Chris Hani launched a dramatic public attack on 'ill-disciplined' members of MK. The tirade was a general one on those who resort to intimidation and violence. No distinction was made between violence directed against the state and its agencies,



such as Inkatha, and violence within the mass movement itself. It was a reactionary plea for pacifism - strongly backed by Mandela - when what was required was decisive militant action to restore the confidence of the masses who have been beaten halfway to submission by Inkatha and its state backers.

For the ANC-SACP-COSATU leadership, the week of action from August 2-6 went according to plan. Rather than constituting a launching pad for a series of actions aimed at building mass organisation, and restoring militancy and political confidence, it was more like a political festival. And although four million workers responded to the general strike call, participation was patchy in some areas, especially in the Western Cape. Many meetings were badly organised and poorly attended, and the plans that had been carefully laid in the weeks before were not acted upon. The half-heartedness of the leadership amounted to a sabotaging of the plans for national, regional and local co-ordination and the uniting of the struggles. There were sharp verbal clashes between the ANC leadership and the South African National Students Congress, which defied the call not to boycott classes.

The role of the ANC-SACP-COSATU leadership was echoed in bizarre form by the PAC and AZAPO, who opposed the general strike on the grounds that it was aimed only at a return to negotiations. Despite the radical rhetoric, their leaders as usual refused to seize the opportunity to base themselves on the mobilisation of the black working class for its self-liberation, relying instead on cheap, and in this case profoundly reactionary, stunts aimed at scoring points against the ANC. What was especially disgusting was the way in which these organisations joined the De Klerk regime and Inkatha in a chorus of

protests about 'intimidation' of workers that wanted to go to work.

Within weeks of the mass action secret talks were taking place between the ANC and the regime; Mandela was once again singing De Klerk's praises, calling him a man of 'vision and courage'; and an ANC official was on South African television stressing the need for the oppressed masses to lower their expectations. But despite all the efforts of the rotten leadership, the week of action has provided revolutionary socialists with much to build on. The hesitation of the ANC leadership on the question of the resumption of negotiations indicates that the restlessness of the masses has not been stilled. As a result of the developments since July, confusion and disappointment in the negotiations process have given way to greater suspicion and mistrust on the part of many loyal ANC supporters. It is thus difficult for the ANC leadership simply to return to CODESA or a revamped version of it. Whatever happens now, further concessions to the ruling class by the leadership are going to be much more difficult to make.

Militants must vigorously oppose a return to negotiations and struggle for further mass action. The ANC-SACP-COSATU leadership must be held to the decision to continue the programme of mass action. Across the length and breadth of South Africa - in the urban areas, on the farms and in the bantustans - the masses must be roused into open struggle around all their political and economic demands. All existing mass organisations must unite in action and campaign for the building of action councils in every locality, in accordance with the decisions of COSATU and the Congress Alliance. The aim must be a democratic Constituent Assembly arising out of free and fair elections convened by the fighting masses themselves.

Negotiations in South Africa

and the Struggle for a
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