

SOCIALIST

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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Britain:

Tories' False Dawn

- see page 6



Workers on the March

Europe in Turmoil

Plus: • *Russia* • *Single Parents* • *GCHQ*

Once more unto the breach...

The result of the Russian elections of 12th December has sent a shock wave through the capitals of the Western World. All the plans of the West now lie in ruins. Imperialism wanted a weak and divided Russia, a sphere of exploitation and a semi-satellite of America and the West.

Through its agencies like the IMF and the World Bank, imperialism has put merciless pressure on Yeltsin and the "reformers" to carry through a rapid transformation from a nationalised planned economy to a capitalist regime. The consequence has been economic devastation on an unparalleled scale, the impoverishment of a vast number of people, growing social inequality and universal crime and corruption. After the physical crushing of the hardliners in the assault on Congress, Yeltsin and his imperialist backers imagined that the pushing through of the reforms would be plain sailing. They were clearly over-confident.

Discontent

What the results represent is a rapidly growing discontent with the results of the "market" and Yeltsin's reforms among broad layers of the population. If the "Communist" party had put forward even a caricature of a revolutionary policy, they would have received massive support. In the absence of a clear alternative, the way was left open for the ultra-right demagogue, Zhirinovskiy.

It is a devastating verdict on decades of Stalinist rule that such an abomination could occur.

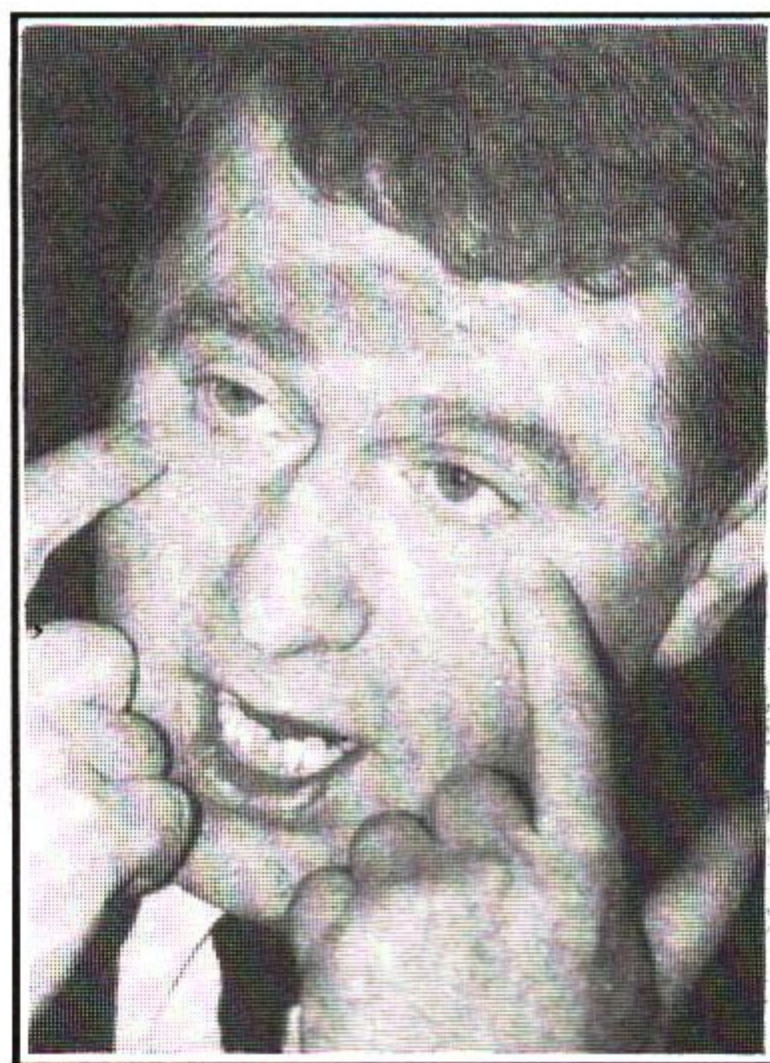
Nevertheless, decades ago, Trotsky predicted that the collapse of the bureaucratic Stalin regime could lead to the establishment of a fascist regime in Russia, if the working class did not take power on the basis of a genuine regime of soviet democracy.

Yeltsin has moved quickly to introduce a Bonapartist constitution. This constitution makes Yeltsin head of state, the armed forces and the Security Council. He can nominate the Prime Minister, commanders-in-chief of the military and the heads of the Security Council. It would be virtually impossible to impeach the president, yet Yeltsin can legally dismiss the Congress, with relative ease, and rule by decree.

Yeltsin's weak position was shown not only by the votes for Congress, but also by the vote for his constitution. It is probable that the vote was rigged to get a narrow majority for the constitution. A defeat would have spelt total disaster for Yeltsin. In the event only 53.2% voted. Of these, 60% were supposed to

have voted "yes." This means that even by official figures, only 30% of the electorate backed Yeltsin.

The "Communist" party represents the interests of the old Stalinist bureaucracy. Probably the majority of these elements would like to go back to the old system of "command economy" which benefits the decisive section of the "Nomenklatura" - the directors of the big state-owned enterprises and the military caste. However, it is a measure of the bankruptcy of the former Stalinists that, despite enormous and



Zhirinovskiy

growing discontent with the "reforms", they were unable to win a majority. Although undoubtedly decisive sections of the working class voted for the CP, which, together with its Agrarian allies, got over 20% of the votes, they were overtaken by the reactionary demagogue Zhirinovskiy.

Zhirinovskiy

The exact nature of Zhirinovskiy's movement is not completely clear. He has carefully avoided putting forward an explicit programme, and confined himself mainly to rabid denunciations of Yeltsin and the reform policies. This enabled him to gather support among underprivileged and dispossessed layers who could have equally been won to a revolutionary alternative, if such had been put forward by the "Communist" party. The class basis of his movement consists of the petit-bourgeois, the lumpen proletariat and backward layers of the working class, that is to say, precisely the social basis for fascist movements in the past. Zhirinovskiy's "programme" is based upon virulent chauvinism, with a clear imperialist colouring, and the most reactionary xenophobia, mixed with populist demagoguery and vague references to a "third way" between

capitalism and communism. Gaidar has advocated "the widest democratic coalition," adding that "even communists would be welcome to join it." (Financial Times, 14/12/93). For his part, CP leader Gennady Zhuganov said that "we have no common ground with those who seek Russia's expansion to the boundaries of the former Soviet Union. We are realists in our policies." He added that he would be willing to co-operate with "various segments of the political spectrum" to defend democracy. (Morning Star, 14/12/93). On the very next day, however, he appears to have had second thoughts. In the Morning Star (15/12/93), he is quoted as saying that he "firmly rejected the idea of a so-called 'anti-fascist' pact to isolate Mr. Zhirinovskiy."

Popular Front

A popular front policy in Russia would lead to disaster, Zhirinovskiy would not need to do anything, except wait for the pro-capitalist policies to do their work. On the basis of 20 million unemployed, and the social convulsions that would ensue, the support for this gangster would inevitably increase, especially if the "communists" assumed responsibility for Yeltsin's policies. The decisive factor in the situation is still the passivity of the working class, as a result of decades of Stalinist rule. However, there are already certain indications of a change in the situation - as shown by the miners strike in Vorkuta. But in the absence of a class alternative, the anger of the miners against Yeltsin has partly been channelled by Zhirinovskiy.

The only way to defeat Zhirinovskiy would be for the CP to turn its back on Gaidar and the bourgeois and firmly defend a policy of workers unity against all pro-capitalist and reactionary tendencies. Only the programme of Lenin can lead the workers to victory:

- (i). Unconditional defence of the nationalised planned economy.
- (ii). Free and democratic elections, with right of recall, of all officials in the state and industry.
- (iii). No officials to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker.
- (iv). No standing army but the armed people.
- (v). Gradually, all the tasks of running industry and the state to be performed in turn. When everybody is a bureaucrat, no-one is a bureaucrat.

Last, but not least, it is necessary to add to Lenin's original programme the demand for the right of all political parties to organise, except the fascists and others who advocate the taking up of arms against the workers state.

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Major-Reynolds Declaration

Raising False Hopes

The joint declaration of John Major and Albert Reynolds has been heralded as a "significant" step forward towards a peaceful solution to the "troubles" in the north of Ireland.

The main points in the declaration are an affirmation of the right of self determination, although this would be expressed separately in the North and South, a declaration from the British government that it has no "strategic or economic interest" in Northern Ireland, the declaration from the Irish government that it will renounce its constitutional claim on the North, and the offer of a place in negotiations for Sinn Fein if the IRA renounces violence. Although the media have trumpeted the declaration as

a new initiative, it represents little more than the expression of already held views. As Socialist Appeal said last year (editorial in November issue), *"The British ruling class would now favour a united Ireland..."* and, *"...it is therefore illogical for imperialism to maintain the partition."* The only significance in the declaration, therefore, is that this is the first time that the current views of the British ruling class have been openly expressed.

Sinn Fein and the IRA are obviously in crisis. It was they who first raised the idea of a ceasefire, reflecting their relatively weak position. After twenty years of "armed

struggle" they are further away from their goals than ever. A section of them, at least, is prepared to compromise.

The Unionists are split. Molyneaux and the official Unionist Party have not immediately rejected the declaration, they are talking about "constructive" criticisms. But the

Democratic Unionists of Paisley and Robinson have denounced it as a sell out and the Ulster Military Council (the UDA, UVF and UFF) have talked of an escalation in violence. Here lies the problem for British imperialism. Statements about disengagement are fine, but if this is attempted over the heads of even a section of the Unionists, then the British Army will be in the north of Ireland for a long time to come. The loyalist

paramilitaries already outnumber the IRA by as much as five to one, so we can see what this would mean if a "settlement" was enforced on them. There have already been eight other "peace plans" in the last twenty five years: they all failed! They failed because there can be no lasting solution on the basis of capitalism. The "ghosts" of imperialism's past can not be exorcised by any number of joint declarations. A genuinely united Ireland will only be achieved by a united working class, struggling for the socialist transformation of society.

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British Gas Threatens 20,000 Redundancies

Fight the Jobs Massacre

NUS action against Clarke's grant cuts

The National Union of Students has called a Day of Action for January 20 and a national demonstration in February against the Tories plans to cut student grants by 10% per annum over the next three years.

With the explosion in the number of students over the past period, nearly 80% of young people now go on to college or university, the Tories are trying to reduce the amount of money spent in the education budget as part of their plans to reduce their overall spending deficit.

But students are already fighting back. Despite it being end of term a number of local demonstrations and occupations have been organised. 2500 marched in London, 3000 in Aberdeen, 3500 in Leeds, and there have been many more small, local demos. There have been occupations at the LSE, Sheffield, York, Doncaster and more.

The Day of Action should be welcomed, but the struggle needs to be deepened and extended if it has any chance of success. This is a direct attack on students living standards - the campaign should be linked in with the campaign of public sector workers against the Tories pay freeze. United with the labour movement students can win a victory on this issue.

The decision by bosses at British Gas to sack 20,000 workers - one third of its workforce - over the next three years was a bitter blow to workers in the gas industry just before Xmas.

British Gas, which has made record profits since privatisation by bumping up prices, wants to increase profits further through a company reorganisation and mass redundancies.

Despite its add campaign, "don't you just love being in control" thousands of workers, as a result of the employers' actions will have "lost control" of their livelihoods.

The union - Unison - has calculated that 40,000 jobs are threatened given the loss of jobs in support industries such as appliance makers, contractors and distributors. These redundancies come on top of 40,000 jobs which have already disappeared in the manufacturing and contracting sector since July '92.

British Gas's chief executive Cedric Brown, described as "extremely ruthless" by a former BG manager, appears to take pleasure in the idea of mass sackings. He said: "When we made the announcement we found

a lot of anger and concern in the regions...the only thing to do was to tell it straight. The response from talking to people was absolutely fantastic. I enjoyed it." David Stirzaker, Unison officer for the gas industry correctly stated: "We are talking here of job losses of British Coal dimensions." In other words, these sackings are the thin end of the wedge for workers in the industry. However, gas workers hold a key position in the economy. It is essential a stand is made now. Back-tracking means nobody's job is safe. **The unions in the gas industry should immediately call together all union reps and stewards to discuss a strategy to defeat the threat to jobs. Central to this strategy must be the demand for no redundancies. If the bosses refuse to withdraw their plans a strike ballot must be organised to defend jobs.**

With emergency cover, a strike in the gas industry could paralyse not only the company, but bring large sections of British industry to its knees. Gas workers have the power to stop this jobs slaughter. Only by using this strength will the bosses be forced to retreat.

Tory councils cost you more - official!

Privatisation Heralds Job Losses

Thousands of jobs are under threat under the proposed privatisation of the Rosyth and Devonport dockyards, the TGWU claims.

T&G official Jack Dromey claimed the Ministry of Defence were admitting in private that their original estimates of 800 job losses were "wildly optimistic" and that the real figure was likely to be around 3000.

Council tax bills in Tory controlled areas are set to soar, some by as much as 35%. Unions fear the potential rises will be coupled with town hall job losses.

The new demands, which are due out just weeks before the local council elections in May, will be substantially higher in many Tory council

areas because of the loss of over £29 million in grants. The three biggest increases will be in Conservative Westminster (+35%), Wellingborough (+29%) and Hambleton (+23%). However, Westminster council leaders have already hinted that they may try to offset the massive jump by slashing jobs and cutting spending on services even more. The Local

Government Information Unit expects many Tory councils to adopt this strategy. The latest estimates come on top of more bad news for the Tories on the council tax front. The Audit Commission calculates that council's are already more than £1 billion in arrears with collection as people try to "pay off debts and pay other bills before their council tax".

Health cuts on cards

Five Birmingham hospitals are set to close and at least 800 jobs to go following a major review of health care provision in the city. After months of speculation (see Socialist Appeal no.17) the consultation paper Looking Forward has been published and recommends closures, job losses and a cut in the number of hospital beds.

The South Birmingham Health Authority claims the services currently provided at the five hospitals (the Eye, Skin, Women's, Woodlands, and Children's hospitals) earmarked for closure would be transferred to other city hospitals.

The aim is to increase the number of "day surgery" patients (those admitted, treated and discharged in a single day) from the present 40% to 60%.

The unions have greeted the plan with the disgust it deserves. Behind its "consumer-friendly" veneer lies the stark truth.

The health authority is proposing to treat the same number of patients with hundreds less nursing staff. Unions at the Woodlands (Orthopaedic) Hospital claim the move to transfer their patients to the Acute Unit will mean Orthopaedic beds being made available to Acute patients because of the lack of adequate facilities for both areas. This will inevitably mean longer waiting lists for operations such as hip replacement and others deemed "non-urgent".

Local union reps said the proposals in Looking Forward would lead to a "loss of expertise, experience and lead to further demoralisation."

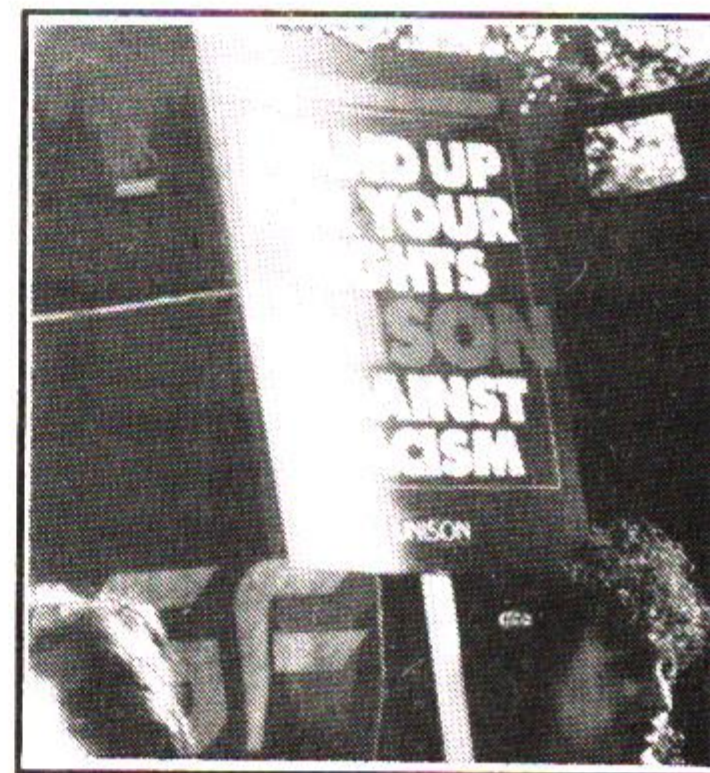
One worker at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital where many of the services will be transferred said: "What the plan is really all about is cutting costs. The managers are not interested in patient care only in the accounts. This is the philosophy the Tories have brought into the health service and it is a philosophy we have to fight to get rid of."

The consultation period allowed by the health authorities is three months. The local labour movement must use this time well, exposing the health authorities' spurious arguments, exposing the real state of the local and national health service and building a campaign to defend jobs and against a reduction in health provision in the city. That way it will be the voice of workers that will be heard loud and clear above that of the accountants.

By a Birmingham Trades Council delegate

Labour movement force to defeat fascists

On Saturday, December 4, the Labour and Trade Union Campaign Against Racism And Fascism was launched. Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich TUC's had originally organised a conference of Labour Party and trade union delegates in July. In response to the growing number of racist attacks and the continuing presence of the BNP national headquarters in Welling, the conference attracted over 50 delegates.



The election of the fascist Derek Beacon on the Isle of Dogs and the so-called Unity march in October dominated the headlines for a period in the autumn and gave added impetus to the need for the official Labour and trade union movement to take the fight against racism and fascism by the scruff of the neck and start to organise an effective response.

For this to take place it is vital that stewards, reps and ordinary party members are organised at a grass roots level to pressurise for such a campaign.

The interim committee elected at the July conference convened the December conference at which the campaign was to be formally launched. Over 70 activists from all over the country attended.

It was reported by a speaker from the TUC that the TUC

was responding to events by organising a march through the East End on 19th March 1994.

However, a proper campaign prior to the march explaining the Tories role in creating the housing crisis and the Liberals role in pandering to racism will need to be carried out. Socialist policies to start to overcome the problems of homelessness, bad housing and unemployment will need to be put forward.

The march should be a labour movement march, a display of class unity against the racists, and against the Tories and Liberals who represent the system where racism breeds. Maximum pressure must be put on the TUC, through the trades councils, union branches, wards and CLPs, to abandon the idea that the

demonstration, or the wider campaign, should be an "all

party" affair. The battle can only be successfully waged by the labour movement. This is the kind of work that the steering committee will be organising over the coming months. Furthermore, the steering committee is charged with the task of organising another conference shortly after the march to start planning an intervention in the May municipal elections with particular reference to campaign work in areas where fascists are standing as candidates.

Socialist Appeal encourages all Labour and trade union activists concerned with the actions of the fascists and racists to get involved with this campaign. Further information will be published in future editions.

A South London Anti-fascist.

The Real Picture

Quote of the month

"When I am shopping, I am approached by people saying "aren't you the chap from the CBI. I want to congratulate your members on getting to grips with unit labour costs, but by the way, I've just lost my job" his happens very frequently."

- Howard Davies, director general of the CBI.

Two new reports have revealed the true scale of the Tory economic "miracle". The first by the Labour-sponsored Commission on Social Justice concludes that more than one in five children in the UK live in poverty. On top of that the report finds that current rates of child benefit only provide for 15% of the estimated £3000 a year needed to raise a child under 10 years old. The second

study, carried out by Youthaid, reveals that more than one in four young people end up jobless after completing a YTS scheme. Many of those who find work are in poorly paid, part-time and largely unskilled jobs. The survey says the level of unemployment among those completing the scheme raises serious questions about the nature of the training provided.

When the Tories were elected for the fourth consecutive time in the 1992 general election, they, and their media, heralded the 'natural party of government' that would rule Britain well into the 21st century. But as we move into 1994 we can see there has been a fundamental shift in the political landscape - not just in Britain but throughout the capitalist world. The Republican era of Reagan and Bush in the US was brought to an end in 1992 by the victory of the Democrats. In 1993 all of the big capitalist powers have been rocked by political crisis - the Japanese Liberal Democrats were driven from office, the ruling Italian Christian Democrats have been decimated, the French Socialists, who based themselves on policies of counter-reform, were smashed in the elections, and the Canadian Conservatives were reduced to a rump of just two MPs! For conservative politicians everywhere 1993 was not a good year! And what does 1994 hold for them?

Electoral Liability

John Major and the Tories are now the most unpopular government on record. They ditched Thatcher because she had become an electoral liability, but now they have beaten even her into second place in the historical unpopularity stakes!

The November budget, which confirmed the VAT levy on fuel prices, cut unemployment benefit entitlement from one year to six months with the new 'job seekers allowance' and heralded a new and more vicious round of public sector cutbacks and privatisations, along with the proposed three year pay freeze in the public sector, represent an all out attack on workers living standards. In the new political climate this will have tremendous repercussions in the coming year. A Tory government already on the ropes, forced to take on workers in sector after sector, along with the development of a changing mood within the rank and file of the trade unions and the Labour Party could electrify the whole social and political situation in Britain.

Britain's inability to shake free from recession is the determining factor in the situation.

The ruling class and its economic witch-doctors have exhausted every combination of Keynesianism and Monetarism, but neither inflationary nor deflationary policies can solve

Tory Britain's False Dawn



Whilst the government and media hail the coming of the recovery, their celebrations will be cut short by a new crisis.

Editorial Statement

their problems.

The impasse of capitalism finds its expression in the crisis of confidence in the bourgeois of all countries, reflected in open splits in the ruling parties.

This is a symptom of a social impasse. Inevitably the crisis in the ruling class will begin to affect the whole of society. Even a sluggish boom, far from solving the contradictions, will exacerbate them.

In the West, even during the boom, there were attempts to cut state expenditure and attacks on the welfare state. These will intensify in the next period. All the gains made by the workers in the

past are threatened by the world capitalist downswing.

In past decades, the ruling class has exhausted all its expedients. In the boom of 1982-90, they used arms expenditure, corporate and personal credit which went beyond the limits of capitalism, to postpone a slump. Property speculation which stoked a colossal building boom has given way to collapse.

One of the symptoms of an unsound system was the fact that most of the major capitalist countries in the last period based themselves mainly on consumer spending, rather than capital investment, to sustain growth.

When this reached its limit, they attempted to get round it by an unprecedented expansion of credit and debt. However, the uncontrolled growth of credit, which temporarily went beyond the limits of the market, now acts as a colossal brake and is one factor which has prevented economic recovery.

Looming over the whole unsound system is the threat that the world economy will break up into its constituent parts as a result of growing protectionist tendencies. This would lead to a complete breakdown of world trade, leading to a catastrophe for the world economy. The new industries of computers and micro-electronics, which the capitalists hoped would provide a way out, are also faced with over-production - a crisis of "over-capacity". The only "solution" of the bourgeois to the problem of over-capacity is the wholesale destruction of the means of production as shown by the closure of traditional heavy industries.

The perspective that opens up on a world scale is one of the most disturbed in history. "Small" wars, such as the war in Yugoslavia, political crises and massive strike movements will characterise a period of revolution and counter-revolution.

Britain in Crisis

Within the general crisis of world capitalism, Britain stands out as the sick man of Europe. From being one of the most advanced economies in Europe, Britain has fallen further behind her rivals. Even with an "optimistic" forecast of 2.5% economic growth per annum for the next five years the unemployment level in 1997 will remain as high as now. Even though British workers wages are lower than in most other Western European countries, unit labour costs in Britain are higher, because of lack of investment. British capitalists invest less as a proportion of GDP in industry than Japan, Germany and the USA. As a consequence, industrial productivity is 40% lower than Britain's major European competitors.

Productivity of labour is the key factor in the development of any economy and determines a country's competitiveness on world markets. Low labour productivity dooms Britain to disaster in the long term.

Incredibly, bourgeois economists argue lower wages and worse social services will give Britain an advantage in the struggle for

markets! However, the whole history of British capitalism shows an economy based on relatively high wages and machinery will always defeat an economy based on low wages and technological backwardness. Britain, which in the past had one of the most skilled workforces in the world, has become a low-skilled economy.

The disease of British capitalism is reflected in the "short-termism" of the bourgeois. Faced with the threat of take-over if they do not show high dividends, they refuse to invest. Even in a period of recession and falling profits they increase dividends, at the expense of investment.

Investment

In the past British capitalists ploughed back a great part of the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class in productive investment. Now it is squandered on services, the retail trade, speculation and dividends, undermining the competitiveness of British industry. The blinkered stupidity of the ruling class was shown by the frantic efforts to maintain the pound inside the EMS at an unrealistic level. But in times of crisis it is a question of "each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." The

Germans unceremoniously ditched Britain, when their own interests were at stake.

The capitalists are not interested in the fortunes of the national state but only in their own monopolies' interests. The owners of the big British based monopolies speculated against the pound, forcing the government to spend billions in a useless effort to defend sterling. The parasitism of the capitalists in a "casino" society thus serves to undermine, not only the productive basis of their own industries, but also the position of British capitalism in the world.

The problems of British capitalism in turn are enormously exacerbated by the general crisis of world capitalism. Now, beginning to come out of recession, they find that the market has so shrunk in Europe and Japan that the recovery in Britain is threatened, especially as the home market is severely limited by low wages, accumulated debts and cuts in government expenditure.

The recovery is extremely shaky. Roger Hurn, chief executive of Smiths Industries told the Financial Times: "We have yet to see all this talk of improvement reflected in our UK order books."

Despite the fact the recovery was



Speculators celebrate the ERM's collapse

meant to be underway, in June '93 output fell 2.1% - the biggest fall for five years. Peter Morgan, of the Institute of Directors said: "these results provide further evidence that the recovery will be slow and corrugated, with periodic ups and downs....Recovery will be erratic and unusually slow."

It is clear the recovery at best will be sluggish. The future of the recovery will depend partly on the evolution of the economy in Western Europe and Japan. If, as seems most likely, Western Europe should pull out of recession in the course of 1994, economic activity in Britain will increase. At the latest in 1995,

there should be some kind of recovery in Western Europe and Japan.

However, all the economies are seeking to overcome limitations of the domestic market by means of exports. This will bring them into conflict, and will mean the recovery will be dogged by protectionist measures and counter-measures, and will be of a sluggish character, and not long lasting. Real rates of unemployment are already above four million, and are unlikely to show much of a fall.

In all periods capitalism requires a "reserve army of unemployment", but the present phenomenon is of an entirely different character. The existence of such massive levels of

persistent unemployment undermines the system, which is obliged to spend huge sums of money just to keep the unemployed alive.

People who thought they were sheltered from the vicissitudes of the system find themselves on the scrapheap. White collar workers, professionals, managers, all find themselves on the dole - many will never work again. We are dealing with a phenomenon not seen since the Depression of the 1930s - permanent or structural unemployment.

Every area of the country is affected. The formerly sheltered South now has higher rates of unemployment than Scotland.

This represents a colossal dead weight on the economy, forcing up taxes and unbalancing the budget. The central problem for the bourgeois is that during the boom they utilised measures which, strictly speaking, should only

be used in a slump, in an attempt to keep the boom going. Now it is difficult to use the measures to get out of the recession.

The problem now is that whatever measures are adopted they will result in disaster. Massive budget deficits, in the long term, will result in inflation. On the other hand, deflationary measures will constrict the economy further.

The British bourgeois must "export or die." The problem is that all the other capitalist powers find themselves in the same situation. This is a recipe for trade wars, in which the frantic efforts of each bourgeois to gain advantage on world markets would eventually cancel each other out.

Ultimately, no one would benefit, but the resultant decline of world trade would result in a downward spiral of falling economic activity and collapsing living standards. In such a scenario, weakened British capitalism would face absolute social and economic catastrophe.

Winners and Losers

So after seven years of tortuous negotiations the major imperialist economies have signed a deal with the rest of the world to reduce tariffs, subsidies, quotas and other restrictions on access to each other's markets.

In the end it was clear that some deal had to be signed or failure would have been the signal for the start of a world trade war.

However, the signing of a deal (to be formally approved in Marrakesh in April) has at best only delayed an open struggle for markets, and may not be able to stop the breaking of procedures in the future anyway.

Major and others claim the GATT deal will add over \$200 billion a year to world production, or 1% to growth rates. Yet what they do not say is that potential boost to capitalism will only come about after nearly ten years, during which all the signatories must honour the agreement. In an environment of slow growth, depression and rising unemployment, will the deal be kept?

The deal represents the limits to freeing up world trade that the major capitalist powers are prepared to go. And the truth is that the US is more protectionist now than it was when the Uruguay Round began in '87. Under the deal it retains its protectionist legislation called Super 301, which allows the US to block imports it considers constitute "unfair competition". The benefits of the deal go mainly to Europe (\$61 billion a year) and China (\$37 billion) and the US (\$36 billion) and Japan (\$27 billion). The poorest part of the world, Africa, actually loses \$2.5 billion, because it loses preferences over competitors to the European market. Prices of its commodities will be driven lower and its debts to the big international banks increase. Under the deal, foreign capitalists will be able to exploit the neo-colonial countries even more and remove the profits they make without restriction. They will even be able to get royalties for their patents on seeds and other natural products from Indian and Asian farmers, who previously used them direct from the land without cost! This is a deal for the rich multinationals who control 70% of world trade, for the major imperialist powers and for the bureaucratic dictatorship in China, not for the starving millions, those eeking a bare subsistence on the land, or those toiling in the factories and offices of the west.

Reformist economists, such as Andrew Glynn and John Eatwell have put forward the utopian idea that, just as Germany overcame backwardness in the 19th century (or Japan after 1945), so Britain can recover from its backwardness with a massive injection of funds into manufacturing.

Britain is an old industrial country. In a changed world situation there is no room for measures of this sort. Already we see howls of protest of Mitterand and Kohl about the "unfair competition" caused by the pound's devaluation. Any additional measures to boost British competitiveness by means of state subsidies to industry would inevitably provoke counter-measures from Britain's rivals.

That is why in the period opening up - characterised by longer slumps and shorter and shallower booms - Britain finds itself in one of the most precarious positions of all the powers. This means the relative class peace which was underpinned by increased living standards gained by big sections of workers will be succeeded by the opposite process.

Under such conditions British society is heading for a period of class conflict not seen for generations. In the Thatcher period, average household income rose by 36%. Nevertheless, the real income of the poorest families fell by 14%. In

1979, the less well-off half of the population accounted for one third of the total income. Now this section has only one quarter of the total. Nevertheless, the number of families owning a washing-machine increased in the same period from 69% to 85%; cars from 39% to 49%; central heating from 29% to 60%. These figures show that, while a section of the class was driven into conditions of want and penury, for a big section living standards increased in absolute terms.

The share of total income of the poorest 10% was 4% in 1979. By 1991, it was 2.1%. In 1979, unemployed families represented 15% of this latter category. By 1991, this had grown to 28%, reflecting the cuts and a sharp drop in the living conditions of the unemployed. The Financial Times published the

fact that "the real income of the poorest 10% of Britons fell, after housing costs, by 14% between 1979 and 1990-91" and commented that there had been a "growing disparity in incomes since the Tories came to power." Between 1987-89, the numbers living below the poverty line increased by 1.5 million.

The Tories put forward the theory that prosperity, even if achieved by growing inequality, would "trickle down and benefit everyone." The statistics show the opposite has taken place, as is inevitable under capitalism. The gap between the highest and lowest paid is greater than at any time since 1886.

The Tories are trying to drive down living standards in a vain effort to increase competitiveness. Thatcher endeavoured to hold down wages. However, under boom conditions (1982-90), the British

employers preferred to buy industrial peace. They could afford to because they simultaneously increased relative surplus value, increasing the actual exploitation of the working class by means of speed-ups and increasing intensification of the labour process.

For a big section of the class, their absolute share of the product increased, while their relative share decreased. The productivity of labour in Britain went up more than other countries, despite the fact that there was little new machinery or technique - it was achieved by super-exploitation and sweated labour. With two million less workers, they obtained the same output. But this can only be a temporary phenomenon. There are limits to what can be squeezed out of human muscles and nerves.

Since the election of the Major government, there has been a sea-change in the outlook of all classes. The bourgeois have taken advantage of the recession to carry out a brutal offensive against the working-class, with mass sackings and worsening conditions.

The middle class and white collar workers have also felt the weight of these attacks. The government has alienated many sectors which formerly acted as a bulwark for the regime - civil servants, teachers, local government workers, doctors, lawyers - and

Under Thatcher, and now, despite his "liberal" protestations, under Major the welfare state is being dismantled. The Tories want a regime of untrammelled exploitation, based on low wages, bad conditions and the withdrawal of health and safety regulations

Clarke's Budget: Making the Workers Pay for Crisis

Any way you look at it, Kenneth Clarke's budget is a disaster for the UK economy. At a time when economic growth is staggering along at around 2-2.5% a year and unemployment remains near 3 million on official figures, the Tories propose raising taxes by £15-17bn over the next 3 years and cut public investment in infrastructure, education, health and transport by 16%. And this at a time when British investment per head is half the level of that in the US or Germany, and as a result productivity levels are 25% behind.



Clarke claims the education budget will rise by 3% in real terms next year and 1% each year after that. But Clarke neglects to mention that by cutting council budgets, the effect is to reduce education spending by 4% in real terms by 1995 and even more after that (or up to £150 off every pupil p.a.)

Housing spending was also annihilated in the budget. Housing investment is now a mere 1.9% of the UK's domestic production against 5% in 1986.

Why are the Tories doing this? Because they blindly believe in the efficacy of the "market economy". For them what is wrong with British capitalism is not the market system of production and distribution, but the "obstacles" to a "free market", namely the state sector and government regulation, and the rights of

workers in the labour market. Their aim is to dismantle the welfare state and state regulation, and lower wages and conditions. This they say will create the conditions for the "enterprise culture". However, this is an illusion that even other capitalist regimes do not accept. By driving up a whole range of taxes, the Tories are adding 10p in the £ to the average tax bill in the next three years. That will reduce demand for goods and drive up unemployment, by lengthening the consumer recession. By cutting public investment and lowering interest rates and wages, the government hopes to fill the gap by private investment. But will capitalists invest when profit rates are driven low and when demand is dampened by increased taxes and lower government spending, and when there is recession abroad?

Moreover, how can British industry compete when it does not invest in new technology? No major capitalist economy has ever competed successfully on low wages alone: those who invest in new technology to raise productivity, and lower costs that way, will always triumph over sweated labour economies in the long run. It goes without saying the budget is another blow to the poorest sections of Britain. The institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that the combined import of just the income tax changes (that does not include VAT on fuel or other indirect taxes) since 1986 under the Tories has made the top 10% of income earners nearly 6% better off, and made the poorest decile 1.2% worse off. Include indirect taxes, which are inherently regressive (they hit the poor harder) and the situation is even worse - a litre of petrol costs the same whatever you earn or whether you drive a car or take a bus.

now even the police.

There is a wave of insecurity among middle-class people. In order to break the resistance of these layers, security of employment has been undermined, and conditions of work worsened by putting work out to tender. The increase in mortgage rates and the banks' impositions on small businesses, aimed at recovering heavy losses made on irresponsible property speculation, are all factors provoking widespread disillusionment with the Tories, preparing the way for a colossal radicalisation of the population in the next period.

The British ruling class in the past was extremely far-sighted. Its strategic calculations were based on decades and centuries. Now, they are incapable of thinking even a few months ahead, but stagger on blindly from one expedient to another.

Following the tradition of Disraeli, Churchill and Macmillan attempted a policy of conciliation between the classes, based on the welfare state. This in turn was predicated on the long period of capitalist upswing and massive surpluses extracted from the workers. Under Thatcher, and now, despite his "liberal" protestations, under Major this policy has been ditched. The welfare state is being gradually dismantled. The wages councils have been abolished. The Tory government wants an untrammelled regime of exploitation, based on low wages, bad conditions, and the withdrawal of health and safety regulations. An air of decay and disintegration has settled on the whole of society.

Welfare State

British capitalism can no longer afford the reforms of the last 40 years. Hence the unprecedented assault on the welfare state. Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley, spokesmen of the Tory right wing, are members of a group of Tory backbenchers which issued a pamphlet demanding the removal of all benefits from the allegedly "better off", which in practice means the majority of the working class. They want to do away with mortgage interest tax relief, rent rebates and allowances on top of the measures already taken - the cut in unemployment benefits from 12 to 6 months, raising of the state pension age to 65 for women, changes in invalidity benefit and VAT on domestic fuel and power.

Major's narrow election victory

rapidly gave way to gloom and trepidation on the part of both the leadership and rank-and-file Tories as the real situation became apparent.

In the South of England, where the Tories had their strongholds, they have received some of their severest blows. Bye-elections at Newbury and Christchurch represent the Tories' biggest defeats for 100 years, with unprecedented swings against the government - Major is the most unpopular prime minister since records began.

Labour Opportunities

The Tories console themselves with the thought that they have always recovered in the past. But Thatcher's recovery was based on economic boom. Now the basis is shaky. The recovery is threatened by the enormous deficit in the balance of trade, which will increase further as economic activity increases. Because of the shortsightedness of the capitalists in the past period, British industry lacks the capacity to meet a surge of demand even on the home market. A boom would lead to a sucking in of imports, and a worsening of the balance of trade. The conditions for a sustained Tory recovery are therefore unlikely to arise.

Thus, a Labour victory at the next election would be inevitable, were it not for the cowardice of the Labour leadership, which hearkens back to the social conditions of yesterday. The "metooism" of Smith and co. plays in to the hands of the Tories, offering no alternative to millions of working class and middle class voters.

The Liberal Democrats have been kept in being by the bourgeois and media as a safety net to prevent the middle class and backward workers from going over directly from the Tories to Labour.

Because of the failure of the Labour leaders to offer a consistent alternative and because of the experience of successive Labour governments and local councils, the Liberals have maintained themselves as an allegedly "radical" alternative.

However, they are only a pale reflection of the Tories. In reality, their policies are no different. In practice there can be no halfway house between the Tories and Labour. Only temporarily could the Liberals recover. At the next election, they could gain up to twenty seats. But any gains will not be long lasting. The inevitable tendency towards class

polarisation, as class antagonisms deepen, will cut across this process.

At present, Labour is riding high in the polls. This is because of a general anti-Tory mood, and in spite of the continuing swing to the right of the Labour leaders. The mass of workers and middle class feel no positive attraction towards the Labour leadership's policy.

The Labour right is incapable of learning from past experience. They have the delusion they can run capitalism better than its official representatives. Despite the disillusionment with Tory policies, Labour's right wing leaders continue to mimic the Tories.

In November's budget debate Gordon Brown was incapable of putting up any real arguments against the economic policies of Kenneth Clarke, precisely because he accepted, lock, stock and barrel, all the precepts behind Tory economic thinking.

Increasingly, the Labour right is moving towards the idea of trying to turn Labour into a British

there." However, the delusions of the Labour right will be shown to be hollow in practice. OMOV will not save them. In the event of a Labour government which does not deliver the goods, there will be a massive swing to the Left in the CLPs, once the lessons have been assimilated by the membership.

The whole debate resulted in a storm of opposition, despite the fact that, at first, it seemed the union leaders were prepared to swallow even this. The active rank-and file of the unions were not prepared to tolerate it. Only the AEEU was able to get it through the "National Committee" under the heavy pressure of the leadership. Every other union conference indignantly rejected it. For the first time in many years, the leadership of the GMB was forced to come out against the policy of the Labour right, nearly half of the constituency parties also came out against OMOV.

Right wing union leaders in defiance of the decisions of their union conferences backed this sham. This is the first of many



Investment in Britain's infrastructure has fallen under the Tories

version of the American Democrats - at a time when the general conditions are preparing the ground for a turn to the left among wide layers of the class.

The right wing wishes to create a situation where they have a permanent domination over the party, with a built-in majority on the NEC, and where the party officialdom interferes actively in the local constituency parties in order to guarantee this domination. That was the aim behind the OMOV proposals. In the past, it was the active layers who regularly attend the GCs and branches who decided. This was a far fairer system. The first law of democracy is that "you must be

storms which are inevitable in the Labour Party in the coming period.

There has been a rapid decline in activity of the membership, which has certainly been accelerated by the OMOV business. In a 1989 survey, 20% claimed they were more active than five years earlier, while 38% said they were less active. In 1992, 13% were more active than five years earlier, and 49% less active. "Sending funds to the party was the only activity that a majority said they did more frequently than before."

These figures are a devastating comment on the present Labour leadership who boasted they were going to recruit a million

members, and in reality have succeeded in decimating the Party, which currently has the lowest level of individual membership in its history. This is a direct consequence of the policies of the leadership. However, Labour enjoys an enormous reservoir of support within the working class. For a temporary period, the rise in living



Peter Hain

standards produced a certain apathy towards politics among the working class, despite the fact it was based on super-exploitation. Nevertheless the working class tends to take the line of least resistance. They do not participate in politics for fun but only when their life's interests are at stake. It is inevitable that, at a certain stage, the workers will begin to participate massively in the Labour Party, and transform it from top to bottom, removing the right wingers.

The mass demo in support of the miners, which the TUC was forced to call under pressure was a harbinger of coming events. It is significant that not only union banners, but also Labour banners were present in large numbers for the first time in years.

A recent poll showed 250,000 trade unionists would join Labour, if asked. This is sufficient proof of the colossal social reserves of Labour. The overwhelming majority of workers are not conscious of the Labour Leaders' policies and will only come to understand what they represent on the basis of the experience of a Labour government.

It is only the force of inertia, and the lack of any socialist alternative on the part of the Labour leaders, which leads to apathy both in the membership of the Labour Party and the mass of workers. This will inevitably change in the coming period. Already there is a trickle of workers into the Labour Party. This will become a flood.

For a temporary period, the Labour Left has been isolated. Skinner and Benn lost their NEC seats. Former supporters of Benn,

like Cook, Blunkett and Meacher went over in droves to the right, isolating the Campaign Group.

The Tribune group took a sharp turn to the right under Kinnock, becoming a mouthpiece for the right. But this situation is beginning to change. A new, more left section around Peter Hain and Roger Berry are now arguing for a more radical approach. Their pamphlet argued for a return to some form of Keynesian policy and tax increases for persons earning over £50,000. Hardly a demand to set the Thames on fire! At the recent Tribune Group AGM, Hain was ousted as Secretary of the group after the right wing packed the meeting. This was his payment for daring to criticise the leadership.

Nevertheless, in a timid way, it is clear that this group will continue to attempt to differentiate Tribune from the right wing. Once this "new left" begins to differentiate themselves firmly from the right wing, they will tend to coalesce with the Campaign Group. The opposition was muted in the past because of the desire for a Labour government and the instinct for unity against the Tories.

Now the situation is beginning to change. An opposition is now emerging, not only from within the Labour left but also from within the trade unions themselves.

Union Opposition

The GMB, in the wake of the OMOV decision, has pulled out of the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory group, which has consistently backed the right wing, and started to use its political fund to finance more left wing causes like the conference on the "The Future of the Welfare State" held in December.

The rift between the union leaders and Labour leaders is an indication of the underlying process of conflict which will develop in the Labour Party at a later stage. These conflicts, in turn, will galvanise the enormous discontent and anger in the class, and have its effect in the ranks of the Labour Party. Hundreds of thousands of working class fighters will become active in the Labour Party, as soon as there is a focal point for the discontent and the workers realise they must act, not only on the industrial front, but in politics also.

The trade unions remain potentially the most powerful social force in Britain. Despite the campaign of the government and media against trade unions, the overwhelming majority of the population accept that unions are

necessary for the defence of wages and conditions.

Since the movement of 1972-74, there has been a relative lull in the battle between the classes, although even in this period there have been important movements. There have been many reasons for this. Important among them has been unemployment, in reality over four million, and widespread factory closures which have partially weakened the unions.

The savage and systematic attack on union rights through successive anti-union legislation has partly succeeded, because they hit the union officials where it hurts (in the pocket) threatening union funds. But the situation resembles the attempt of the Lilliputians to tie up Gulliver. One big movement of the workers would sweep away the anti-union laws, as happened under Heath.

Fear of the sequestration of funds has paralysed the bureaucracy. But that is not the main reason for the crippling of the unions. Despite the increased exploitation of the workers, the rise in living standards in absolute terms had an enormous effect.

The climate of the boom period from 1982-90 was such that workers, exhausted by toil, tended in the main not to participate in the life of the unions and the Labour Party. This created the conditions for a swing to the right by the leadership.

They have been able to get away with this so far because of the decline in activity of trade union militants. The reasons for this lie partly in the objective situation, but also because of the policies of the union leaders who try to curb action by the workforce. Last year there was the lowest level of strikes for 100 years.

The employers have taken advantage of the recession to launch a sustained attack on living standards and union rights. However, many defensive struggles have been waged during the last phase of the recession. In general, workers are reluctant to go on strike, where jobs are threatened. On the other hand, the employers resist wage increases, and seek to put the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the workers, cutting wages and conditions. Nevertheless, the limit is inevitably reached, and workers take action, as at Timex. There have been very few offensive strikes, as workers seek to defend their wages and conditions against the employers' onslaught. Instead workers prefer to resort to limited action like overtime bans.

The climate within the working

class is changing. The grim realities of capitalism are bearing down on workers. Deep undercurrents of fury, anger and frustration are building up. Even the extreme right wing union leader Bill Jordan commented that a change in the economic climate, a "boom", even of a sluggish character, and a slight dip in unemployment will encourage workers to take revenge for the punishment they received during the recession. There will inevitably be big movements of the workers.

The illusions in an uninterrupted increase in living standards, through increases in productivity (ie. relative surplus value) have been shattered by the recession. The boom will be of a sluggish character, which will not allow the employers to make big concessions. That is a recipe for bitter class conflicts.

Conciliation

Like the Bourbons of the Labour front bench, the union leaders are attempting to conciliate with the employers and government. In this way the union leaders delude themselves they can reconcile the conflicting interests of workers and bosses. It is futile to imagine they could succeed.

In the new era of social conflict which opens up, the unions still have an enormous role to play. As the struggle develops, union membership will begin to rise again.

The new recovery of the economy will give the working class confidence to resist the impositions and attacks of the past period. The continuing attacks on the welfare state, abolition of the wage councils, pressures exerted on the shop floor, whittling away of health and safety, and so on, form a backdrop of disillusionment that will evolve into a disillusionment with capitalism amongst the advanced layers of the class.

The Labour leadership should use the growing support for Labour in the country to build a mass campaign to drive the Tories from office. Policies on full employment, the welfare state and trade union rights must be given flesh as part of a socialist programme. A labour government, based on such a programme, including the nationalisation of the big monopolies, banks and insurance companies, could draw up a plan of production using the full resources of the economy to begin tackling the real problems facing the working class. ●

Council anger at Tories' budget dogma

This Time We Must Fight!

As expected, the Tories announced a pay freeze for public sector workers. However, they hinted that local managements could come to local agreements for their workforces.

The Tories tried this once before in 1989 when they tried to end the national negotiating rights for local Council workers. This was met by widespread industrial action and beaten.

The leadership of the public sector unions must ensure there is united opposition to next year's pay freeze and - through active campaign in preparation for industrial action - the managements do not use 'divide and rule' tactics by tempting local workforces with local agreements.

Jobs and Services Face Axe

School Meal jobs in Sandwell in the West Midlands face the axe in a bid to try and reduce the cost of the service before it is put out to tender.

Tory councillors fear the service is too costly and will not attract potential contractors and so they propose cutting the cost. They have put forward a number of proposals including introducing a cold-meals only service, price rises, cuts in holidays and wages and job cuts. These threats come on top of rises in the price of milk and school meals in the past twelve months.

Councillors blame the rising cost of the service and the current overspend on the number of extra people who are now eligible for free school meals. What they don't do is put the blame for that where it really lies - with the Tory cabinet!

The budget was bad news for local authorities - it will mean more cuts in services, higher Council Tax bills and longer housing waiting lists.

Overall there has been a 1.2% cash cut on local councils. This means councils will have to slash their already squeezed budgets by millions more.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities say that for the essential front line services the budget changes will mean a national cut of £2,972 million. This at a time when mass unemployment, poor living conditions and poverty are driving more and more people to rely on the facilities provided by Social Services and so on.

Yet Council Tax bills will rise. Councils have two main sources of income - grants from the Government, called the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), and from the Council Tax. At the same time the Tories 'cap' Council budgets, setting a limit on how much Council budgets can be. In general terms, Councils make up the 'gap' between how much they get in grant and their budget limit by collecting Council Tax.

In the budget, for some councils the gap between the RSG and their capping limit has widened - strapped for cash these councils will push up Council Tax bills to get in much needed cash to pay for services.

The Tories have done this to try and divert attention from their own failings: they hope people will blame their local council, not the Government, for the increased bills and lack of services.

At the same time, the Tories have stopped Councils using the money

from the sale of council owned property and assets to pay for 'capital' projects (e.g. new schools, council housing, community centres etc). The Tories allowed this money (called 'Capital Receipts') to be used for such projects in last year's budget - they hoped it would boost the construction and

Funding for "special needs housing" - purpose built homes for people with disabilities, mental health, drug and alcohol problems or learning difficulties - has been withdrawn by the Tories

subsidiary industries to alleviate unemployment: for all their Thatcherite zeal they turned to the Public Sector to bail them out!

But such is the erratic and short term nature of the Major administration, now they slam the door shut again. It is all part of Major's appeasement of the Tory Party right wing, as witnessed at the Tory Party conference.

This means that Capital Expenditure by local councils will be slashed nationally by £700 million. The chair of the AMA, Jeremy Beecham complains: "**Re-freezing income from the sale of assets - for what can only be dogmatic reasons - will**

result in thousands of private sector construction workers standing idle when they could have been busy repairing or building council housing, schools or roads."

In the budget, Kenneth Clarke also announced the Tories were cutting funding for 'social housing' too. This money, used by councils to mainly repair or convert existing homes, will be reduced by £446 million nationally, while money for the private sector repair grants will be cut by £86 million.

At the same time funding for 'special needs housing schemes' - purpose built homes for people with disabilities, mental health, drug and alcohol problems or learning difficulties - has been withdrawn. The Housing Minister Sir George Young (well known for his grasp of the housing issues at the sharp end!) says he thinks this an inappropriate use of Housing Corporation funds and wants local councils to take on the responsibility, even though he has provided no extra funds for them to do this.

But as ever with this Government, incompetence reigns. While they 'save' money with one hand, they are building themselves up huge bills with the other. The Government gives guidelines on how much Councils should set rent levels for council housing. In the budget they said these could be raised by a staggering 7.5%.

Yet the Government picks up the tab for Housing Benefit payments, which are claimed by the unemployed and those on low incomes. Therefore the Tories' hike in rent levels could leave them an extra £500 million to find for the increased Housing Benefit bill!

Single parents are bearing the brunt of the Tories' latest attack on the welfare state. Ann Tanner exposes the hypocrisy behind Major's moral crusade.

Single Parents, Morality and Hypocrisy

There has been a lot of talk about single parents recently. Last July John Redwood, the Secretary of State for Wales, visited the St Mellons council estate in Cardiff where 68% of the families are headed by one parent, usually the mother. His suggested "solution" to this "problem" was to cut the mother's benefits until the fathers were forced home! The real problem is "lack of facilities on the estate. The children really have nothing to do," said a single mother when interviewed by a local paper. The estate has no comprehensive school, no leisure centre and no bank. And it costs a pound to get into the main shopping centre! Another mother from the estate said tensions between couples, often leading to violence was a factor in the increasing number of lone parent families.

Scapegoats

Far from solving the problem, cutting benefits to this highly vulnerable section of the population would only make things worse. Several other Tory ministers have scapegoated the single parent. The image painted is the "feckless" teenage girl who gets pregnant to "jump the queue" for

council housing. Recently Peter Lilley suggested the setting up of hostels for single mothers, as has Dr David Green of the right wing think tank the Institute of Economic Affairs, who said recently that (such hostels) "would mean the mother could not have a string of boyfriends and would be given guidance on how to bring up a child". Without such guidance the single parent is, apparently, responsible for the rise in crime. This claim was greeted with tumultuous applause when Home Secretary Michael Howard said it at Tory conference. Single parents are accused of "breeding like rabbits" and "having a different father for each child".

This campaign of vilification is typical of the victim-blaming tactics employed by capitalist governments, especially when, beset by economic crises, the treasury is desperately seeking areas for spending cuts. The single mother has always been demonized by class society. Bearing children outside marriage has always been punished by social stigma and often by virtual imprisonment in "mother and baby homes". In 1971, three "unmarried mothers" were discovered who had been

incarcerated in lunatic asylums in the 1920's - they were considered "moral degenerates". In 1918 bad conditions and poor diet in workhouses for single mothers resulted in a perinatal mortality rate twice that for babies born in wedlock. This was seen as "divine retribution". Why is it that the capitalist class so easily stirs up resentment against the single mother? (Fathers are rarely if ever subjected to such treatment. They may have been tracked down and made to support their offspring but have usually escaped the shame, and the asylum).

Womens' Rights

As Engels explains in "Origin of the Family", class society requires that the rights of women be restricted to ensure that they only bear their husband's children. This is to protect the inheritance of property. Working class people, with little or no property to pass on to their children have traditionally had a more relaxed attitude, but even amongst the working class another mouth to feed without a breadwinner was a disaster. Although working class women worked, their wages were low, and employers considered unmarried mothers "lax and immoral" and were reluctant to employ them. For a working class girl to become pregnant outside marriage was a "fate worse than death" unless the father stood by her and married her. As late as the 18th century most country girls went pregnant to the altar. Her condition was a necessary proof of fertility. Children were sent out to work at an early age and were thus essential to the family economy. Only in the 19th century did more of the working class become infected with "middle class morality" (especially after the passage of laws regulating child labour.) So it can be seen that the Tory campaign against single parents fits in very well with ruling class

philosophy. It is this kind of attitude that permeates the "traditional family values" so beloved of the Tories. Despite their protestations that many single parents do a "really good job" bringing up their children alone there can be no doubt that the opposite image, created at their conference, is very popular with the Tory party workers. So what are the facts behind the propaganda? Almost 20% of families in Britain are headed by one parent. The government seems keen to represent all of them as feckless teenagers having large numbers of children by many different fathers. In fact the typical lone mother has been married, is 35-39 years old and has two children. So single lone mothers under the age of 25 only account for 4% of all parents. At least 60% of these were living with their parents, so it is the case that grandparents are already taking responsibility. The Tories gave the impression that stern measures would be needed to "force grandparents to take up their responsibilities". 65% of all lone mothers were married to the father when they had children. In fact the "problem" painted by the Tories almost completely disappears when government statistics are examined. As to the accusation that single parents "breed like rabbits" most single parents only have one child and lone parent families have been consistently smaller than two parent families for years. The picture painted by the Tories is false and insulting. Michael Howard's claim that single parents are responsible for the crime wave is contradicted by a report from his own department. A Home Office report in 1985 concluded there was "no difference in prevalence of delinquency" between single and two parent children. It is however true that births outside marriage have increased nearly threefold since 1979. This has several causes, but the



Natalie - a teenage single mother who starred in a BBC documentary about life as a single parent

increase in women's and children's rights and more liberal divorce laws have certainly contributed. Recent reports have shown there has been a dramatic rise in the number of births outside marriage that are registered jointly by both parents. The number of these parents who record the same address is also rising. Today a large number of "unmarried mothers" are not lone parents! The economic situation has, also had an effect - poverty and unemployment put stress on any relationship and increase the rate of marriage breakdown. Late 20th century capitalism is failing to provide a role for an increasing number of working people, especially young people. It is entirely possible that, faced with the prospect of no job and even no benefits before they are 18, some may opt for parenthood. Of course the Tory press will seek them out and claim they are typical, the figures prove they are not.

Tory Programme

What is the Tory solution? To force mothers to take the fathers back? In the Cardiff estate visited by John Redwood last July, 240 of these absent fathers have exclusion orders against them for violence.

It is difficult to know for certain how many marriages breakdown through violence. A figure of 20% has been quoted by researchers but the usual reason for marriage breakdown is "unreasonable behaviour" followed by adultery by one of the partners. Both these reasons may involve violence. However in 1974 25% of family violence cases reported to the police in one city were attacks on wives. This is very high when it is remembered that women are often reluctant to report their husbands and were probably even more reluctant in 1974. (Only 10% of all cases of non family violence were male against female attacks.)

In government circles much interest has been shown in the scheme currently introduced in New Jersey, USA. The scheme is the brainchild of American political scientist Professor Charles Murray. The mother is penalised by a cut in welfare if she has another child while on welfare and is provided with employment training to "encourage" her off welfare. Professor Murray believes the "problem" can be solved if politicians reaffirm their commitment to the "traditional"

family. Spending should be switched to adoption services and orphanages he says. One can only imagine the horrors that would be produced by such a return to "Victorian values". Such schemes ignore the fact that most single mothers do not add to their families and also forgets that all the training in the world is not a substitute for a real job. Also lone mothers do not need to be "encouraged off welfare" - 90% would prefer to earn their own living. Properly funded nursery provision is desperately needed and not just for the children of single parents. This country has the poorest provision in Europe. At present in Britain decent child care is either unobtainable or too expensive. Government figures show 67% of all lone mothers have a weekly income of under £100. In 1991 the average mean weekly cost of full time child care (excluding families who paid nothing i.e. used grandmother or other relative) was £43.90! Obviously this is out of the reach of anyone earning less than £100 per week. Recently a single mother was jailed for leaving a very young child at home while she worked. Of course she was wrong but many of us can understand the pressures that drove her to such action. Unless you are lucky enough to have a relative willing to care for your child you either do what that mother did or struggle on income support and get labelled a scrounger. Anyone who has been on income support knows it is a grim existence. No wonder most lone parents want to work! It is sickening to hear champagne swilling Tories give the impression these women are living in the lap of luxury! But then this hypocrisy is no surprise to Marxists, we know the depths the capitalist class will stoop to in the defence of their rotten system!

What they cannot do is solve the problems of these families. They do not even take note of the advice given in reports that they actually sponsor. Such a survey in 1991 suggests that the following factors help to get a mother off income support; Having only one child instead of 2 or more; have a child aged 5 years or more rather than under 5; having educational qualifications; receiving maintenance regularly; not having a long term illness.

Child Care

Better child care provision would take care of the first two points. Educational qualifications, or rather lack of them has an effect on the earning power and job opportunities of most lone mothers. The charts below show that lone mothers have, on the whole, lower educational attainments than other mothers. The provision of education and training for women with family responsibilities (including the provision of nurseries and creches) is vital. Courses also need to be available to suit the needs of mothers with school age children, or alternatively after school clubs should be provided. Absent fathers have problems too - they're not prepared for any family role except breadwinner and often feel that they do not fit in because of unemployment. Also because of low wages or lack of work absent fathers often do not have the means to support their offspring. Nobody would argue with the principle that an absent father should help support his children if he has the means. It is undoubtedly true that some absent fathers renege on their responsibilities even when in quite highly paid jobs. However the Child Support Agency was not set up to enforce these principles but rather to "save the tax payer's money".

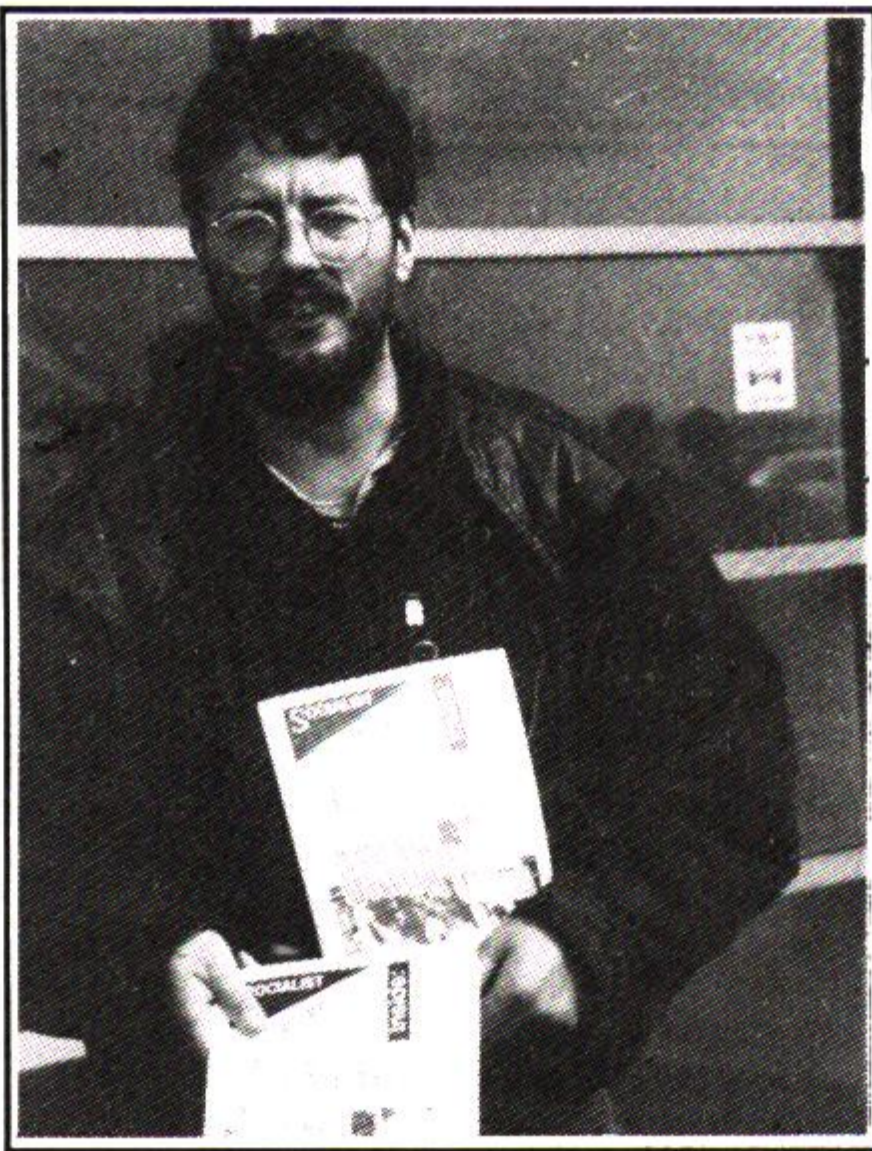
Any mother who uses these services voluntarily is likely to be charged unless she is on income support, and mothers on income support are going to feel pressurized into "naming the father" despite all government protestations to the contrary. Recently the agency lost a case against a father in court. The formula used to assess didn't leave the father enough to live on! Anyway the mother and her children on income support gain nothing, they just get their benefit cut. If the award gets them off benefit then they are often worse off as they lose free NHS treatment and other benefits. It was recently reported that the agency had been instructed to concentrate on those fathers that were easy to find. These were mostly already contributing regularly. Despite the crocodile tears shed by Tory MPs when the bill to set up the CSA was going through parliament, the agency is as suspected just another back door cut and has nothing to do with supporting children. Although it is usual for mothers to be the lone parent, some, widowers for example, are fathers. They face exactly the same problems, compounded by the fact that society does not prepare boys for a parenting role. Fathers do not fit into the "mother and toddler" provision and so may be even more isolated. Only with socialist policies will men and women be able to relate to each other without the stresses and distortions brought about by the capitalist system. Only socialism can free the human race to explore the roles of both parents and their children and create a society which allows all to reach their potential. Capitalism has no solutions for the problems it has created for families in the late 20th century.

One Parent Families: The Facts

- 2.2 million children are being brought up in one parent families
- The total weekly income of one-parent families is 37.3% less than two-parent ones
- Over half of one-parent families live on less than £100 a week
- Almost twice as many one parent families, as compared with two-parent families have no central heating

Source: National Council for One Parent Families

Major Boost to Sales



Funding the fight for Socialism

In October we launched a £5000 appeal to purchase much needed pamphlet making equipment. That equipment is now safely installed in our offices and the first pamphlet should be rolling off it very soon! The fact that we have been able to raise the cash in such a quick time is a testimony to the spirit of sacrifice shown by so many readers and sellers. Socialist Appeal's Editorial Board extends its thanks to everyone who donated.

The equipment will allow us to begin producing pamphlets in the next few weeks. Among the first to be published during the course of the next 12 months or so are likely to be, on Marxism and the trade unions, racism and fascism, and key questions of the day such as the economy and full employment. Watch this space! The new year sees new challenges and our resources will be put under new strains. Money donated to Socialist Appeal's Press Fund does not vanish in some bottomless pit but is put to the best possible use - the fight for socialism. The Editorial Board believes the next task is to raise the money to purchase a high quality scanner in order to vastly improve our ability to use photos. We urge every reader and seller to match and surpass the efforts they made during the course of the last appeal to make sure this equipment is in place as quickly as our pamphlet-maker. Please make a donation towards the building of Socialist Appeal and Marxism today. (see box right)

Whilst all the monies from our Sales campaign '93 are still arriving at our office, one thing is clear - the campaign has resulted in a major boost to our sales. *It has resulted in new regular readers, new subscriptions and new sellers.* Many areas reported excellent new sales during the course of the campaign - now those sales must be followed up.

In the next few weeks sellers in every area should:

- ☛ visit all those people who bought Socialist Appeal for the first time and ask them to take a regular copy
- ☛ visit regular readers and ask them to take out a subscription
- ☛ Ask regular readers and subscribers to take extra copies to sell at work, in their union or Labour Party meetings

I enclose a donation to the Press Fund of:

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Getting a Good Response

On the Saturday before the budget, Stoke-on-Trent district Labour Party held a demonstration against VAT on fuel. In the run up to the demonstration 20,000 leaflets and posters were distributed. The march started at 10.00am, at the insistence of the police, as Port Vale were playing at home. This, along with the very cold weather, no doubt affected the turn out which was about 400. Labour Party members, whilst slightly disappointed with the turn out, were enthused by the fact the local party had organised the demonstration. No party member I spoke to could remember the last time the Labour Party in Stoke-on-Trent had organised a demo. All agreed this should be the start of a campaign to raise Labour's profile in the city. As one party member said, there were enough issues around at the moment for the local

party to be organising a demonstration every week. Whilst I don't believe anyone would seriously suggest that labour should hold a demonstration every week, it is true that there are no shortages of issues which Labour should be hammering the Tories over. The demonstration was a great success and the Labour Party in every area should be holding similar demonstrations. However, as we saw during the campaign against pit closures (including the closure of the last pit in Stoke-on-Trent) demonstrations are not enough. Labour's leadership should be putting the case for socialism at every opportunity. They should be putting up a real fight against the Tories instead of the "me too-ism" that has lost Labour the last two elections. On the demo five copies of Socialist

Appeal were sold along with ten local bulletins. Most of the sales were to LP members. An example of the response Socialist Appeal has had in the party locally was when a party member hadn't got enough money to buy a copy of Socialist Appeal, the secretary of the district party insisted on buying him a copy. The reason, he said, was that months issue was so good as many people as possible should read it. That is exactly the kind of response the Labour leadership would get if, like Socialist Appeal, they put forward a real socialist programme.

Mike Lievens

For sales enquiries ring
071-354-3164

Left win as Italy's crisis deepens

Last year millions of workers took to the streets in Italy, demonstrating against the abolition of the sliding scale of wages ('scala mobile').

This year practically every state school in the country has either been occupied or gone into 'autogestione' (which means the students take over the running of the school). In Naples there has been a demonstration of 50,000 school students, in Rome one of 25,000 followed by another of 50,000, in Milan 30,000 demonstrated. The dilemma of the Italian bourgeoisie is that it urgently needs to attack the welfare state in order to try and reduce the national debt. Cutting public spending meant attacking the electoral base of the Christian Democrats (CD) which had built up a powerful corruption machine which guaranteed the votes. Due to its involvement in corruption on an unprecedented scale it has collapsed both North and South. The results of the latest municipal elections show that the CD are finished.

In the North the 'Lega Nord' (Northern League) has filled the gap left by the CD, while in the rest of the country, with the exception of Sicily, it is the MSI that is picking up their votes. Neither the MSI nor the League are parties

the bourgeois wanted, but their traditional party has collapsed and therefore they are forced to try and use what there is.

However, the League didn't do so well in the recent council elections. In Genoa and Venice the candidates of the alliance around the PDS defeated the League.

MSI Conference

However a number of individual capitalists (including Berlusconi) are showing interest in the MSI. The MSI is holding a conference in the new year where it is going to change its name to 'Alleanza Nazionale' (National Alliance) in an attempt to attract splinter groups from the CD and others so as to present itself no longer as the openly fascist party of the past but as a 'democratic' conservative party.

All these developments pose a problem for the bosses. If, as seems likely, a 'first past the post' electoral system is introduced, no party would have a clear majority. All this explains why the serious bourgeois are considering the possibility of a coalition government involving the PDS.

In spite of everything the PDS is the only major traditional party in Italy to have survived the corruption scandals. However the bourgeois are

divided on the question. Without the PDS it will be very difficult to govern the country, but at the same time the PDS is based on the working class. The revolutionary traditions of the Italian working class have not been forgotten by the bosses. Italian society is extremely polarised between left and right. It is a sign of what is to come: the classes are taking up position before the battle. What happened in the Rome and Naples council elections is significant. In Rome, the PDS was in an alliance with the Greens, the ex-radicals and the 'Alleanza per Roma' (a bourgeois formation made up of ex-CDs, Republicans etc.). In Naples on the other hand, although the programme was basically the same, the PDS was also in alliance with the Rifondazione Comunista (RC). Whereas bourgeois element supported the 'left' candidate in Rome (Rutelli from the Greens) they did not support the PDS candidate (Bassolino, a long standing leader of the left-wing of the old Communist Party) in Naples. In fact the PDS and RC both increased their vote by 3% in Naples as against no increase in Rome. These figures show that the PDS and the RC should be campaigning on a joint platform. Unfortunately the leaders of the PDS feel the enormous pressure of the

bosses and are prepared to join some form of coalition government after the coming general elections. On the other hand Rifondazione could face a split in the near future. At present it has about 35 MPs but the new electoral system would reduce this figure to about 10. The same is happening in the council elections. Where the RC was in an alliance together with the PDS it got a larger number of councillors than if it had stood alone. Therefore the leadership is looking to an alliance with the PDS, but not on the basis of a class programme.

Alliances

Rifondazione has the potential to play an important role, unfortunately its leaders are only worried about holding on to their parliamentary and council positions, and in order to do so they are prepared to accept alliances not only with the PDS (which would be correct if based on a genuine socialist programme) but also with bourgeois formations. This is not what a layer of the ranks of the old CP were looking for when they formed Rifondazione. The situation in Italy has many similarities to the period 1964-67 i.e. just before one of the biggest movements of the Italian working class. The workers, after over a decade of relative calm, are about to rise once more and will begin looking for an alternative to the capitalist system.

Fernando D'Alessandro.

State of Emergency

A 21-day state of emergency has been declared in the Caribbean country of St Kitts-Nevis after street demonstrations against the newly elected government ended in running battles between supporters of the Labor Party who are demanding new elections and armed police.

Private Companies Ignore Safety Fears

Sixty workers died when a fire swept through a factory in Fuzhou, China in late December. The deaths were part of a mounting toll of injuries and fatalities in China's "development zones" where foreign private firms are allowed to operate outside health and safety regulations. The People's Daily complained that "local leaders attach more importance to production than safety." In the private mines, 14 miners are killed for every million tons of coal. Last year the Shenzhen development zone reported a 60% increase in deaths from industrial accidents.

Post Strike

Over half a million Indian postal workers have walked out on strike. The 500,000 workers started an indefinite strike after negotiations over pay and conditions broke down. The strike has already had serious consequences for business and residential mail services.

Belgium has been rocked by its first general strike since 1936. Editor of the Belgian Marxist paper Vonk (Spark) Jean Lievens sent this account of the action and its aftermath.

General Strike Opens New Chapter in Class Struggle

What a sight! Everywhere workers were on their way to their workplaces - not to earn their daily bread but to put up the barricades. The general strike had begun!

On November 26th, the three Belgian trade union federations (ACV, the Catholic union, ABVV, the socialist union and the small liberal union ACLVB) called for a general strike against the new austerity measures or the so-called Global Plan of the catholic-socialist coalition government, led by Dehaene of the Christian democrat party, the CVP.

In every corner of the country, in the middle of a freezing, foggy night all the roads leading to the industrial areas had been barricaded by picket lines, kept warm by the

burning tyres and wood found outside the factories. Due to this kind of action the workers in the small factories (in Flanders alone 800,000 work in factories of 50 workers or less, where the unions are not very strong) could be involved in the strike too. It was an historic strike - not least because it was the first time since 1936 that the three unions blocs have been on strike together. The 1960-61 general strike was only supported by the socialist trade union and the general strike of 1983 only hit the public services. This time the whole country was brought to a standstill. Not one train or bus moved. Not only were the big shops closed, but also a lot of small shopkeepers, especially in the south, closed their businesses in solidarity with the strikers. Even special police brigades, who

have never before been on strike, joined the movement. It was also historic because never before has a strike been so solid here. It cut across all possible divisions among the workers - the catholics, socialists, liberals, Walloons, Flemish, immigrants all took part and showed an implacable attitude against all the possible manoeuvres of the trade union leadership, who first tried to divide the workers by using different tactics against the government's policy in an attempt to keep the movement apart.

Workers' Strength

It wasn't only the government and the media but the trade union leaders too, who were terrified of the enormous power of the working class demonstrated on November 26. Even the right wing papers understood the feeling on the streets: *"Even if the government give some concessions and even if the strike movement bleeds to death because of the lack of clear demands and the hesitations of the trade union leaders, the anger is here to stay, because it is so deep,"* commented the right wing catholic newspaper *De Standaard*.

Right from the beginning the trade union leadership were very modest in their demands towards the government. - far more modest than the membership. Whereas the overwhelming mood amongst the workers is to fight for the complete scrapping of the Global Plan, the trade union leadership want to "amend" the plan. In reality, they agree with the plan's main measures because they are following exactly the same logic as the government. Belgian capitalism is in a mess. This year the economy will see

the biggest drop in GNP since the Second World War - between 1.7 and 2%. The bourgeois economists are predicting zero growth next year. Unemployment broke all records this year and is still rising. One million people are in receipt of unemployment benefits, and next year another 70,000 jobs at least are expected to go. The public debt amounts to a staggering 10 billion francs (£200 billion), more than 130% of GNP. Despite all the cuts of the past 15 years, the government has still to borrow 4-500 billion francs each year in order to cover its expenditure. So every year, the interest payable on this ever growing debt becomes bigger (800 billion francs this year alone - or 50% of the total income of central government). Most of that money (about 85%) is borrowed from inside the country. Since Dehaene came to power, his government, despite the fact that the socialists have a majority in it and all the main CVP ministers have their roots in the catholic workers' movement, has introduced five different austerity plans in the past 20 months, with cuts totalling 427 billion francs. Every time, the trade union leaders picked on one of the smaller points with which they disagreed, threatened strike action, sometimes organised a big demonstration and then won a "victory". But each time, the main measures went through. The problem with the Global Plan, which involves 120 billion francs worth of new taxes and cuts (and a series of other measures concerning the deregulation of the labour market and grants for bosses to reduce their contributions to the social security system) is that it was presented as a "balanced plan"



The barricades burn during the general strike

which demanded "sacrifices from all layers of society". Of course, in reality, the workers were to pay for the bulk of the measures whereas the bosses receive billions in grants. So this time the workers said enough is enough. The more we pay, the worse the situation gets. There is a general feeling of anger, not only against the government, but also towards the union leaders. When the government wanted to start negotiations with the trade union leaders in the middle of October, the socialist trade union leaders said that the government's proposals were unacceptable and no basis for negotiations, so they called a demo for October 28. The catholic trade union leader Peirens was angry and said the action was "premature". In this way the so-called Common Front of the trade unions was broken. But the rank and file of the catholic unions were furious about their leaders "moderate" attitude and they forced them to restore the Common Front.

Red Flags

Meanwhile, the October demonstration in Brussels was a huge success. Although only the ACOD (socialist public services union) had called for a strike on that day and the demo was only called three days before, 70,000 people marched in an impressive, very red demonstration. This demo changed everything. Everyone was surprised at the size and the feeling arose "that perhaps we could stop the plans of the government". In the following days the Common Front was restored and the trade union

The Common Front was restored not because of the leaders but because they were forced to do it by the rank and file

leaders had agreed on a "plan of action", consisting of a provincial general strike every week leading to a national 24-hour general strike on December 10 - the day of a major European meeting in Brussels. Then the government moved quickly. Dehaene kept all the cabinet ministers (instead of the main ministers) and some well known lefts such as Dehousse (Socialist Party, SP) "hostage" until 4am in order to get agreement on the Global Plan. Once the plan was accepted, the socialist trade union leaders called off all the planned strikes and said that their "demo had paid off and there were some very positive aspects in the new plan." But the catholic trade union leaders said the plan was unacceptable and that they would continue and even sharpen the struggle. They announced that all the strikes planned for the following month were to be held on just two days - the 22nd and 24th of November.

This led to anger amongst the ABVV rank and file. The ABVV leaders had to admit "they were on a different level than the membership," that they "had made a mistake". To make up for it they agreed to "support the strikes of the catholic union" and furthermore "to organise a Red Friday" on November 26, meaning a national 24-hour general strike. Then the ACV leaders said they would support that strike too. The Common Front was restored, not because of the leaders but because they were forced to do it by the rank and file.

After the strike, which was a huge success, Dehaene said that he was "impressed" and he was prepared to start new negotiations, but that the plan had already been approved by parliament so the main lines of the plan had to be kept. The workers had not put up a struggle, in which they had already lost about 6000 francs apiece, just to change some dots and commas. The pressure remained and the ABVV-leaders called for a new demo on December 10th. ACV leader Peirens reacted furiously and said "that for the second time the ABVV have broken the Common Front by organising actions too soon" and that first off "we" had to hear what the government had to say and that anyway, a demonstration would not be enough and if the ACV wasn't

satisfied with what the government said they would call for "firmer action". On the demo on December 10 less people turned out (about 20,000). The demo was clearly seen as a step back and the shop stewards have had great difficulties explaining why the Common Front had broken down

workers government, which is piling up measure after measure against the interests of the workers and in favour of the bosses. The socialist parties are lagging more and more behind in the opinion polls, whereas the right wing new liberal party (VLD) are at their highest ever with 30% in Flanders and the



Trade unionists rally in Brussels during the November general strike

again. There are also divisions opening up in the ABVV. Some sections want "a general strike to the finish."

Meanwhile, the government made a few small concessions but not nearly enough to satisfy the workers' demands. The government has promised a crusade against "fiscal fraud" and called on the banks, who despite the recession are making huge profits, to recruit extra staff or face higher taxes. On the question of employment, Dehaene proposed new negotiations between the bosses and the unions on January 15. Until then, the Global Plan remains unchanged.

Temporary Lull

The union leaders and the bosses have supported the proposals hoping that the angry and combative mood amongst the workers will fade over the Xmas period. For the moment, it is likely that the manoeuvres to divide the movement and to win time will temporarily succeed. But that will not be the end of the story. The Dehaene government is one of the most hated governments ever. It is a so-called pro-

extreme right Vlaams Blok has stabilised around 10%. In the Walloons, the extreme right Front National threatens to break through in the next elections and the Greens may be able to take advantage of the PS's decline. The socialist leaders keep on saying that their measures are far less severe than those which a right wing coalition with the liberals would take. But it is exactly these policies which are preparing the ground for a vicious right wing government. The Marxists of Vonk and Unite Socialiste are calling for a break with the coalition government. The socialist parties should chose the side of the workers. Furthermore, the catholic trade union is more and more removed from the CVP and the LBC (public services) has broken with the CVP. This provides an historic chance for the socialists in Flanders to become the political leadership and expression of the catholic trade union movement, the biggest in the north. This depends on the socialist party putting forward a socialist alternative to the present policies which will only lead to disaster. ●

Europe is in revolt. From France to Italy to Belgium and beyond, workers have taken strike action, marched and demonstrated against cuts, redundancies and austerity. Alan Woods analyses the prospects for the European workers' movement.

Europe in Turmoil

The Air France strike, echoed by the strikes of airline workers in Austria, Portugal and Germany, the four-hour general strike in Italy, the mass demonstrations of workers and students in Spain where a general strike is now the order of the day, and above all the magnificent general strike of the Belgian proletariat, are all indications of a profound change in the mood of workers.

Throughout the world, the crisis of capitalism is having its effect on all classes and parties in society.

In Japan, the Liberal Democrats, after a period of 38 years of uninterrupted rule, were sent into opposition. In Canada, the Tory party in the recent elections fell from 43% of the vote and 170 seats in parliament to 16% and two MPs.

In the USA, Clinton's support for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) deal led to open confrontation with the trade unions who have threatened to stand candidates against all those Democrat politicians who supported the deal. It could not be excluded that the sharpening conflict between the unions and the Clinton administration might lead to the launching of some kind of Labour Party in the next period. These events and movements mark the beginnings of a profound change in the situation, reflecting the most serious crisis of world capitalism since 1945. With the exception of the USA and Britain, where there is a sluggish and fragile recovery, all the advanced capitalist countries are in a recession.

The main reason why the capitalists are finding it difficult to get out of recession is because they used measures to prolong the boom of 1982-90 which should normally only be used as a "counter-cyclic" measure. Thus, they cannot resort now to increased state expenditure or the expansion of credit to get out of the recession. In all countries, in addition to huge budget deficits, we have the piling up of both private and corporate debts. In the long term, the situation for world capitalism is hopeless. Of course that does not mean either that capitalism will collapse automatically, or that the boom-slump cycle has been abolished. There is no such thing as a "final crisis of capitalism." Unless and until it is overthrown by the working class, capitalism can always "find a way out."

Workers' protests sweep Europe

However, the truth is always concrete. In 1914 and 1939, capitalism found a way out through two devastating world wars. A war has the same effect as a slump, destroying the means of production and, ultimately creating new markets.

In any other period, the present tensions and antagonisms between Europe, Japan and America would have led to war. But, as we have explained previously, under modern conditions, world war between the major capitalist powers is ruled out. However, there will be many "small wars" - like the Gulf war or Yugoslavia - in the next period, which, with modern weapons of destruction will be a nightmare.

The wrangling over GATT was an indication of the insoluble contradictions of world capitalism. Since 1945, under the hegemony of US imperialism, the capitalists of the different countries reached an agreement to

liberalise world trade. This was the most important element in the unprecedented period of economic upswing from 1948-1973. Now all that has changed. Clinton's election slogan of "America First" summed up the new, belligerent stance of US imperialism. With a huge domestic economy, America only devotes 6% of GDP to world trade. Nevertheless, this makes it the world's biggest exporter. The crisis of US capitalism forces it to look increasingly to the world market to solve its problems. Thus the dollar was allowed to drop by one-third of its value. Heavy pressure was put on Japan to open its home market to US exports. Now Washington is engaged in a ferocious struggle with its European "allies" to increase its exports to the EU, especially in agriculture, where the USA is the world's leading exporter.

Pacific Growth

The programme of US imperialism is reflected in its target to increase its exports from 6% of GDP at present to 10% and then to 20% by the year 2000. This is a finished recipe for crises and conflicts on a world scale, because all the other capitalist powers are trying to do the same.

Even before the war, Trotsky predicted that the centre of gravity of world history would pass to the Pacific. A few weeks ago Clinton warned that if there was no agreement on GATT, the USA would, in effect, turn its back on Europe and face the Pacific where already the bulk of trade is conducted. Thus the crisis of 1990-93 has opened up an entirely new period on a world scale. The situation in Europe is especially explosive.

Europe's workers have taken to the streets to oppose job losses, new laws and wage cuts



There is the prospect of a sluggish economic recovery, probably in 1994 - but this will not alter the fundamental problems.

In the present period the general crisis of world capitalism expresses itself with redoubled force in the crisis of European capitalism. In the past few months, economic, social and political convulsions have swept Europe from one end to the other.

Unemployment is now a major problem right across Europe. According to official figures, which deliberately under-state the seriousness of the situation, at least 17

And he went on: "Modernisation is improving living standards for many...but often at much the same cost in disruption, misery and alienation that characterised our own experience in Europe a century and a half ago."

The immediate effect of the crisis is revealed in a wave of mobilisations and strikes in a number of countries. The general strike in Belgium was the first since 1936, affecting both Flanders and Wallonia, cutting across the old nationalist and language divisions. In Spain, the trade union leaders just lifted their little finger and one million workers

government's austerity budget. This was the 13th such strike in 13 years, revealing the anger of the workers at attacks on living standards.

In September, there was an occupation of the state-owned phosphorous plant, Crotone, in Calalvia against a plan to sack 300 of the 500-strong workforce. Protesters blocked the railway station and drums of chemicals were used to block the main north-south railway. The European commented: "The Crotone incident was an indication of a new spirit of spontaneous action which is sweeping through the labour movement and threatening to undermine the authority of the CGIL, CISL and UIL."

The crisis of the ruling class is reflected in the unprecedented splits in the Tory party in Britain. Only eighteen months after the election of this government, John Major is the most unpopular prime minister since records began. The Tories have lost control of the "shire" counties of England for the first time in over one hundred years. In Norway, the anti-European Union (EU) Centre Party also received a large protest vote in the recent elections.

The crisis of Swedish capitalism also indicates the final bankruptcy of the "Swedish Model", so beloved of reformists (including the "lefts").

Welfare State

Everywhere, the welfare state is in terminal crisis. All European governments, whether openly bourgeois or nominally "socialist" advocate a policy of deep cuts in public spending and a reduction of living standards. The rising unemployment and collapse of economic activity expresses itself in a steady increase in the public deficits of all countries. According to the Economist (27/11/93) "The average budget deficit for countries in the European Union has surged from 3% of GDP in 1989 to around 7% this year - the highest level since the Second World War...the ratio of public debt to GDP in EU countries has duly jumped from 43% of GDP in 1980 to 66% this year."

These conditions represent a sure background to social and political struggle. As the reality of the crisis of capitalism dawns on the workers, there will be violent reaction. Unlike in the previous period, where individual workers could try to find a solution to their problems by "working hard", albeit at the cost of their health and family life all such avenues are now closed. The only avenue open is that of struggle. All illusions will be shattered by experience. Gradually, the workers, and even parts of the petit-bourgeoisie, will begin to question the system.

If the leaders of the workers' organisations were Marxists instead of reformists, the socialist transformation of society would be a peaceful and relatively easy affair. But the incredible stupidity, blindness and cowardice of the leaders of the socialist and communist parties and the trade unions will prepare the most terrible convulsions.

We are entering into a period of revolution and counter-revolution. The Italian elections



Spanish workers fight new labour laws

million people, or 11% of the workforce are out of work in the EU. This is not normal cyclical unemployment, or even the "reserve army of unemployed" of which Marx wrote but is an organic unemployment, or to use the economists jargon, "structural unemployment" which will not fall substantially, even in the event of a sluggish boom.

The rising unemployment in Europe assumes dimensions not seen since the 1930s. It affects layers of the population who considered themselves immune. This will have profound consequences on the psychology of the whole of society.

The Economist (17/7/93) observed that, "many who toiled long and hard to climb a career ladder are, indeed, finding that the rungs are falling away under their feet." In the same journal, there is a most striking quote from the British Military historian, Professor Sir Michael Howard explaining why the New World Order was doomed to disorder, and why history had refused to end (despite claims to the contrary) he said: "Both fascism and communism emerged in Europe because liberal democracy failed to live up to its expectations. If it fails again we may expect new and similar challenges both in our continent and throughout the world."

demonstrated. 150,000 marched in Madrid and Barcelona alone. Now, under the pressure of the class, the union leaders have been compelled to call a 24-hour general strike in January.

Labour Laws

In Sweden, on December 15, 30,000 workers demonstrated in Stockholm against the attempt of the right wing government to carry out a brutal attack on the rights of workers and the unemployed under the guise of a reform of the labour laws. Incidentally, the same issue provoked the movement of the Spanish workers.

The all-European character of the movement was shown by the fact that, after the magnificent Air France strike, other strikes of airline workers followed in Austria, Germany and Portugal, where striking workers clashed with armed riot police at Lisbon airport. The action of the Portuguese airline workers followed a major strike wave in Portugal throughout the autumn period.

In Germany, the building workers staged a massive strike, and on their demonstrations appeared banners saying, "we should follow the example of the French."

In Italy, before the elections, there was a four-hour general strike in protest at the

indicate the beginnings of a polarisation to the left and the right, reflecting an intensification of the class conflicts in society. Revolution always begins at the top. The impasse of society is reflected in splits in the ruling class, and a ferment of the middle strata, which is seeking a way out of the crisis. If the labour leaders offered a revolutionary alternative, we would already be on the eve of a socialist revolution as an all-European basis.

The crisis of Italian capitalism has produced a political earthquake. The collapse of the Christian Democrats after more than 45 years of unbroken rule, led to the sweeping victory of the ex-Stalinist PDS in the local elections. The four coalition parties which polled 48.8% of the vote at the general election in April 1992 only received 13.7% in the November elections.

At the same time, the vote for the neo-fascist MSI in the south and centre of Italy serves as a warning to the labour movement.

However, it is a staggering contradiction that, precisely when capitalism is entering into a deep crisis, the "official" leaders of the working class go further to the right. Thus, even after the elections in Italy, PDS leader Occhetto rushed to "guarantee the budget's approval on the appointed date" The leaders of the PDS have, in effect, accepted the discredited programme of the Christian Democrats, including privatisation. They wish to form a coalition government of "moderate"

The existence of formal bourgeois "democracy" was, predicated on a long period of upswing which allowed the ruling class to maintain its domination on the basis of concessions to workers. That period is now over.

parties. This is a recipe for disaster, which will probably lead to an even bigger increase in support for the MSI.

The collapse of the Christian Democrats, the unprecedented crisis of the bourgeois state, together with the magnificent movement of the workers and youth, means that if the leaders of the PDS put forward a genuine socialist programme, the socialist transformation of society would be the order of the day. The sweeping victory of the left, mainly the PDS, in the recent elections, indicates the masses are looking for a radical alternative to the corrupt capitalist regime. However, as Trotsky pointed out, the crisis of

the workers movement is the crisis of leadership. Unless the workers take power there is a danger of reaction.

The existence of formal bourgeois "democracy" in the advanced capitalist countries has been taken for granted by most workers over the last period. It was, however, predicated on a long period of economic upswing, which enabled the ruling class to maintain its domination on the basis of concessions to the workers.

Now that period is over. It is unlikely to return. Instead, we will have a more "normal" period of capitalism, like the period between the wars. That is to say a period of revolution and counter-revolution.

After the experience of Hitler and Mussolini, it is unlikely that the bourgeois of any country would hand over power to a fascist madman. They prefer reaction in the form of a military police dictatorship, because they would have greater influence over the army generals. The fascist gangs would not be allowed to take power, but would be used as auxiliaries to terrorise the workers, as happened with *Patria y Libertad* in Chile.

However, bourgeois democracy is a very fragile plant. Under conditions of massive social crisis, the ruling class, especially in Italy, but also in Greece, Spain, Britain and Belgium, which are weak capitalist countries, would not hesitate to move in the direction of reaction, passing through the phase of parliamentary bonapartism to open military-police rule, if the workers failed to take power. While it is necessary to discuss these perspectives it would be entirely wrong to exaggerate the immediate danger. Le Pen in France may be a fascist, but the Front Nationale is not a fascist party, but an extreme right wing movement which demagogically exploits the question of immigration.

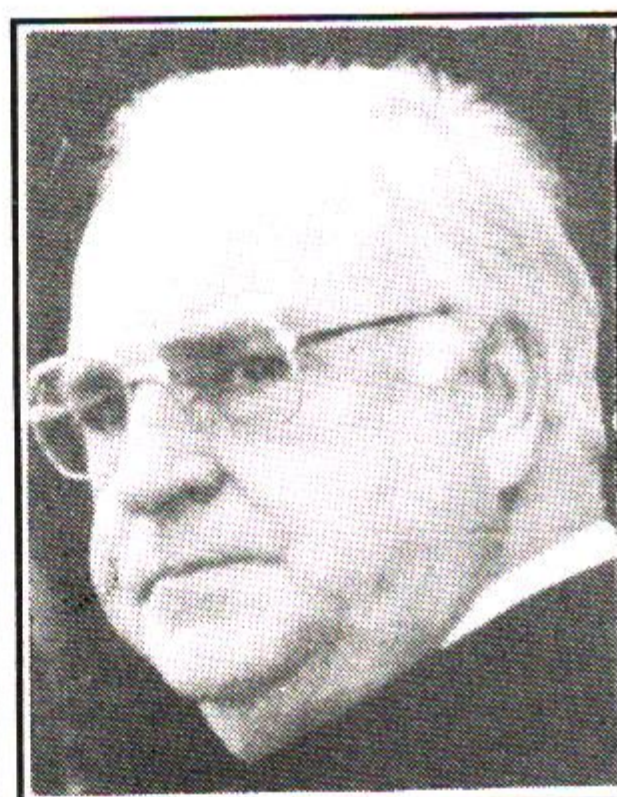
The fascist groups in Germany and Britain are virulent, but still very small. However, the advance of the MSI in Italy represents a more serious threat. After half a century, the memory of fascism has been somewhat diminished and given the extreme crisis of Italian capitalism, and above all the monstrous policies of the PDS leadership, it is probable that support for the MSI will grow. At a certain stage, if the Italian workers do not take power, it is not excluded that the ruling class could opt for reaction in the form of a military-police dictatorship. Such a scenario would inevitably provoke an intensification of the class struggle not seen since the 1930s. The workers would fight to defend their living standards and democratic rights. That is the real meaning of the present strike wave which is sweeping Europe. Long before the outright victory of reaction, the working class will have the opportunity to take power in one country after another. The victory of the working class in any key country would serve as an irresistible force of attraction for the whole of Europe. The collapse of the EMS shows the impossibility of European unity on a capitalist basis. Only the working class can establish a genuine unity of the peoples and the integration of the economies based upon a common and harmonious plan of production.

Kohl hit by defeat in east

Voters in the former east German state of Brandenburg turned decisively against Helmut Kohl and his Christian Democrats (CDU) in last month's election. The CDU, hit by high unemployment, corruption allegations and evidence that its leaders in eastern Germany are claiming higher salaries than they are entitled to slumped to less than 23% of the vote after winning 32% in the last local elections in the state and 40% in the general election.

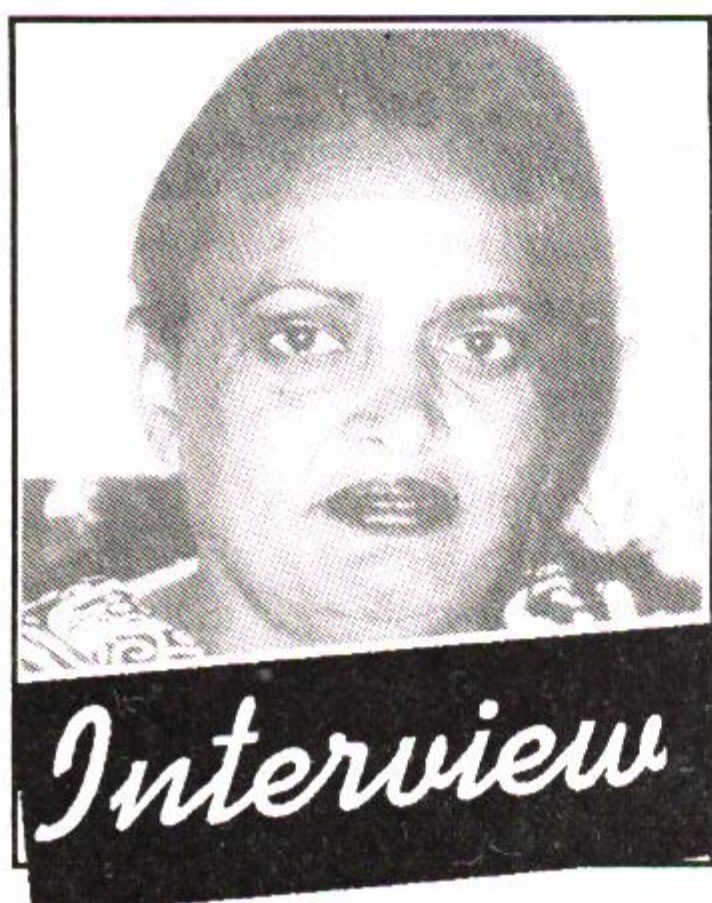
The Social Democratic Party (SPD) emerged as the largest party but its vote failed to increase as much as many party

workers hoped given the state of the CDU. However, the failure to offer a genuine alternative to the policies of the CDU was a major factor in its failure to capitalise on the crisis facing Kohl. The ex-Communist Party (PDS)



Chancellor Kohl

almost doubled its support since the 1990 general election as voters expressed their growing dissatisfaction and disillusion with industrial decline, rising unemployment and growing poverty. What is clear is that voters in the east and west are looking for a real alternative to the CDU and its policies. With the general election looming this year the SPD/PDS must capitalise on that desire and offer the prospect of a government based on a genuine socialist programme that can end the nightmare of unemployment and poverty.



Shahida Jabeen is National Secretary of the Pakistan Peoples Party Women's Section. She is also the publisher of the fortnightly Marxist Urdu paper 'The Struggle', and a PPP candidate for the National Assembly.

The Struggle

RS: You have had a bitter personal history in the struggle against the General Zia dictatorship in Pakistan?

SJ: Yes. Zia came to power on 5th July 1977. From the first days I fought against the regime and for the interests of the working masses. Since 1972, I had been very active politically in the PPP, where I became the party secretary in Lahore.

I was arrested for the first time following a mass opposition demonstration in early 1978. I was sentenced by a military court to 12 months imprisonment for "anti-state activities and slandering the government". Along with my five month old daughter Sonia, I was then incarcerated in the prison at Rawalpindi.

RS: What happened after that?

SJ: I was released after serving nine months of my sentence, and continued my activities against the dictatorship. It around then that I was elected as a city councillor in Lahore on a PPP ticket. During this period I was detained twice by the authorities.

In 1982, I was arrested by the army for "anti-government activities", and taken to the Fortress of Lahore, where I was beaten and tortured. My captives demanded I admit to crimes of terrorism, to which I replied it was the Zia dictatorship that was 'terrorist'.

As expected I was tried and found guilty by a military court and was kept in solitary confinement in the cells of the Fortress for 8 months. I was denied access to my family and children, as well as to lawyers. I went on hunger strike against the brutal regime in the prison. After

that I was transported to the goals at Kotlakhpat, where I remained until 1984.

RS: It was also at this time that your brother was imprisoned?

SJ: Yes. Usman was also held in the Fortress on charges of terrorism against the state. He was sentenced to death and hanged on 6th August 1984.

RS: How did you carry on after this?

SJ: There is no alternative but to fight. You cannot give up what you believe in. I adopted socialist ideas from the very beginning of my political life. They were born out of the experience of my life, out of the poverty and exploitation of capitalism. Only Socialism and the theories of Marxism can offer a way out of the barbarism of capitalism. Life is hard and so is the struggle, but it will be worthwhile in the end. So on my release I continued my political work. From 1985 to 1988 I was repeatedly rearrested and held for short periods by the regime.

RS: Given the traditions in Pakistan, it is very unusual for women to be involved in political struggle. Do you see your role as an inspiration to others?

SJ: It is through your work and ideas that you gain respect. I have therefore won much support in the trade unions and in the ranks of the PPP. In Pakistan women are exploited as workers and as women. There are huge difficulties in getting the involvement of women in the struggle due to social and religious prejudice. However it is vital women are drawn into the struggle to change society and better their lives. I hope my role will assist them in this.

It is essential that the new PPP government does not bend to the pressures of the capitalists and landlords, and behind them the IMF and world imperialism, but carries out the socialist principles of the PPP's founding documents. To this end, the 'Struggle' paper promotes these ideas as the only way out for the down-trodden masses of Pakistan and the world generally.

In finishing, I would like to send my warmest greetings on behalf of the PPP's Women's organisation and 'The Struggle' to the supporters and readers of 'Socialist Appeal' and our comrades in the British labour movement. Forward to the socialist future!

The interview was carried out by Rob Sewell on a recent trip to Pakistan

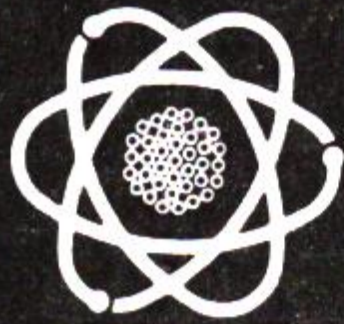
Next Issue: Child labour in Pakistan.

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On Human Development

Engels' pamphlet, *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*, written in 1876, but not published until 20 years later, contained many brilliant insights into the theory of human development.

Against a background of very scarce fossil or other evidence, his application of the method of dialectical materialism to the problem allowed him to provide a consistent and coherent explanation of human development well in advance of the majority of his scientific contemporaries, an explanation that remains to this day the main pivot of the Marxist view of human development.

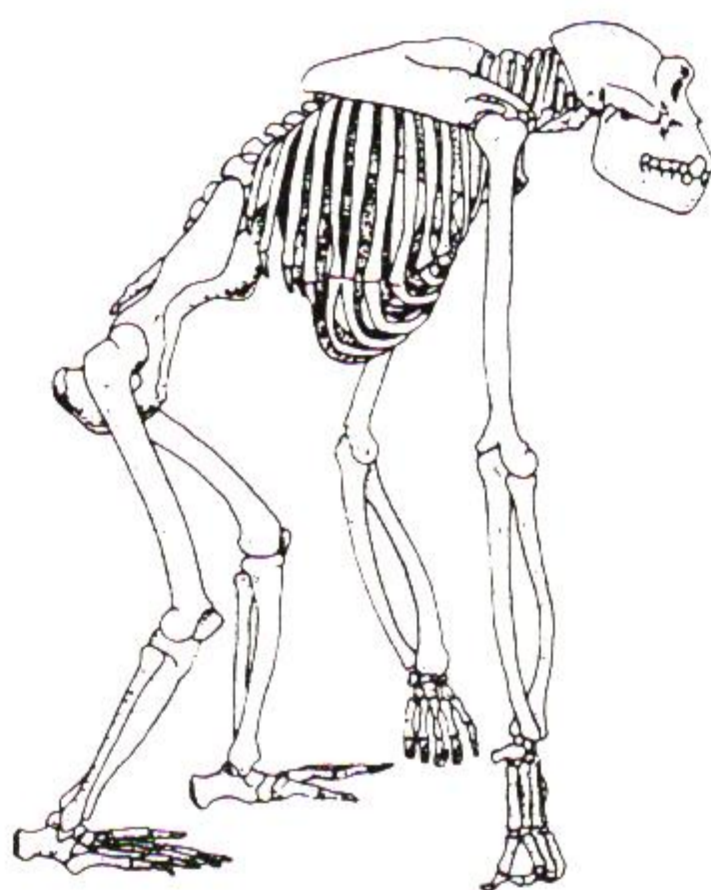
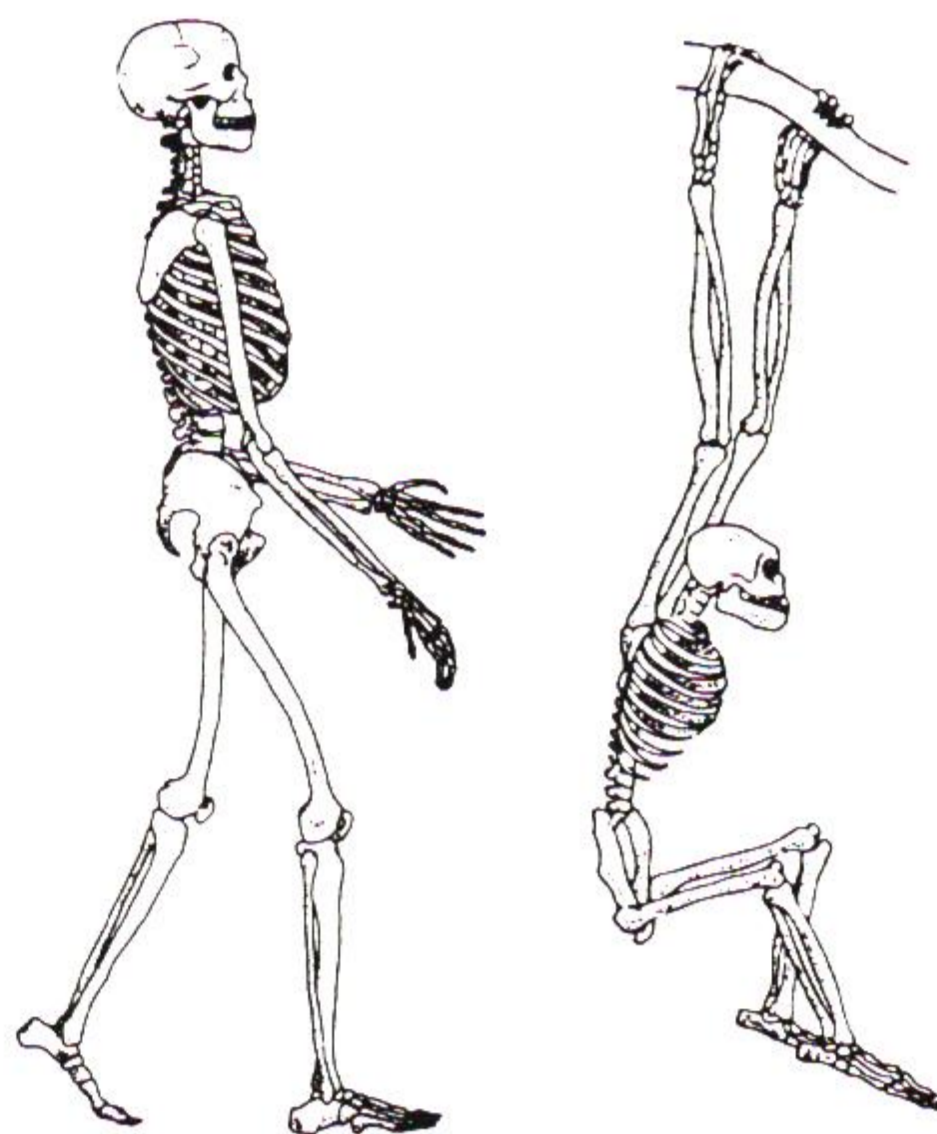
An examination of his work in the light of modern scientific evidence and theory would perhaps refute this or that secondary detail of Engels' work, but would show that in broad outlines his arguments were correct. The pamphlet remains, in other words, a masterpiece of the dialectical method. What specific issues and questions led Engels to writing such an essay?

Dialectical Materialism

Marx and Engels had both arrived at the same philosophical method - dialectical materialism - although by different paths. Their outlook was materialist in the sense that they considered that all natural phenomena and social development to be firmly based, in the final analysis, on material processes rather than spiritual or metaphysical (idealist) causes. At the same time, they considered that society and nature were in a constant process of dialectical change, that is, change through contradictions; everything was in a state of motion, of coming into being and passing away.

Both Marx and Engels applied their philosophical method particularly to social and political development, as historical materialism. Marx's greatest work, *Capital*, laid bare the general laws of motion of the capitalist system itself, but the two great founders of scientific socialism were at pains to explain that capitalism was only a single stage in social development. Just as the capitalist system came into being as a result of the social forces and contradictions within feudal society, so it would be overthrown by the contradictions it carried within itself to be replaced by a socialist society.

The emphasis placed by Marx and Engels on the transitory nature of capitalism inevitably led them to a consideration of pre-capitalist societies. They sought to demonstrate that the method of historical materialism, just as it had revealed the inner mechanism and laws of capitalism would also find application in earlier societies, revealing their own special laws of social development. Casting an even



In the first of two articles on human development, Socialist Appeal looks at the contribution to our understanding of the subject made by the Marx and Engels and assesses how their ideas have stood the test of time
by John Pickard

wider net, they also sought to use contemporary scientific studies to show the general validity and applicability of dialectical materialism as a universal world outlook. As Engels explained in *Dialectic of Nature*: "...it is precisely dialectics that constitutes the most important form of thinking for present day natural science, for it alone offers the analogue for, and thereby the method of, explaining the evolutionary processes occurring in nature, interconnections in general, and transitions from one field of investigation to another."

The notes of Marx and Engels on pre-capitalist societies were used by the latter in his work *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published 100 years ago. Engels' own notes and essays on the relationship between science and dialectical materialism were only published in 1924, nearly 30 years after his death, in *Dialectics of Nature*.

There was a natural bridge therefore linking Marx and Engels' ideas on political issues and Engels' interest in anthropology and the origins of humanity. Marx and Engels had hailed Darwin's theory of Natural Selection as a triumph for materialism because it provided a scientific foundation to human evolution from "lower" animals. After Darwin, the origin of the human species was firmly rooted in the natural sciences rather than in theology or metaphysics.

Social Animal

But while Darwin emphasised the material continuities between the animal kingdom and homo sapiens, Engels stressed the dissimilarities; arising as a result of material processes from the animal world, mankind was nevertheless unique, a social animal. Without ever leaving the high firm ground of materialism, Marx and Engels sought to explain how the quantitative evolutionary changes in apes had produced a qualitatively different species, a unique, thinking, social animal. Man, Engels explained, was the only animal that undertook labour - a conscious interaction with nature, purposefully altering nature to Man's advantage, but altering Man also in the same process.

The central purpose of Engels' essay on the part played by labour was to show that human labour and social organisation were not the product so much as the cause of the development of the human hand and brain, those features most generally used to characterise human likeness. Engels explained, "Labour is the primary basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created Man himself." Engels' view was presented in direct opposition to those contemporaries of his who saw human development through the spectacles of "civilisation", as a process motivated by ideas

and thoughts. Engels complained: "All merit for the swift advance of civilisation was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men become accustomed to explain their actions from their thoughts, instead of their needs...even the most materialistic natural scientists of the Darwinian school are still unable to form any clear idea of the origin of Man, because under this ideological influence they do not recognise the part that has been played therein by labour."

The idealistic notion of the origin of humanity found its expression in scientific circles in the generally held theory that mankind developed a large brain before the development of the hand and before bipedalism (erect walking). Hypnotised by the wonders of society, the scientists of Engels' day (and indeed very much later) pushed the more modest productions of the working hand into the background.

With scarcely any direct and concrete scientific evidence, but using the method of dialectical materialism, Engels was able to show that the common scientific theories of human development were incorrect. His pamphlet explained that in early man the upright posture and bipedalism had freed the hands for the manipulation and manufacture of tools. The making of tools and their use led to a further refinement and development of the hand, so that the hand was both the "organ" and the "product" of labour. The

conscious interaction of man with nature - altering both at the same time - was an active process in contradistinction to other animals' interaction with nature which is entirely passive. Man is the only animal which engages in labour. "Animals in the narrower sense also have tools, but only as limbs of their bodies...Man alone has succeeded in impressing his stamp on nature," wrote Engels.

But the use and manufacturing of tools, Engels explained, also increases the usefulness and purposefulness of joint activity, of social labour. Both tool production and social labour raised the question of language and speech. "First comes labour, after it and side by side with it, articulate speech - these were the two most essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of the ape gradually changed into that of man."

The further development of the brain, of course, would interact with labour processes and social intercourse to develop greater capacity for language, for reflection,

judgement and abstract thought. The accumulated effects of these interacting processes led to human evolution. "By the combined functioning of hands, organs of speech and brain, not only in each individual but also in society, human beings became capable of executing more complicated operations..."

The social accumulation of knowledge, skill and expertise would mean that these things could be passed on by speech from one generation to another: a cultural evolution is thereby set in train. A re-examination of Engels' ideas in the light of modern discoveries shows their complete validity. If Engels were alive today, he would no doubt immerse himself in the mass of accumulated details, facts and knowledge, and, after studying them in his normal meticulous fashion, he would rewrite *The Part Played By Labour...* with fundamentally the same view.

○ Part two next month

A re-examination of Engels' ideas in the light of modern discoveries shows their complete validity.

A Socialist Appeal to Workers

Socialist Appeal was launched in April 1992 to provide trade unionists, labour activists and youth with a Marxist analysis of events. Given the complexity of the political situation in Britain and internationally there has never been a greater need. The boast of the capitalists of a "new world order" after the collapse of Stalinism have turned to dust with the crisis in Russia, the bloody civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the continuing economic recession in Europe and Japan.

As the employers continue their offensive against wages and conditions, governments everywhere are attempting to push through austerity measures against the working class. In Europe these attacks have pushed workers into militant action. The ideas of class collaboration are more and more threadbare as the ills of capitalism re-emerge with a vengeance: mass unemployment, wage cuts, squalid working conditions, and so on. The task of Socialist Appeal is to arm the new generation of class-conscious workers and youth with a strategy and programme to put an end to this nightmare. Marxism provides a scientific understanding of the problems and issues that face the working class. Socialist Appeal believes it is essential for the labour movement to adopt a class approach and a socialist programme to transform the lives of ordinary working people.

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On the anniversary of the deaths of three great workers leaders Phil Mitchinson looks at their lives and legacy...

Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg

to stand for the ideas of Lenin and Marx have muddled not only the name of Lenin but also socialism itself. From his death in January 1924, Stalin portrayed Lenin as an icon to be venerated, as a symbol of his own infallibility, but what was Lenin's real role.

Trotsky explained that 90% of the work of the revolution was accomplished prior to the October insurrection of 1917. Trotsky himself played a very large part in this work, but much of it must be accredited to Lenin. This work began in the 1880s when, as a result of a growing strike movement, the Marxists began to succeed for the first time in linking up with the advanced workers. Discussion circles sprang up in all the major industrial centres.

Discussion Circles

Years later, Lenin's wife Krupskaya wrote of his work in these groups: "*Vladimir Ilyich was interested in the minutest detail describing the conditions and life of the workers - he tried to find what one could seize upon in order better to approach the worker with revolutionary propaganda... (he) read with the workers from Marx's 'Capital', and explained it to them. The second half of the studies was devoted to workers questions about their work and labour conditions. He showed them how their life was linked up with the entire structure of society, and told them in what manner the existing order could be transformed. The combination of theory with practice was the particular feature of Vladimir Ilyich's work in the circles.*" While several volumes could be devoted to Lenin's contributions to the theoretical arsenal of Marxism, he correctly interpreted Marxism as a guide to action. Trotsky once wrote of him "*Lenin...is contained entirely in revolutionary action. His scientific works are only a preparation for action.*" This uninspiring educational

work seems a million miles away from "action." In reality this work was preparing solid foundations for Russian Marxism. Despite the mocking of the anarchists and the terrorists, Trotsky was able to write years later "isn't it ironic that it was the party of dialectical materialism and not the party of the bomb who led the October revolution of 1917" On returning from three years of Siberian exile in 1900 Lenin turned his attention to the question of developing an All-Russian paper. Lenin had first approached this question in 1895, having discussed the it with Plekhanov's group in Switzerland, shortly before he and the other leaders of the St. Petersburg League were arrested. In prison he began writing his first major work "The Development of Capitalism in Russia."

The leadership now fell to the young, inexperienced members. They desperately sought a "short cut" to the masses through opportunism, abandoning theory. For Marxists however the central task is to first win the advanced workers and then through them the masses. There are no short cuts. It is a question above all as Lenin was to repeat many times of "patiently explaining", of raising the level of

understanding of the workers and to make them realise through their own experience of struggle the need for a complete transformation in society. This was to be one of the tasks of Lenin's Iskra.

This trend in the new leadership, "Economism", coincided with a more serious international phenomenon.

In Germany, Bernstein began to call the basic ideas of Marxism into question. He argued that Marxism was "outmoded", reform was the way forward not revolution. Reading his ideas today, it becomes clear just how unoriginal are the supposedly "modern" theories of the present Labour and trade union leaders. Of course these ideas did not fall from the skies, but reflected a long period of economic growth. However the seeds which flourished in the economic soil of the west withered in the harsher terrain prevailing in Russia.

Back in Germany, Karl Kautsky, foreshadowing his future betrayal, was at first reluctant to go into writing against Bernstein. A fierce counter attack was launched however by Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg, whose pamphlet Reform or Revolution remains a classic today. In the coming years Lenin was to have many disagreements with

Luxemburg, though later they were to agree in their estimation of Kautsky.

Lenin considered himself to be an "orthodox Kautskyite" until the SPD leader's betrayal of the international revolution in 1914. Luxemburg, however, was able to observe the German leaders at closer range and in action. Lenin was more often than not shown to be right in his differences with Luxemburg. However, Luxemburg's errors were rooted in a boundless faith in the working class, and an implacable hostility to the careerist-bureaucrats who claim to represent them. In 1919 when he wrote "*at the moment of...establishing the Soviet republic, Bolshevism was united; it drew to itself all that was best in the tendencies of socialist thought akin to it...*" Lenin undoubtedly had in mind not only Trotsky, who had remained formally outside the Bolsheviks until 1917, but also Rosa Luxemburg.

Iskra Launched

In spite of all the difficulties facing them, however, the movement was growing in Russia. In 1900 Iskra was launched. Lenin not only wrote for the paper but organised its production, its distribution, and raised the finance needed to get it off the ground. "Iskra", Lenin wrote, "*lay the foundation for the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.*" He saw the paper as the scaffolding surrounding the construction of the revolutionary party. It was more than simply a newspaper, it was a "collective educator, agitator and organiser." When he left Russia in 1900, Lenin was already in possession of a ready store of revolutionary experience and theoretical training. But now he began to come into conflict with Plekhanov. They disagreed over the draft party programme. Although agreeing theoretically with Lenin's polemic against the "legal Marxist" Struve, he appealed for the arguments to

Karl Liebknecht addresses workers during the 1918 revolution



be "toned down somewhat" in order not to frighten off the liberals. Plekhanov, it seems, was on the wane. Trotsky wrote in his *autobiography*, "His strength was being undermined by the very thing that was giving strength to Lenin - the approach of the revolution...He was Marxian propagandist and polemist-in-chief, but not a revolutionary politician of the proletariat. The nearer the shadow of the revolution crept the more evident it became that Plekhanov was losing ground." In 1902 Lenin arrived in London. His time was now increasingly taken up with organising the Second Congress of the RSDLP. It was here in 1903 that the famous split developed between the Bolsheviks (majority) and the Mensheviks (minority). As often occurs in history, the split developed over what appeared to be a secondary matter relating to the party rules. At this stage no obvious political differences were apparent, it was a difference of attitudes between, as Lenin put it, the "hards" and the "softs." However this clash foreshadowed the future split between Bolshevism and Menshevism, which only finally took place in 1912. At the congress Lenin won Plekhanov over temporarily. At the same time he lost Martov, the leader of the Mensheviks, permanently.

Bolsheviks

Trotsky, meanwhile, the future founder of the Red Army, initially found himself in the camp of the Mensheviks. But contrary to the Stalinist slander that Trotsky was a Menshevik from 1903 onward, he broke with Martov's group in September 1904, and thereafter remained formally outside both factions until 1917. He believed it was possible to unite both wings of the party. History finally showed this to be impossible. On many occasions later, Lenin himself tried to reunite the two factions. But it was Stalin, and not Trotsky, who was preparing an unprincipled unity in March 1917, before Lenin's return to Russia. By this time Trotsky had realised the impossibility of such a unity and from that time, Lenin commented, there was "no better Bolshevik than Trotsky." After the congress, Lenin tried everything to heal the rift, even

co-opting the old editorial board. This meant that when Plekhanov went over to the Mensheviks, they gained control of *Iskra*. Shortly afterward Lenin resigned from the editorial board. Most damaging to the Bolsheviks was the attitude of the German SPD. Even Rosa Luxemburg attacked Lenin. She repeated all the Menshevik distortions about Lenin's alleged "ultra-centralism." This was not accidental. Luxemburg had spent years struggling against the bureaucratic-reformist tendency in her own party. She argued not against Lenin, but against the caricature of Lenin's position presented by the Mensheviks.

As a reaction against the bureaucracy, which had become a gigantic break on the class struggle, she always laid heavy emphasis on the spontaneous movement of the working class, raising the idea of a revolutionary general strike almost to the level of a panacea, while not paying sufficient attention to the role of the subjective factor.

Luxemburg's misgivings were shared by Parvus, and also by Trotsky. In later years Trotsky explained his mistake. "In...politics I stood far more closely to the Bolsheviks. But...I had not yet learned to understand that in order to realise the revolutionary goal a firmly welded centralised party is indispensable."

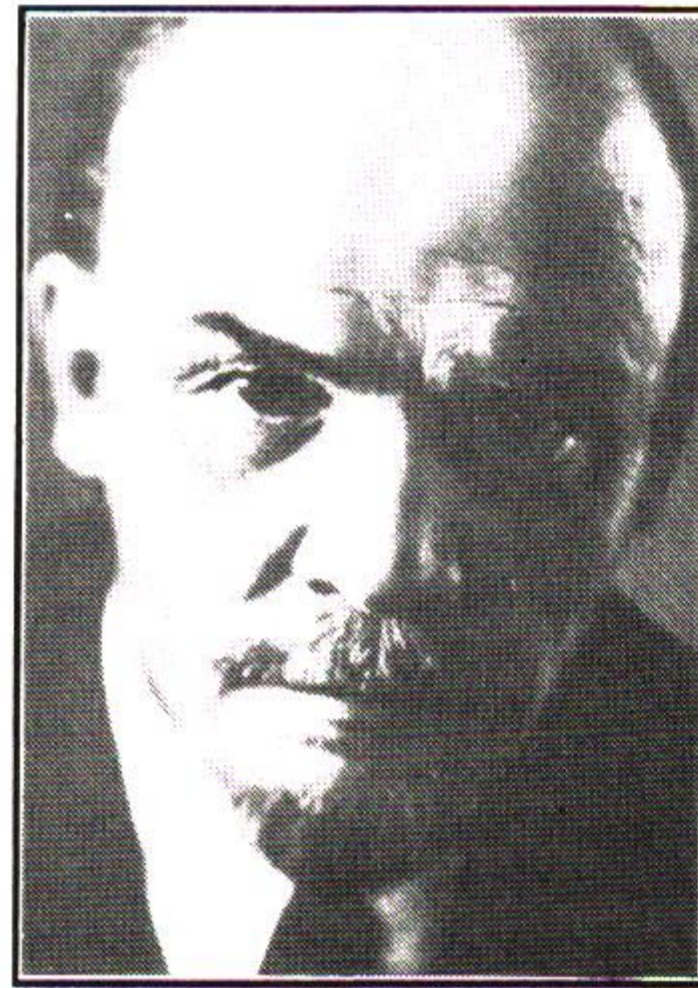
While a revolutionary party is not a discussion club, the distortion that the Bolshevik party was a monolithic structure where the leaders ordered and the ranks obeyed is monstrous. The Bolshevik party was the most

The Soviet to Lenin was a supreme example of the creative genius of ordinary working people

democratic party in history. During the revolution, even during the civil war, the internal regime especially the congress was an open arena for the clash of ideas. However, a party which seeks not only to talk but to act must reach decisions and carry them out.

In his biography of Stalin, Trotsky summarised Lenin's position: "Lenin understood better than anyone else the need for a centralised organisation: but he saw in it a lever for enhancing the activity of the advanced working men. The idea of making a fetish of the political machine was not only alien but repugnant to his nature."

The division between the



Lenin

Mensheviks and Bolsheviks clarified itself over the years as the division between reform and revolution. At the time Lenin tried to explain the differences involved in his book "One Step Forward Two Steps Back." A short time later events intervened in the shape of a revolution.

The revolution of 1905 was a dress rehearsal for 1917. It tested out all tendencies and parties. Lenin praised Trotsky's work but castigated him for not drawing all the necessary conclusions from his perspectives, i.e. joining the Bolsheviks. "In this" Trotsky later wrote "Lenin was right."

The Bolsheviks however made a number of mistakes which Lenin attempted to correct. In particular they feared the Soviet, which they saw as a rival rather than an important field of action. Lenin, like Trotsky, saw the Soviet as "the embryo of a

provisional revolutionary government." The Soviet to Lenin was a supreme example of the creative genius of ordinary working people. This is not the place to deal with Trotsky's permanent revolution, suffice it to say that on all the fundamental political questions of the 1905 revolution there was virtually full agreement between Lenin and Trotsky. On Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917 he outlined in the "April Thesis" an identical perspective to Trotsky. This is not evidence of any telepathy between the two, but the benefit of the Marxist method.

The period following the 1905 revolution was a long, dark night of reaction. In this period as in the heat of the revolution itself the political and organisational weapons the Bolsheviks needed to lead the workers to victory in 1917 were tempered.

One of Lenin's attributes as a revolutionary leader was that he knew not only how to advance, but also, when necessary, how to retreat, to entrench and defend your position. In 1909 he wrote "We learned at the time of revolution 'to talk French', i.e., to arouse the energy and the sweep of direct mass struggle. We must now at the time of stagnancy...learn 'to speak German', i.e., act slowly conquering inch by inch."

Economic Upturn

As Trotsky had predicted, it required an economic upturn to give the workers the necessary confidence to take to the road of struggle again. This emerged in the years 1910-12. Now the struggle for theoretical clarity began to bear fruit.

By 1912 the Bolsheviks had won over four-fifths of the organised working class. Only now did they carry through the split with the Mensheviks. Without the onset of the First World War, there could have been a successful revolution in this period.

However the war, forced many of the best workers to get to the front. It also marked the decisive stage in the degeneration of the leaders of the parties of the Second International.

When Lenin read the issue of *Vorwaerts*, the German SPD paper, supporting the German ruling class he believed it to be a forgery. When he discovered it was genuine he realised that on this question Rosa Luxemburg

had been correct. In the German Reichstag Karl Liebknecht (the son of SPD founder Wilhelm Liebknecht, and himself founder of the Socialist Youth International in 1907) alone of the SPD members voted against approving the war credits. Before 1914, Lenin, Trotsky, Liebknecht and Luxemburg, were conducting a struggle for the genuine revolutionary policy of Marxism inside the Second International. At the outbreak of war, this international capitulated to social-patriotism. In 1915 Lenin joked that you could fit all the Internationalists in the world in two stage coaches. Although the Communist International wasn't established until 1919, as a programme and a set of ideas it originates from this time. However the only one who really understood the role of the revolutionary party was Lenin. Only he had set out to create a firm and consistent Marxist party, carrying matters to the point of a split with the Mensheviks.

Revolutionary Faction

For a period of almost ten years, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks acted as two factions of one party - the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which from 1905 was the mass party of the Russian working class. Had Rosa Luxemburg acted in the same way, organising a revolutionary faction in the SPD prior to 1914, the Marxist tendency would have been in an incomparably stronger position during the first world war. Instead, the German Spartacists found themselves in a relatively weak position. Of course it is natural that the revolutionary wing should be a small minority at the beginning of the revolution, when the politically inexperienced masses burst onto the stage of history, and inevitably gravitate towards the traditional organisations and their leaders. Furthermore the difficulties of the German Marxists were increased by the fact that both Luxemburg and Liebknecht were in prison. But this only underlines the absolute necessity of a strong cadre organisation, which cannot be improvised, but must be prepared in advance, through years of patient work.

While Rosa Luxemburg clearly understood the importance of facing towards the mass organisations, the young and inexperienced party members had an impatient and ultra-left position which helped isolate them from the masses.

This was precisely the great advantage of Lenin's conception of the party. In order to take advantage of a revolutionary situation, the presence of the subjective factor - the revolutionary party and its leadership - is necessary. The very speed of events in a revolution rules out the possibility of the proletariat working out all the necessary lessons on the basis of trial and error. Every failure is paid for at a terrible cost, as the experience of the German revolution of 1919-23 clearly demonstrates. While Rosa Luxemburg clearly understood the importance of facing toward the mass organisations, the young and inexperienced members of the party had an impatient and ultra-left position which helped to isolate them from the mass of social democratic workers. In 1919 and 1920 a number of ultra-left tendencies emerged among the young leaders of the newly formed Communist parties. Lenin tried to correct these tendencies in his masterpiece on Marxist tactics *Left Wing Communism An Infantile Disorder*. It was useless to stand aside from the reformist workers in the name of revolutionary purity, he argued. The approach of Marxists as Marx himself had explained was to be "mild in manner and bold in content." It is necessary to struggle alongside the workers and not to fear "the pinpricks of the reformist leaders", above all to "patiently explain." Marxists, he argued should be flexible in their tactics while remaining firm in the defence of principles. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were undoubtedly giants. But when their murder by the Freikorps in January 1919, decapitated the revolution. This

illustrates the tremendous importance of the role of the individual in history. The will of the workers to change society, is not enough. They workers fought heroically in the period 1918-23. If Luxemburg and Liebknecht had not been killed, the German workers would undoubtedly have taken power in 1923. What course would the revolution have taken in 1917 without Lenin's return in April? On returning to Russia, Lenin was almost alone in defending the perspective of a socialist revolution, but he remained firm, preferring to be in a "minority of one like Liebknecht" as he put it though he still advised the Bolsheviks to "patiently explain" their ideas. It is doubtful that Trotsky could have won the Bolsheviks over as quickly as Lenin did. Without Lenin or Trotsky there would have been a military-police dictatorship in 1917. Trotsky wrote in the *History of the Russian Revolution* that Lenin "merely entered into a chain of objective historic forces. But he was a great link in that chain... The party could fulfil its mission only after understanding it. For that Lenin was needed. Until his arrival not one of the Bolshevik leaders dared to make a diagnosis of the revolution. The leadership of Kamenev and Stalin was tossed by the course of events to the right... Inner struggle in the Bolshevik party was absolutely unavoidable. Lenin's arrival merely hastened the process. His personal influence shortened the crisis. Is it possible, however, to say confidently that the party without him would have found its road? We would by no means make bold to say that. The factor of time is decisive here... Without Lenin the crisis, which the

opportunistic leadership was bound to produce, would have assumed an extraordinarily sharp and protracted character. The conditions of war and revolution, however, would not allow the party a long period for fulfilling its mission... a disoriented and split party might have let slip the revolutionary opportunity for many years. The role of personality arises before us here on a truly gigantic scale."

Equally it would be wrong to contrast Lenin with the objective circumstances, the masses and the party. Lenin was not an accidental element in the historic process, but a product of it. As Trotsky added "*From the extraordinary significance which Lenin's arrival received, it should only be inferred that leaders are not accidentally created, that they are gradually chosen out and trained up in the course of decades, that they cannot be capriciously replaced...*"

Stalin's Rise

Much more could be written about Lenin's role as leader of the world's first workers state. A whole chapter could be devoted to his Testament in which he had begun, with Trotsky, the struggle against the rise of the bureaucracy, and to remove its representative, Stalin from his position. How would this struggle have turned out had Lenin lived? The power of the bureaucracy might have developed more slowly, but as early as 1926, Krupskaya commented in a circle of Left Oppositionists "*If Volodya (Lenin) were alive he would probably already be in prison.*" Of course had not only Lenin but also Liebknecht and Luxemburg lived then everything could have been different. However the purpose of studying history is not simply wish-fulfilment, but to learn. As the Dutch philosopher Spinoza said "*Neither weep nor laugh but understand.*" Today the Russian workers are passing through a very harsh school, as are workers in all corners of the world. Through their own experience they will rediscover the ideas of Lenin and of Trotsky. Alongside their names on the banner of the workers movement should be added the names of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. ●

"Since May 12 we have been left to continue our struggle alone, but not alone, as the rank and file are still with us. They did not let us down." A. J. Cook (*The Nine Days*, May 1926).

The betrayal of the 1926 General Strike left the miners isolated and dealt the morale of the British workers a terrible blow. The TUC General Council attempted to subdue the workers' anger at the sell-out by claiming they had obtained reassurances. Jimmy Thomas, the railworkers' 'leader', asserted that the Government was bound by the Samuel Memorandum, while George Hicks stated that "the strike had been called off on this binding understanding".

A national circular to all branches of the Railway Clerks' Association, stated that "part of the understanding on which the General Strike was concluded (was) that there should be no victimisation on either side". It was signed "Yours in Victory". The telegram from C.T. Cramp to NUR members claimed not only had lock-out notices been withdrawn, but that "there are to be no wage cuts whatever for the miners"! This deception, which was used to confuse and disorientate the rank and file, was not long lasting. As the reports from Yorkshire strikers explained: "The spirit was magnificent, and consternation and dismay prevailed when the news came that the strike was called off had been confirmed...Alarm - fear - despair - a victorious army disarmed and handed over to its enemies."

Despite the deceit of the TUC General Council, the 'British Gazette' demolished all remaining illusions: "Unconditional Withdrawal of Notices by TUC. Men to Return Forthwith. Surrender Received by Premier in Downing Street." The appeals of Baldwin for the employers to show compassion in their time of victory ("Let us get the workers calm as soon as we can...") fell on deaf ears. The capitulation of the TUC signaled an all-out offensive by the big business against wages and conditions generally.

The employers used their position to victimise union activists. London newspaper owners banned chapel meetings, while their counterparts in Glasgow forced workers to renounce the union altogether. Union restrictions were imposed on the docks, but bus and tram workers were faced with wholesale dismissals, attacks on conditions and renunciation of the union. Despite Cramp's claim of "Complete reinstatement without penalties", the rail companies only agreed to take workers back when work became



A Bitter Legacy - The Aftermath of the General Strike

available. Thomas paid tribute to the bosses' magnanimity: "I say to every employer: Follow the example of the railway companies. Do the big thing." Five months later, Thomas told the Labour

Party Conference that 200,000 were working three days a week and 45,000 were still waiting for jobs.

The miners continued to fight on alone for a further six months. Their call for a coal embargo and a compulsory strike levy were rejected by the rail leaders and the General Council. A defeat for the miners would justify the moderate stand of the TUC. Through starvation and a split-away in the Midlands, led by the Notts miners' leader, Spencer, the miners were eventually forced back to work. The defeat of the strike meant the imposition of wage cuts, longer hours and the return to district agreements. For many, it marked the beginning of years of long-term unemployment in the coalfields. It produced a deep ingrained bitterness, even more profound than the miners' defeat of 1984-85, which would last for generations. The General Council's conclusion from the events of May 1926 were summed up by C. T. Cramp's immortal words: "NEVER AGAIN!" They had stumbled into the strike against their better judgement. The General Strike posed the question of power. The trade union leaders were terrified by the prospect lest it

should get out of control. For them, they had to put a stop to it as fast as possible, even if it meant sacrificing the miners. These 'leaders' had no other perspective than the continuance of capitalism, no alternative but capitulation. On the other hand, the 'lefts' on the General Council had no alternative either, and were forced to justify the actions of the right-wing. It was an inevitable outcome of reformism. For the past two years, the image of the General Council 'lefts' had been systematically cultivated by the Communist Party. This policy grew out of the new opportunist turn of the leadership of the Comintern, which had been hijacked by the Russian Stalinists. Whereas Trotsky fought for the return to Lenin's revolutionary programme, Stalin and his supporters adopted the theory of 'Socialism in One Country' and sought after short-cuts and compromises internationally. In China, the Stalinists, sacrificing the independence of the proletariat, promoted links with the national bourgeoisie, the Kuomintang, which led to the shipwreck of the Chinese revolution.

In Britain, the interests of the working class were sacrificed for deals with the trade union tops. In 1925, the Russian trade unions formed an alliance with the British TUC, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee. With the betrayal of the General

Strike, despite calls from the Left Opposition, the Stalinists refused to openly break with the General Council. In fact, when relations were broken, it was at the instigation of the British TUC, which accused the Russians of interfering in their internal affairs!

The betrayal of the Strike led to questioning amongst the trade union rank and file. The TUC, however, refused point blank to give an accounting of its actions. Finally, under intense pressure from affiliates, a conference was called for June. However, three days before it was due to open, the General Council announced that it had reached an agreement with the miners to postpone the conference till the lock-out was over. It was also agreed that mutual criticism between the Council and the Miners' Federation would cease. Cook himself undertook to suspend publication of his pamphlet *'The Nine Days'*, which was critical of the General Council. The TUC leaders had been let off the hook. This action of Cook clearly showed his lack of perspective. Although a sincere class fighter, and undoubtedly the most courageous leader on the left, he was deeply influenced by syndicalism. His failure to understand the real implications of the General Strike and the question of power that it posed, together with the abject capitulation of the TUC, led him to make a series of blunders. He was faced with enormous pressures and responsibilities that disorientated him. Eventually, these pressures broke his spirit and forced him to capitulate to the right-wing.

Coal Crisis Report

Although the miners stuck by their deal and refused to criticise the TUC, it didn't prevent John Bromley, General Council member, publishing extracts of stinging criticisms of the miners made by the TUC report. Despite this breach of confidence, it was none other than Bromley that was chosen to give the General Council's Coal Crisis Report to the September TUC Congress in Bournemouth. The uproar was such that the proceedings had to be held up for more than an hour. To avoid further disruption, the Chair ruled - in a blatant manoeuvre - that the Congress could not discuss the conduct of the General Strike - which must be left to a future conference of Union Executives. Although challenged - and could have been successful - it was headed off by the intervention of Cook who urged that there be no washing of dirty linen in public while the miners were on strike. The Baldwin Government learned a key lesson from the events of May 1926. They had correctly assessed the attitude of the TUC leaders - who were desperate to end the General Strike. The initiative was now in their hands. *"Weakness invites aggression"*. The Tories acted to press home their advantage by introducing draconian anti-union legislation, the Trades Dispute Act of 1927.

The Act consisted of eight clauses:

1) all sympathetic strikes were illegal, confining the right to strike solely to the trade or industry concerned.

2) all scabs would be protected under the

law.

3) the right to picket was curtailed.

4) political funds were attacked by substituting 'contracting in' for 'contracting out' for those who wanted to pay the political levy.

5) all civil servants were banned from joining or remaining in a union which had political objectives or was linked to other unions (ie. the Labour Party and TUC).

6) all local and public authorities had to abandon any employment closed shop. 7) the Attorney General could restrain a union from using its funds in an illegal strike.

8) it was an offence for any worker to refuse employment 'under a common understanding', when offered during an illegal strike.

The Act was accurately described as *"the most reactionary sample of British labour legislation placed on the statute book since the evil Combination Laws of 1799-1800."*

The Government representatives taunted the impotence of the labour leaders. They had a clear measure and contempt for them. *"Call all your meetings"*, jeered Birkenhead about their opposition to the anti-union legislation, *"blow all your trumpets, make all your speeches, unfurl all your red flags - and when you have done it all, the Bill is going through Parliament."*

Its immediate effect was to reduce Labour Party income by a quarter. They were determined to extract their pound of flesh. After all, concluded Birkenhead, there is no point in *"losing about £30,000,000 in this insensate struggle without coming away with some trophy."*

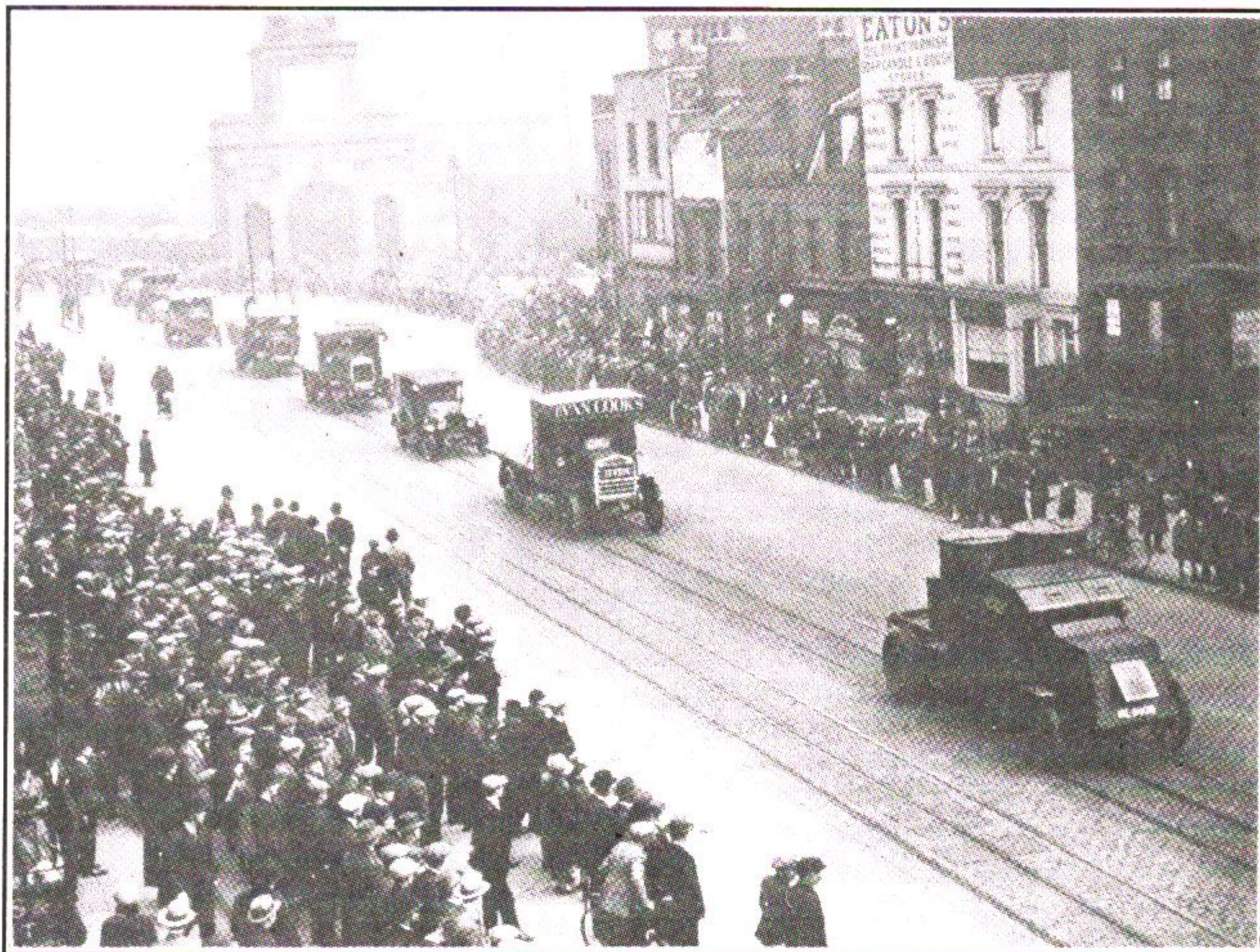
The 1926 defeat was a watershed for industrial struggle. The strike figures collapsed. In the four years before the General Strike between 400,000 and 600,000 workers were involved in strikes

The problem facing the British trade unions can be reduced, in the final analysis to a problem of leadership. A reformist leadership would inevitably fight within the confines of the system - only a revolutionary leadership, with correct tactics and strategy would be prepared to challenge the system

each year. In 1927 and 1928 the figures were little over 100,000.

Parallel to this was the fall in trade union membership and the decline of TUC affiliation by half a million between 1926-8. The figure fell below the 5 million mark for the first time since 1916.

The defeat had led to demoralisation and disillusionment with the trade union leadership, as little resistance was offered to the employers' offensive. Militant action was described cynically by the fabian Beatrice



A food convoy arrives in London during the general strike

Webb as "a proletarian distemper which had to run its course". She also added in her diaries that "the failure of the General Strike shows what a SANE people the British are." The long-awaited Conference of Trade Union Executives, which was finally held in January 1927, endorsed the General Council's conduct during the General Strike by 2.8 million votes to a little over one million. "I hope the time will come when," stated Walter Citrine, the TUC General Secretary, hoping to bury the issue, "instead of looking at whether the miners were right, we shall sit down and look at the thing objectively and see what are the defects. Until we do that, nether getting rid of your leaders nor delivering the head of Jimmy Thomas on a charger, will be of any avail... Could, in the circumstances, any other set of men have acted differently?"

Union Leadership

This last question went to the heart of the matter. The problem facing the British Trade Unions can be reduced, in the final analysis, to a problem of leadership. A reformist leadership would inevitably fight within the confines of the system, only a revolutionary leadership, with correct tactics and strategy, would be prepared to challenge the system. At the end of the day, this was Cook's fatal weakness. He simply believed the system would collapse in face of a miners' strike. The young Communist Party proved incapable of filling the vacuum that had opened up. Although they had a decisive position in the powerful National Minority Movement, they tail-ended the 'lefts' on the General Council.

A few days before the General Strike, J.T. Murphy, the CP's industrial organiser, declared in their press, "**Our party does not hold the leading positions in the trade**



A.J. Cook

unions. It can only advise and place its press and forces at the service of the workers - led by others... To entertain any exaggerated views as to the revolutionary possibilities of this crisis... is fantastic."

This view was backed up in Moscow by Karl Radek who stated, "But make no mistake, this is not a revolutionary movement. It is simply a wage dispute."

The Minority Movement went into decline after the defeat. The trade union leaders took measures against it, beginning at the 1926 Bournemouth TUC Congress which instructed Trades Councils not to affiliate. This was later followed by the fore-runner of the GMWU deciding to exclude Communists and Minority Movement members from holding office.

Their example was followed in various ways by the NUR, Transport Workers, USDAW, Natsopa, the Bakers, Painters, Boilermakers, Electrical Trades, and Boot and Shoe Operatives. Alongside this witch-hunt in the

unions was a change of policy by the CP. After burning their fingers with their opportunist policy in Britain and China, the Stalinists swung over to ultra-leftism and the adoption of the 'Third Period'. From now on, the Labour and trade union leaders were described as 'social fascists' who had to be denounced at every stage. They also adopted a policy of splitting the unions where they had any influence.

In Britain, due to their small size and influence they only manage to carry through this crazy policy in two unions: the United Mineworkers of Scotland (based in Fife) and the United Clothing Workers (based in the East End of London). The NMM was later abandoned and by 1935, the two independent unions were wound up. The trade union leaders now looked to class collaboration as a way forward. Initially raised by the 'left' George Hicks at the Edinburgh TUC, it resulted in an approach by the industrialist Sir Alfred Mond of the giant ICI conglomerate to discuss industrial co-operation.

Mond-Turner

In January 1928, the first meeting took place between a group of industrialists and the General Council. These Mond-Turner Talks, as they were known (Turner was the chair of the TUC), produced a suggestion for a National Industrial Council on which both employers and workers would be represented. Despite opposition from Cook, the proposal was accepted.

However, the scheme was abandoned in the turbulent events of the following years which saw the Wall Street Crash, the Great Depression, mass unemployment and the coming to power of the Second Labour Government.

Rob Sewell

Trotsky: The Unions in Britain



The trade unions were formed during the period of the growth and rise of capitalism. They had as their task the raising of the material and cultural level of the proletariat and the extension of its political rights. This work...gave them trade unions tremendous authority among the workers. The decay of British capitalism, under the conditions of the decline of world capitalism, undermined the basis for the reformist work of the trade unions. Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or

become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of workers. The trade union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path. It turned all the accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction. From that point on, the most important task of the revolutionary party became the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade union bureaucracy.

(From the Unions in Britain, Leon Trotsky, September 1933)

GCHQ: The Fight Goes On

Continued from back page...

success, in spite of the belated call for action, and the lack of preparation and a prior campaign.

The civil service was brought to a standstill, and a million workers in the public and private sector took part in the biggest anti-government strike since 1972.

Marxists in the civil service unions demanded that the union leaders call for an all-out civil service strike to prepare the ground for a one-day general strike to force a general election. Such a campaign was entirely possible, and would undoubtedly have forced the Tories to retreat. But the TUC leaders instead allowed the momentum to run down, putting all their faith in legal action and a publicity campaign designed to force a public debate with the Tories! The Tories breathed a sigh of relief and went on to attack the miners, and the year-long miners' strike began a few weeks later. Again, the TUC and Labour leaders distanced themselves from workers in struggle, joining with the Tories in their smear campaign against Arthur Scargill and the NUM, and stepping up the witch-hunt against Marxists in the Labour Party.

Judicial Review

The unions applied for Judicial Review of the case, which produced the famous Glidewell Judgement (that the ban was "invalid and of no effect.") The government went to the Appeal Court which ruled that the ban was not subject to Judicial Review because of "national security", and that ministers alone could be the judge of what was in the interests of national security. The unions appealed to the House of Lords, but the five Law Lords ruled for the government.

The International Congress of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Public Services International (PSI) both condemned the ban. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), a branch of the United Nations ruled that the government was in breach of ILO Convention 87 (on Freedom of Association and Protection of

the Right to Organise), which had been ratified by the UK government. The TUC and civil service union leaders continued to pursue the case with the European Commission on Human Rights, but to no avail. The ban remained in force, and the Tories were unshaken. The union leaders, in the grip of "new realism", adopted a policy of "wait for a labour government". But the prolonged economic boom and the failure of the Labour leaders to present an alternative to the Tories paved the way for a third consecutive election defeat in 1987. This spelled disaster for the few remaining trade unionists at GCHQ.

After the 1984 betrayal, most GCHQ workers had given up their trade union membership for fear of being victimised. By use of threats of sackings, the imposition of wage cuts, and bans on promotion, the government had whittled down the remaining numbers of union members to 14 by the end of 1988. The first of these was sacked on November 18 and five months later the final one was dismissed.

Again, civil servants and other workers took strike action in solidarity with the sacked workers, and again the TUC refused to organise effective action, hiding instead behind the Tories anti-union laws. At every stage, the TUC leaders played directly into the hands of the Tories, refusing to call on the power of the trade union movement. The Tories have taken confidence from this, introducing a series of anti-union laws which have further weakened the unions ability to organise effective legal industrial action.



The Tories know far better than the TUC leaders the power of the labour movement. That is why they attacked union rights at GCHQ. Their anti-union laws have been designed, not to strengthen the rights of individual members but to neuter the unions and leave the field clear for attacks on jobs, pay and conditions which are so crucial in their attempts to protect and increase the profits of their friends in industry.

Leadership's Role

The TUC and Labour leaders believe the unions are impotent, that they cannot defend their members or offer an alternative to the capitalist crisis. Right wing union leaders fear the Tory anti-union laws because the sequestration of union funds threaten their fat salaries and expenses cheques. The Tories' current threats to check-off arrangements, new laws on compulsory re-

registration of union members, and the scrapping of the Bridlington Agreement have been carefully planned to exploit this weakness by hitting unions in the pocket, tying them up in continuous recruitment exercises, and provoking membership wars. These attacks are a direct consequence of the leadership's failure over the past ten years. Workers have again and again shown their willingness to fight, but, tragically, the commitment of their own leaders has not matched this. The Tories attack the unions because they fear us, because they know they are weak and we are strong. Confidence in that strength is the key to defeating the Tories, like the confidence of a quarter of a million civil servants who joined November's strike against market testing and privatisation. In the eyes of the TUC and Labour leaders, the annual rally in Cheltenham has become a memorial service for the GCHQ unions and the sacked workers. It should, for socialists and trade unionists serve also as reminder of the need for an accountable, fighting leadership of the workers' organisations. Only by transforming the unions can we successfully defeat the Tories, sweep aside their anti-union laws and restore union rights at GCHQ. The tenth anniversary of the union ban is a fitting time to step up this struggle.

GCHQ Trade Unions

10 Years and the Fight Goes On

March and Rally

Saturday January 29th, 1994

*Assemble: 12.30 Pitville Pump Room,
Cheltenham*

The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor



'Rid me of this turbulent priest...'

The criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism'. So ruminated Karl Marx, reflecting on how the first critiques of Christianity led to the beginnings of communist thought.

The role of the Church in medieval society was one of the greatest scams in history. They effectively operated as the 'state machine' in feudal society. They provided a civil service for the monarchy; they organised the meagre education and welfare services; and most importantly they kept rigid control of the only communications network - the pulpit.

With such a grip on society, they could advance the ideological case that whatever happened was God's will. You rummaged around in the mud while the rich got richer and the rulers ruled - that was God's will.

The only theoretical work available that could challenge this convenient philosophy was the Bible. Hey presto, it was 'God's will' that the Bible could only be produced in Latin, which in turn could only be understood by a select few of the priesthood. Therefore only they could translate passages from the Bible for the masses from the pulpit, and 'interpret' its relevance to the burning issues of the day.

Also, much the wealth procured by the Church went to Rome, as the church was merely the local branch on the international Papal organisation.

This was a legacy from the days of the Roman Empire. Christianity was brought to Britain by the conquering Romans. As an ideology it had little competition as the height of intellect of the Ancient Britons was to run around in your howsyerfather from Solstice to Beltane, daubed in blue woad. Besides, anyone who could bring central heating to this rain sodden isle must have known what they were talking about.

By the way, beside leaving Christianity, the Romans also abandoned their Legions, the mainstay of which were 30,000 Nubian troops. When the old order collapsed, these black Africans gravitated to the established Roman communities, mainly Londinium and Colchester. So many Cockneys and Essex men have black ancestors. Now there's one for the Isle of Dogs to ponder!

But I digress. The first to raise theoretical criticisms of the church's stifling ideology was John Wycliffe. A priest and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, his ponderings on the meaning of life led him to difficult conclusions - and into hot water.

He argued that it was the Bible that mediated between God and man, and not the priesthood (this is called *anti-sacerdotalism*). At the same time, he introduced the concept of 'Predestination'; that is, God decides before you're born whether you are among the Damned or the Elect, so it

doesn't matter whether you are a pauper, a knight, a Bishop or the Pope himself - there was no such thing as 'divine authority'.

As can be imagined, this didn't go down too well. However, having rid himself of these mental shackles, Wycliffe was really kicking.

In 1374 in his work *De Civili Domini* ('Civil Lordship') he argued that the damned amongst the priesthood and the wealthy could be spotted from, as historian Edmund King puts it, "... the exercise of lordship, and from what it involved; patronage, and concern with promotion; litigation and the exercise of Church penalties, such as ex-communication for non-payment of tithes; the *simony*... (using your wealth or office to buy or sell positions of power, influence and privilege)". Well, if these are sins then most of today's bourgeoisie are for a roasting on the Eternal Spit. And some trade union leaders too.

The "exercise of lordship" was wrong, Wycliffe argued, because:

"Firstly, that all good things of God ought to be in common. Every man ought to be in a state of grace... This will not happen until they hold all things in common; therefore all things ought to be in common."

This was revolutionary stuff - man only 'sinned' because the things he needed for everyday life were in the ownership of a privileged elite.

Although only a lowly university teacher, his ideas rocked medieval society. They were the theoretical grist to the mill for the likes of John Ball and the leaders of the Peasants Revolt. They also gained an echo amongst sections of the ruling class; some - like the new, rising merchant class - because it gave an ideological justification for their personal ambition which challenged the 'divine authority' concept, and others with nationalist aspirations as it confronted the influence of Rome.

Hence Wycliffe lived a charmed life and was protected by his friends in high places from the wrath of the Church. It is significant he was not driven from office until 1382 - a year after the failure of the Peasants Revolt - and even then, his 'heresy' was not his communistic ideas, but instead he was charged with denying 'transubstantiation' (the 'real presence of Christ in the Mass'), a high brow argument that was lost on the masses.

Even so, Wycliffe escaped the stake and died peacefully in his bed in 1384. But his ideas did not die with him, nor in the 'counter revolution' that followed the Peasants Revolt. His ideas spurred on a new movement that swept the country...

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1994
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- Pakistan

GCHQ

We Fight On!

On 29 January, thousands of trade unionists will take part in the tenth annual TUC march and rally in Cheltenham to commemorate the ban on trade unions at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in 1984 and demand the restoration of full trade union rights.

When the Tories removed trade union rights from 7000 civil servants a million workers took part in solidarity strike action against the ban, but the TUC missed the opportunity to

capitalise - hoping instead to win on the basis of legal action and public sympathy. As a result, 14 GCHQ workers were sacked for refusing to give up their union rights, and the ban is still in force today.

What are the lessons of this dispute for trade unionists and socialists?

On January 24 1984, the government announced that membership of trade unions was to be outlawed at GCHQ. The Tories argued that membership of a trade union presented workers with a "potential conflict of loyalty" and was therefore a threat to "national security."

Civil servants at GCHQ were offered the choice of resigning from their trade unions and accepting a £1000 "compensation" payment (officially because they had lost the right of access to an industrial tribunal), giving up their jobs or facing the sack.

Workers were to be denied all trade union rights, and would be allowed only to join a management-controlled staff association. At the same time as Margaret Thatcher was championing Lech Walesa and Solidarnosc in Poland, workers in Britain were denied the right to belong to a free, independent trade union.

Civil servants all around the country responded to the announcement of the ban with spontaneous walkouts over the next few days, and demanded that their union leaders organise immediate strike action on a

national scale.. But this courage and solidarity was not shared by the union leaders, who called a "day of action" for February 28, which was to stop short of industrial action. And as late as February 20, Alastair Graham, then CPSA General Secretary and one of the architects of "new realism", was telling CPSA members in

by Jon Rubidge, CPSA Branch Secretary DE West Glamorgan and Dyfed (personal capacity)

union circulars that "we are not making this a one-day or a half-day strike", and "this dispute will be won by the force of public opinion rather than by industrial force." The government believed GCHQ workers would be an easy target. They had been carefully vetted to ensure their loyalty to the state, and were predictably outraged at the suggestion that their trade union membership in any way conflicted with this. But they were unable to organise all-out action in their own defence without giving credence to the Tories' argument that industrial action presented a threat to "national security".

The Tories used the example of civil service strikes in 1979 and 1981 in which GCHQ workers had taken a limited part, to support the ban. But Sir John Nott, then Defence Secretary, had said on 14 April, 1981 that, "this dispute has not in any way affected operational capability." The unions at GCHQ had provided advance warning of industrial

action to allow for the provision of cover without preventing their members from demonstrating their opposition to the Tories' scrapping of their national pay system in that year. It was clear

then, that industrial action was not the only issue.

This did not prevent the TUC and right-wing civil service union leaders from bending over backwards to demonstrate their loyalty to the state, offering the government a no-strike agreement; giving up the right of access to industrial tribunals; a ban on national union officials entering GCHQ; and the removal of GCHQ from national bargaining agreements. The Tories sneered and refused to budge. As Marxists commented at the time, "Having offered the Tories, not just an olive branch but the whole tree, Thatcher responded with a chainsaw!"

The union ban was condemned not just by the labour movement. The Times, Financial Times, The Economist, and other Tory papers, as well as backbench Tory MPs and the Liberal Party all spoke out against the ban - no doubt fearing that the giants of the trade union movement would be provoked into action.

The trade union leaders preferred unity with these friends of the bosses to a campaign of industrial action. It was not until it became clear that rank and file union activists were successfully organising to turn the "day of action" into a one-day strike that they issued a belated call for a (half-day) strike just a few days before it was due to take place.

The one-day strike was an enormous

