

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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Russia

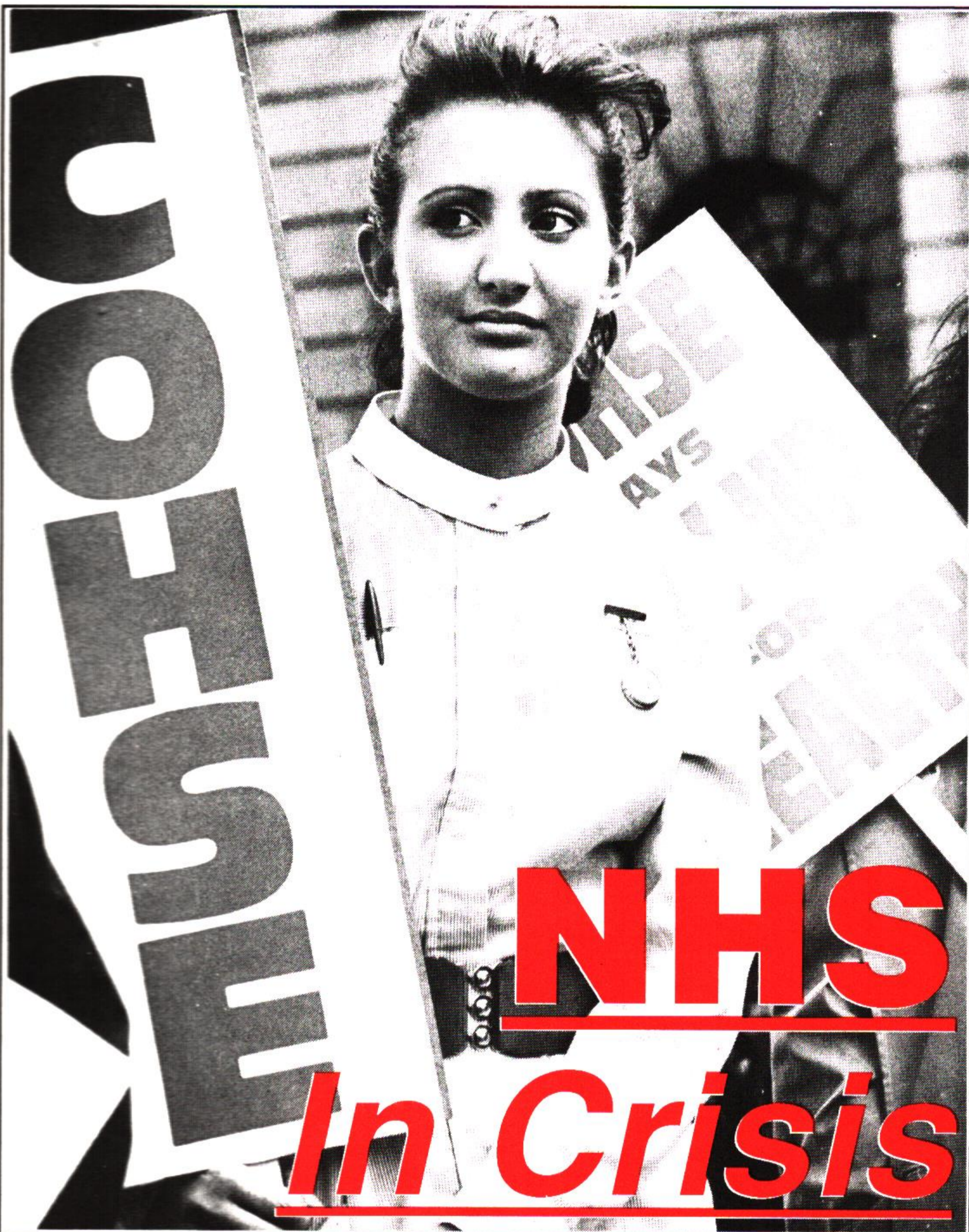


**After
Yeltsin's
Coup**
-see
centre
pages

.....
Marxism
and
Science:
The
Evolution
of Life

.....
**Just
the
Job?**

Labour's
Full
Employment
Debate



Plus: • Ireland • Greece • Europe in Revolt

Towards a Lasting Peace?

Atrocities perpetrated in the name of "nationalism" and "loyalism" reached new depths with the Shankhill Road bombing and the Greysteel massacre.

In their wake there now lies a real desire for an end to the slaughter. Workers in Belfast's Harland and Wolf shipyard, and from Short's engineering factory spontaneously walked out and marched to the scene of the Shankhill Road bombing to demonstrate their feelings of anger at the bombing. But at the same time as this, RUC leader's have voiced their fears that the situation could spiral into sectarian chaos.

Hume-Adams Talks

The Hume-Adams talks between the leaders of the Socialist Democratic Labour Party and Sinn Fein have produced nothing concrete except in raising the idea of an IRA ceasefire. Adams has said that he is prepared to broker a ceasefire in the right circumstances, on the basis of Sinn Fein being involved in peace discussions with the various sides.

There has been much talk in the media of new peace prospects: if the PLO can make peace with Israel and if Mandela can make peace with de Klerk, then surely it is not impossible to get peace in Ireland. Even Major has declared that "new doors could be opened," after his discussion with Irish premiere Albert Reynolds.

However, within a few days of this, Irish Secretary Christopher Mayhew poured cold water on any attempt to get all-party talks off the ground. His argument being that such talks would be useless until there was a real prospect of a settlement.

For 14 years the Tory's policy has been not of peace but of containment: that is the maintenance of just enough troops and cash to prevent the situation from getting seriously out of hand. Despite the killings and the escalation of the IRA's terror campaign within Britain, the Tories have remained unmoved on the question. In reality, the Tories have always worked hand and glove with the Unionists over the years as the bastion of British rule in the North.

The talk of an IRA ceasefire comes as no surprise. As Marxists predicted, after twenty years of so-called 'armed struggle' the IRA are further away from their goal of an united Ireland than they

were at the start of their 'campaign.' They are in a blind alley, and clearly a section at least is prepared to compromise and discuss with the 'enemy.' Also, they can see the music of the future as far as the 'armed struggle' is concerned: the loyalist UDA and UVF outnumber the IRA by approximately five to one, so even their 'military campaign' is questionable.

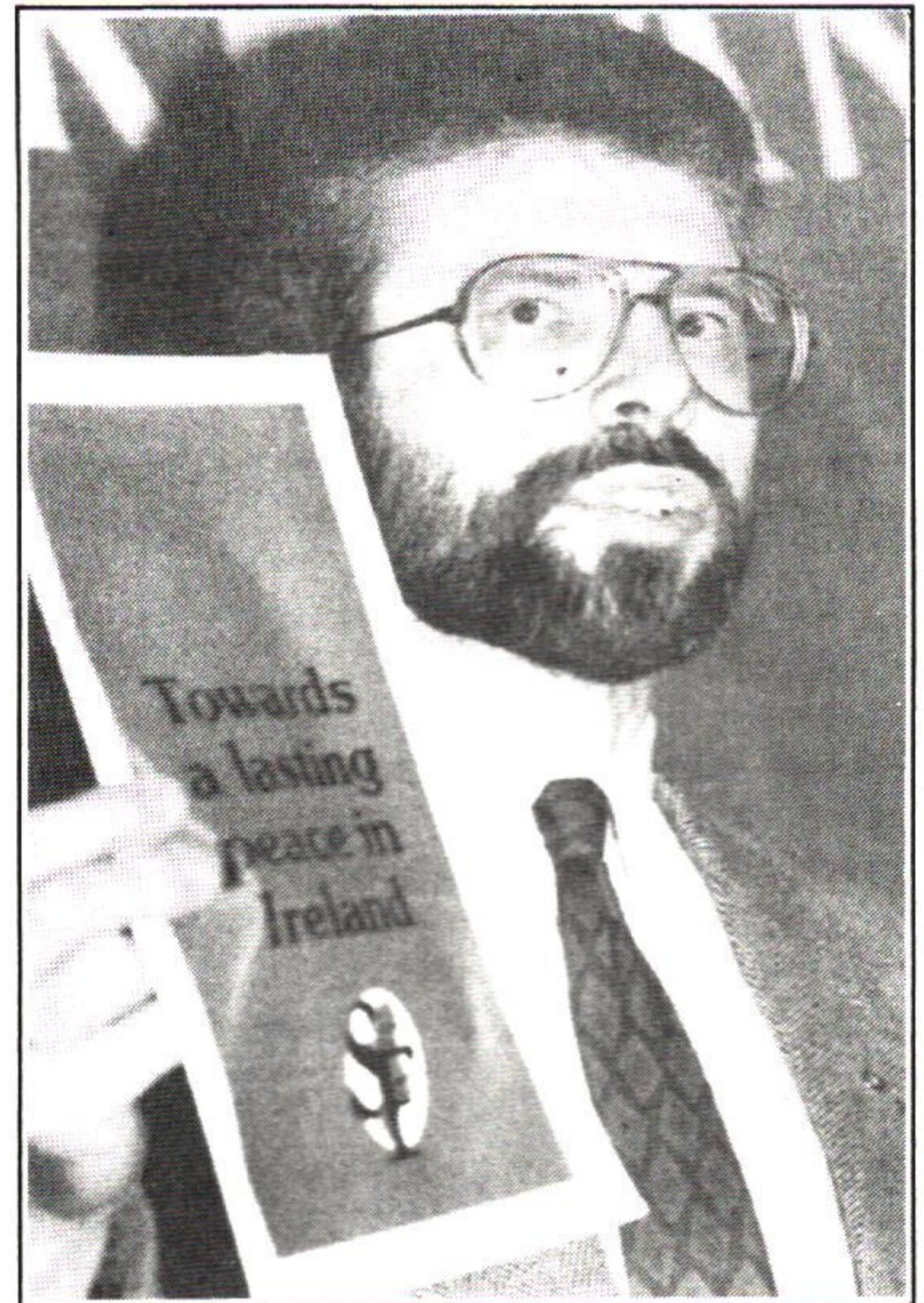
Paramilitaries

This year the loyalist paramilitaries have killed many more people than the IRA, the answer of the loyalists to the Shankhill bombing was the indiscriminate slaughter of Catholics. A section of the republicans now fear a loyalist 'pogrom' against their communities. It is these considerations that have forced Gerry Adams to seek a road to the negotiating table.

But in many senses it is not the IRA that is the major problem. **The British ruling class would now favour a united Ireland - but they realise that it is impossible.** The conditions that led to British imperialism's partition of Ireland no longer exist. The 'independence' of the South is little more than nominal, in reality it is an economic satellite of Britain. It is therefore illogical for imperialism to maintain the partition. However, the ghosts of imperialism's past role, of its 'divide and rule policy', will haunt it for a long time to come.

Any attempt to force the North into a united Ireland would lead to civil war. This is why the demand of some 'lefts' in the British labour movement for British 'withdrawal' on the basis of capitalism is totally utopian. A civil war of this nature would be vicious and bloody, with its own version of 'ethnic cleansing', as Ireland is re-partitioned and people are driven from their homes. What would face the North in this situation would not be the

peace of the PLO and Israel but the 'peace' of Beirut or Sarajevo. The only real solution to the problems in Ireland lie in the hands of the workers movement. When the class moves forward, sectarianism will always be pushed to the background - that has been the lesson of Irish history time and time again. The Irish working class has a



proud record of struggle, where Catholic and Protestant workers have united in common action against the bosses.

Despite the sectarianism, the trade union movement is organised across the whole working class, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers in the same organisations. This is the key to the solution. The trade union movement must take the initiative out of the hands of the sectarians and all the different shades of Toryism.

The launching of a party of Labour, linked to the adoption of a socialist programme capable of tackling the immense social and economic problems that face the North, is the only real way forward. There is no solution on a capitalist basis. A working class united in common struggle would sideline the sectarians and lay the basis for a socialist united Ireland.

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Front page pic: Jez Coulson, Insight

THE DOWNING STREET YEARS:

The Never Ending Story

The arrival of the much heralded memoirs of the Downing Street years "written" by Maggie Thatcher is destined to be bought and read - or more likely unread - by Tory loyalists up and down the country. Whether there is any point in socialists getting this book is another matter.

Despite the spicing up of the book - evidently at the publisher's request - to include a wad of insults (or "assessments" depending on your point of view) about other Tories, what you in fact get is a boring and seemingly never ending chronicle of events describing her alleged achievements. Of course hurling insults at one another seems to be the Tory way at present - words like "barmy", "Nutter", "Bastards" and other statesman like phrases are being banded about by all and sundry including John Major.

Needless to say the "Grey One" is dammed with faint praise by Thatcher who says he "intellectually drifted with the tide" and was not at home with big ideas!

There is no real attempt to analyse the Thatcher years or provide any explanation for her actions beyond that of the most simplistic.

She certainly doesn't seek to apologise for



anything; any mistakes she admits to - and there are many such as the Poll tax which she doesn't admit to - are always the fault of others i.e. "it wasn't me, guv!". Tory leaders have been quick to attack the book in no uncertain terms not least because they are still in government even though their former beloved leader is not.

No wonder then that Thatcher got a less than ecstatic reception at Tory party conference despite that conference's traditional ultra-right wing leanings with Tories leading the attack against the threat of "foreigners", "single mothers" and other scapegoats for the crisis.

Thatcher has been condemned to the dustbin of history - by her own class as much as anything else - and this book should join her. Anyone getting a copy should note however that it makes a good doorstop!

Steve Jones

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OMOV Vote Condemned

The MSF Scottish Regional Council has condemned the union's Labour Party conference delegation for changing their vote to support John Smith's OMOV proposals at the last minute and so ensure the narrow victory for the Labour leadership.

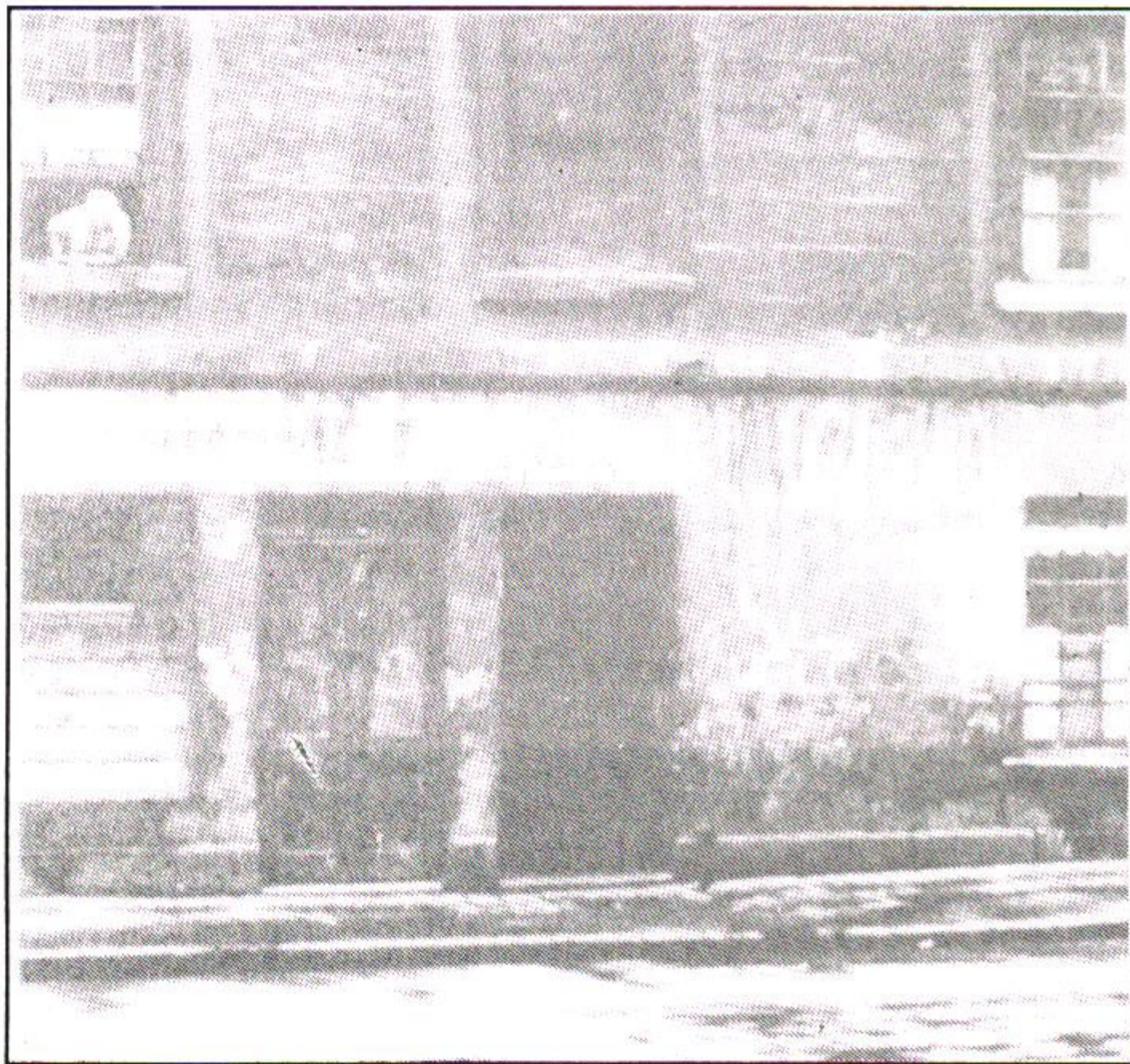
In a recent vote the council condemned the decision to switch votes and called on the union's President to resign and for a vote of no-confidence in General Secretary Roger Lyons.

The MSF leadership used the excuse that because the OMOV vote was lumped together with proposals for quotas for women they had to support it because the union supports quotas for women. However, opposition to OMOV was a conference

policy (the highest policy-making body in the union) whereas the support for quotas for women was a recommendation from a working party and so under union rules carried less weight.

MSF members in Scotland have clearly shown their anger at the MSF leadership's attempts to ignore their wishes.

Home Sweet Home



"Not only is there a fine tradition of tenement design, but a well designed tenement could, perhaps, solve many of our current problems."

- Prince of Wales, speaking in Glasgow, 26.10.93

Tube Victory

The RMT scored an important victory after two sacked London Underground guards were reinstated. RMT rep Pat Sikorski and union activist Ray Stelzner were reinstated after management withdrew the trumped up charges against them following a one day strike by Central Line workers and the threat of two more stoppages and a ballot of all RMT London Underground members. The two were clearly victimised for their union activity, Pat for organising Ray's defence. Management were in effect threatening the whole workforce by picking on the union rep. At first management tried to reinstate them into different jobs (effectively a demotion) but both have now been fully reinstated at their original jobs. This victory is extremely important as a number of Disciplinary Board hearings are due soon.

By a London Underground Worker

Fares Up, Jobs Cut, Services Threatened

BR Prepares for Sell-Off

The announcement by British Rail that they are axing 1,800 jobs in its freight sector is the latest stage in the count-down to privatisation. BR are blaming this on the decline in coal movement following on from the programme of pit closures.

With the NUM estimating that 100,000 jobs would be lost in associated industries as a result of the closure programme we can see clearly the effects of the Tory programme, first for the mines and then for the rail industry.

BR will be put under more and more pressure to cut jobs and services to make the rail service as attractive as possible to private buyers. Fares are being raised in January by well above the rate of inflation, yet again, and many routes are being cut back with frequency of service being reduced. Necessary investment and repair work will again be curtailed. Rail employees and users will be the first to suffer. The loss of 20% of the freight sector jobs shows how, according to the RMT, things will be under privatisation. The TUC have warned that losses in mining jobs will be matched by transport, engineering and other associated industries. The prospect for employment in Tory Britain remains poor as the government puts profit before people.

Defend the NHS

National TUC Demonstration
Saturday 20 Novemebr
London

Socialist Appeal sellers meet at 11am
outside York Road entrance to Jubilee
Gardens (next to county hall). Nearest
tube, Waterloo.

Lining the Bosses' Pockets

The government says wage rises should be no higher than 1.5%. This is apparently to help keep the budget deficit under control and to "keep British industry competitive".

But whilst we are expected to "trim our pay demands" the bosses wallets are straining at the seams - and yet it is us who produce the wealth and profits.

Workers in the Walsall leather industry are just one group of workers in this situation.

Walsall became one of the centres of the leather industry producing bridelry, saddles and fancy goods such as purses, key fobs and handbags.

I recently started work at one well established factory. It has been there since 1755. Being used to piece work I expected to be able to earn a reasonable wage, well above the basic rate. Indeed, the advert read, "all the above jobs have good rates of pay plus a bonus." Of course it turned out the bosses' idea of a "good wage" is very different from mine. They pay the minimum they can get away with - i.e. the minimum agreed rate with the union which has been agreed nationally.

Poverty Pay

As it turns out, the bosses are paying leather cutters a mere £2.66 per hour with a bonus of £22 per week. The reason this exploitation can take place is the state of the industry. One worker had previously worked at five different factories all of which have now closed. This factory seems to be the end of the line, keeping going only by undercutting all the remaining competitors by extreme exploitation of the workforce.

All the workers tell similar stories, like how one used to cut the leather for Chesterfield sofas for £250 - 300 per week - now he's reduced to earning less than £115 per week or his family faces cuts in benefits.

If you work quickly you end up like a charity giving the bosses work for nothing. On my first day the other workers were laughing. "You'll slow down when you see your first pay packet!" they said. The only way to scrape a living is to work long hours - many work from 8am until 7pm and on Saturday mornings.

This company produces goods for amongst others Filofax and Prince Charles - all for the princely sum of £2.66 per hour. It's a scandal that companies like this exist. In effect it means taxpayers are subsidising poverty wages through state benefits. The bosses should be forced to pay a decent wage (and not just to themselves!).

The union (KFAT) should be campaigning for the next Labour government to implement its policy of a minimum wage - even Labour's proposed £3.40 per hour would be a pay rise for many workers). The union should also be demanding that any minimum wage be index linked to protect against inflation. **If the Labour Party had taken these demands into the factories up and down the country instead of trying to woo the bosses into the**

Labour fold we wouldn't have a Tory government now.

Under capitalism Britain has become a low wage economy - a first rate workforce in a third rate economy. This has in large part been allowed to happen because of the Labour and trade union leadership's "dented shield" policy i.e. not putting up a fight. These "leaders" should get off their knees and inspire workers to fight for a better system that can guarantee them a decent standard of living.

In the 1990s the demand for Socialism has never been more relevant for the working class. It's about time the Labour leaders reflected the interests and aspirations of the working class rather than bowing to the pressures of the millionaire bankers and industrialists.

Ian Shelley

Anti-Privatisation Action Must Continue

On November 5th some 310,000 civil servants took part in the first nationwide all-union strike since 1984.

Market testing or privatisation, as it should be known, is the greatest threat to terms and conditions and to the actual organisation of trade unions in the civil service we have ever witnessed.

The Tories' plans were laid bare when Treasury minister Stephen Dorrell said: "we must not ask what can we put into the private sector but what do we need to keep?"

Their vision is a civil service slimmed down from the current 500,000 to a core of just 5,000 with all other functions carried out by a low paid private sector workforce with vast profits going to the Tories' big business friends. Before they can do this they have to weaken the unions. They have tried to do this by introducing performance related pay, attacks on facility time, bypassing of the

Whitley negotiating machinery and now in Bedminster ESJ the sacking of CPSA officials and members.

John Anderson, managing director of P&O Developments stated: "it is likely that purchasers will be deterred by the prospect of owning businesses with extensive white collar trade union membership."

November 5th will be the start of a long and hard campaign if civil servants are to defend the rights won over the past 50 years.

Activists must ensure that the campaign is continued and not allowed to peter out As some in the leadership of the unions would like to see.

Martin Page, IRSF, Leicester Rutland and Northants Collection Branch (personal capacity)

● The strike on November 5th followed a series of one-day strikes by CPSA and NUCPS members in a number of sections as well as action by unions in a host of government departments facing privatisation. Workers rightly see the reason behind the Tories plans is not any concern for improving standards in the civil service but to cut public expenditure in the face of the Tories' £50 billion budget deficit. Through privatisation they hope to slash jobs, cut pay by encouraging "cheaper in-house bids" and save money by worsening the terms and conditions of those whose jobs remain. (what they laughingly call "flexibility"). But civil servants proved on November 5th that the mood is there to defend jobs and conditions and defeat privatisation. This strike must mark just the beginning of a concerted campaign of action. Workers have shown their determination now that needs to be matched by the leaders of the civil service unions. If it is we are on the way to defeating privatisation.



Quotes of the Month

"All Mr Major seems to do now is plead. Plead with Maastricht rebels via his whips. Plead with constituency chairmen personally. Plead with backbench MPs personally. Plead with newspaper editors personally. Plead with the rest of us that we must believe the economy is rising from the pit he and his closest colleagues created. Doesn't he ever get tired of being on his knees?"

- The Tory London Evening Standard columnist Peter McKay -

"Compared to the US I am very poorly paid. Look at their salaries: \$17 million at Apple computers; \$81 million at Coca-Cola. Phil Collins got £12.7 million last year, Elton John got £8 million."

- Tomkins plc chief Greg Hutchings complaining about his "paltry" £1.24 million salary

NHS

Stop the Tories

Selling Off Our Health

The imposition of the "internal market" on the NHS has exacerbated the problems caused by years of deliberate chronic underfunding. The NHS is suffering its greatest crisis since it was established by the Labour government in 1948. Unprecedented and massive cuts caused by the Tories' attempts to claw back money and reduce the £50 billion balance of payments deficit is affecting the health service on a national scale.

Hospitals across London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bradford, Newcastle and in other big cities are being forced to close wards, beds and services for lack of cash. The Times reported (26/7/93) that, "London hospitals are allowing their kidney machines to stand idle for much of the week, while patients with kidney failure are dying because they cannot get treatment. Hospitals say they lack the resources to keep machines running full time."

And the Guardian (7/7/93) said, "the NHS changes are putting at risk patients needing specialist treatment, including critically ill babies, a panel of government appointed advisors warned. It recommends changes to specialist services that fly in the face of many of the government's health policies." Since February 3,500 health workers have lost their jobs and a further 30,000 jobs are at risk. On top of the fear of redundancy health workers have not only been insulted by the government's 1.5% pay offer and the threat of a total pay freeze next year but are also expected to tackle an increased workload with less staff and fewer resources. Nearly one

third of Health Service staff in a recent Personnel Management Plus survey were found to be on some kind of medication linked to stress. 83% suffered from some degree of stress.

The newly published survey of 2000 nurses undertaken by Gallup and commissioned by UNISON, the public sector union, reveals the dire state of Britain's health service. 79% of nurses and midwives report that the workload and pressure under which they are working has increased over the last year. This reported increase is particularly high amongst staff working in wards or units where job losses have occurred (87%). As a result 78% of staff say there has been a decline in morale and 52% consider that services to patients have worsened over the past two years. The main reasons cited for this deterioration are cut backs in staffing levels (81%), increases in administrative duties (70%) and management attitudes (60%).

Low Morale

Management are trying to take advantage of health workers low morale and job insecurity and are attempting to undermine existing pay and conditions. "Staff at Ayrshire and Arran Trust are being threatened with the loss of their jobs if they do not accept reduced employment rights. Staff whose temporary contracts were nearing the two year mark, were sent letters by the Trust setting out the new terms. Contracts would only be renewed if a form was signed agreeing that rights to unfair dismissal

and redundancy money were waived for the non-renewal of contract." (Scotland on Sunday 5/9/93)

At the same time "Bradford Hospitals Trust has ended the contracts of 118 weekend staff and imposed a pay cut, shorter holidays and no sick pay entitlement for remaining staff." (Health Service Journal 5/8/93) The mood amongst health workers is now changing to one of anger and a determination to fight back against the decimation of the NHS. Due to pressure from the rank and file, UNISON and the TUC have designated November 20th, NHS Emergency Day and called a national demonstration in London.

The Tories' lie that the NHS is safe in their hands has been well and truly exposed. Major has even less support on the health service than Thatcher did. An opinion poll in the Guardian found that only 13% believe the NHS is safe in his hands. 75% think it is unsafe in his hands. 18% thought the NHS was safe in Thatcher's hands. The Health

Secretary Bottomley has won the title of Britain's most insincere politician in a recent Gallup poll in the Independent. The Tories claim that the NHS internal market ensures cash is diverted to patient care becomes a farce when it is revealed that Bottomley has allocated over £20 million for salaries for chairs and board members of 289 Trusts.

Jobs for the Boys

Many posts are going to former government ministers, their spouses and Tory candidates who failed to win seats in the general election. St James University Hospital was the biggest spender of all first year Trusts on board fees. It paid out £495,000 to its board, with five directors averaging £65,000 earnings. The government has again been caught fiddling the statistics with its claim that the NHS is treating record numbers of patients. It has now been disclosed that the total given in



Tory figures includes private patients using NHS pay beds. NHS income from private patients has more than doubled over the last five years from £67 million in 1987 to £140 million in 1991, the last year for which figures are available.

Tory cuts in health provision for the elderly have been particularly vicious. A Guardian survey revealed that the number of NHS beds for elderly people with long term illnesses has been cut by 40% in the last five years. Over 10,000 beds for elderly people in England and Wales are likely to have closed since 1988. The survey indicates that the NHS is shedding its responsibility for this area, forcing people into means tested private nursing homes.

A Labour Party report on the NHS in Scotland found it to be in a state of decay. 65 of 348 hospitals had closed since 1979, ancillary staff numbers have been slashed by nearly half and 13% of acute beds have closed. Even the Department of Health's own figures show that the number of patients waiting a year or more for NHS treatment has risen by over 15% in three months. The overall waiting list in England has topped the one million mark for the third consecutive month.

The British Medical Association estimates that £6 billion extra is needed to bridge the gap between UK health spending and other European countries. London Health Emergency call for £2 billion to restore the NHS and cut the waiting lists.

Trade unionists and Labour Party members must build support for the forthcoming UNISON/TUC national demonstration. But whilst a demonstration is certainly useful in terms of raising morale and putting this issue in the spotlight, recent events, such as the magnificent TUC demo against pit closures in October 1992, show that more is needed to stop the Tories. We must not allow the UNISON/TUC leadership to lead us up the blind alley of countless protest marches.

Trade unionists in the health service must argue for a 24-hour

National Health Service strike, with emergency cover, in defence of jobs and patient care. This, linked with joint action from other public service workers, who are also under attack from Tory cutbacks such as the fire service and local government could topple the Tories. A future Labour government must be committed to proper funding of the health

service and the scrapping of the internal market and Trusts. However, much more than simply returning funding removed by the Tories, Labour must fund a massive expansion of health care and decent wages and conditions for health service workers. It is only when we have a Labour government, elected with a socialist programme that resources can

be utilised to provide health care based on the needs of the population.

Eric Barnes, Joint Branch Secretary, Scarborough, Whitby and Malton UNISON Healthcare Branch (personal capacity).

Chaos Reigns in Health Service

The West Midlands Regional Health Authority typifies the chaos reigning in the health service. It is to make up a £20 million deficit by a hospital closure programme that threatens some of Birmingham's top hospitals, with an overall plan to cut the number of beds from 1,280 to 850.

The sickest part of the whole exercise is the West Midlands RHA's declaration that they will "share the options" with local people; this is double-speak for getting Brummies to vote on which hospital they "want" to close!

The four hospitals under threat are:

- * Selly Oak - this is top of the list as it is in a prime development area and sale of land and buildings would raise £4.89 million.
- * South Birmingham Trauma Unit - formerly the General, this was saved from closure earlier in the year after a huge local campaign. To fanfare the RHA withdrew it from the closure list, changed its name, spent an estimated £5 million on it; now it's back on the list
- * Woodlands Orthopedic - the recent scandal of incorrect bone cancer diagnoses here is being used as a cover to justify its closure; in reality, the RHA are more keen on the £3.87 million its sale could raise

* Queen Elizabeth - this is the region's most prestigious, pioneering hospital attached to Birmingham University. This is the least likely candidate as it is a national specialist centre however, the fact it is even being considered is a scandal. The RHA's cutback plans are mixed in with a programme of "reinvestment" and reorganisation. Behind this positive gloss remains the fact that the £20 million deficit has to be found which can only result in a poorer service. Their reorganisation plans are not driven by the needs of local people but by their need to balance the books.

But some are doing very nicely thank you. Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, one of the first to become a Trust, has a vacancy freeze and staff complain of overwork and poor pay. However, chief executive, Mr Robert Naylor is on a tasty £91,000 a year - that's £28,000 more than even health secretary Virginia Bottomley gets!

We Say:

- 24 hour national health service strike, with emergency cover, in defence of jobs and services
- Halt the closures of any hospital bed until proven alternative improved forms of care are up and running
- Scrap the internal market and disband divisive trusts
- All health authorities to be democratically elected
- £2 billion to be put back into the NHS immediately to restore the NHS and cut the waiting lists
- For a general election now! Labour to power on a socialist programme

By a Birmingham UNISON steward



By Rob Sewell

The Evolution of Life

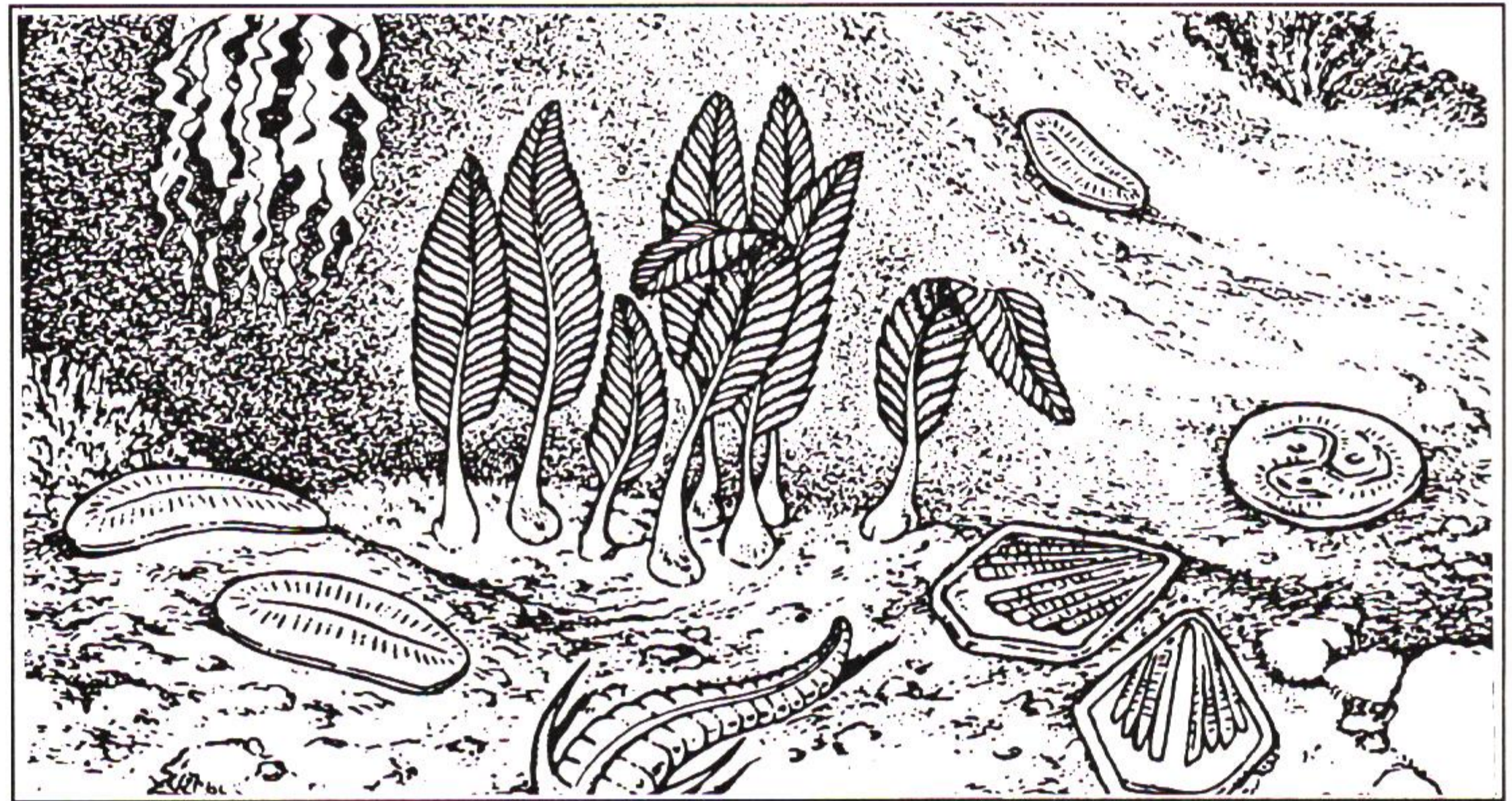
Marxism has always regarded the understanding of evolutionary change as paramount. Using the scientific method of dialectical materialism, which understands things in their ongoing development, in their contradictions, Marx was able to understand the laws that governed history and the development of society in general.

Unconsciously using the same method, Charles Darwin was able to uncover the laws of evolution of plants and animals. "Darwin applied a consistent philosophy of materialism to his interpretation of nature", states the palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould. "Matter is the ground of all existence; mind, spirit, and God as well, are just words that express the wondrous results of neuronal complexity." At that time, the conventional view was that all species - and society for that matter - were immutable, each having been individually created by God for specific functions in nature.

Darwinism

A number before Darwin had suggested an inter-relation between different life forms, but Darwin's revolutionary contribution was to discover the mechanism that brought about change, thereby putting evolution on a firm scientific basis. The same was true of Marx. Many before him recognised the class struggle, but he was able to explain its roots in the struggle over surplus value and how that surplus originated.

Darwin's theory of natural selection, was based upon the fact that there was a great deal of variation in offspring which would give advantage to some in an ever changing environment. Those best suited to survive, in turn, would tend to pass on those superior characteristics to their off-spring in greater proportions.



At a certain stage, quantitative changes would give rise to a qualitative change and the emergence of a new species. This is more likely to occur when the two groups of the same species become separated geographically. "Evolution by natural selection is no more than a tracking of these changing environments by differential preservation of organisms better designed to live in them." (Gould). In other words, natural selection directs the course of evolutionary change. This discovery by Darwin was described by Leon Trotsky as "the highest triumph of the dialectic in the whole field of organic matter."

Ever since its inception, life has been in a state of continuous change and transformation, continually adapting to its changing environment. Those species that proved unable to adapt became extinct. This has occurred on countless occasions. About 225 million years ago, at the end of the Permian period, fully half of the families of marine organisms died out during a short span of a few million years. The late Cretaceous extinction, some 70 million years ago, cleared the earth of its dominant terrestrial animals, the dinosaurs and their relatives leaving the stage free for the development of mammals and the evolution of man.

Describing a dialectical view of change, Dr Stephen Gould, commenting on the 'big bang' of life in the Cambrian period some 570 million years ago, explains that "The history of life is a story of massive removal followed by differentiation within a few surviving stocks, not the conventional tale of steadily increasing excellence, complexity, and diversity." (Wonderful Life, p25). Again, "We find no story of stately progress, but a world punctuated with periods of mass extinction and rapid origination among long stretches of relative tranquillity." (Ever Since Darwin, p14).

Plekhanov

Almost a century ago the Marxist George Plekhanov polemicised against the gradual conception of evolution. "German idealist philosophy", he noted, "decisively revolted against such a misshapen conception of evolution. Hegel bitinglly ridiculed it, and demonstrated irrefutably that both in nature and in human society LEAPS constituted just as essential a stage of evolution as gradual quantitative changes. 'Changes in being', he says, 'consists not only in the fact that one quantity passes into another quantity, but also that quality passes into quality, and vice versa. Each transition of the latter kind represents an INTER-

RUPTION IN GRADUALNESS, and gives the phenomenon a new aspect, qualitatively distinct from the previous one.'" (The Development of the Monist View of History, p96-97).

This dialectical process of evolution, through the slow accumulation of changes that suddenly give rise to new forms, a combined and uneven development involving progress and regression, is largely verified in the fossil record, although inadequate. This represents a fundamental challenge to orthodox vulgar conceptions of evolution preached by most paleontologists which describes change as a slow and steady gradual development, culminating in higher forms of life. From this 'evolution' all the leaps, abrupt changes and revolutionary transformations are eliminated. This anti-dialectical outlook has held sway over the sciences, representing orthodox philosophy. "A deeply rooted bias of Western thought predisposes us to look for continuity and gradual change: natura non facit saltum ("nature does not make leaps"), as the older naturalists proclaimed." (Gould).

Although far from complete, the fossil record represents a picture of the evolution of life. The deepest cleft in the earth's surface is the Grand Canyon, which begins at its edge with young

rocks around 200 million years old, containing the more recent reptile fossils. Half way down there are no reptiles but the bones of armoured fish. Rocks dated at 500 million years contain a few shells and fossilised worms. At its deepest, the oldest rocks are about 2,000 million years old. At this age the only fossil evidence is of primitive bacteria, a common ancestor of higher life forms. The latest fossil evidence from Australia pushes the emergence of life on the planet to some 4,000 million years ago. The more complex forms of life evolved from the more simple. The origins of life is to be found in the hot primordial seas. The thin atmosphere was composed of hydrogen, carbon monoxide, ammonia and methane. These elements were subjected to electrical storms and, with no ozone layer, ultra-violet sun light, and led to the formation of molecules, including sugars, nucleic acids and amino acids - the building blocks of proteins.

Leap Forward

The interaction of these molecules resulted in the formation of even more complex compounds. Eventually, one evolved that was essential for the further development of life: deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA. It possessed two key properties. It can act as a blue print for the creation of amino acids; secondly, it has the ability to reproduce itself. This represented a qualitative leap forward in the evolution of life.

The DNA's ability to replicate itself results from its unique structure: the double helix. In cell division, the molecule zips apart into two separate helices. These then act as the template which attracts simpler molecules that form together to again produce a double helix.

The simple molecules that combine to form the immensely long DNA molecule are arranged in a particular order that determine the types of amino acids occurring in the proteins and the sequence. In other words, the DNA holds all the information for the continuous reproduction of life. It is the chemical molecule of heredity inherent in organisms as different as bacteria, plants and humans, which is proof again of our common ancestry. Occasionally the copying process

of the DNA may go wrong. At some point in the gene (the length of DNA) a part may be temporarily dislocated and inserted in a different place. As Hegel explained, necessity can express itself through the accidental. The protein therefore created can differ. This results in variation from which natural selection can take place and evolution continue. Over millenia of time the earliest forms of bacteria or algae, which lacked a nucleus or chromosomes, fed on the carbon compounds in the sea. The scarcity of food could have resulted in newer forms that could produce energy in other ways. Using hydrogen that was in great supply, food could be manufactured within the cell walls - drawing energy from the sun directly. This is the revolution of photosynthesis. As a result, forms evolved, similar to blue-green algae, that could extract hydrogen from water, producing oxygen as a by-product. This provided the point of no return. Their activity over the millenia produced the oxygen-rich atmosphere of the present day. This in turn, produced the ozone layer that protects life from the harmful rays of ultra-violet sun-light. These factors provided the essential ingredient for the further evolution of life.

Cells later evolved (a mere 600 million years ago) with a nucleus and structures of cytoplasm (called 'eukaryotic'). For a period of some 2.4 billion years (two-

thirds of life's history) the planet was dominated by a mass of blue green algae. Now with the emergence of eukaryotic cells, making further complexity possible, at the end of the pre-Cambrian period, an 'explosion' of multicellular life forms took place. The exact reason for the timing of this qualitative leap is open to much controversy. The theory of the American palaeontologist Steven M. Stanley seems to provide a convincing answer: the ecological theory of cropping.

The Precambrian algae mass that dominated for two and a half billion years was composed exclusively of primary producers. Its evolution was extremely slow, never reaching great diversity due to the environment being monopolised by a few dominant forms. The key to the Cambrian explosion was the evolution of 'cropping' single-celled herbivores. These croppers made space for greater diversity of producers, which in turn, increased the diversity of croppers, resulting in a burst of species at the lower levels of production and new levels at the carnivorous top. The Cambrian explosion was born.

Cell Division

The more complex protozoa of single-celled life gave rise to an even more complex cell division involving two types of cells: the sperm and the egg. The emergence of sexuality, with the new combination of genes not from one source but two, increased the possibilities of genetic variation and accelerated the rate at which evolution could proceed. The asexual reproduction makes identical copies of parent cells, but new mutation is infrequent. Sexual reproduction provides favourable genetic variation from an extensive genetic pool of two sex cells. The advent of the eukaryotic cell made sex a reality. It is also at this point that the division between the plant and animal kingdoms occur. This evolutionary leap saw a huge

Man now has to overthrow the social barriers that have emerged under class which threaten the very existence of life on the planet.

variety of invertebrate animals come into existence.

Each of these life forms carried the DNA's code of genetic information. The evidence of our common ancestry is the similarity of the cell structure of all living things. The mechanism of inheritance is similar. The cells of higher organisms are split into two compartments: nucleus and cytoplasm, and it is inside the former that we find the genes. The genes determine that mice look like mice and humans look

like humans. The information is coded in the DNA molecules. Some organisms, such as bacteria, contain only one main DNA molecule. Our own cells, and those of higher organisms, contain a number of separate bundles of DNA, each known as a 'chromosome'; and the DNA of each chromosome contains many genes. The genetic information carried by the genes is held in a chemically coded form. One gene is a section of DNA molecule that contains the information to make a particular type of protein molecule. The full complement of genes contained within a cell's DNA is known as a 'genome', and the human genome probably contains about 100,000 distinct genes, all present within every one of our trillion cells. They produce the proteins that construct and maintain all cells. From bacterial cells, plant cells and animal cells; cells specialised to form leaf and stem, muscle and bone, liver and kidney, and many more, including the brain. They all originate, however, from a single fertilised egg cell which began to divide until a mature adult is created. Each cell contains the same complement of genes as was present in the original cell, yet the cells are different.

Activity of Genes

These differences must be due to the activity of the genes, with genes that make blood cells active only in blood cells, and so on. Each human cell probably contains the genetic information needed to make any type of human cell, and therefore an entire human, but in each cell only a selected portion of that information is used. This is the path of the evolution life.

"Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of the nebulae." (Trotsky).

The process is not complete. In a geological year representing the history of the earth, Man did not appear until the evening of 31st December. However, Man now has to overthrow the social barriers that have emerged under class society which threaten the very existence of life on the planet. The fate of the species, and of the planet itself, is directly linked to this question. ●

Two recent pamphlets by Labour MPs have reopened the debate on economic policies. Mick Brooks assesses the programmes of Gordon Brown and Peter Hain in the quest for full employment.

Just the Job?



Has Labour an answer to the mass unemployment presided over by the Tories

Full employment is central to a socialist programme but, in words at least, a commitment to full employment also formed part of the ideas of both major political parties from the Second World War until Thatcher ditched the commitment in 1979.

Capitalist governments during that time believed that by Keynesian methods, i.e. pumping money into the economy, they could guarantee a job for all. However, in reality, it wasn't Keynesianism but the post war boom that maintained relatively full employment up until 1973. When the hour for Keynesianism struck it was abandoned - by a Labour government. Callaghan told the 1976 Labour Party Conference, "we used to think you could just spend your way out of recession by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that option no longer exists."

It is a measure of how far the Labour leadership has drifted to the right that Gordon Brown's new pamphlet, *How We Can Conquer Unemployment* has been hailed as a new commitment to full employment by Labour. The media have highlighted Peter Hain's

pamphlet *What's Left?* as an alternative which also raises the need for full employment as part of a break with the "soft left" policies recently associated with Tribune. Can either of these programmes really achieve full employment?

The Tories economic record is miserable. Their "economic miracle" has seen growth of 1.8% from 1979-92 compared with an average 3% between 1950 and 1973. Even if growth speeds up to 2.1% for the next ten years, unemployment will still be higher than it is now. In order to reduce unemployment to one million, four million new jobs have to be created between now and 2003 on present labour market trends.

Inflation

What's the problem? The Tory argument is that as we approach full employment inflation will rekindle. They are prepared to make the unemployed casualties in the "war against inflation." For Gordon Brown, "the reason for accelerating inflation is that rising aspirations conflict with the inability of a relatively inefficient economy to meet those aspirations - because investment is too low to provide sufficient productivity gains and skills are so short that companies have to try to "leap-frog" each

other to attract secure labour." The traditional Keynesian remedy for mass unemployment is to pump money into the economy. But for Brown and the Labour leadership, "the traditional solutions to depressed demand will not work." Brown calls instead for "an enhanced Keynesian approach together with radical reforms on the supply side to deal with the investment and skills bottlenecks."

Brown makes no bones about it - he is after "changing the way the market economy works in the public interest, making it work better." Certainly not a radical challenge to the capitalist system!

The second constraint to a full employment policy is the balance of payments. As the economy is reflationed uncompetitive British capitalism sucks in imports. This gives rise to a "fear of currency depreciation" which the government can only counter by jacking up interest rates, which in turn serves to choke off investment.

In other words the dead parrot can only be kept on its perch by being nailed with sky high interest rates!

Brown, who supported the Tories' membership of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) right up to

the ignominious moment sterling was forced to withdraw, can hardly pose as an expert on exchange rate movements. Brown proposes a ten point programme with policies such as "environmental initiatives that will create jobs" and an "emergency programme in retraining."

New Economics

Important as these measures could be Brown gives us no indication of how much he would spend. Doing sums without figures is a feature of Labour's "new economics". Later on he tells us, "Labour's short term plans will be placed within a tough medium term plan for fiscal consolidation." This appears to mean that Labour would pump money in to start with and pull even more out later on.

Much of Brown's programme is a rewrite of the failed policies of past Labour governments. The calls for "waiving national insurance for companies who take unemployed men and women off the dole" is similar to the 1974-79 Labour government's Job Creation Scheme which ended up not subsidising jobs but subsidising the bosses for taking workers straight off the dole instead of from the Labour market. How does this

create new jobs? The real effect is to reduce workers' expectations as to the going rate when they are looking for work. Brown's pamphlet is in no sense a step forward. Rather than learning the lessons of past Labour governments he hopes everyone else has forgotten them by now.

How much money does he intend to pump in? When does he expect to achieve full employment? What is his inflation target? Brown grandly declares an "investment decade". How will he turn rhetoric into reality? Capitalists invest for profit which is the unpaid labour of the working class. How will this benefit workers? How will Brown challenge the miserable record of British capitalism, where investment is currently below 1979 levels. Brown hopes to make capitalism better but doesn't explain how. Anybody looking for serious solutions to Britain's economic failure will only find slick evasions in Brown's pamphlet.

Peter Hain's pamphlet, "What's Left? The Future of Labour" has a broader sweep and at least has the merit of asking important questions. He begins with the paradox of Labour Party modernisers such as Brown, who were responsible for the last election defeat, actually being emboldened by the defeat to try to tow the party still further to the right. In a section entitled "Modernisation Doesn't Work" he makes the basic point that "our main problem is that the electorate don't know what Labour stands for anymore."

Hain raises the banner not of socialism but of "participatory democracy". There is, he says, a dominant top-down or statist vision of socialism ranging from social democrats to Marxists within the movement. He classes himself as a "libertarian socialist" (He is a former Young Liberal).

Hain states, "so industrial democracy becomes a key plank of a socialist economic strategy" but in reality he means, "tax incentives...encouragement for co-operative and employee share ownership schemes." In

other words sops, not real workers democracy. ESOPs are famously a device to cement workers' loyalty to capitalist employers, but this kind of thinking is central to Hain's proposals. "Only socialism's commitment to a fair distribution of wealth and income can create a workable consensus for the necessary changes; otherwise many people will not be prepared to accept a short term brake on rising living standards to switch resources into investment and ensure long term security...industrial democracy is essential to mobilise a common purpose between worker and manager."

Investment

So Hain shares Brown's preoccupation with the "debt driven consumer and service sector boom" under the Tories. In other words, workers are too well off and class collaboration is an alternative way of reducing workers' consumption in favour of capitalists' investment. What about the traditional socialist programme? "There ought to be no enthusiasm on the left for the nationalisation model of 1945."

The stock market value of privatised industries stood at over £61 billion in May 1993. Hain argues that we cannot

afford to renationalise if it costs that much at market rates of compensation. So a future Labour government led by the "left" would have a smaller public sector than Labour's monetarists had in 1979. Ownership for Hain remains a key issue - but it is the institutional shareholders such as pension funds who are now the dominant force in the economy. He argues that some "86% of loans to business have to be repaid in under five years." In

other words the City thinks short term. Gordon Brown too believes that "institutions...have failed to deliver the goods." He mentions pension funds, the Stock Exchange, the Bank of England and then moves on to his next point. He puts forward no policies to deal with these failings.

Hain's programme is to reform the City. The high street banks should be decentralised to make them more responsive to local needs, pension fund and insurance institutions (which own two-thirds of shares in British industry) should be controlled by having workers appointed to the boards and new public banks should be set up - a National Investment Bank, a Small Businesses Bank and a Housing and Construction Bank to offer cheap mortgages. The National Investment Bank should lend to and buy shares in companies and force the commercial banks to do the same to force manufacturing to invest.

In fact Hain's National Investment Bank is a scaled down version of the last Labour government's National Enterprise Board. Set up to pick

winners it instead found itself bailing out losers such as British Leyland and Ferranti. The "new" Investment Bank, unlike the NEB, would not

take controlling interests but just act like any other punter on the Stock Exchange. There would be tremendous pressure on it to break even by buying shares in profitable companies who presumably could get loans for investment already. If the Investment Bank were to go for a controlling interest in profitable companies it would meet the wholesale resistance of the capitalist class.

Secondly, if the Investment Bank is to be an economic

power in the land, where is it to get funds from? If it opens its doors to lenders in the usual way, they will be looking for a decent return. If the Investment bank were to back no-hopers the pressure would be on for the taxpayer to pick up the bill. The NEB had maximum funds of £1,000 million. The sums required to turn round the shortsightedness of city institutions would be astronomical and out of reach.

Wilson Committee

If it were really the case that British industry was knocking at every door for funds that were guaranteed to make money, then it would not be turned away. The real problem for manufacturing capital is profitable markets. If they don't exist there is no point force feeding them with investment funds.

As far back as the Wilson Committee on financial institutions the CBI's evidence was "the clear conclusion of an overwhelming majority of our members is that it has not been a shortage of external finance that has restricted industrial development but rather a lack of confidence that industry will be able to earn a sufficient return." That is why industrial capital has never asked the financial institutions for more.

It is impossible to plan the economy without owning and controlling the financial institutions. They are an important lever of control over industry. The sums involved are so vast there can be no question of market rates of compensation. Hain's proposal does not scratch the surface of the problem. Hain has a serious proposal to reflate the economy. He suggests "an immediate £20 billion programme of public expenditure driven investment in infrastructure, training and skills." How would this be paid for? The pamphlet suggests that by putting people back to work it would pay for itself. He makes the point that it costs £27 billion a year to keep three million on the dole. The figure of £9,000 per head graphically illustrates the economic and human waste of mass unemployment. "The choice is between borrowing to



Gordon Brown

finance the dole queue or borrowing to invest," he says. However, the question must be asked, if it's in the interests of the capitalist class to give everybody a job why hasn't it been done? Keynesianism hasn't worked - reflation can create a market but the massive spending on our run-down public infrastructure would soak up the resources capitalists need to boost their profits. That is why the capitalists would resist such a programme every step of the way. And since economic control remains firmly in their hands they have the power to sabotage such a policy. Marxists support reflating the economy in order to stop the run-down of our public services and to mop up unemployment. But we recognise that capitalism imposes restraints on reforming governments. British capitalism is so weak that any attempt to flush it with health just brings on a fever of imported goods. Since 1979 one in three manufacturing jobs have gone. The "boom" of the 1980s offered new jobs in three major sectors - retailing, construction and financial services. These industries are not

To build up manufacturing requires not just reflation but an overall plan of production... this requires taking power out of the hands of the capitalist class

high-tech, more important they offer no way to boost exports and cut imports. Manufacturing must be rebuilt for Britain to pay its way. To build up manufacturing requires not just reflation but an overall plan of production that targets certain sectors of the economy to undo the damage of decline. This requires taking power out of the hands of the capitalist class whose only interest is to make money the easiest way even if at the expense of industry. Peter Hain is aware of the danger of resistance by the capitalists.

He calls for the abolition of the Royal Prerogative and the House of Lords. He warns that "*Labour will fail in government unless it actively engages the support of sympathetic extra-parliamentary forces to resist the hostile forces of the financial, business, bureaucratic and technological elites,*" but his programme does not seriously reflect this recognition. Hain has escaped the fatal embrace of the "modernisers" who have swallowed up much of the soft left within the party. He has dug up sections of the old Alternative Economic Strategy and is making common cause with Campaign Group MPs like Ken Livingstone who says, "*the alternatives which are frequently posed today...are that either Labour does nothing, or at least nothing sufficient to tackle the problems of the economy, or it proceeds to a socialist economy. Both are false as a guide to strategy today.*"

Peter Hain and Ken Livingstone are wrong. The only real solution to the crisis caused by British capitalism lies in the socialist reconstruction of society. In Socialist Appeal no.10 we set out the socialist alternative to unemployment. There is not room here to repeat the whole programme. But it must be made clear a socialist plan would involve millions of people in shaping their own destiny for the first time. The precondition for that plan is the taking over of high finance and big business. A socialist plan of production would not only guarantee a job for all, but a real job with a living wage alongside a reduction in the working day and working week. Such a plan would enable the tapping of the talents, skills and unused resources of people who today are condemned to a humiliating existence of enforced idleness. However, without ownership it is impossible to plan and control the economy and as such Labour must be committed to nationalising under democratic workers control and management the banks, insurance companies and big monopolies which dominate the economy. Only on such a programme can we guarantee full employment.

Watching Brief

Of Heroes and Bastard Sons

"Stalin" is a television 'biopic' now available on video for rental. It is rare to see films, particularly Hollywood films, about the October revolution, its heroes and bastard sons, so it is one many Socialists will probably take out.

The first point of curiosity is the fact that it gained three Golden Globe Awards - which made me think it would probably be a hatchet job, not just on Stalin, but the whole revolution. Presumably the television companies which funded this film feel that the revolution has now been discredited and that it no longer presents a threat to show the Bolsheviks on screen. However, when you begin to watch it you realise why there would be very little bourgeois fear on the release of this film.

Insight

It stars Robert Duvall (well known bald actor) as the bonapartist with the low forehead and Maximillian Schell (well known actor with thick head of hair) asLenin! Robert Duvall is often used to lend an air of respectability to terrible films, but not even his considerable acting skills could save this mess. He and Schell are buried in more prosthetics than you average Frankenstein's monster and it would have required the special effects team of 'Jurassic Park' to elicit any facial expression from the pair. In the absence of any psychological, or, more importantly, political insight into Stalin, Duvall does an unintentionally amusing impression of Robert De Diro. This is significant, since the film closes with the caption '*Stalin's crimes caused the deaths of tens of millions of Soviet citizens*'. This is the key to the approach of the film, which effectively begins after

the revolution and continues for the following 160 minutes or so, to push the political issues so far into the sidelines that they are seen as irrelevant.

True, the film does not take the liberal Bourgeois approach that the revolution would inevitably degenerate and that Stalin was the dictator within Lenin, struggling to get out.

Trotsky

True, it is clear that only Trotsky had the foresight and was capable of stopping Stalin's ever tightening grip on the party and state. But the terror which followed is presented in a 'Godfather' type manner - a paranoid power crazed bully tricks and executes his friends and family - with a melancholy music score. The ludicrous 'Russian' accents employed by the English and American cast also help to make it less a historical account of the treacherous betrayal of the Bolsheviks by representatives of a bureaucratic caste, more a 'mafia' film. Trotsky is portrayed as an arrogant snob, 'the son of a prosperous land owner with all the privileges of wealth' who 'wastes' the opportunity to stop Stalin remaining as leader. Zinoviev and Kamenev are spineless 'intellectuals' whose temporary manoeuvre in supporting Stalin goes wrong. There is no hint of the forces behind these characters and events. In fact the only Bolshevik who is portrayed in anything other than caricatured form is Bukharin, who is a dashing, handsome hero! In short, watch the film for a laugh, but if you want to know the truth read the book - Trotsky's that is!

Mark Turner

Our sales campaign has already seen new sales established and new sellers spreading the ideas of Marxism. Business manager Steve Jones reports.

On target for sales success

Funding the Struggle

Within a matter of days of the launch of our £5,000 special Press Fund appeal we had pledges and money arriving at our office. Already over £1,500 has been raised in "hard cash".

Many other people have pledged money over the course of the next month. If every reader is approached to make a donation to our campaign and all the pledges are honoured we could make our target within the next month.

Step Forward

That would mean we could have the urgently needed equipment to publish pamphlets up and running for the new year. That would represent a tremendous step forward in building Marxist ideas.

But we cannot sit back and rely on other people to fund this major investment.

Every seller should ask regular readers for the solidarity price of £2, or ask workmates, local labour movement activists and friends to help fund our fight.

Socialist Appeal's editorial board urges every reader and seller to dig deep and give us the best Xmas present possible - the cash to publish material on the struggle against racism, on the trade unions and major international and economic questions facing the labour movement which can help to arm workers for the forthcoming battles.

Readers and sellers continue to respond with enthusiasm to our Sales Campaign '93.

More reports of new sales, of new sellers and new subscriptions continue to reach us.

As reported last issue we had an excellent start to the campaign at Labour Party conference. At the time of going to press last month we did

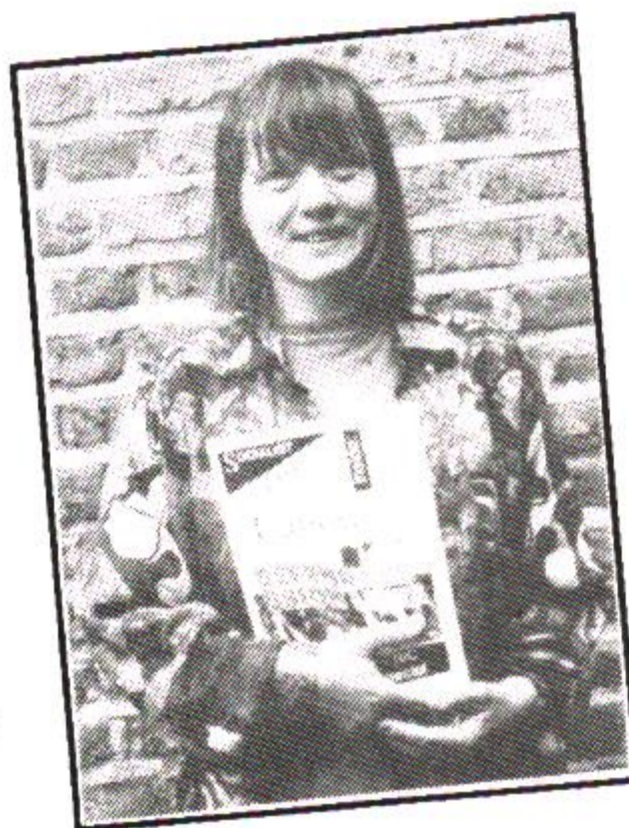
not have a final total. However, we can now report that 95 copies were sold at the conference and many others around the country on the basis of our determined defence of the trade union links and the special party conference supplement.

It is always excellent to hear of new people becoming sellers and helping to spread the ideas of Marxism in the labour movement. In the past few days we have had requests for copies of Socialist Appeal for new sellers in a number of areas. A Fords

Success

TGWU activist in Swansea has requested copies to sell each month and a trade unionist in Devon has asked for 15 copies to sell at work and in the local labour movement. Other

one from Plymouth. Every seller should make sure they cover the local coaches down to the health workers demonstration on November 20th and...keep up those good sales!



new sellers have also been reported in Yorkshire and in Cambridge. Our Labour Party/TUC conference special also encouraged a number of new subscriptions, including most recently two from London and

Selling at Work

One of the best ways of spreading socialist ideas is to sell Socialist Appeal at work.

Alan, a regular reader in Tyneside reads the journal during his breaks at work. He told us: "I leave it on the side and loads of people read it. My mate said just the other day that you get information in the paper you won't find anywhere else. In fact it disappeared for 3 days last week while someone had a good read of it."

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Sales Campaign '93

Pasok Must Learn Lessons of Past Mistakes

With 47% of the vote, the Socialist Party PASOK returned triumphantly to power. During the 3.5 years of right wing New Democracy rule the Greek working class suffered vicious attacks and lost many of its past gains. New Democracy (ND), after a split in its ranks, suffered a humiliating defeat taking only 39% of the vote.

In 1989 when the PASOK government was crumbling under the weight of its anti-working class policies and a financial scandal, the "official" political establishment of Greece, and many foreign politicians and analysts, thought PASOK was finished. The Communist Party even agreed with the right to send Papandreou and other leading PASOK members to special courts over unfounded accusations (telephone bugging) which have since been proven to be part of a set up organised by people working for members of ND. It was in this climate that ND won the 1990 elections with 47% of the vote against PASOK's 38.5% and 10.3% for the alliance of the Communists and other left parties.

Smear Campaign

ND came to power in 1990 in an anti-socialist climate due to the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and it seemed it would rule forever. **However, it is notable that in the 1990 election, despite a massive smear campaign and an unfavourable world situation, the Socialists won 38.5% of the vote.**

After their first year in office, ND launched an all out attack against the working class, lowering its standard of living by 35% in three years. Unemployment increased from 7% to 11%. A tight monetary policy caused many small businesses to fold. It privatised many companies, selling one of Europe's biggest cement companies to an Italian multinational, and taking large bribes as revealed recently in the Italian courts.

As events unfold, the Greek working class, through its experience of past PASOK governments will inevitably look for more radical, socialist solutions to their problems

The ND government was in the process of selling to its friends two of the biggest public companies - telephone and electricity. PASOK promised to reverse this process immediately. One of the most scandalous privatisations was that of public transport which PASOK is already reversing. With the excuse of not wanting to subsidise public transport ND gave the buses to their friends while at the same time attempting to destroy one of the more militant unions. The bus workers lived up to their tradition and for months held daily demonstrations winning the solidarity of Greek workers.

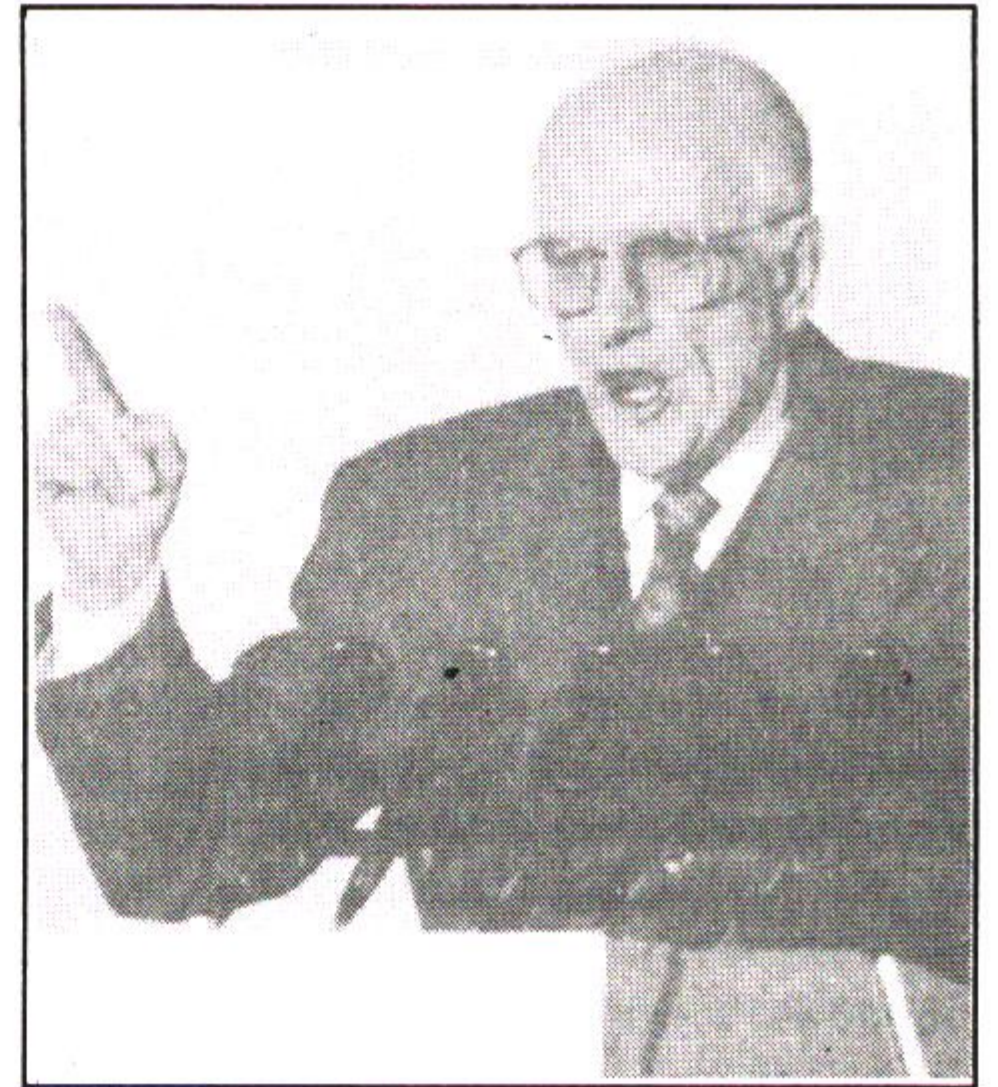
During the whole period of ND rule, there were important struggles of the youth (school occupations in 1991 and 1992) and workers, which were always hampered by the lack of leadership and direction offered by PASOK and the unions. Because of this, and even though there were important struggles, they didn't lead directly to the overthrow of the ND. But the struggles created a climate of uneasiness within the ruling party and resulted in a split in its leadership.

An internal opposition was formed around three leading MPs who accused the government of incompetence and lack of consideration for the people. It also led to an actual split, with Samaras, Minister of foreign affairs, forming his own party, Political Spring, with about ten ND MPs and the backing of some Greek and foreign capitalists.

Youth Participate

The return of PASOK has brought feelings of hope to workers and the poorer layers of society not because they have illusions, as they did in 1981, that PASOK would bring socialism, but because they feel PASOK's government as their own from which they can demand and gain some benefits.

The same feelings exist in a large part among youth who were politically emancipated through their harsh clashes with the ND government and who were active in supporting PASOK in the election. An example was the huge and enthusiastic rally of PASOK's youth during the elections in Athens and the mass participation of youth in PASOK's rallies. It is characteristic of the new situation that PASOK announced the first parliamentary bill would be the renationalisation of public transport, and following that, one reversing the anti-strike laws, as well as taking back the ex-king's estate which was given to him by the ND government.



Papandreou

Even so, the perspectives of the new government are not so good. It went to the electorate with a populist programme which in reality is a conservative programme that will lead nowhere. In the first year or so, the PASOK government will have to give wage rises at least equal to inflation, but because of the crisis of the economy, the massive budget deficit and the ever increasing public borrowing and because it will continue to work within the confines of capitalism, it will soon move towards an austerity programme.

The crisis of Greek and world capitalism as well as the unstable situation in the Balkans will push PASOK down the same road other European socialist parties went after they came to power. This is the road of managing the system in its crisis, leading directly to a clash with the workers. This will push the rank and file against their leaders in a fight for left wing policies. **It is inevitable that this movement will lead to the formation of a mass left wing (elements already exist) inside PASOK.** Whichever way events unfold in the near future, one thing is certain: the Greek working class through its experience of past PASOK governments will inevitably look for more radical, socialist solutions to their problems. The ideas of Marxism will surface again to guide the struggles and give direction. As events unfold, the Marxists within PASOK will play an important role in offering a programme and perspectives to this movement.

**Spyros Gougousis,
Editor of Socialist Ekfrasi.**

France

Class Struggle Back on Workers' Agenda

French workers have been facing the reactionary policies of the Balladur government since their narrow election victory in March of this year. Their victory was more an opposition to the policies of the socialist party than any acceptance of the ideas of the right. Seven months later the results have proved to be disastrous for the working class. Each day sees new attacks on the gains of the past - an increase in health and social security contributions, a decrease in old age pensions, in unemployment benefits and increases in direct taxation. The

on past gains in the workplace. The government predicts that wage cuts will improve business "confidence" and trigger economic growth. In reality they will change nothing - it's only a pretext to justify the concessions made to the capitalists and speculators. Whilst workers suffer under the impact of government cutbacks, the employers and the ruling class benefit from reductions in their social security and health contributions, lower taxes on profits and on income

the strikers victory was not limited to small concessions, but amounted to a brilliant victory over management and the government) have all faced industrial action.

The Air France dispute was a test case. Government minister Bernard Bosson had criticised the timidity of plans submitted to him by Air France president Bernard Attali. On top of an intended saving of four million francs, Bosson demanded a further billion. The bulk of the sacrifices were to be made by the lowest paid workers. The pilots and flight commanders had been given wage increases. But following the public sector strike of October

Europe in Revolt

right-wing government is also proposing to reduce the legal minimum wage for young workers, to introduce further flexibility in working hours by calculating hours worked on an annual basis and restricting the right to asylum for political refugees. These attacks are accompanied by plans to privatise nationalised industries and to put on a "healthier" footing both private and nationalised industries. Of course, the main measures proposed to achieve this are sackings, even in the profitable industries, wage cuts and attacks

from property, and also from the privatisation of the Banque Nationale de Paris, along with other concessions to shareholders. Now in opposition, Socialist Party (SP) leaders criticise Balladur's policy. However, it was the failure of their right-wing policies, together with financial scandals and corruption which led to demoralisation of the working class and the left's defeat. Over the last few weeks the situation has begun to change. Strike movements have broken out against government and employers plans Renault, Aerospatiale, Bull, Snecma, Thomson, Euro-Disney and especially Air France, (where

12, in which some private sector workers also participated in spite of trade union divisions, the Air France workers, and in particular the ground staff, continued the strike given the mood of the workforce and the encouragement of other sections of the working class. Even the pilots joined the strike. The government adopted an apparently implacable position at the beginning of the strike but rapidly retreated when faced with the prospect of a generalisation of the movement. The Air France president was forced to resign and his plan withdrawn. The Air France workers have given new hope to the working class and put the ideas of class struggle firmly back on the agenda.

Frederic Catalan

Spain

Students fight back

Once again Spanish students have shown their willingness to fight. The attempts by the right-wing Socialist government to increase university fees led to a one-day general strike with mass demonstrations. If the government does not back down, the movement will continue on a higher level. On Wednesday 27th October 100,000 students

demonstrated in the major cities. Despite torrential rain, there was a good turnout from the universities and the schools, called out by the Marxist-led Student Union (SE). Among the slogans heard were; "Workers and Students, go forward united!", "The bankers' profits for students grants!" and so on. The student movement is not an isolated phenomenon. There is a general mood of anger and frustration in the working class and youth, faced with 3.5 million unemployed and attacks on living standards. The leaders of the main trade unions (UGT and CCOO) have called a day of action on 25th November. The Students Union have called a general strike in the schools for 17th and 25th November and appealed for students to participate massively in the workers demonstration on 25th November. As an indication of our close links with the labour movement, the general secretary of the Socialist Union (UGT) Nicolas Redondo has invited the leaders of the SE for discussions. In the new and stormy period of the class struggle which opens up, the Spanish youth will be in the vanguard.

Mili Rodriguez

(NEC of the Spanish Students Union)

European Round-Up

Across Europe there has been a wave of strikes in both the private and public sectors as many European countries move into, or move deeper into recession.

In Belgium workers in the public services staged a one-day strike to oppose cuts and proposed job losses.

In Italy millions of workers took part in a four-hour general strike to protect jobs. There were protest marches in a number of cities during the strike against government policies. Hospitals, banks, factories and cinemas were hit by the action. More than 100,000 building workers in Germany staged a series of protests after a scheme to compensate them for work lost due to bad weather was stopped. Other protests and strikes have taken place in Eastern

Germany as workers begin to feel the real effects of capitalism on their pockets. One of the most significant is the strike of east German potash miners who are staging hunger strikes against threatened pit closures and have become a focus of protest against poverty and unemployment. Ten thousand recently took part in a demonstration of support. And when coach-loads of neo-nazis came to offer their support the workers turned them away and told them not to return.

And miners in Romania's Jiu Valley have also struck for better pay and to protest at the government breaking promises to increase wages in line with inflation which now stands at 250%.

The crushing of parliament by Boris Yeltsin marks a major turn in the situation in Russia. However, as *Socialist Appeal* editor Alan Woods explains, Yeltsin's victory has solved none of Russia's problems

Russia After Yeltsin's Coups

The deadlock between the two mutually antagonistic forces of the nascent mafia-bourgeoisie represented by Yeltsin and the old Nomenklatura, represented by parliament has, for now, been resolved in favour of the former.

However, Yeltsin's victory is not sufficient to provide a definitive solution. The process of capitalist restoration has received a powerful stimulus, but is far from completed. In reality, Yeltsin's coup will open up a new period of economic, social and political convulsions in Russia.

Yeltsin's decision to dissolve the Congress was a desperate move, which reflected weakness, not strength. He was forced to act when he failed to gain support for a new constitution. Dissolving the Congress was a clear violation of the existing constitution, despite his assurance of new elections in December.

Imperialist Hypocrisy

Nevertheless, the imperialist powers fell over themselves to support him in his actions, including the bloody attack on parliament. What a contrast to their howls of protest when "democracy" was flouted in the attempted coup of August 1991.

In the final analysis, they are not concerned with "democracy," but only with their material and strategic interests. In 1991, it was the nascent capitalist elements who were being threatened. This time it was the ex-Stalinist bureaucrats who faced a murderous assault. The foreign policy of the imperialists is always dictated by class interests, like their home policy. Their hypocrisy is nauseating.

The Second International has also added its voice to the chorus of support for Yeltsin, while making the obligatory nod in the direction of "democracy." This shameful bowing to the imperialists shows how far the degeneration of the leaders of the labour movement has gone.

The West has been pressurising Yeltsin to push ahead with his "reform" programme. Yeltsin, who represents the interests of the



"Hardline" demonstrators call for "the unity of the army and people" against Yeltsin

gangsters and racketeers of the nascent Russian bourgeoisie, wants a free hand to prepare the way for an untrammelled movement towards capitalism.

However, Yeltsin's reforms were being blocked by parliament, which represented the old bureaucracy (the "Nomenklatura") - state officials, army officers, collective farm managers and directors of large-scale nationalised industry, who previously ruled through the "Communist" party. These elements support a more gradual movement towards capitalism, preserving their power and privileges. There is also a section (which may be a majority) who want to return to the old system of "socialism" and a centralised economy.

Disintegration

Yeltsin's programme would mean massive privatisation, resulting in the destruction of 40% of industry, with mass unemployment of 25 million or more - but that is of no concern to the West who demand more severe measures to speed up the transition to capitalism.

The deadlock between President and parliament could not last for long. The open split in the state raised the possibility of the disintegration of Russia itself. For many months, both Yeltsin and his opponents in parliament have been struggling for power. The outcome of this struggle could not be determined in advance. We are dealing here with the struggle of living forces, an extremely complicated equation.

Even after Yeltsin's decree of September 21st the outcome of the struggle was not decided. Both sides appealed to the masses. Khasbulatov and Rutskoi even appealed for strikes.

However, every worker knows that to organise a strike it is not enough just to issue an appeal. For two weeks the deputies just sat in the White House, waiting for the masses to come to their aid. If, instead, they had sent representatives to the factories to rouse the workers, explaining concretely the meaning of Yeltsin's programme and posing an alternative - even in a caricature Stalinist form - they would have got a response. But they were incapable of explaining the attack on workers' rights posed by Yeltsin., limiting themselves to appeals to "defend the Constitution."

The presence of fascist groups among the defenders of parliament has been deliberately highlighted in the Western media. These were a small minority. However, it is further indication of the tactical and political bankruptcy of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov that they failed to repudiate these elements, enabling Yeltsin to present the movement as a "Communist-fascist uprising," weakening their position.

In a situation of this character, energetic and determined action is essential. However, the leaders of Congress showed themselves completely unprepared. They hesitated, displayed passivity, waiting in the White House with no evident plan of action, until Yeltsin cut the electricity. Unused to basing

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themselves on the masses, they were incapable of appealing to the working class, despite the existence of widespread discontent against Yeltsin.

In reality, the inaction of Congress was no accident. Both Yeltsin and Rutskoi made repeated statements that they were "against violence." What is clear is that both sides were terrified an armed confrontation would spark off the intervention of the masses, with unpredictable consequences.

In fact, the decisive factor from the beginning has been the passivity of the working class, after 60 years of Stalinism.

The prevailing mood in the masses was undoubtedly at the time of the coup "a plague on both your houses," although that mood was beginning to change towards the end, with a section of the most active workers participating in the demonstrations outside the White House. This was one of the elements which made Yeltsin decide on an armed assault on the parliament.

An indication of the hopelessly degenerate and corrupt nature of the bureaucracy was the fact many of the deputies accepted Yeltsin's bribe to leave the White House, in exchange for money and positions. In the end only about 100 of the "hardliners" remained.

Army Intervenes

Despite this, Yeltsin's position remained extremely shaky up to the last minute. Since the fall of Congress, it has emerged that the army chiefs only decided to intervene to save Yeltsin at the very last moment. Most reporting in the Western media has been false and one-sided, exaggerating the position of Yeltsin, and suppressing or underestimating the degree of opposition. Yeltsin was in panic. The *Daily Express* reported "military chiefs were reluctant to obey orders to shoot at the parliament. The assault force was eventually cobbled together from the army, the interior ministry and sections of the KGB and police."

The events of October have been compared to 1917. There is no comparison. Trotsky explained 90% of the Revolution had been accomplished before the insurrection. The Bolsheviks' main task was to win over the decisive majority of workers and soldiers. Because of this, the actual seizure of power was relatively painless.

The Congress leaders had important points of support in the armed forces, through the Union of Officers. Yet they failed to conduct agitation among junior officers - let alone ordinary soldiers. They addressed their appeals to the army tops. Most of the generals stayed on the fence till the last moment, waiting to see who would win. Yeltsin could count on the support of only a small minority of hand-picked units. Even the support of these was not firm, as shown by the mass defections of police during the

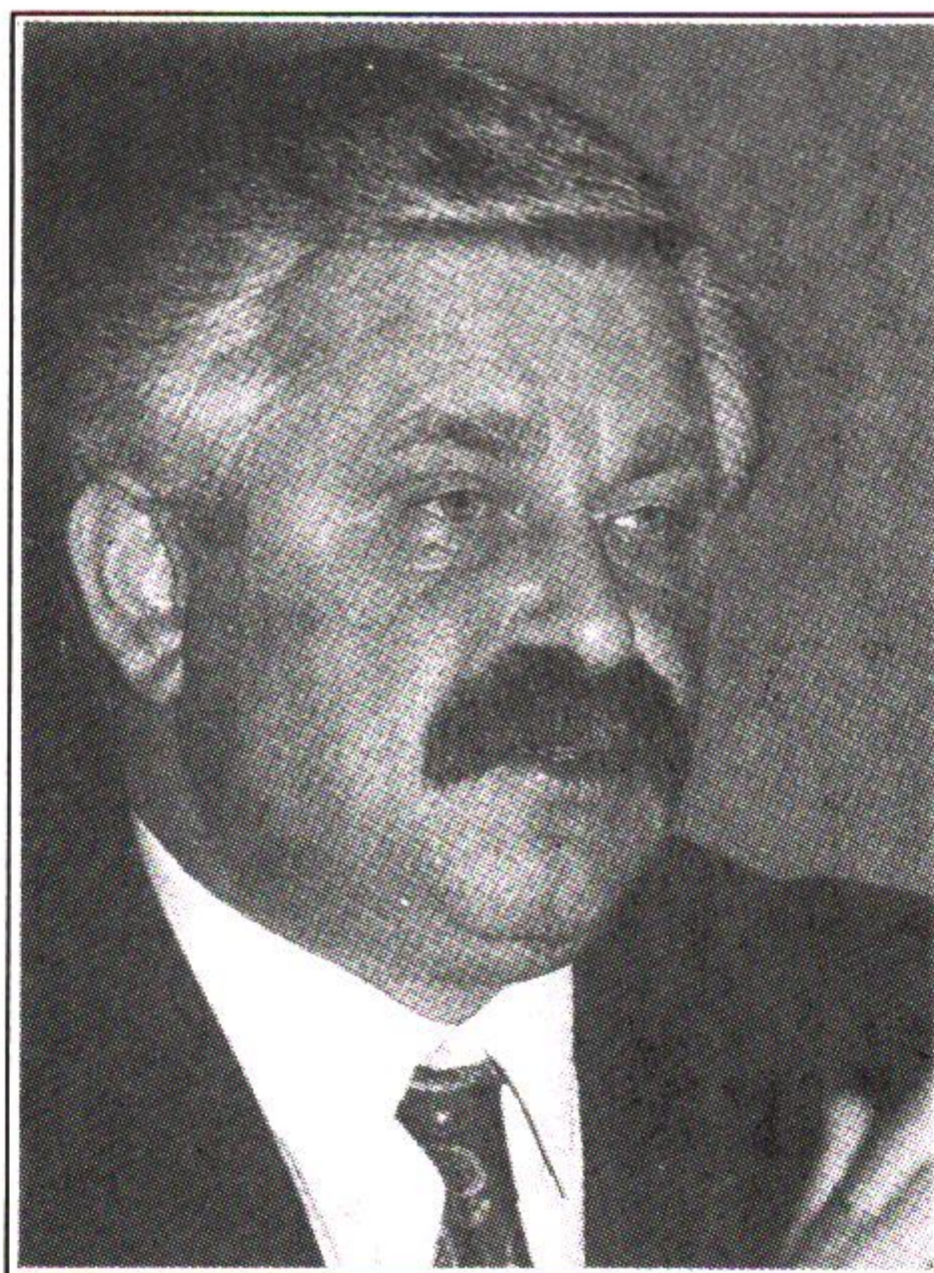
fighting on October 3rd-4th.

Yet, in the absence of mass participation, the action of a minority of the army and KGB was sufficient to tip the balance in Yeltsin's favour.

Despite the inactivity of parliament, it is clear its support was beginning to increase. - on October 3rd-4th tens of thousands of demonstrators broke through police lines to reach the White House. It is probable that Rutskoi and Khasbulatov mistook this for a movement of the masses, and decided to "go for broke." They apparently ordered demonstrators to seize Moscow City hall and TV As would-be insurrectionists, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov made every mistake in the book. Their behaviour had nothing in common with that of Lenin and Trotsky, but everything in common with that of the Austrian Social Democracy in 1934, which when faced with the threat of fascism staged an ill-prepared insurrection which was drowned in blood.

Similarly, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, having foreseen nothing and prepared nothing, reacting passively to Yeltsin's initial aggression, finally panicked and attempted to seize power without any plan or perspective. We had the pathetic spectacle of Rutskoi's frantic telephone calls, after the assault had begun, appealing for the intervention of Western ambassadors - like appealing to Satan against Beelzebub! The ambassadors of the imperialist powers, reflecting the policies of their governments, backed Yeltsin to the hilt.

In reality, this was not an insurrection at all,



Rutskoi

At present things appear black in Russia. But that is only the surface. The Russian working class has not spoken its first word - let alone its last

but a putsch - that is, an attempt to take power without the participation of the masses. The truth is the mass of workers remained passive throughout these events, although it is clear a certain number of workers did participate.

Despite the bungling of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, the fact an armed struggle took place can have a powerful effect on the consciousness of the masses, particularly as the results of Yeltsin's measures begin to be felt. The heated discussions in the streets outside the burnt-out White House are an indication that the ferment has begun, although it might take time to reach its full expression.

Despite their public display of support for Yeltsin, the Western imperialists are not at all confident about the present position, let alone the future. The general consensus in

the West is that Yeltsin's position has been weakened, although in the short term he may consolidate himself.

This great "democrat" immediately showed his real intentions by banning opposition

newspapers, suspending local councils, and outlawing opposition parties. This despite the fact he already has complete control of TV and radio. Television journalists have not hesitated to lie and distort news in favour of "the Boss." Under these conditions, if elections go ahead in December the result is a foregone conclusion. Yeltsin has already sacked regional governors and local councils and suspended the Constitutional Court. Eventually, he will write a new Constitution, along "Presidential" (that is, Bonapartist) lines.

There is not even a pretence at "democracy." Opposition leaders, trade unionists and the left-winger Boris Kargalitsky have been arrested and beaten. All this is acceptable procedure "in defence of democracy" to the West. In practice, Yeltsin will try to establish a Bonapartist dictatorship, probably with a pseudo-parliamentary facade.

Yeltsin intends to try to move quickly in the direction of capitalism, taking advantage of his victory. However it will not be an easy ride. He has increased the price of bread and rents. Prime minister Gaidar and co. are pressing for the abolition of subsidies. The bloody suppression of parliament has been badly received by the masses. The reality of Yeltsin's "reform" will cause an inevitable backlash, at a certain moment in time.

The events in Russia must be taken in the general context of what is happening in Eastern Europe. After only three years, the people of Poland have had a chance to draw

the balance sheet of the move towards capitalism. As a result, the Polish ex-Stalinists and their satellites won the elections. Solidarity was reduced virtually to nothing.

The experience of capitalist policies is already producing a backlash. This is clear not only in Poland, but also in Lithuania, where the ex-Stalinists also won the elections, and in the former East Germany, where the ex-Stalinists will probably emerge as the main party.

At the present time, things appear black in Russia. But that is only on the surface. The Russian working class has not yet spoken its first word - let alone the last. The Russian proletariat will go through a terrible school, but will draw its conclusions. The main thing is that the perspectives for the development of capitalism in Russia are severely limited.

The monthly rate of inflation is 20%, there is widespread poverty and starvation. The Western media had to admit that among the demonstrators outside the White House there were many poor people, whose living standards had been destroyed by capitalist policies.

Unemployment is still relatively low, mainly because of the huge subsidies paid to keep open the big state-owned enterprises. But once they are abolished - and that is Gaidar's policy - unemployment will rapidly rise to 20-25 million, or more. Under such conditions, it is inconceivable that the Russian workers would not respond. The conditions for a new October would be created over period of a few years.

The general impoverishment of the masses, quite apart from its social and political consequences - from an economic point of

view means a sharp reduction of the home market. Under conditions of world capitalist crisis and increasing protectionism where would the nascent Russian bourgeois find markets for its goods?

The abolition of the state monopoly of foreign trade has not had the anticipated effect of stimulating exports. On the contrary. Russia's participation in world trade is less now than it was under Brezhnev. The collapse of the rouble completely undermines foreign trade.

Even if Yeltsin presses ahead with a programme of massive privatisation, that will not solve the problem. The "voucher system" of privatisation is a farce. Given the prevailing poverty conditions, most people sell their vouchers as quickly as possible to get money for food. Thus, control of the privatised assets ends up in the hands of a few wealthy speculators and bureaucrats. Instead of state monopolies, you will have private monopolies, more corrupt than before.

No Investment

The problem is: where to raise capital for private industry in Russia? The Western capitalists will not invest large sums of money unless they see a reasonable prospect of "stability" - and Yeltsin is not at all stable. They fear losing everything.

The only possibility would be to squeeze capital out of the super-exploitation of the working class, keeping wages down to near-starvation levels, and then re-invest the surplus in industry.

Even that would require a certain level of state planning ("state capitalism"). But the policies of Yeltsin-Gaidar are proceeding, under the pressure of the IMF and the World

Bank, in precisely the opposite direction. This is a finished recipe for chaos. All this means that Yeltsin's dictatorship will be weak and unstable. What worries the West is that, by his actions, Yeltsin has now made the army into the real arbiter. Yeltsin broke the law and defied the Constitution. By what right does he rule Russia, then? By the right of the sword, wielded by the general staff. However, the services of the military caste do not come cheap, much less free of charge.

The army has already asserted its power in the field of foreign policy. Moscow has warned Poland and the other states of Eastern Europe not to try to join NATO, at the same time they have demanded the right to send extra tanks to the Caucasus. This is a clear indication that the struggle between Russia and US imperialism will inevitably break out again in the next period. Russia has already begun to recover its control over the former territories of the USSR. It is ironical that, shortly before Yeltsin plunged Russia into convulsions, most of the former Republics had come back into Russia's orbit. Ukraine and Belorus have entered into an agreement with Russia to set up a customs union. The Central Asian republics joined immediately. Now even Georgia and Azerbaijan have applied to join. This agreement goes far further than a free-trade zone. It means, in effect, these republics have "ceded monetary sovereignty to Russia, rebuilding the rouble zone shattered last year."

Spheres of Influence

This merely recognises the fact that, after decades of a common plan, the economies of these republics are inseparably linked. There is no future for any of them outside the CIS. The Russian army is intervening in the Caucasus and Moldovia. To all intents and purposes, Georgia has now ceased to exist as an independent state, being divided into four areas controlled by different national groups and warring factions. Shevardnadze accused Russia of secretly backing the Abkhazian rebels in order to undermine the Georgian government. Everywhere, Russia is re-asserting itself in its old "spheres of influence," re-gaining lost territory, by one means or another.

Despite everything, Russia remains a superpower, and not only because it possesses nuclear weapons. For this reason, the West is extremely anxious about its future. One day before Yeltsin dissolved parliament, Warren Christopher, US secretary of state, said: "If democracy reverts to dictatorship in the former Soviet Union, Americans are likely to pay a severe price in a revived nuclear threat and increased defence budgets." That, of course, did not prevent Christopher and Clinton supporting Yeltsin's coup.



Demonstrators defend the parliament building

What are the perspectives now? It seems likely Yeltsin will succeed in temporarily consolidating his position. However, his "reform programme" represents a blind alley.

One of the most difficult tasks in dialectical analysis is to establish the exact point at which quantity becomes transformed into quality. That the recent events represent a turning point of some sort is evident to everybody. The question is whether Yeltsin's victory over parliament represents the point of no return in the movement towards capitalism.

Similarly, in the process of political counterrevolution in Russia, there were several "turning-points" - 1923, 1927, 1931, 1936. If we wish to establish the point at which the bureaucracy finally established itself as a ruling caste, probably the decisive moment was 1931, when the legal restraints on the privileges and incomes of the bureaucracy were removed.

However, even that did not represent a completely irreversible change, as demonstrated by the fact that Trotsky still defended

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the idea of a reform of the Soviet state, up to 1933-1934. It was the one-sided civil war of the bureaucracy against the remnants of Bolshevism in the Purge Trials which finally consolidated the Stalinist counter-revolution. Thus, the question of at what point a qualitative stage is reached is not a simple one.

The regime in Russia is a bourgeois government, attempting to move in the direction of capitalism. This definition is not very elegant, but corresponds to the present state of affairs, which still has an incomplete, transitional character. However, does Yeltsin's victory over the parliament signify the decisive victory of the bourgeois counterrevolution in Russia? We do not think so. At least, not yet.



Yeltsin triumphant - but for how long?

The outcome of the present situation will be determined, not by formal definitions, but by the struggle of living social forces. The recent events demonstrate the impossibility of a "cold" transition to capitalism in Russia. Is the struggle now over? The Western bourgeois do not think so. Neither do we. In the last analysis, the class nature of Russia is determined by property relations and the make-up of the state. In this respect, the bourgeois counterrevolution still has some way to go. The majority of industry is still in the hands of the state. The state itself is still in the hands of the "Nomenklatura," which is stubbornly defending its power, and privileges, against the nascent bourgeois elements.

Slow-Track Capitalists

Some elements in the bureaucracy desire a return to centralisation and planning, not only to defend their personal interests, but because they understand that the present situation represents a disaster for Russia. Another section of the bureaucracy wants to proceed more slowly towards capitalism. They want time to transform themselves into the owners of property. They look with distaste and loathing to the parvenus, criminals and scum who are at present overtaking them, and threatening their position as a privileged caste. The defeat of parliament, in and of itself, is not sufficient to settle the issue of power. The bureaucracy still retains key positions in industry, the army and the state. It will not be easy to remove it.

Despite appearances to the contrary, Yeltsin is in a weak position. On the basis of social convulsions, new upheavals and coups d'état are inevitable. Now that the generals have an idea of their power, there will be no shortage of candidates for the role of Bonaparte. Yeltsin's base of support in the armed forces is very relative. Most of the army is in a sorry state, there is widespread discontent. A senior officer recently complained that a large proportion of soldiers had not been paid for two months. There are plans to reduce the army by half, with 800,000

officers being discharged in the last year without homes or jobs to go to. There have been reports of soldiers actually starving. There will be a ferment in the barracks, especially as the disastrous results of Yeltsin's reforms make themselves felt. This can easily lead to a new coup.

The question as to which direction such a coup would take cannot be answered in advance. It is quite possible it would take a bourgeois direction. However, the possibility of a move in the direction of centralisation and a return to a modified form of Stalinism is still not off the agenda.

However, this is far from being the only possibility.

A new Stalinist regime in Russia could not be like the old regime. It too would be a military police dictatorship resting on the army and police, and the passivity of the masses.

The reason the Stalinist regime in the past could last for decades was that it penetrated the masses to an unheard of degree, through the agency of the "Communist" party, with a huge network of spies, stooges and agents. Under present conditions, such a phenomenon is ruled out. It would be a much more unstable regime, because the army and the police by themselves are not a sufficient base to maintain the situation for any length of time.

A new dictatorship in Russia - either under Yeltsin or the new Stalinists - would have a weak and unstable character. It would inevitably prepare a reaction on the part of the masses. The timescale partly depends on events on a world scale. The developing crisis of world capitalism means there is no long term future either for a capitalist dictatorship or for a new version of proletarian bonapartism in Russia.

The decisive factor in the whole situation is the lack of a mass movement of the proletariat.

Economic Collapse

Given the degree of economic collapse, with the prospect of tens of millions of unemployed, this may be temporarily delayed. Once the initial shock wears off, a movement of the working class will be on the order of the day.

With the growth of unbearable social contradictions, it is inevitable that the mighty Russian working class will enter the arena. Within the space of a decade, even in the event of a further move in the direction of capitalism, big movements of the proletariat will be on the order of the day, raising once again the perspective of a new edition of the October Revolution, this time on a qualitatively higher level.

Such a development would transform the whole world situation to a far greater degree even than the stormy period of 1917-23. ●



The current round of GATT talks on world trade have dragged on without agreement for 7 years threatening "free trade" and a protectionist economic war. Michael Roberts assesses what's at stake.

Free Trade or Protectionism?

As we go to press, the fate of the Uruguay Round of the GATT talks on reducing further national restrictions on world trade hangs in the balance.

At the end of October the European Community's Council of Ministers met to make some vital decisions. They decided whether to accept the agreement reached earlier this year with the US to cut subsidies on agricultural exports and so make farmers in the EC compete on more equal terms with their American, Canadian and Australasian competitors. The conservative French government has pledged to protect their farmers' interests and up to now has tried to renegotiate the deal, called the Blair House accord, by getting a five-year delay in implementing the subsidy cuts.

No Agreement

As they met, the "market access" committees of GATT had just two more weeks to complete the detailed negotiations for agreement on the three major categories - merchandise (particularly textiles), agriculture (especially rice) and services (finance and media). The prospects of success were no better than even money.

No substantial agreement had been reached in the committees, mainly because none of the major players in the so-called Quad Group (US, EC, Japan and Canada, which together account for 56% of all world merchandise trade), had made any substantial concessions on any of the material questions. If the effective working deadline of 15 November passes by without agreement in the committees, there will not be enough time to deliver a detailed deal for all 111 national participants to agree by the December 15 deadline set by GATT director-general Peter Sutherland. Since the second world war, there has been an unprecedented expansion of the productive forces in the economy throughout the globe. One of the key contradictions of capitalism is that the productive forces of the world economy tend to outstrip the boundaries of the nation state upon which capitalist class relations are based. The tremendous growth in world trade in the post war period partially overcame that contradiction and helped to create a relatively stable epoch. However, the world capitalist economic boom came to an end in the mid-1970s and



European farmers pull down a fence outside GATT talks - they want protection against imports

since then capitalism (and working people who rely on the system) has suffered three major global recessions. Unemployment in the advanced capitalist economies threatens to reach 32 million this year and to rise further after that. With growth in the industrial economies likely to do little better than 2% next year, after no more than 1% this year, the hope of the major capitalist governments is that increased world trade will provide the boost that they need. The latest figures from the World Bank claim that reducing tariffs (taxes) on imports of goods and services, cutting government subsidies for exports, and removing quotas on various imports could boost world output by as much \$213 billion a year. That could add 0.5% to 1% to annual growth rates. However, these estimates depend on immediate reductions in tariffs and regulations that last for up to ten years. Certainly, world trade has been a vital ingredient in the growth of the capitalist economy since the second world war. World trade growth has consistently outstripped the rate of growth of world output, thus allowing the industrial economies to lower tariffs and protective restrictions over the last 40 years, and to ameliorate the effects of the three world recessions since 1973. In the 1980s world trade growth nearly doubled the rate of output growth. In 1991 output was virtually stagnant while trade rose 2.5%, thus alleviating the depth of the recession. In Latin America, imports grew three times as fast as the world average during 1990-92. Thus US exports to the

region grew 18.7% in that period. Similarly, Western Europe was able to benefit from exports to Eastern Europe which rose 24%, while Japan boosted exports to China by 40%, to the Middle East by 25% and to Latin America by 23%. That is why the advanced capitalist economies are so keen on a GATT deal. It means new markets to offset stagnation at home.

But is 'free trade' of such great benefit to capitalism and do 'market economies' work so much better if the 'restrictions' to the market of tariffs on imports and quotas are removed? Capitalist economic theory is divided on the question. The majority of capitalist economists claim that 'free trade' will benefit all capitalist economies, and if not all, then at least there will be a net gain globally i.e. there will be more winners from free trade than losers. They base this conclusion on what is called "the theory of comparative advantage". This argues that if each national economy concentrates on producing what it can make most efficiently, and there are no obstacles to selling this to other nations, then all will benefit. Thus industrial economies should produce manufacturing goods, because they have modern technology and systems, while 'developing' economies should produce agricultural goods and minerals because they have those resources in abundance and have plenty of cheap labour to develop food exports. As long as there are no obstacles to trade, everybody will benefit. That might sound like common sense, but the reality of

'free trade' capitalism is different. Capitalism does not allow the smooth and harmonious distribution of resources, leading to a steady increase in the production and incomes of the advanced and 'developing' capitalist economies alike. Capitalism breeds inequality not just of incomes but also of market shares among capitalist businesses and national economies. Those economies with the greatest amount of capital funds to invest can raise productivity through new technology and so gain market share over those with less efficient methods. The result of 'free trade' when it existed in the 19th century between 1850 and 1890 was to increase the economic dominance of Britain over rivals and over the colonial economies. Similarly, the free trade era which began in 1944 allowed the US to dominate world markets at the expense of its industrial competitors, and above all, at the expense of the Third World economies. This is because, under capitalism, economies with high productivity from heavy investment in technology will always triumph over economies relying on low wages as a method of cheapening costs to compete on world markets. So high-wage industrialised economies will usually defeat starvation-wage undeveloped economies. While undeveloped capitalist economies need trade to provide the technology and capital to build an industrial base, by opening up their markets to imports, they allow foreign companies to wipe out their infant domestic industries.

Industrial Development

Marx said that "*free trade is the normal condition of modern capitalist production*". In over 200 years of industrial capitalism that "normal condition" has not led to an equalisation of industry and incomes based on "comparative advantage" but to increased dominance of the early industrial capitalist economies who have undermined and destroyed the potential industrial base of the later industrial economies. That is why 86% of world manufacturing exports now come from the industrialised economies. The reason why Britain, as the dominant industrial power of the mid-19th century, did not destroy the industrial development of Germany, the US or Japan was that these economies did not allow free trade until their industrial base was well established. They exercised the policy of protectionism: protecting "infant" home industries from foreign competition. It is also one of the reasons why what are called the newly industrialised economies (NICs) of Taiwan, Korea, Singapore etc have proved the exception to the rule in the Third World. With strong protection against foreign imports (alongside heavy capital investment for political reasons from the US, and high state regulation and monopolisation of

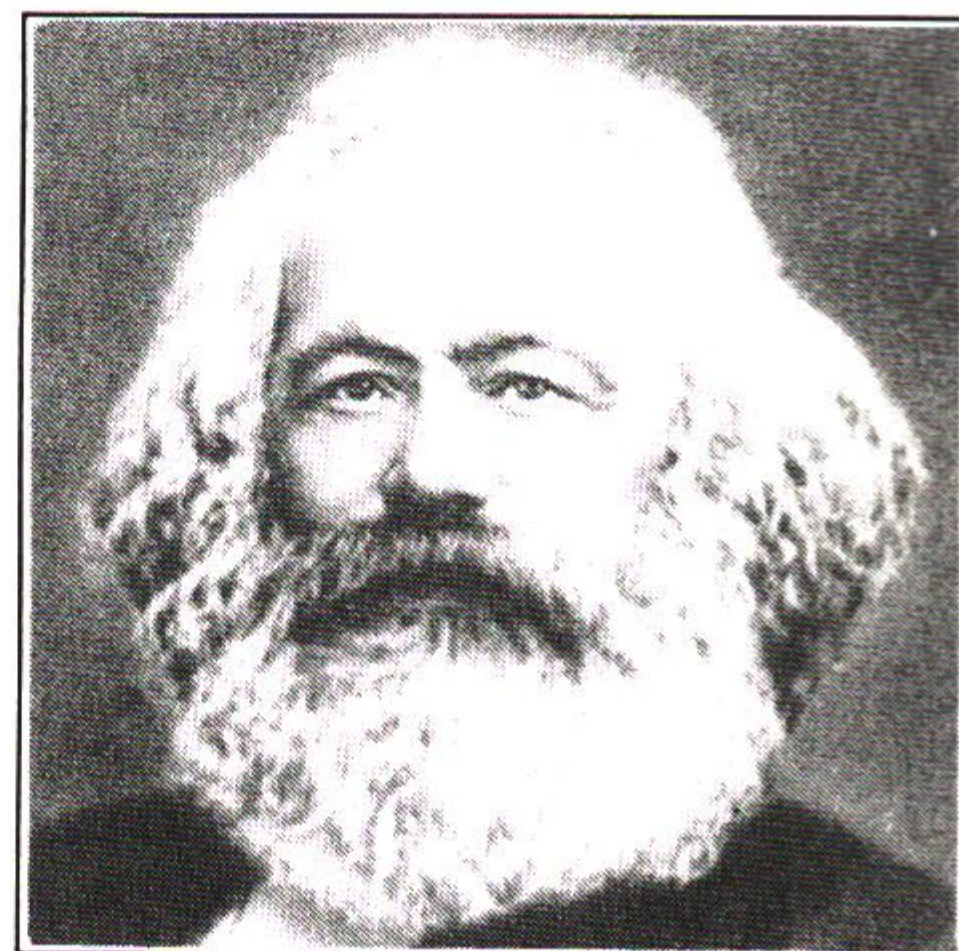
industry), these economies escaped from the de-industrialising effects of 'free trade'. For the rest of the ex-colonial capitalist economies, while certain industries can be set up which use new technology (computer assembly, cars etc) and so cheapen constant capital and enable undeveloped economies to establish a small industrial base, still over 90% of investment takes place in industrialised economies. This is because, while new technology may make new factories smaller and easier to build, they are usually owned by foreign capital. National capitalists cannot compete against multinationals introducing the latest technology and using raw materials and parts from all over the world.

Agriculture

Even in agriculture, the industrialised economies can compete successfully against undeveloped economies: Ugandan cotton producers must compete with hand hoes against US tractors and harvesters. The advanced countries' share of world primary

In reality there is no free trade just as there is no free market under capitalism - the big industrial and banking monopolies rule over markets and the weak must submit to the strong

product exports (agricultural and mineral products) has actually increased in the last 30 years. Developed economies have two-thirds of all world exports and the same proportion of primary products (excluding oil). This is because the productivity of a US farmworker is 100 times that of an Indian peasant. So in reality there is no free trade just as there is no free market under capitalism, the big industrial and banking monopolies rule over markets and the weak must submit to the strong. Every year Indian peasants collect oil from 14 million neem trees to use in traditional medicines and for soaps etc. Now the US chemical multinational WR Grace has taken out a patent for pesticide based on the oil from the neem tree. The proposed GATT deal will stop India from blocking the operation of patents from farm products in their country - that means that WR Grace will then make peasants pay for their neem oil seeds which they have been getting free



Marx said protection "would make matters worse"

for hundreds of years, and so make \$800 million a year out of Indian poverty, all in the name of "free trade".

Because free trade destroys the industrial base of the weaker economies and does not lead to everybody benefiting from "comparative advantage", not all capitalist economic theory supports free trade.

American and German economists supported the idea of protection for "infant industries" in the 19th century, while economists in the Third World have similarly opposed free trade and claimed that "managed trade" would be better. But protectionism is also no solution for the development of the productive forces on a global basis. As Marx said: protection "*artificially increases domestic production capacity*" and so "*makes matters worse*" (Capital Vol 3. p428). If every country shut off imports from each other, output in each country would clearly suffer or even collapse, and is it efficient or even practical that every national economy build its own aircraft or cars or make its own light bulbs or grow its own oranges? In the global capitalist economy, not only is socialism in one country impossible, so is capitalism in one country.

It is true, as Engels once argued, that tariffs may be necessary for fledgling or infant industries in mainly agrarian capitalist economies trying to resist the encroachment of foreign imports from the big industrialised capitalist economies (as in the Third World). But once monopoly industrial companies in an economy emerge "*it is the surest sign that protective tariffs have outlived their usefulness and have changed their character; that they protect the manufacturer no longer against foreign imports but rather against the domestic consumer*" (Protection and Free Trade, Marx and Engels Werke Vol 21 1888 p362) This is particularly so in the older "smoke-stack" industries or in inefficient agricultural sectors of many economies of the advanced capitalist world. The EC preserves a Common Agricultural Policy, which

massively subsidises mainly richer farmers to produce products at prices way above world prices and protects them from non-EC competition by quotas. The rich nations also apply what is called the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) to keep out textiles from Asia, Africa and other Third World economies to preserve their high-cost industries. The Third World loses about 10% of its possible export revenues from this form of protectionism. One-fifth of industrial goods are still subject to non-tariff regulations despite reductions in tariffs over the last 40 years. The US applies a policy of 'most favoured nation' status where it signs bilateral deals with countries it favours by offering them better quotas. The NICs like South Korea have benefited particularly from this policy, which flies in the face of the principles of GATT, which says that the terms you offer to one country on trade should apply to all equally.

Free trade will probably produce greater growth in output globally than protectionism (the experience of the 1930s when protectionism was rife is some proof of that), but the relative gains are mainly for the industrialised economies. The gains from free trade in advanced capitalist economies may even outweigh losses in output for undeveloped economies. If these net gains were then transferred in aid and subsidies to the losers, then everybody would be better off. But of course, nothing like that can happen under a capitalism dominated by a few imperialist economies. On the contrary, the net flow of resources since 1945 has been from the undeveloped to industrialised world under free trade. The fall in demand for primary products since 1973 relative to industrial goods has meant that prices of primary products have fallen, while prices of industrial goods have risen. This has forced Third World economies to borrow heavily to pay for imports of industrial goods. Huge debts built up, particularly in the 1980s. The debt crisis looked like bringing down the whole capitalist edifice with banks in the West going bankrupt. However, the crisis was temporarily averted by imperialism forcing or imposing Third World governments who agreed to severe austerity policies to restructure their debts with the International Monetary Fund and continue paying. In 1991 every man, woman and child in the Third World owed the industrialised

economies \$170 each, now they owe \$250. The total debt now stands at \$1.6 trillion, and that is after paying back \$1.3 trillion in the 1980s. Between 1982 and 1990 the West was paid \$6.5 billion in interest payments plus repayments of capital of \$12.5 billion each year. That is as much as the Third World spends on health and education combined.

Winners and Losers

But if the fruits of 'free trade' go to the industrialised countries, can they not be redistributed to the Third World in aid? First, what aid is given is mainly government finance to buy military hardware rather than boost industry or the infrastructure of the 'developing' economies. And what the Third World gets is less than half of what is taken in tariffs and duties on primary exports. Now debt and interest payments are three times as much as aid. In 1992 the poorest nations in the world paid the richest nations \$13.4 billion more in debt repayments than they received in aid. No wonder Midland Bank got 95% of its profits last year from Third World debt repayments. So the GATT Uruguay Round, by lowering tariffs and quotas further, will allow the rich capitalist economies to exploit the labour of the poor Third World even more. However, the irony is that in the event of the failure of GATT and a move to protectionism the hardest hit would also be the Third World.

There are three possibilities that could emerge from the current impasse on world trade negotiations.

First, the Blair House accord and the GATT Uruguay Round will be signed by the year end. That could allow a new burst of trade globally, although probably much less than the capitalist leaders claim or hope. As the World Bank says, "*the largest income gains*

would occur in the regions with the biggest distortions (i.e. trade restrictions), notably the EC, EFTA, Asia and Japan."

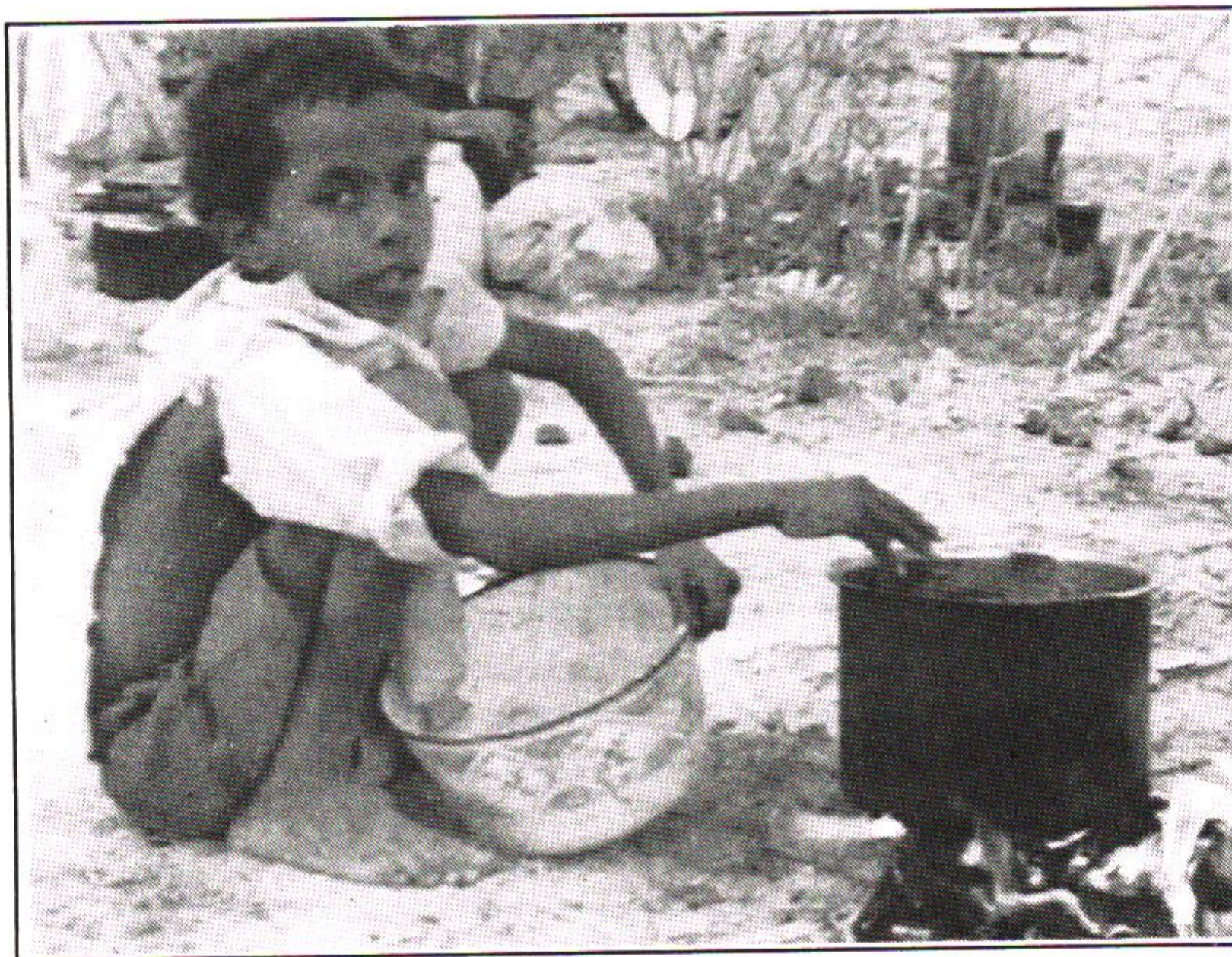
It seems that there is only a 50:50 chance of that happening. The recession, rising unemployment in Europe and Japan, and the powerful lobbies of those threatened by world competition, like the Japanese rice farmers or the French lamb producers, could force governments in Europe to reject the deal. There is also strong opposition in the US from small businesses and older industrial monopolies who fear competition from Europe and Asia. The French want GATT to allow protection of its farmers and the European film and media industry from the Hollywood moguls, while the US does not want to allow Europe to enter its banking and insurance markets freely, and compete fairly in shipping. There is little sign that any compromise can be reached. Failure will mean the end of GATT as one of the three major international capitalist institutions set up since 1945 to ensure the harmonious expansion of capitalist economies. Failure of the Uruguay Round will mean the death of GATT.

Second, if GATT fails, then the major imperialist economies may revert to regional blocs of trade. The US is trying to build a North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, which would remove tariffs within that region, while mounting them against Europe and Japan. However, even NAFTA is under threat, as US manufacturers complain of cheap competition from Mexico using low-wage labour, while US unions protest at the use of Mexican workers with no union rights or safety and environment laws. The NAFTA agreement may not pass US or Canadian congresses. At the same time, Japan has yet to build any Asian trade bloc, while the EC remains divided with its move towards monetary union under Maastricht

dead in the water.

Third if these regional plans fail, then it could be each person or country for themselves. Tariffs and restrictions on imports could shoot up in retaliation, as each economy tries to export its unemployment and loss of world market share to the others. That is what happened in the 1890s and 1930s and led to major slumps in the capitalist economy.

As Engels remarked: "*protective tariffs are nothing but the preparations for the ultimate general industrial war, which shall decide who has supremacy on the*



Decades of free trade have not helped the "developing" world

world market." (Capital Vol 3, p447-8 note). About 23 million full-time jobs are supported by manufacturing trade in G7 economies. If protectionism becomes the "normal condition" of capitalism, then all these jobs will be under even greater threat than they are now. And when you look at the table below, you can see who will suffer relatively more from protectionism; those economies that depend more on trade like Germany, Canada and most of the EC, as opposed to the US.

Capitalist Crisis

But remember cause and effect in all this: It is the worldwide crisis of capitalist production, the recession of the last three years, which is the mother of protectionism. Restrictions on trade have not caused the recession and the freeing up of trade in the last 40 years has not stopped capitalism experiencing three global recessions since 1973. **The collapse of GATT may worsen the crisis for capitalism, but the signing of the Uruguay Round will not avoid future recessions.**

Neither free trade nor protectionism is a solution for working people, whether they live and work in the advanced capitalist economies or the Third World. So-called free trade means unemployment and poverty for the majority of those living in the weaker capitalist economies. Even in those economies where free trade boosts output and incomes (the imperialist nations), the extra gains are not redistributed either to boost industrial development in the weaker economies or to raise living standards for working people in the stronger economies. They are just super profits for the big multinationals.

But neither does protectionism actually "protect" the weaker economies. In the long run it drives down efficiency, output and thus forces up unemployment everywhere. Market capitalism cannot provide full employment, steadily rising output and equalising market shares and incomes. That requires planning of trade internationally through socially owned resources and technology that would enable the world's bounty to be used effectively in the interests of the all.

Trade as a share of GDP:

	1960	1992
Canada	17	27
US	5	11
Japan	11	10
France	14	23
Germany	18	33
Italy	13	19
UK	21	24
EC	19	28

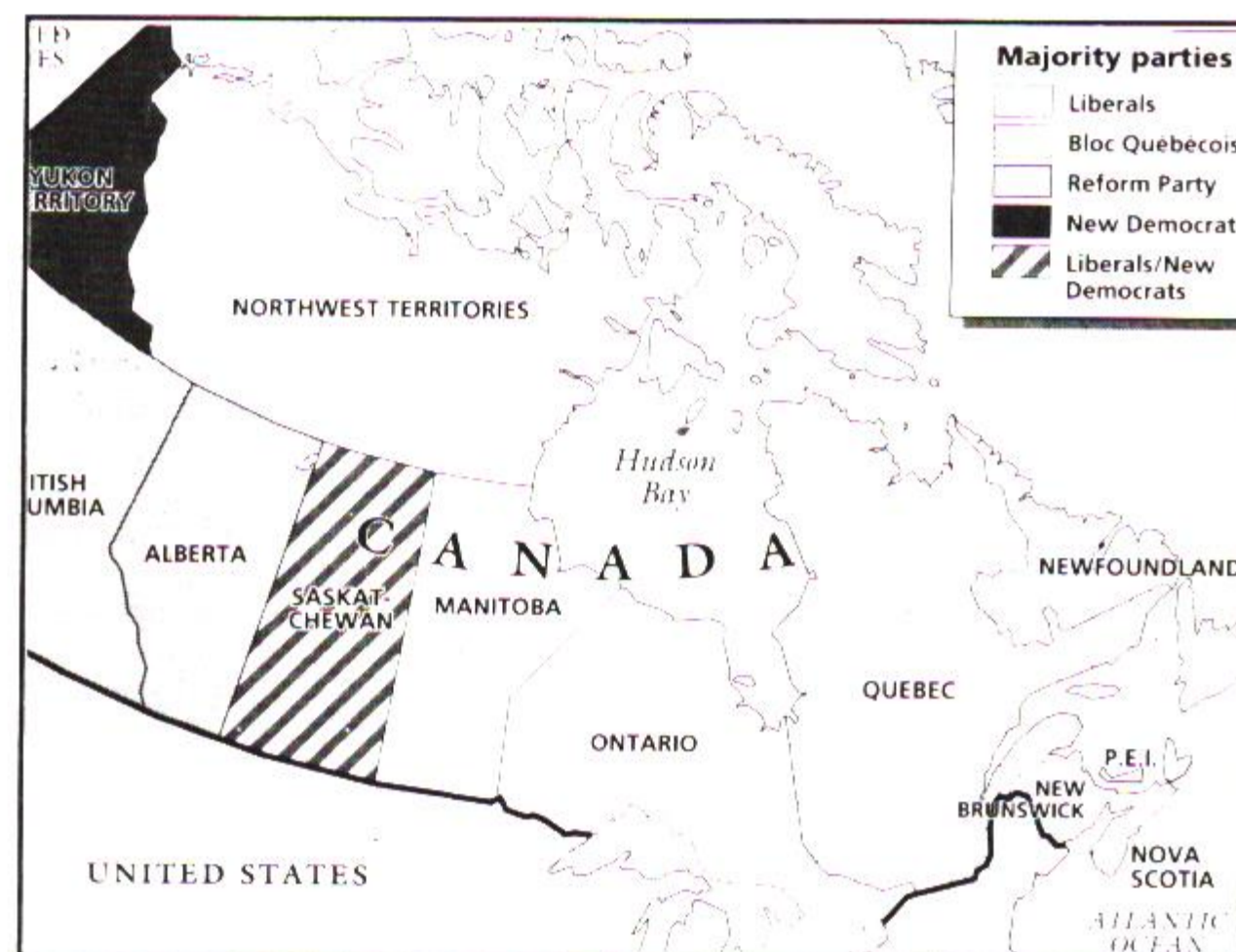
Canada's Tories Trounced

In one of the most disastrous results in a general election to ever affect a ruling party, Canada's right wing Progressive Conservatives have not only lost power but seen their parliamentary representation fall from 170 to just 2!

The main opposition party, the Liberals have regained power with an increase from 82 to 177 seats. This result reflects in no uncertain terms the disillusionment of the Canadian masses with a government that has allowed an unemployment rate of over 11% and a sharp decline in living standards. This disillusionment has also been reflected in the rise of the separatist Bloc Quebecois in Quebec and the right wing Reform Party in the west of Canada.

The most serious result for socialists to look at is that of the New Democrats (the equivalent to the British Labour Party) who have been further squeezed from 43 down to just 9 seats. The right wing policies of the NDP administrations in Ontario and British Columbia lost them virtually all their seats in those regions. Only in their stronghold of the Yukon and the Prairies did they keep any real base. They paid the price for following a "me-too" strategy in relation to the Liberals rather than raising a serious socialist programme. Only by doing so can they provide a way out for the Canadian working class who will find no joy from either the new Liberal administration or from the blind alley of separatism.

John Simmons



Open to Debate...

Unity is Strength

Dear Comrades,

I wish to respond to Simon Green's comments on union mergers (SA No.15). Simon, in my opinion, correctly states that he supports the principle of union mergers and the need to maintain the democratic rights of members. However, he proceeds to argue the opposite case for his own union, the FBU. Clearly Simon has pride in the FBU's history and traditions, and rightly so. It is also fair to say that this applies to all genuine trade unions. The right to organise has been won by many sections of the working class through bitter struggle. Simon bases his views on the assumption that the FBU is 'strong' and therefore does not need to combine with others. I believe this view to be erroneous and doubly so in the case of firefighters. It is interesting to note the article concludes with 'the policy of independence is right for the time being'. This can only mean that should the union be wrecked then merger would be right. The problem with this is that it would be more difficult to merge on the FBU's terms. The whole history of the trade union movement attests to the fact that the generalising of action and organisation brings forth maximum results. The threat of

industrial action was on the horizon had the threat of a pay freeze been carried out. The significance of the pay formula is that it links pay to that of other workers. That is a tacit admission that firefighters pay is related to what workers and their unions are securing in other sectors.

Simon correctly states that the FBU is respected by the labour movement. However, that has much to do with the dangers of the job and the socially necessary service that firefighters provide. The article completely ignores the terrible dilemma that emergency service workers face when contemplating industrial action. That is why it is incumbent on the rest of the movement to act alongside those workers in defending vital services. The principle of merger is the right policy. The concrete issue of with whom and on what basis is a separate question. I'm afraid that Simon's views on union mergers harks back to the old craft union mentality who also believed that they were 'strong'. The instinct of workers is towards unity not separatism. Not trade, not just industry but one organisation for one class should be the goal of socialists and class conscious workers.

Mark Langabeer TGWU 1/366
Branch (in personal capacity)

A Move Towards Communism?

The elections in Poland on September 19th mark an enormous reaction by the Polish working class to the effects of 'neo-capitalism' which has brought mass unemployment and steep cuts in living standards.

As a consequence the neo-Communist Left Democratic Alliance (SLD) has made big gains achieving 20.6% of the vote and 173 seats. In 1991 they gained only 12% of the vote and 58 seats. The other neo-Communist Party, the Polish Peasants Party (PSL) got 15.2% of the vote with 69 seats as against 8.7% and 49 seats in 1991. The right wing parties suffered losses. The party supporting Lech Walesa's policies got only 5.4% of the vote and 20 seats. Solidarnosc failed to reach the 5% level necessary for representation in parliament. In a low turn-out, although higher than in 1991, only 51.5% of voters bothered to vote. This shows the despair and indifference to the political parties by large layers of the



Lech Walesa - his policies failed to win support

population. There are clear differences inside the SLD, an alliance of 30 groups including Mr. Kwasniewski's Social Democrats, the former Communist union federation OPZZ and a string of other unions. Earlier this year Mr. Kwasniewski came out in favour of Poland's privatisation programme - 28 SLD members of parliament supported him with 7 opposing and the rest abstaining. This sell out will result in increasing unemployment. The report in the Morning Star of 21/9/93 quotes

Mr. Kwasniewski as saying "This is a great test of maturity. I believe that the political groups and politicians in Poland will pass the test of maturity well."

The reporter continues by saying "Mr. Kwasniewski has made clear that the left would pay more attention to workers' wage demands at the risk of easing tight budget controls. He added that the alliance would back reform and that it did not aim to restore the old system. 'I want to stress that the SLD is a party which strongly wants to continue market reforms,' he said."

State Bureaucracy

The Morning Star's leader column on the same day was headed "Poles make wise choice" and began: "It would be a mistake to fall into the trap which the capitalist press was offering to us yesterday when it declared that the Polish elections heralded the return of the 'old communists', or alternatively the 'ex-communists.'"

The fact is that, as with the former Soviet Union, the majority of those who held key positions under the former regime remained at their posts in the state bureaucracy and in industry, simply casting off their Communist Party cards, which were for them a passport to their jobs and their privileges....these time-serving 'communists' had little difficulty in accepting the so-called 'shock therapy', because they were in a position to avoid it applying to themselves."

Trotsky's prediction that this would happen to the Soviet bureaucracy, made more than 50 years ago, was greeted with scorn and calumny by the so-called communists of the Communist International and the British predecessors of those who produce and support the Morning Star today. Trotsky's brilliant analysis of "socialism in one country" showed how the reformist and nationalist degeneration of the Communist International would occur throughout the world. For the Morning Star the answer is to uncritically praise the SLD saying that they have "tried to come to grips with the past and to draw lessons which will help Poland in the search for a way to overcome its problems in the interests of its working people." (21/9/93) The hope of the Morning Star is to see the return of what they call the "positive features" of the old system. The method of Marxism is totally absent here. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky stood on a firm position of internationalism drawn from the experience of

the class struggle itself.

History has seen the heroic Polish proletariat again and again march into action to change society. In 1956 the bureaucracy was overthrown by a movement of the working class involving millions of workers. Unfortunately the result was the coming to power of Gomulka on a nationalist Stalinist programme of semi-independence from Russia. A mass movement in 1970 led to the downfall of Gomulka and the coming to power of the 'liberal' Stalinist Gierek. Again, in 1976 an uprising took place against price rises. Between 1980 and 1981 10 million workers under the banner of Solidarity moved into struggle against the Stalinist state. This movement was crushed with the coming to power of the Jaruzelski dictatorship. The crisis of the regime in the Soviet Union led to the collapse of the Jaruzelski dictatorship and the rise of the current regime with its position of toadying to capitalism. However four years of a regime which has promised much but given nothing but rising unemployment and falling

The Left Democratic Alliance are betraying the Polish people. They won the election because of the threat to privatise Poland's big factories by the right wing parties. Now they have adopted the same programme

living standards has driven down the illusions of the masses in what capitalism has to offer. If even just one of the movements of the masses in Polish history had proceeded with a Marxist leadership and perspectives - such as the Bolsheviks in Russia - then we would have seen the transformation of society. The Polish proletariat were to be betrayed by their leaders at every occasion.

This is the background to the shameful position of the Morning Star which represents the so-called hardline Communist Party of Britain. These crypto-communists have completely abandoned any attempt at a class analysis. They have forgotten the laws of capitalist and transitional societies which dictate the changes of revolution and counter revolution. Bold, socialist policies for transforming society are necessary otherwise electoral disaster, as happened in France, will be inevitable.

The "return to positive features" of the Stalinist regimes is impossible under capital-

ism or a regime moving towards capitalism. People remember a social infrastructure that guaranteed jobs, housing, education and health care. Very substantial gains in spite of inefficiency and bureaucratic totalitarian rule. It is precisely for a genuine workers democracy, the "positive features", that the Polish workers voted for, not a bureaucratic, totalitarian regime as in the past with privileges for the top officials in state and industry nor a capitalist regime with glaring inequalities - millionaires at one end of society, with people living in misery at the opposite end. The vote was a vote for socialism - rejecting bureaucratic Stalinism and above all naked capitalist exploitation. It could only arouse mirth from genuine Marxists that the Morning Star appeals to the "world bank and the IMF should take note of this." They may as well have appealed to tigers to become vegetarian!

Class Struggle

"The election shows that given an alternative perspective, working people will not accept capitalist inspired stabilisation programmes which everywhere in the world have simply meant that the rich get richer while those who create the nation's wealth by their daily labour get poorer." Too true! One waits for these pseudo-Marxists to draw the right conclusions: the policy of Lenin and Trotsky of class struggle and a socialist perspective nationally and internationally.

It was the abandonment of this in all countries and the blind support for the vicious bureaucracy of the Soviet Union, rather than the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, which disoriented the workers of the Soviet Union and the world. The forces of the so-called "Communist" Parties, split and disintegrating have learned nothing as these articles show. The Editorial continues remorselessly to pile blunder upon blunder. *"There are those in the West who would like to see Poland as their outpost in the East. It is true that all the major parties in Poland, including the Left Democratic Alliance favour joining both the EC and NATO."* What a travesty of Marxism is provided by the Left Democratic Alliance and the Morning Star. Time after time they have explained the role of the EC and NATO, but when their "brothers" in Poland put forward this position as a solution to Poland's problems they meekly accept. *"But it is important to note a crucial difference in emphasis. For the Left Democratic Alliance is alone in insisting that the Polish policy dictates that this closer relation with the West must not be at the expense of relations with Russia in the East."*

Balancing between Russia and the West has always ended in catastrophe for Poland. Nor could the present position be otherwise. It can provide no solution for the working class. The editorial continues, *"our labour movement should give the Polish people every support in their efforts to modernise with social justice."* But in practice the Left Democratic Alliance are betraying the Polish people. They won the

election because of the threat to privatise Poland's big factories by the right wing parties. Now they have adopted the same programme. The leader of the Alliance has stated, *"We want a government which will support a strong market economy but which will respect social rights."*

As experience everywhere, and particularly in Russia and Eastern Europe, shows, again and again, the two are incompatible. The contradictions of capitalism will not allow this for more than temporary periods and certainly not in Poland.

The new Polish government is continuing the policy of privatisation of 600 companies begun by the ousted right wing government. Small left wing split-offs from Solidarity refused to join the government because they were only prepared to support the privatisation of 200 companies which constitute a decisive section of the economy. This was not enough for the Left Democratic Alliance which insisted on the 600! The social reforms promised by the SLD will inevitably turn into counter reforms. They will not be able to prevent inflation from developing with an increased state deficit. The World Bank and the IMF will exert enormous pressure for their programme.

The Financial Times remarks (21.9.93), *"The trump card of the go slow brigade (in Russia) was, and remains, the argument that the social costs of high unemployment and declining living standards would make such change politically impossible and raise the risk of a bloody revolt."*

The FT continued, *"Mr. Alexander Kwasniewski... does not ignore the benefits of IMF and World Bank supervision or the need to continue privatisation."*

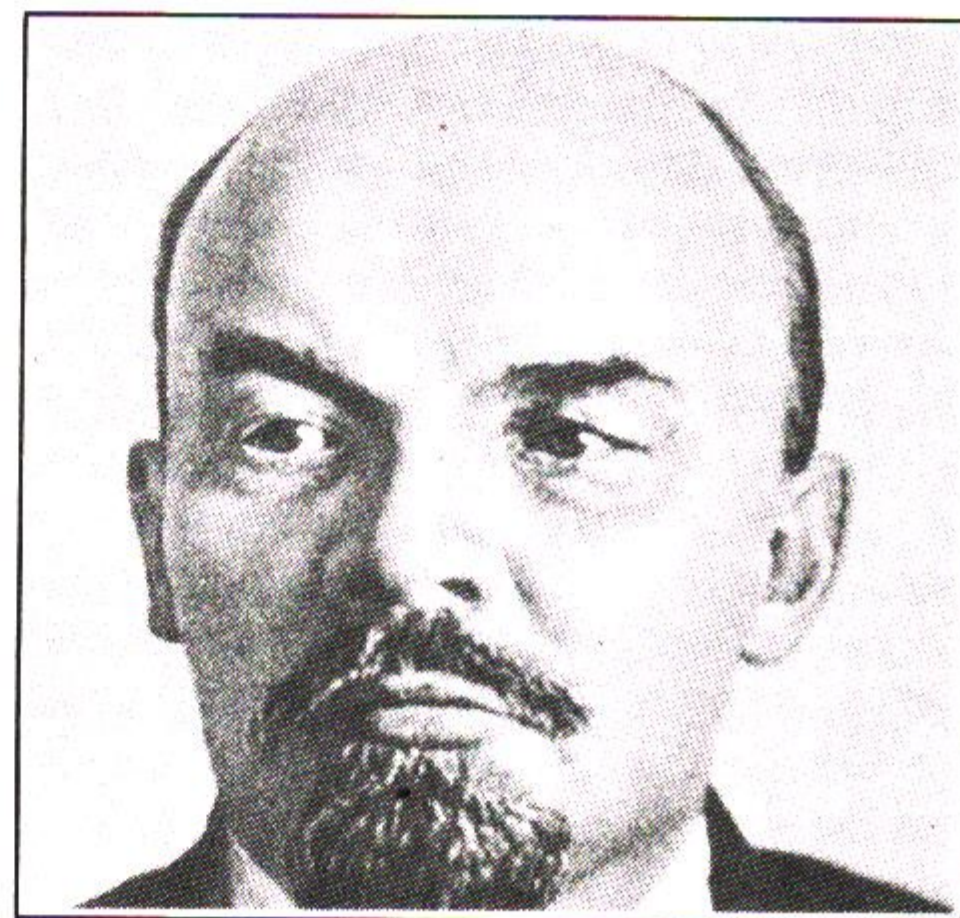
So on the same day as the Morning Star wrote its report and editorial, the Financial Times, organ of finance capital and big business, gave a far more correct and realistic assessment of the elections in Poland. The erstwhile "communists" have gone from Stalinism to reformism at a time of an organic crisis of capitalism in the West. That means a crisis of reformism as well.

Backlash

The "realists" of the SLD and the Peasants Party, like the "realists" of the French Socialist Party are preparing the way for a massive right wing backlash. It can prepare the way for a military-police dictatorship by Walesa or some general. Like the dictatorship of Yeltsin, it may have a figleaf of a tame "Duma" but with real power in the hands of the President. There is no solution under capitalism except very temporarily. In its editorial the FT argues, *"a government of this stripe will want to modify economic policy as the voters have asked. In boosting social spending and public sector wages, it may push up the budget deficit, fuel inflation and dampen economic growth. Poland's relations with the IMF and World Bank could suffer turbulence as a result. But a new government will also be aware that its members desire for*

reform and economic integration with western Europe imposes limits on their room for manoeuvre."

The solution can only be a programme of democratic socialist transformation - not to create a monstrous state but in Lenin's terms a 'semi-state' which would begin the movement toward Socialism. On the basis of micro-electronics and computers it would be possible in any modern industrial state to



Lenin

begin the process, after the working class takes power, with the speedy introduction of a 6 hour working day and a 4 day week. At the moment computers and information technology are abused in order to increase the intensity and extent of the working day. As always under capitalism machinery increases wage slavery.

Socialist Programme

Decreasing the working day without reduction in wages would not only be an important reform but would be an indispensable means for the working class to have the time to run industry and run the state thus preventing the possibility of a new bureaucracy, as in Russia, taking power out of the hands of the working class and establishing a new dictatorship. Without this change and on the basis of supporting the market the Polish ex-communists have become agents of the nascent Polish capitalism and of imperialism. They will be compelled to do the dirty work of these forces and would be forced to take action against the interests of the Polish workers.

The four points of Marx and Lenin must become the programme of the Polish and international working class:

1. No official to receive a wage higher than that of a skilled worker
2. Administrative duties to be rotated to prevent the crystallisation of an entrenched caste of bureaucrats
3. No standing army but an armed people
4. All power to be vested in workers committees, known in Russia as soviets

In the light of the Stalinist degeneration of the Bolshevik revolution we must add a fifth demand, the fullest freedom and democracy for all political tendencies except the fascists.

Ted Grant

German Revolution - 75th Anniversary

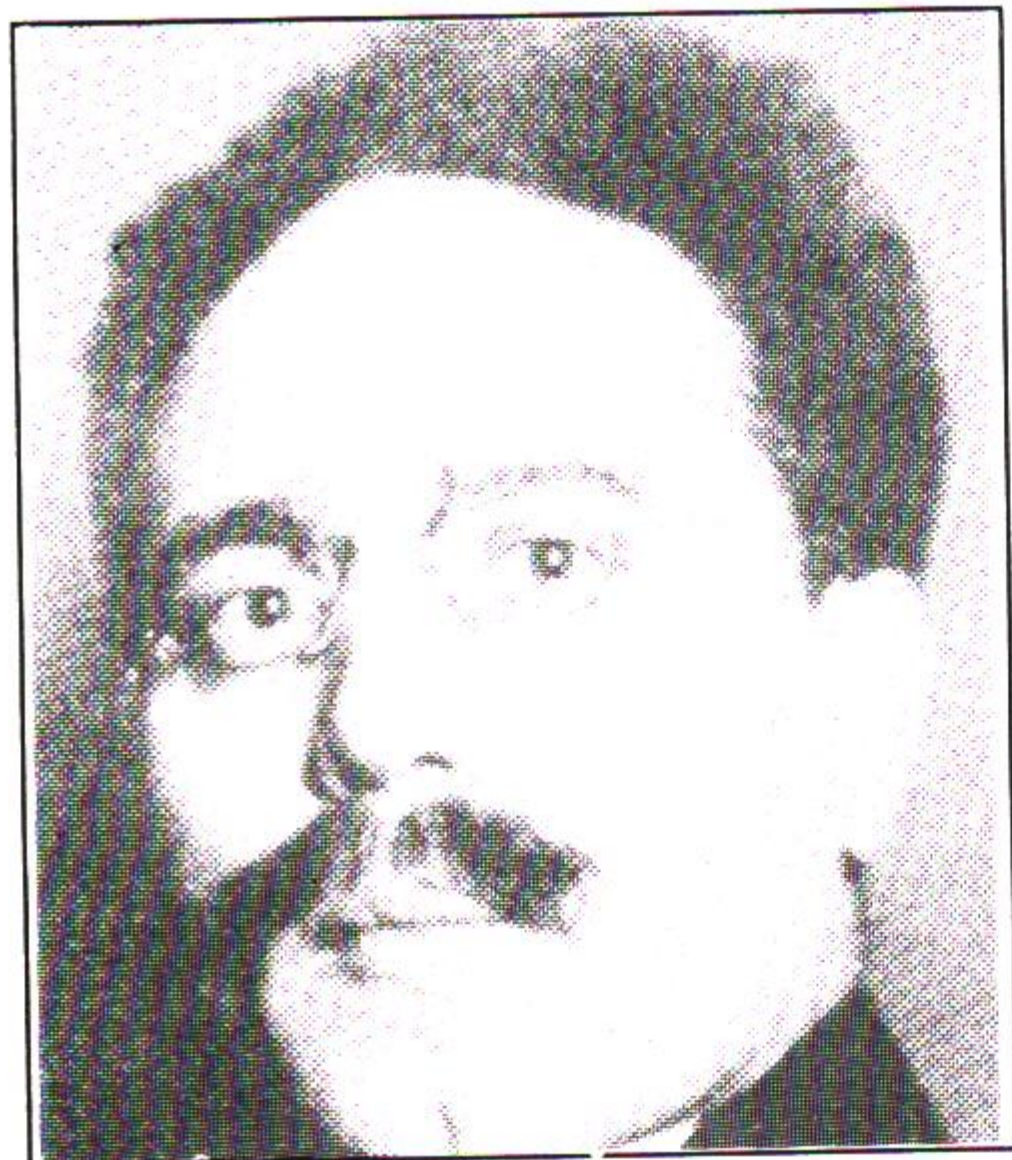
Missed Opportunity

November 1993 marks the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the German revolution. This movement was of enormous significance for the world working class following on from the Russian revolution of 1917. Lenin and Trotsky always saw the Russian revolution as the first step in a world movement. If the German working class had succeeded in taking power it would have provided an enormous boost to workers fighting to free themselves from the horrors of capitalism in other countries, especially in Europe. Unfortunately the revolution was derailed, primarily by the leaders of the Social Democrats (SPD). But the German revolution shows that the powerful German working class can look back confidently at its own history and tradition of revolutionary struggle.

By Dave Cartwright

"The day of the revolution has arrived. We have achieved freedom... We now proclaim the free socialist republic of Germany", Karl Liebknecht told a mass demonstration of workers and soldiers in Berlin on 9th November 1918. November 1918 saw the outbreak of a massive revolutionary movement of the German workers, soldiers and sailors. If this movement had led to the workers taking power then the whole future of mankind would have changed in favour of world socialism.

The events of November showed the deep-seated anger and frustration that had been building up in Germany during the war. The movement did not just appear out of the blue. It was the culmination of years of growing discontent. Although there was widespread support for the war at the beginning this eventually started to wane. In 1916 there was an important strike of 2000 young factory workers in Braunschweig. In the same year the SPD expelled Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and their supporters. This group had remained



Karl Liebknecht

firm to the principle of internationalism when the war broke out and hence were known as the Internationale Group later to become the Spartakus Group. They constantly campaigned against the pro-war position of the SPD leadership.

Strikes Spread

The strike movement was growing. In 1917 there were more strike days lost than in the previous record year of 1905. Workers were beginning to see that only the bosses were profiting from the war. Conditions for ordinary people were becoming unbearable. The ration for butter was only 50 grams per month and the bread available was virtually inedible. In April 1917 the Independent Social Democrats (USPD) were formed out of the SPD fighting on an anti-war position. There was a mutiny in the Summer of 1917 on the "Prince Regent Luitpold" in Wilhelmshaven and in January 1918 the group known as the Revolutionary Shop Stewards organised a massive strike in Berlin. 400,000 of the 650,000 industrial workers in Berlin joined the strike.

Against this background the Kaiser and the two main leaders of the General Staff, Hindenburg and Ludendorff could see that they were losing the war and that they needed to stem the tide of the workers movement. Ludendorff, who had led armies of intervention against the Russian Revolution, wanted the war to end in such a way that the army could be protected and kept intact for the future stability of the ruling class. Hence, he put forward the idea at the end of September 1918, that the Government should be seen to be ending the war in order to achieve peace, rather than admitting the military failure of the German Forces. In order to obtain co-operation from the main political parties the Kaiser and the military had to make concessions. They established a new government on 3rd October 1918 led by Prince Max von Baden and involving representatives of the three parties: the Centre party, the Progressives and the SPD. The hope was to use the authority of the SPD leaders to keep the workers in check. The Kaiser himself expressed his trust in the SPD leader, Friedrich Ebert to achieve this when he said *"I would be happy to work with Herr Ebert... I have nothing at all against the Social Democracy, only the name you understand, the name must be changed."*

The fears of the ruling class are clearly expressed in the following comments from Reichert, the leader of the Iron and Steel employers federation: *"The question was - how could industry be saved? How could the private ownership of industry be protected from the threat of socialisation of all branches of industry, from nationalisation and from the approaching revolution?"*

In October 1918 even as the negotiations continued with the American president Wilson to end the war, the 17 year olds were called up for military service. The tense nature of the period is captured by Sebastian Haffner in his book A

"The revolution is on the verge of winning. We cannot crush it but perhaps we can strangle it... if Ebert is presented to me from the streets as the people's leader, then we will have a republic; if it is Liebknecht, then Bolshevism."

- Prince Max Von Baden, 1917

German Revolution where he describes October 1918 as: *"... a period between war and peace, between imperial rule and revolution, between military dictatorship and parliamentary democracy. The more the month progressed the more the direction signs of a normal political life disappeared as if into fog."*

In Berlin there was widespread speculation about revolt. However, the revolution was sparked off in the North German port of Kiel.

Assault

The General Staff had made plans for a desperate sea assault against the British fleet. However, the German sailors could see the war was lost and this adventure would lead to the pointless loss of life. Confrontations took place between sailors and officers on board the "Thuringen" and the "Helgoland". In support of their mutiny the sailors argued that they were in line with the Government which was involved in peace negotiations. The officers were unable to carry out the assault given the mood and actions of the sailors. Instead they sailed to Kiel in order to incarcerate the sailors and then subject them to court martial and possible execution.

Another naval squadron had not mutinied but also returned to Kiel from Wilhelmshaven. In Kiel the sailors from this squadron went to the factories and fraternised with the workers and discussed ways to defend their fellow sailors from the "Thuringen" and the "Helgoland". The result was a magnificent show of solidarity. On Sunday 3rd November a workers demonstration took place. The demonstration was brutally attacked by armed forces led by Lieutenant Steinhauser. Nine demonstrators were killed and twenty-nine were injured. During the struggle Lieutenant Steinhauser was shot. The Revolution had begun! Councils of workers and soldiers committees (like soviets) were formed. Red flags flew over the ships. The jailed sailors were released by the demonstrators. On Monday 4th November the power in Kiel was in the hands of 40,000 armed sailors and marine soldiers. The SPD leaders moved quickly to establish control over the situation. Gustav Noske travelled to Kiel and was welcomed by cheering crowds and was elected Governor. This shows that the masses were not yet aware of the role

Noske would later play in putting down the revolutionary movement with his famous phrase of "somebody has to be the bloodhound"! At this early stage in the revolution the SPD leaders were seen by the masses as being in favour of democracy and peace even though they had faithfully supported the ruling class in the voting of war credits at the beginning of the war.

On 5th November a General Strike took place and workers took over the factories. The movement spread like wildfire to Hamburg and Luebeck in the north, then by the 7th to Hannover and its surrounding area.

By 8th November the revolution had reached down to Cologne and Munich. In Munich a demonstration of 200,000 took place. A workers council was formed under the leadership of the Independent Social Democrat, Eisner. The workers stormed the barracks and military jails.

A decisive stage was reached when the revolution spread to the capital Berlin. On 8th November a call was made by the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and the Spartakus Group for a General Strike the next day. The demands put forward included the overthrow of the military dictatorship and the reactionary government.

Mass Demonstration

On 9th November a massive demonstration of hundreds of thousands took place. Most of the soldiers were on the Groups of armed workers and soldiers toured Berlin disarming the officers. Power was in the hands of the workers and soldiers. At 4 pm Karl Liebknecht made his famous declaration of the socialist republic from the Berlin Castle.

The point of no return had been reached for the Kaiser. He fled from Belgium to Holland. Ludendorff fled to Sweden. The SPD leaders had not wanted to see the Kaiser deposed but during the demonstrations in Berlin on 9th November, Scheidemann addressed the crowds and declared Ebert the new Chancellor and under pressure from the movement shouted 'long live the Great German Republic'. Ebert was enraged but could do nothing to bring the Kaiser back. Prince Max von Baden also saw the need to stand down in favour of Ebert. He is quoted as saying "The revolution is on the verge of winning. We cannot crush it but perhaps we can strangle it...if Ebert is presented to me from the streets as the people's leader, then we will have a republic; if it is Liebknecht, then Bolshevism."

The three months from November 1918 to January 1919 were critical in deciding if the revolution would succeed or fail. Unfortunately it ended in January with the murder of the two key Spartakus Group leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. As early as November 10th the SPD leaders had put themselves in the driving seat to try and control and divert the movement.

At a joint meeting of the Berlin Workers and Soldiers Councils a provisional executive committee was elected which appointed a Government of Peoples Commissars effectively taking the place of the Government. This body comprised three majority socialists (SPD) Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg; and three Independent Socialists (USPD): Haase, Dittmann and Barth. The workers had not realised the power

they had to form a genuine Workers' Government. Instead they had given authority to those who were determined to prevent revolution. General Groener has later told of an agreement he struck with Ebert on 10th November: "Ebert took up my offer of an alliance. From that point on we spoke each evening about the secret management by the Government and the Army General Staff of all the important measures to be taken."

The genuine revolutionary forces were gathered within the Spartakus Group. Their leaders had bravely stood out against the war. However, they had not built sufficient base of support within the SPD and USPD to combat the control of the social democrat leaders. The urgent task was to build within the workers councils and win the support of rank and file SPD and USPD members. Given the immaturity of their forces, the Spartakus Group was given to ultra-leftism in some of their tactics. The revolutionary movement achieved gains for the working class. On 15th November a declaration was passed including the establishment of the 8 hour day, state-funded unemployment benefit and collective bargaining of employment contracts.

The ruling class were prepared to allow reforms now with the objective of taking them back when they were back in control. Ebert tried to portray these gains as his own personal achievement. He appealed to the masses "We have achieved so much. Let us not risk losing those gains. No experiments!"

Showdown

The ruling class wanted a showdown with the revolutionary forces in Berlin as soon as possible, so provocations were started to provide an excuse for an armed intervention in December. There was a premature putsch on 6th December. Troops from the Franzer regiment occupied the Berlin House of Deputies and arrested elected leaders of the Workers and Soldiers Council. Fusiliers attacked a Spartakist demonstration. They opened fire without warning killing 16 and injuring many more. The troops went to Ebert and encouraged

office. By the end of the weeks clashes over 150 people had been killed.

On 15th January, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were arrested. The soldiers shot Liebknecht and smashed Luxemburg's skull before throwing her body into the Landwehr Canal. The events in January opened up a period of terror by the Government troops against the workers councils all over Germany. Workers and Soldiers Councils were closed down and many activists were shot or arrested. The workers resisted heroically. In February a General Strike was called in Berlin. Noske sent in 30,000 Freikorps and by the end of the fighting on 9th March over 2,000 had been killed.

Communist Party

A large section of workers had not yet come over to the idea of socialist revolution. They gave the SPD leaders support, albeit grudgingly. The task facing the fledgling Communist Party (KPD) was to win these workers by avoiding the pitfalls of ultraleftism and sectarianism. But this had to be done in the heat of events where the KPD was constantly under fire (literally) from the state forces. It shows the vital importance of building a strong base for Marxism in the labour movement in preparation for revolutionary events.

On February 21, Kurt Eisner, USPD head of the Bavarian republic was shot dead by a monarchist. The SPD created a replacement government in Munich under Johannes Hoffman but he had to flee because the revolutionary events in Munich could not be controlled. A new workers' and soldiers' council was formed by the USPD leader, Toller. The KPD refused to join but such was the mood of the working class and the influence of the recent Hungarian revolution that eventually on April 7th a Bavarian Soviet Republic was declared. Outside Munich Hoffman had assembled 8,000 troops to strangle the Bavarian Republic.

Backed up by 30,000 Freikorps he entered the city on May 1. Over 1000 workers lost their lives. For a whole month the troops were given free reign to

The revolution shows the tremendous power and determination of the working class. It is part of our history. We need to learn the lessons so workers will be able to successfully carry through the socialist transformation of society in future.

him to become State President. Ebert realised it was premature and the incident was kept quiet. A peoples marine division had been formed in Berlin starting off with Kiel sailors freed from the military jails on 9th November. The division grew to 3000. They took possession of the Berlin castle on 15th November. The General Staff was desperate to weaken the power of this division. They had refused to aid the failed putsch on 6th December. To put them under pressure to vacate the castle the City commander Wels threatened to stop their wages just in the run up to Christmas. The sailors refused to leave and Government troops were sent in on 24th December. Fighting broke out but was interrupted whilst workers entered the fighting Government troops to retake the "Vorwaerts"

shoot at will.

The SPD leaders had re-established control for the ruling class. Yet the working class came back less than 4 years later in 1923 with an even bigger movement. In 1923 the KPD failed to give the correct lead and an opportunity was again lost. The high price paid for the failure of the revolution was the coming to power of Hitler in 1933. The revolution of 1918 shows the tremendous power of the working class and their determination to struggle. It is part of our history. We need to learn the lessons from that history so the workers in Germany and elsewhere will be able to act decisively in future revolutionary events and successfully carry through the socialist transformation of society. ●

In the Cause of Labour: Betrayed!

"Not a shot has been fired and no one killed, it shows what a wonderful people we are." (King George V, 12th May, 1926).

The whole of the post First World War period was coloured by the impact of the Russian Revolution and characterised by a qualitative upsurge in the class struggle. However, since the defeat of 'Black Friday' in March 1921, the crisis of British capitalism had given rise to an employers' offensive aimed at cutting wages and driving down conditions. The working class fought a bitter rear-guard battle to safe-guard its position. Nevertheless, within a year of 'Black Friday', six million had suffered reductions in wages and conditions and trade union membership had fallen by two million members.

By early 1924 the attention of the working class was temporarily turned towards the political front. For the first time, a minority Labour Government under Ramsey MacDonald had been formed with Liberal support. This gave rise to great expectations. However, the Government, in the view of one historian, "had been anything but revolutionary". In the words of Liberal leader Asquith, it was a government "with its claws cut", adding reassuringly that "we still sleep more or less comfortably in our beds".

MacDonald Government

Instead of championing the cause of the workers, the MacDonald Government bent the knee to big business. It publicly deplored strikes, which had risen markedly in recent months. At the end of March, it went as far as to invoke the hated Emergency Powers Act to deal with the London traffic dispute, declaring in MacDonald's words, that "the major services must be maintained."

Despite the timidity of the first Labour Government, the combined Opposition wasted no time in ignominiously casting it aside when the time was right. The pretext was the government's handling of the Campbell Case. This legal case was brought by the Attorney General against the acting editor of the Communist 'Workers' Weekly', J.R.Campbell, for publishing a 'don't shoot' appeal to the troops. Under pressure of the movement and the fact that Campbell was a decorated ex-serviceman, the case collapsed. Four days before polling day, the newspapers published

the so-called Zinoviev Letter, allegedly subversive instructions from the president of the Communist International to the British Communist Party. The forgery, as intended, sparked off a 'red scare' campaign aimed at panicking the electorate. As expected, the Tory Party led by Stanley Baldwin, won a massive majority. On the other hand, although defeated, the Labour vote had increased by more than a million. The Liberals were annihilated, losing 119 out of 158 seats. As a personal consolation, King George V told MacDonald that "he would always regard him as a friend." The eyes of the workers once more turned to the industrial front.

Coal Crisis

The crisis in the coal industry reflected the general crisis of British capitalism. The occupation of the Ruhr by French troops in early 1923, led to a temporary reprieve. With the withdrawal of troops, the revival of coal exports was short-lived. Exports fell from 42 million tons in early 1924 to 35 million in 1925. The coalowners, to protect their profits, demanded that all prior concessions be rescinded and that wage cuts, ranging from 10% - 25%, be introduced. *The Times* editorial insisted sacrifices had to be made all round. Matters were made even worse when the newly appointed Chancellor, Winston Churchill, announced the decision that Britain would return to the Gold Standard at pre-war rates. As the 12 month mining agreement came to an end, the scene was set for a massive show-down.

These post war years had seen a shift to the left in the trade union movement. Reciprocal relations had been established between the TUC and the Russian trade unions. A.A.Purcell, a left winger from the furnishing trades, was elected president of the TUC, and was joined on the General Council by fellow left George Hicks from the Bricklayers' Union. The departure of Frank Hodge from secretary of the Miners' Federation to become a minister in MacDonald's government resulted in a left candidate, A.J.Cook, the miner's agent for Central Rhondda, being nominated by the S.Wales Area. He had the backing of the newly established Communist controlled Miners' Minority Movement. Although Cook resigned from the Communist Party (CP) in 1921, he described himself as "a disciple of Karl Marx



Stanley Baldwin

and a humble follower of Lenin", and supported the CP as "I agree with nine-tenths of its policy." He was elected Federation secretary and joined the General Council. A.J. Cook, although a sincere class fighter and held in great esteem by the miners, remained an individualist deeply influenced by syndicalist ideas. He mistakenly believed that an all-out miner's strike would automatically lead to the downfall of capitalism.

Left Leaders

This lack of understanding, which was shared by the rest of the trade union 'lefts', contributed to their ignominious role during 1926. An ominous sign of their future actions, was the stony silence of Hicks and Purcell at the 1925 Labour Party Conference in Liverpool which decided to exclude Communists from party membership.

These 'lefts' had the support of the left-wing National Minority Movement which grew out of a similar body in the miners' union. The NMM was launched in August 1924 at a conference attended by 270 delegates, representing 200,000 trade unionists. Tom Mann became its president and Harry Pollitt its national secretary. The organisation, under the effects of bitter class conflict and the aura of the Russian Revolution, rapidly built up factions among the engineers, transport workers and railway workers, to supplement its largest section in the miners' Federation. The initiate for this broad left venture laid with the

Communist Party. Prior to its formation, no left party or group undertook systematic work in the unions to win them to a revolutionary position. The CP took an entirely different line, which saw the essential basis for the socialist revolution amongst the industrial working class concentrated in the factories and in the existing trade unions. The only way to conquer the class for socialist revolution, was the conquest of its traditional organisations. In the words of Willie Gallacher, the aim of the Minority Movement was "not to organise independent revolutionary trade unions, or to split revolutionary elements away from existing organisations affiliated to the TUC... but to convert the revolutionary minority within each industry into a revolutionary majority."

By this time the Communist Party, through the *Workers' Weekly* and its leadership of the NMM, were building up illusions in the left trade union leaders, mainly due to their radical stand on the Soviet Union. Both A.A. Purcell (President) and Fred Bromley (Secretary) from the TUC paid an official visit to the sixth All-Russian Trade Union Congress in December 1924. Eventually, in April of the following year, the British General Council re-inforced their left credentials when the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council was established to promote the unity of the Russian trade union movement with the Amsterdam Bureau (I.F.T.U.).

Wage Cuts

Meanwhile, on 30th June, the coal owners gave notice to terminate the existing agreement, proposing drastic wage cuts, the abolition of the principle of a minimum wage, and reversion from national to district agreements. The Miners' Federation rejected these demands and referred their case to the TUC General Council, which gave full backing to the miners. The struggle that was to unleash, was no ordinary struggle over the coal industry. The Prime Minister, Baldwin, made the situation crystal clear to the miners' representatives: "All the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet." (Daily Herald, 31st July, 1925). The ruling class had declared all out war.

Under such a threat the whole trade union movement rallied. The TUC met the executives of the railway and transport unions, who indicated that they would stop all coal transport in the event of a miners' lock-out. This was endorsed by a conference of trade union executives, who pledged their support. This threat was taken seriously by Baldwin who immediately convened a Cabinet meeting. They were forced to retreat, and announced a nine month subsidy to the coal industry and a Royal Commission to address the problem. The unions were jubilant, and the 'Daily Herald' put out a bill-board with the words: 'RED FRIDAY!'

The views of the ruling class were summed up by Maurice Hankey, the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet in his report to the King: "The majority of the Cabinet regard the present

moment as badly chosen for the fight, though the conditions would be more favourable nine months hence."

Herbert Smith, the Miners' President tempered the rejoicing in the movement with the warning: "We have no need to glorify about a victory. It is only an armistice, and it will depend largely how we stand between now and 1st May next year..." Cook also expressed himself forcefully: "Next May we shall be faced with the greatest crisis and greatest struggle we have ever known, and we are preparing for it... I don't care a hang for any government, or army, or navy. They can come along with their bayonets. Bayonets don't cut coal."

The September TUC Congress was dominated by militant speeches. The new president, Alonzo Swales, talked about "the clear indication of a world movement rising in revolt and determined to shake off the shackles of wage slavery." Tomsky, head of the Russian trade unions, attended as a fraternal delegate. Resolutions sponsored by the Minority Movement, especially on international questions, were passed by large majorities. The resolution, backed by the CP, asking for more powers for the General Council was, however, referred to the Council for consideration. The right wing argued that they had sufficient powers. J.R.Clynes, secretary of the GMWU, summed up their feelings with the words: "I am not in fear of the capitalist class. The only class I fear is our own." J.H.Thomas rejoined the Council after two years absence, together with Ernest Bevin.

While the union leaders talked, the Government moved swiftly to prepare for civil war. The country was divided into ten divisions, each

While the government was taking strong measures, the trade union leaders were lulling the movement to sleep, placing their hopes in the Royal Commission...their main philosophy was the best way to avoid a conflict was not not to prepare for it

under a Minister as Civil Commissioner, and armed with the plenary powers of the Emergency Powers Act. These state forces would take charge of emergency administration and ensure essential supplies and the maintenance of law and order.

As an auxiliary, a volunteer strike-breaking organisation was established at the end of September: the Organisation for the Maintenance

of Supplies (O.M.S.). It was led by Generals and Lords and had direct links with the government. It was supported by the capitalists with finance and facilities. Also leading fascists joined OMS as "the most effective assistance to the state".

On 14th October, the Home Secretary ordered the arrest of leading members of the CP. Twelve were charged with seditious libel and incitement to mutiny, and received sentences ranging from six to twelve months imprisonment - long enough to keep them out of the way in the run up to May 1926. Again as a foretaste of what was to come, 50 miners were arrested during a fierce strike in the anthracite bet of West Wales.

While the Government was taking these measures, the trade union leaders were lulling the movement to sleep, placing their hopes in the Royal Commission headed by Sir Herbert Samuel. They had established, it is true, an Industrial Committee made up of five right wingers and three 'lefts', but this had done very little. Their main philosophy was the best way to avoid a conflict was not to prepare for it!

The Samuel Commission reported on 10th March, framed in such a way as to cause maximum division on the eve of battle: recommending a reorganisation of the industry through wage reductions and longer hours. The miners' leader Hartshorn declared it "impossible", while MacDonald described it as a "landmark". The Industrial Committee urged negotiations with the coalowners using the Report as a basis. The Federation conference stuck to their slogan "not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day". The miners were determined to fight.

On 20th March, a further conference of the National Minority Movement was held to discuss the impending conflict. The response was incredible, with 883 delegates representing almost one million organised workers - or nearly a quarter of trade union membership. However, the CP leadership of the NMM had come under increasing pressure from the new opportunist line emanating from Moscow, which was attempting to cultivate a cosy relationship with the 'lefts' on the TUC General Council. With the death of Lenin, and a shift to the right under Stalin and Bukharin, the criticism of the 'lefts' were dropped. This policy, in turn, gave added authority to the trade union 'left' of Purcell, Hicks, Swales and also Cook, who lent credibility to the actions of the right wing.

After a series of negotiations between the Industrial Committee, the Government, the miners and the coalowners, the position became totally dead-locked. Despite the total lack of any preparation for a struggle, the TUC General Council met for the first time on 27th April 1926, three days before the end of the nine-month subsidy, to decide plans in the event of a breakdown in the coal negotiations! It was a classic case of lions led by donkeys. The executives of the trade unions were called to London to hear the General Council report. After further negotiations with the government stalemate was reached, and the lock-out notices

stood. Thomas reported, "In all my long experience... I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all day today." The General Council stumbled into the threat of a general strike that they did not want or believe in. The executives voted "to place their powers in the hands of the General Council", by 3,653,527 to 49,911. This would also include the Miners' Federation. The General Council was given the sole authority of running the dispute, including its conclusion. Bevin then announced that those unions deemed in the "first line", would cease work as from midnight on Monday, 3rd May, in a fight to prevent "the miners driven down like slaves."

By the mid afternoon the General Council had notified Baldwin that they were now acting on behalf of the miners. They entered into negotiations with the government behind the backs of the miners, going to the lengths of accepting the Samuel Report, and wage cuts, as a basis for agreement. The Industrial Committee now had to get agreement from the Miners' Executive, which repudiated the idea. When the negotiators returned at midnight to Number Ten, they were handed an ultimatum by Baldwin to "withdraw the instructions for a general strike" and repudiate the strike action at the *Daily Mail*. The latter was entirely spontaneous and was provoked by a reactionary editorial entitled "For King and Country".

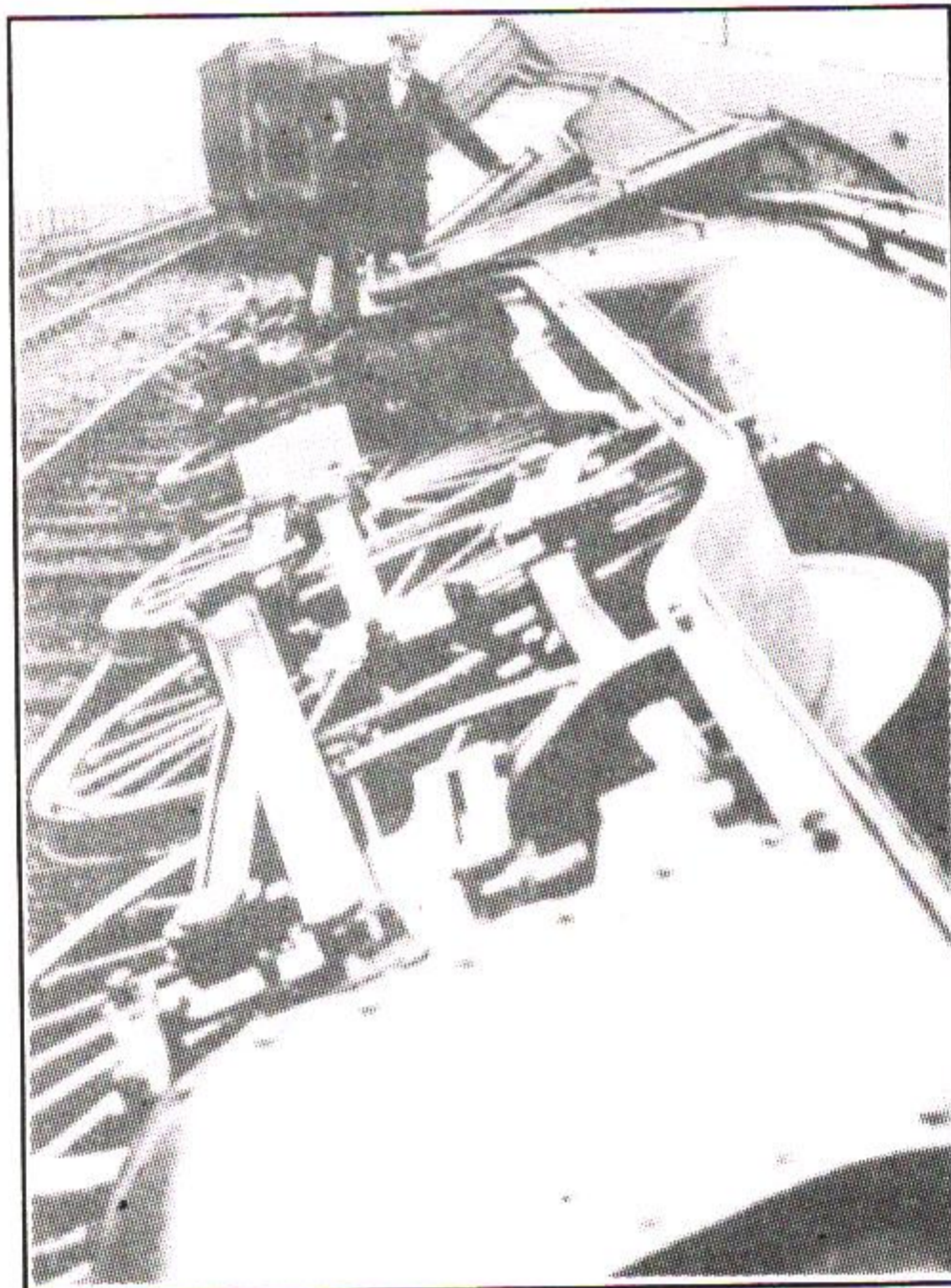
Strike Looms

The General Council immediately repudiated the 'Mail' strike and dispatched Pugh and Citrine (the new secretary) back to Downing Street with the resolution. When they got there, they were informed that the Prime Minister had gone to bed and could not be disturbed. The General Strike could not be averted. Jimmy Thomas complained to no avail that it was not a challenge to the Constitution as the Government maintained, otherwise "God help us unless the Government won..." When he left knowing that "a strike was inevitable, I gave way to tears. It was like seeing the fabric you loved smashed to fragments."

On the first day of the strike, Monday 3rd May, the response was way beyond what the trade union leaders had expected. On top of the strike of one million miners, there was a wholesale collapse of the railways and public services. A few buses operated in the Capital, but only nine tramcars out of 2,000 odd were on the road. The army of scabs, made up mostly of students and middle class professionals, were largely ineffective, lacking the necessary skills to keep services going. In his diary, the right wing editor of the 'Daily Herald', Hamilton Fyfe recorded on the 4th May: "On the railways scarcely a wheel turns...Docks everywhere are empty and silent. The roads, outside of the cities, have little traffic on them. Building has almost entirely stopped, except on housing schemes and hospital extensions. Iron and steel works are closed; so are the heavy chemical factories. There are none of the ordinary

newspapers. Nothing like a strike on this scale has been seen before - anywhere." (Behind the Scenes of the Great Strike).

As in 1920 the trades councils sprung into action. Councils of Action based on these bodies and local Labour Party executives, organised the strike in the areas. These organised picketing, communications, permits, and even workers' defence corps in certain areas. At Methil, in Fife, for instance, in response to police attacks, the Council of Action's defence corp swelled to 700 volunteers organised into companies under the command of ex-NCOs. The corp was armed with pick shafts, which served to keep the peace. In all



The Flying Scotsman derailed by miners

but words, the councils, which assumed great powers, were similar to embryonic 'soviets'. Nothing could operate without "the permission of the TUC". When the working class moved into action on such a scale, they instinctively formed their own centres of power. The general strike itself posed the question of power: who shall prevail? The councils represented elements of the new society within the old. The trade union leaders were terrified by these developments. In the words of Thomas, "if by chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would happen.... That danger, that fear, was always in our minds." (Quoted by Symons in *The General Strike*).

General Council

The Government showed its teeth. It incorporated into its forces the OMS. Battleships were anchored in the Mersey, Clyde, and off Swansea and Cardiff. Two battalions were dispatched to Liverpool. All army and naval leave was cancelled. Hyde Park was turned into an armed camp. The Government used the BBC and its newspaper, the British Gazette, to depict the strike as a revolutionary challenge to the constitution. But given the strength of the strike, which was growing daily, the Government were largely paralysed.

The greatest asset of the Government was the

General Council itself, which was constantly on the defensive and had no perspective of how to use the power that it had unleashed. Three days into the strike, Sir Herbert Samuel returned from holiday in Italy and immediately opened up negotiations with Thomas, followed by the Negotiating Committee, to find an 'honourable settlement'. The TUC made it clear that it saw Samuel's proposals as a basis for calling off the strike. They became increasingly desperate for a way out - even sacrificing the miners. By Tuesday afternoon the General Council agreed to call the strike off. This was put to the miners in that night, who rejected the proposals. On Wednesday morning a deputation met the miners again to tell them the strike was crumbling and it had to end. Within the hour the General Council was at Downing Street with its surrender proposals, leaving the miners to fight on alone. They capitulated without any

The "lefts" on the General Council offered no alternative or opposition to the betrayal of the right wing. In the words of the Herald, "the TUC packed up and went home."

guarantees against victimisation. The strike, far from crumbling, was getting stronger, with 100,000 more out than on the previous day. This unconditional surrender constituted an historic betrayal. Even Bevin stated "we have committed suicide. Thousands of members will be victimised as a result of this day's work." The 'lefts' on the General Council offered no alternative or opposition to the betrayal of the right wing. In the words of the 'Herald', "the TUC packed up and went home." Many advanced workers understood the actions of Thomas and Co, but were shocked at the role of the 'lefts'. The CP bore a heavy responsibility for these illusions that served to disorientate and demoralise tens of thousands of activists, and in turn, shipwrecked the Minority Movement. As Trotsky explained, "inherent in reformism is betrayal". However, the strike also showed the enormous solidarity, initiative, and self-sacrifice of the working class. In the caption of a national Labour Party organ, 'Labour Women' of June 1926, were the words: "There SHALL be a Next Time!" This burning confidence is a fitting epitaph to the greatest movement in the history of the British working class.

Rob Sewell

Next Issue: The Aftermath of the General Strike and the Rise of Mondism.

The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor



John Ball's Bolshies and the Wat Tyler Tendency

"If the Barons merited a monument in Runnymede, Wat Tyler merits one at Smithfield." So complained Tom Paine in the 18th century. For centuries the real story of the Peasants Revolt of 1381 has been hidden from history.

I was brought up in Brentwood, Essex, only yards from the birthplace of the rebellion. Yet at my local Comprehensive, while we spent hour after intolerable hour learning meaningless lists of Kings and Queens, never did we touch upon the greatest mass event of Medieval society.

It was not until Thatcher hit upon the loopy idea of reinstating the Poll Tax 600 years later did our bourgeois historians deign to remind us of 1381 and the uprising by the peasant masses against the Poll Tax (see last issue).

Even then, they write about the Peasants Revolt as though it was some spontaneous event without reason or design, a collective madness that suddenly, inexplicably gripped the country.

But to tell the real story would be to admit that revolution - not to mention its meticulous planning and execution - is as much a part of the 'British way of life' as roast beef and ale. The fight against the Poll Tax in 1381 was an organised struggle, that had all the subjective and objective ingredients to make a tasty revolution.

Objective conditions:

The Peasants Revolt did not happen in isolation, but was part of a revolutionary wave that swept Europe. There were a whole series of uprisings - in the Jacquerie in France in 1358; in Florence in 1378; and in the Mallotins in France in 1382. The population of Europe had been devastated by the Black Death which put economic pressures on feudal society and gave the peasants new confidence in the resulting labour shortage.

Theory:

The Black Death also challenged the ideological bedrock upon which Feudalism rested. Lords and Ladies had come croppers alongside the Great Unwashed, knocking a large hole in the concept that the ruling class were where they were because it was the will of God. The Black Death was a great leveller - it prompted the popular refrain of the period: *"When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"*

The architect of the Peasants Revolt, the revolutionary priest John Ball, developed this theme. In his address to the peasant armies as they besieged London he declared: *"If it had pleased God to have made bondsmen He would have appointed them from the beginning of the world, who should be slave and who lord..."* Another sermon of his went: *"... the matters goeth not well to pass in England, nor shall do till everything be common, and that there be no villeins nor gentlemen, but that we may be all united together, and the lords be no greater masters than we be..."* (he got sent down for that one).

Subjective factor:

As the vast majority of Medieval society were illiterate and the printing press was yet to be invented, there are no records of how the peasants organised. But some organisation must have

existed - indeed, we know that 'Brotherhoods' were formed to fight the Statute of Labourers.

Given the timing of events in 1381 - in a society where the speed of communication was one horse power - it is clear the uprising was pre-planned, and that means there must have been an organisation.

The first act of rebellion in Brentwood took place on May 30th. By June 1st thousands in Essex and Kent were under arms controlling whole areas of the south east; by June 6th Rochester Castle was taken; by June 7th Maidstone fell; by June 12th the 100,000 strong peasant army had effective control of London. It took the Bolsheviks with their machine guns, motor vehicles and the telegraph ten days; 13 days isn't bad for a revolutionary force that relied on its 'plates of meat'!

Indeed, the reason for the taking of Maidstone was because John Ball was imprisoned there - according to records of the time he had even warned his captors during his trial that *"soon twenty thousands of his friends would come and free him"*.

Meanwhile all revolutionaries who lived within four miles of the coast stayed at home in case of any sneaky attack by those Frenchies. These are hardly the actions of some unruly, spontaneous mob.

Programme:

Ah yes, and this is sadly where it all fell apart. Following a conference of the peasants at Maidstone, a three point plan emerged:

- ☛ allegiance to the good King Richard II (hurrah!)
- ☛ opposition to John of Gaunt (boo!)
- ☛ no taxation of the commons except the accepted tax of one fifteenth (er... that's it).

They wanted to reform society, not transform it and had illusions in the young King Richard. John Ball was beginning to formulate a more revolutionary policy arguing that: *"the Archbishop, the King's counsellors, the lawyers and Justices were to be killed, as one weeds the ground before planting..."* which is a bit more like it.

Unfortunately however, at the Maidstone conference the peasants elected Wat Tyler as their leader rather than Bolshie Ball; although good on organisation Tyler was weak on theory (hang on, where have I heard that before?).

Naivety won the day. There is no room to outline the events of 1381, but suffice to say through their misguided loyalty to the King the revolt failed, its leaders executed and persecuted. The peasants learnt the hard way that while sections of the ruling class may seem approachable and amenable, they always act in their class interests when the chips are down. A lesson many in the current leadership of the labour movement could do well to remember.

Next month: if God meant us to think he would have given us brains.

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Inside this issue:

- Free Trade or Protectionism?
- Marxism and Science

Defeat the Racists

A racist attack takes place every 28 minutes in Britain. Unemployment rates amongst blacks and Asians are double that of the population as a whole and the situation is even worse amongst the youth.

One in twelve black 16 to 25 year olds are homeless. Only 0.5% of black people get to university or polytechnic, compared to eight times as many whites. The chief medical officer reported recently that deaths from heart disease are 36% higher among Asian men and 46% higher among Asian women than among the general population. Poverty, unemployment and the stresses of living in a capitalist society are the causes of this and other health problems.

Discrimination

The black and Asian population faces discrimination in every area of life, on top of problems caused by the recession, redundancies and the Tories' cuts in public spending on education, health, housing and social services.

If this were not enough, blacks and Asians face the increasing violence of lunatic right wing neo-fascist groups, who try to stir up race hatred in order to achieve their aim - the destruction of the organisations of the working class.

These groups must be combatted by the power of the labour and trade union movement.

But racism is not the preserve of these small groups of thugs. The "race card" is used by the Tories and the ruling class to divide and rule the working class and so preserve their power and wealth. That is why racism must be an issue for all workers and for workers' organisations. The struggle against racism cannot be left to isolated groups which cannot match the power and resources of the organised labour movement - the only real force which can stop the racists and fascists.

Already in the wake of the BNP's council by-election victory marvellous trade union initiatives have been taken from industrial action against the BNP councillor, to a trades council demonstration in Walsall, to a Labour and trade union conference against racism and fascism organised by Bexley Trades Council to calls from the TGWU for the TUC to organise a national labour movement demonstration against racism. Now the TUC have responded to the pressure and called a demonstration for March 19th.

This is a big step forward. However, the TUC must not make the mistake of previous demonstrations by calling for "all-party action". The Tories and the Liberal-Democrats, based on capitalism, demonstrated in Tower Hamlets, in the miners struggle, over Europe and so on, they cannot be relied on to fight for workers' aims and aspirations. The TUC and Labour leaders should be at the forefront of the fight to defeat racism and rely only on the power of the labour movement. **But workers must also remember that part and parcel of that fight is the struggle for socialist policies.**

The poverty and degradation suffered by many under capitalism allows the arguments

to be used that one section of society is to blame. This is false to the core. It is the capitalist system itself that causes homelessness, poverty and unemployment. **It is for that reason that the only way to defeat racism is to eradicate the conditions on which it breeds, in other words end the capitalist system.**

Alternative Programme

The rotting decay of capitalism is the source of increased support for the far right in Britain and Europe. No amount of appeals to "better nature" will defeat it. To effectively cut across racist ideas Labour must put forward a programme outlining a serious alternative to cuts, poor housing, unemployment and despair.

Labour must convince workers it will not make the same mistakes previous right-wing Labour governments and councils have made. It must convince them things will get better. That means acting to end the rule of the banks and monopolies, acting to sweep aside capitalism and replace it with a socialist plan of production capable of ending want and poverty.

March Against Racism and Fascism

No Platform for Fascists!
organised by Walsall
Trades Union Council

**Saturday November 13th
Assemble:
Reedswood Park, Walsall
11.30am
Rally: Bloxwich Baths 2pm**

Labour and Trade Union Conference Against Fascism and Racism

organised by Bexley Trades Union Council

**Saturday December 4th
10am - 5pm**

TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1

For further details contact: Bexley Trades Council, c/o 59 Woolwich New Road, Woolwich, SE18