

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

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THE GENERAL ELECTION -

*why Labour lost
and the lessons for
the movement.*

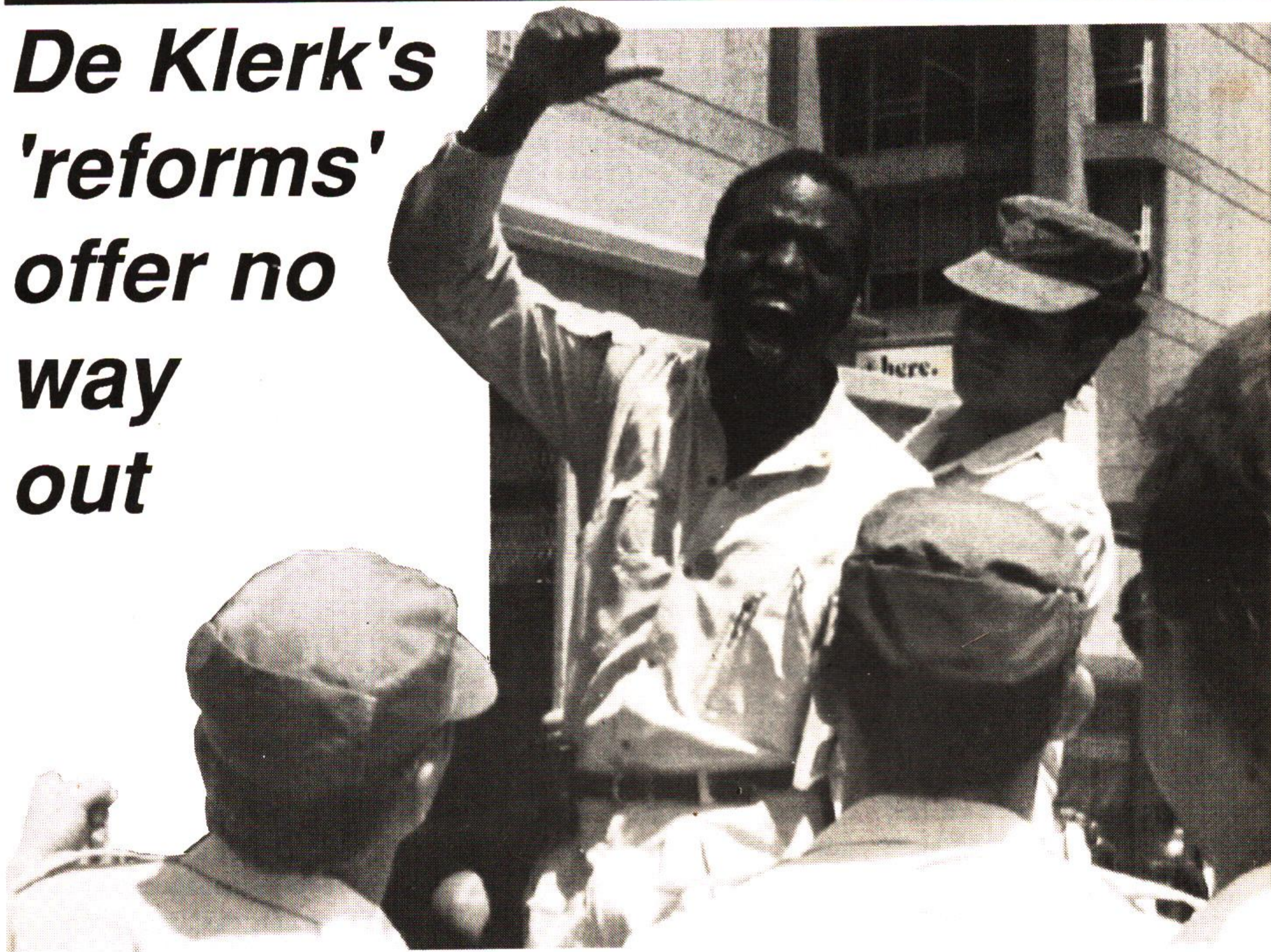
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The Marxist voice of the labour movement
ISSUE No. 2

MAY 1992

SOUTH AFRICA

***De Klerk's
'reforms'
offer no
way
out***



PLUS

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EDITORIAL

As the shock waves of Labour's fourth consecutive election defeat die away, the rank and file are struggling to understand why it has happened and looking for the way forward.

Like the "Emperor who had no clothes", Neil Kinnock and the entire right wing leadership stood exposed on the night of April 9th. They promised victory, if only Labour would accept "reasonable" and "moderate" policies. So "reasonable" and so "moderate" that in the end, they were virtually indistinguishable from those of the Tories and Liberals.

Now we see the result. For years, the Labour right have slavishly followed the dictate of the Tory press. They ditched socialist policies, expelled socialists and offered no real opposition even in parliamentary terms. Despite the longest recession since the war and the prospect of three million unemployed, they managed to lose an election, which even the Tories despaired of winning. By their policy of class collaboration, they snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. Now, incredibly, these same people have drawn the conclusion that Labour has not got far enough to the right! The press pundits have been quick to egg on the Labour front bench, prodding them with "friendly advice" to take a few a few more steps toward the abyss.

According to these ladies and gentlemen, Labour should break its links with the unions, explicitly renounce Clause 4, and adopt electoral reform and form a Lib-Lab pact or, better still, turn into a new version of the Liberal Party. The editorial of the *Economist* suggests that Labour takes as its model the policies of Gladstone! Thus the spokesmen of the ruling class wish to push Labour back a hundred years, to the "good old days" before the trade unions broke with the Liberal Party to form an independent party of the working class.

With "friends" like that, who needs enemies. Yesterday, they said that Neil Kinnock's right wing policies made Labour "electable". Now they argue unless Labour climbs into bed with the Liberals, it will be "unelectable" forever!

After Kinnock's resignation, Labour's right wing - the architects of defeat - have fallen over themselves to accept the poisoned chalice of the media. They have disgracefully rigged the leadership election, fixing an arbitrary ceiling of 55 votes in the Parliamentary Labour Party for candidature to the leadership. This manoeuvre is directed against the left. The Campaign Group of left M.P.'s, has little or no chance of getting 55 M.P.'s to sign the nomination of Ken Livingstone.

So it would appear, as things stand, that Labour is stuck with two right wing candidates - John Smith and Bryan Gould. There is precious little to choose between them. Both served as loyal lieutenants of Neil Kinnock. Both applauded his abandonment of socialist policies and persecution of the left. Both have attacked Labour's vital links with the trade union movement. Both have fudged the issues of PR and electoral pacts with the Liberal Democrats. Gould poses as a moderniser and a radical. He has attacked Smith as the monetarist candidate, as opposed to the "keynesian" Gould, who advocates devaluation as a solution. It is no such thing. At best devaluation would give the economy a very temporary edge over the competitors, while causing, almost overnight, a reduction in real wages for British workers, through inflation. Inflation (Gould) and deflation (Smith) are head and tail of the same capitalist coin. For working people it is the choice between death by hanging or slow asphyxiation.

We must fight to remove the undemocratic "55 votes" ruling, which would allow the right wing to turn the election into a farce. The very same people who pose as democrats and called for "one person - one vote", in the past, have introduced this rule to prevent a real democratic challenge to the leadership. What they want is a self-perpetuating right wing leadership, remote from the membership and the unions and answerable only to itself.

Socialist Appeal say NO to the "Divine Right of M.P.'s". Fight for a democratic Labour Party and a genuine socialist programme - the only way to beat the Tories!

MINERS VOTE FOR ACTION

Yorkshire miners are set to take strike action to halt British Coal's plans to use contract labour to develop new coal faces at Markham Main Colliery in Armthorpe, South Yorkshire.

Miner's leaders have said they will take strike action if British Coal refuses to compromise or hold further talks with union officials. The vote for strike action came despite warnings from British Coal managers that any strike would be "suicide" and would result in job losses.

MIDLANDS BUS BALLOT

West Midlands bus drivers have voted for strike action after rejecting a £5-a-week pay offer. Local TGWU officials said the offer would only add about 2% to the average driver's pay whereas company directors, in the employee-owned firm, received 40% taking their salary to more than £90,000 a year.

One driver told Socialist Appeal: "The mood in the garages is very serious. People realise this would be a drastic step but when you are faced with managers who give themselves whacking pay rises and then offer us 2% what else can you do?" We have already rejected the offer by three to one and now we have to force management to come back and talk to us. If they won't we will have to take action.

NEWSDESK
021-455-9112

Workers Fight For Health and Safety

Across the US, Canada and Europe labour movement organisations marked Workers International Memorial Day by highlighting the dangers to workers of cost-cutting measures by employers and governments. In Britain the number of fatal accidents at work rose between 1981 and 1988 by 96% in the manufacturing sector and by 65% in the construction sector. In addition 1,500,000 people are injured at work every year. We are supposed to have laws which prevent employers from forcing us to work in dangerous conditions. But 13 years of Tory cuts have allowed the bosses to get away with murder - literally!

The number of Health and Safety factory inspectors has been cut by 23%. An employer can expect to face an inspection on average only once every 12 years. In reality this means many flout the minimum safety standards set down in law. They would rather save money by cutting corners on safety and pay a paltry fine if they were unlucky enough to actually meet an inspector. Recent fines, such as the measly £50,000 penalty against Floyd Construction after three young workers died as a result of a build-up of fumes in a drain, have only encouraged more employers to break the law. Due to the Tory's anti-trade union legislation many workers are afraid to complain about unsafe working conditions for fear of being sacked. Now the unions must make it a priority to "remember the dead, fight for the living" - the slogan of International Workers Memorial Day.

STOP PRESS

A new Left bookclub has been launched by supporters of Socialist Appeal. All your books can now be ordered through Well Red Books. See page 31 for full details.

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BEATING THE ELECTION BLUES IN BIRMINGHAM



The Midlands saw the biggest swing to Labour. Twelve of the target marginals were won, while John Wilton, standing on a left platform and pledging to only take the average wage of a skilled worker, halved Dame Jill Knight's majority in a seat which previously was not even a marginal. The reason for the upsurge of Labour support was clear. The Midlands has been badly devastated by the recession. The depth of the recession can be illustrated by Coventry-based

Jaguar. When Ford took the company over in 1989 they planned to increase production to 150,000 vehicles a year. Last year they only sold 46 cars in the whole UK!

To beat the post-election blues, Socialist Appeal supporters from the Midlands held a meeting and social where Ted Grant spoke on the election results. Supporters from Coventry, the Black Country and Leicester also attended and the meeting raised over £150 for the Press Fund.

NO SOCIALISM - NO VICTORY!

To the surprise of the pollsters and the dismay of many Labour supporters the Tories are back in power. **Ted Grant** analyses what went wrong for Labour and looks at the economic prospects for the Tories.

The victory of the Tories in the fourth general election in a row has shocked the labour movement. Labour won over 40 seats, increasing its share of the vote- but not enough to win.

1992 ELECTION RESULT

Conservative - 14,231,884
Labour - 11,619,306
Lib-Democrat - 6,083,661
SNP - 629,552
Plaid Cymru - 154,410.

The percentage of the vote for the Conservative Party, 41.85%, hardly changed from the 1987 election. The total vote was a record for the British elections exceeding that of Labour in 1951 (although Labour scored 48.8% of the vote at that time), which stood as the highest poll at a time of polarisation of the classes. In most elections a high poll benefits Labour. In this election it benefitted the Conservatives!

Polarisation

Labour received 34.16% of the vote, a massive improvement on 1987 when they received about 30.8% of the vote. The Liberals received 17.88%, compared to 1987 when the "Alliance" came close to the total of Labour. The increase in Labour's poll was largely a consequence of relative polarisation in society with the Liberals squeezed as a consequence. The Tories however have had their seats reduced from nearly 400 to 336. Labour increased their repre-

sentation to 271. The Liberal Democrats lost 2 seats ending up with 20. The Social Democratic remnant was wiped out. David Owen did not even stand and the other two Social Democrats lost their seats to Labour.

The idea of an immediate breakthrough by the SNP was shown to be false. They received 629,000 votes, but lost 2 seats ending up with 3 seats, 1 less than the number won by Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalists. However they increased their vote by 5.5%. The Ulster Unionists and the Irish Nationalist Social Democratic Party (of course fundamentally opposed to each other) won 17 seats together. This gave the Tories an over-all majority of 21 seats.

How to Explain

In the last issue of Socialist Appeal we put forward a Labour victory as the most likely result, either as the result of a hung parliament or even with a small majority. This seemed to us to be the most likely outcome given the economic background to the election. Of course it is not possible to predict with absolute certainty the result of an election but that does not relieve us of the responsibility of attempting to point out the general processes and draw likely conclusions. In that event mistakes will be made which must be explained and corrected in the light of experience.

How is it that with massive un-employment of nearly 3 million, with massive bankruptcies of small businessmen and small shopkeepers and the longest recession or small slump since the Second World War, with manufacturing



Neil Kinnock - The glossy presentation failed to deliver a victory.

output falling by 5% in 1991, that the Tories won? Especially as the formerly prosperous South East and London were hit harder than the rest of the country? Why then was there this massive vote for the Conservatives by millions of middle class people and millions of workers as well?

Growth

Social processes like these can only be understood by taking into account the history of the last 40 years and especially of the last 10 years. The economic upswing of the last 40 years with minor blips of recession, and even the serious slump or depression of 1979-1981, have been regarded by the middle class and even the bulk of the work-

ing class, as unfortunate interruptions in a never ending upward curve of living standards and growth.

The Independent of April 17th said: **“The average household in this country has two thirds more disposable income than it had 20 years ago and this income has grown more than a third in the last decade”.**

Even allowing for the lumping together of rich and poor households through “averaging” it nevertheless shows the process that has taken place. And yet despite this process the poorest strata of the population, 10% of which is unemployed and on social security or income support (which has been cut by about 10% in the last 10 years) have got poorer. The mass of the population has benefitted in material terms.

Poll

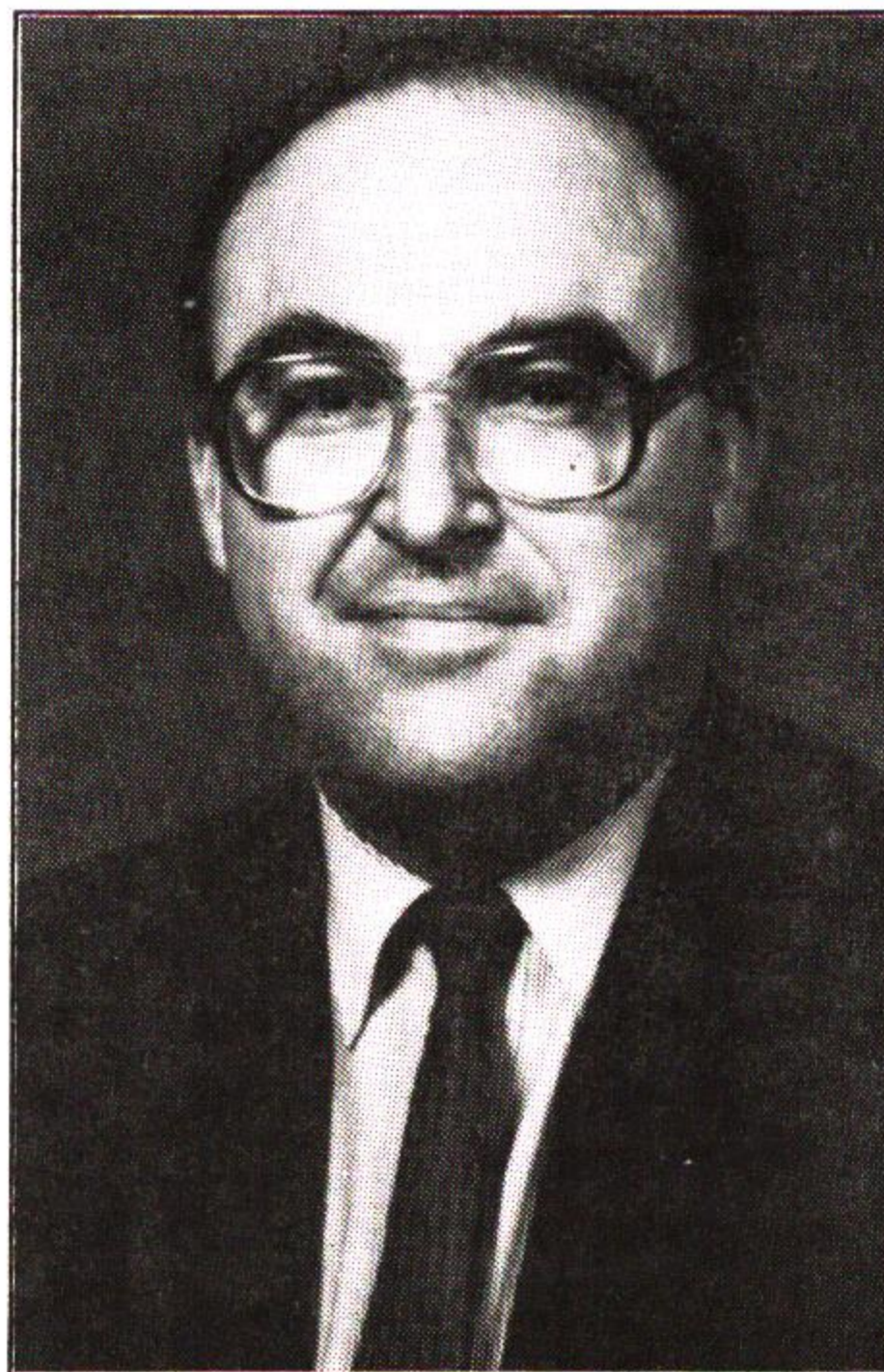
A recent poll by the General Municipal and Boilermakers Union (GMBU) showed that over two thirds of all trade unionists in Britain “owned” (mortgaged) their own home and one-third owned two or more cars. The majority possess T.V.’s and washing machines, 90% have video machines, vacuum cleaners, telephones and other durable goods. The choice of foods has increased enormously. Very many have had holidays abroad, or at the sea-side in Britain. All this has entered into the consciousness of the working class and of the population as a whole. They remember the “boom” of 1982-1990 and cannot reconcile themselves to the prospect that these “good old days” are not just around the corner again.

On the television there was an interview with a small building employer in Manchester who had gone bankrupt during the current recession, which has hit the construction sector particularly hard. He said the Conservatives had got the country into the recession now they must get the country out of the recession. He voted Conservative! In the marginal commuter constituency of Basildon there was a similar interview with a married couple on the way

to the polling booth intending to vote Labour, they discussed the position and decided to vote Conservative! They blamed the “mistakes” of the Conservatives for the recession but hoped the Tories would get the country out of the recession and back to the boom of 1982-1990 which they regarded as good and prosperous years.

Thus the upswing and the boom of 1982-1990 affected the consciousness of wide layers of the working class. The illusions in capitalism and the market, worked into the consciousness of the middle class, professional people, lawyers, architects and others. They believe the recession is a temporary upset. Despite inflation, there has been an increase in living standards for the majority of the population. Thatcher and the Tory Government remonstrated with the employers for increasing wages by about 7% per annum. But they got the benefit of this increase.

The employers in their turn bought relatively peaceful relations with their workforces. They relied on what Marx called relative surplus value. They obtained the same output with 2 million less workers. Speed-ups and almost un-endurable stress placed on the



John Smith - Blamed by many for Labour's defeat

workers meant that largely without extra machinery they increased the output of the workers. Thus in reality this meant increased exploitation. In a survey 44% of the workers in Sheffield were under treatment for stress related to their work. The same conditions apply in the rest of the country. But the mass do not see these conditions as a payment for higher living standards. It has not entered into their consciousness. But the “boom” of 1982-1990 is the basic factor behind the election victory of the Tories.

Campaign

However the election campaign by Labour was also an important factor in the defeat. They presented themselves as a more moderate Tory Party. They adopted a policy of “me-too’ism” on the market. They hardly mentioned the dirty word Nationalisation. They could have explained that Gas, Electricity, Telecommunications and Water were sold at a quarter or a fifth of their real value to the monopolies. They then raised prices steeply. Labour should have gone on the offensive about the obscene profits being raked in by British Telecom or the poor standards of the water industry since privatisation. But they never raised class issues or socialism at all during the campaign. They relied on the media and the T.V. to present a superficial case. Labour can only make an impact by street meetings, public meetings and mass canvassing explaining the case for socialism. Mass canvassing door to door could engender the necessary enthusiasm for the victory of Labour if the socialist case was put. This is the way to counter the press barrage of poison. Even if Labour had failed to win this election due to the social factors explained earlier, such a campaign, explaining the inability of the Tories and capitalism to solve the problems of the workers could have laid the basis for a massive victory in the future.

With the current right wing policy

ELECTION

workers cannot differentiate between the policies of Labour and the Tories. Consequently workers and the middle class plumped for safety and security - Better the devil you know!

However a malaise hangs over the capitalist system at the present time. Britain in particular is in difficulties. Government borrowing in March is up £6.4 billion. The Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR) was almost £14 billion for 1991-1992. This

abandon even the few reforms they were promising. Big business would refuse to invest otherwise. The *Financial Times* published an article in the week of the election pointing out that if the Tories won they too would have to abandon their promises.

The Cambridge Economic Policy Group predicts a further fall of 0.2% in gross domestic product (G.D.P.) in 1992. 1993 will see, according to their estimates, a rise of only 1.2%. There is

exceed £30 billion this year and much higher next year.

In the boom, Britain, in comparison with her rivals, operated on the basis of "sound finance". The budget was in surplus. This was because of the £100 billion oil revenue which has been frittered away. In addition, there has been, in MacMillans words, the "selling of the family silver." The denationalisation of the utilities, which though sold for less than their real value nevertheless ensured billions of pounds flowed in to the government's coffers. Apart from the railways there is not much of worth left for the Tories to sell off.

Consequently, like the United States, but without her resources, British capitalism will be faced in the coming years with massive balance of payments deficits and also massive deficits in the budget. In addition it will be very difficult to increase productivity further at the expense of the workers and sinews of the working class.



If Labour had tapped in to the poll tax battle it could have inspired millions of voters

year the P.S.B.R may be as high as £34 billion according to stockbrokers Philips and Drew.

Manufacturing investment only recovered to its pre-1979 level in 1988-1989. But in the recession it has again dropped below its 1979 level. In the 1960's British productivity grew at a yearly rate of 2.9%, in the 1970's it grew by 1.2%, and in the 1980's at 1.7%. Japan grew in the same period by 8.9%, 2.8% and 2.9%, an average of around 5%.

Imports

In the recession the balance of payments deficit was £8 billion. When the economy recovers it will suck in imports as during the Lawson boom and Britain's trade deficit will get even worse.

With this economic background all the Tory's election promises will come to nothing. Just a couple of days before the election the C.B.I, in anticipation of a Labour victory, issued threats to the Labour leaders that they would have to

no space to develop the theme of the organic crisis of British capitalism in this article. But the Cambridge economists correctly say that the British economy is "limping, characterised by too little investment and a weak manufacturing sector".

Fixed investment is forecast to fall a further 6.4% next year. This will further weaken British capitalism in the world market where her main competitors are increasing their investments in industry. The balance of payments deficit will increase this year to £8.9 billion and a further depreciation next year to £10 billion is forecast. The capitalists are boxed in by the slow decay of British capitalism.

The C.E.P.G. says faster growth would produce "an un-stoppable balance of payments deficit". Unemployment will rise, even according to doctored figures, above 3 million this year and 3.25 million in 1993. The Tory government will have further difficulties with the budget deficit which may

Strikes

Without massive investment in industry Britain will fall further behind her rivals. Competition on the world market is getting increasingly fierce. The employers in industry, and services too, will not be able to concede rises in wages at the level they did during the boom.

Consequently, in coming years, the class struggle will hot up, with strikes and demonstrations as workers try to maintain their living standards. As a result of the changed world and British economic environment workers will be forced to struggle and during the course of their battles the illusions of the middle class and large layers of the working class in a bright future under capitalism will be dissipated. The workers struggles will be reflected in the ranks of the Labour Party and the trade unions. In this atmosphere the ideas of Marxism can make great gains.

LABOUR'S FUTURE....LABOUR'S FUTURE....LABOUR'S FUTURE....LABOUR'S

ELECTION PACTS - NO WAY!

"Never again must the radical and anti-conservative vote be divided."

This argument, put forward by Bernard Crick in the *Guardian*, is also being raised by sections of the Labour Party. They argue that some form of electoral pact or tactical voting agreement is needed to defeat the Tories.

Crick and others pose this as a "new" idea made necessary by social and economic changes that have "eroded" the working class. Yet in the 1930s the same call was made by the Communist Party under the banner of the "Popular Front" - an alliance of anti-capitalist parties.

At that time popular fronts in Spain and France initially achieved electoral victo-



Robin Cook - One of those supporting proportional representation.

ries only to subsequently lead to utter confusion when workers aspirations were thwarted. In Spain the outcome of the class collaborationist policies was bloody defeat in the civil war.

In Britain, a voting agreement with the Liberal-Democrats would drag Labour back to the time before its formation. The fiercest opposition to the founding of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 came from Lib-Lab trade union leaders

who argued creating a Labour Party would split the vote.

Now the call for electoral pacts is surfacing again. Why? Apparently some now believe that Labour cannot win another election. Yet no one argued this before April 9th. Indeed the Stock Exchange tumbled by more than 10% in a few days at the prospect of a Labour government. Crick, Robin Cook and Paddy Ashdown are demanding Labour abandon its birthright as the independent expression of the working class because 4 or 5 voters in every 100 changed their minds in the last few days of the election. Yet even this marginal shift was not "inevitable" or "irreversible".

Decline

The most significant feature of the election was the decline of the Liberal Democrats. Ashdown's vociferous labelling of Labour as a "dinosaur" and demanding electoral pacts were an attempt to hide his own weakness.

Not for the first time, reports of the death of the Labour Party have been greatly exaggerated. During 1981-82, 29 Labour MPs split away forming the SDP. By December 1981, the new Alliance, heavily backed by the media reached 50% in one Gallup poll, with Labour apparently finished on 23%. The 1983 election was a disaster for Labour, when it secured only a few hundred thousand more votes than the Alliance. Today, support for the Liberal Democrats has fallen to pre-Alliance levels. Their overall share of the vote, 17.7%, is below their 1974 level. Once again they are a party based largely in the south and south-west of England and in rural areas. In these areas they secured 40% of their votes. In the rest of the country they averaged only 14%. Yet had Labour accepted the argument of tactical voting or single anti-Tory candidates, it would now be the Liberal Democrats rather than Labour challenging the Tories in hundreds of seats including a number of seats where Labour was third in 1983, but won in 1987

or 1992.

An electoral pact with the Liberals would be a one way agreement. Clearly if Labour withdrew, a large minority of Labour voters would probably grudgingly vote Lib-



Paddy Ashdown - Pacts to save his own party.

eral rather than give the Tories a clear run. But no such likelihood exists the other way round. According to a *Guardian* survey on 14 April, 37% of Liberal-Democrat voters indicated the Tories were their second choice, while only 35% indicated Labour.

Tactical Voting

This was borne out on April 9 when thousands of Liberal-Democrat supporters drifted to the Tories. Ashdown is trying to use tactical voting to save his own party. Cook and others who echo his position inside the Labour Party must be resoundingly rejected.

The so called C2s (skilled workers) have not been won back to Labour by "clever presentation." Nor will they return Labour on the basis of tactical voting. They will be won, as will sections of the middle class, by a clear socialist programme capable of inspiring and pointing a way out of the pressures of unemployment and debt.

COAL: THE BURNING QUESTION

Behind the economic arguments about the future of coal lies a far more fundamental political question for workers. *Phil Mitchinson* charts the Tories attacks on the industry and the NUM.

AS World War I began, 53 pits in the Rhondda Valley employed over 41,000 people. Coal became the first commodity in Britain produced in millions of tonnes.

It fuelled the industrial revolution, powering steam engines, producing steel and generating electricity. Even the capitalists understood then that real wealth was created by manufacturing industry, and that the service sector could only exist if it had a manufacturing base to service.

Decline

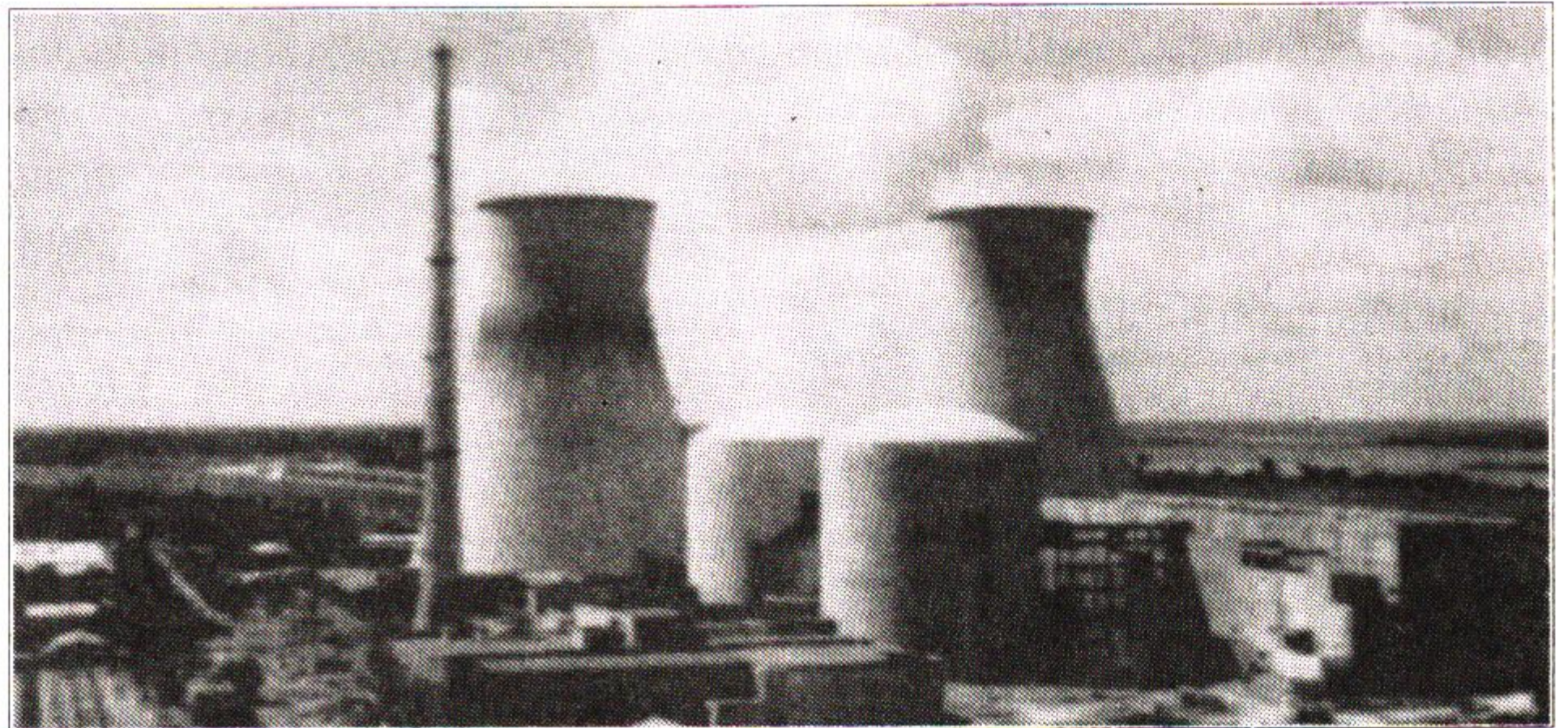
Today there are no pits in the Rhondda, only three in Wales, and just 50 in the United Kingdom, employing just 45,000 workers. British industry has been in steady decline for decades. Since 1979, Thatcher and now Major, have presided over a further decimation of British industry. In the recession of 1979-81 industrial capacity was cut 25%, it did not fully recover in the 1980s boom and is being cut again in the current recession. Today, for the first time in 100 years, less than five million workers are employed in manufacturing. This economic decay provides the backdrop for the virtual destruction of the coal industry. But there is also a more overtly political dimension to coal's decline.

On coming to power in 1979, the Tories were haunted by the spectre of the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes which toppled the Heath government. The dependence of British industry on coal - in 1979, 80% of electricity in England and Wales was generated by coal - had placed miners and the NUM in a powerful position. In the mid-1970s, Nicholas Ridley prepared a report on how a Tory government could break this power by turning to oil, gas and particularly nuclear energy, at the same time as stockpiling imported coal, to undermine the miners position. A leaked cabinet minute from 1979 spelled out this planned assault on the NUM. It stated: "A nuclear power

programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial proportion of electricity from disruption by industrial action by the miners and transport workers."

In 1984 the Tories launched their assault on the miners. NUM president Arthur Scargill warned that British Coal planned to close 70 pits and shed 70,000 jobs. Many, unfortunately even in the Labour leadership, derided this as a fantasy. Tragically, even his forecast was an underestimation

only brief will be to privatise. A recent report by the Tories' privatisation advisers, N.M. Rothschild "predicted" just 12 pits remaining by the mid-1990s. Britain's energy would be provided by nuclear power and gas, it said. The "dash for gas" has already led to a cut of 20m tonnes of coal production and plans to build combined cycle gas turbines (CCGTs) would threaten another 20m tonnes and 20,000 jobs. British Coal's contract to supply 65m tonnes of



The Tories preference for nuclear power has more to do with their determination to destroy the NUM than with a safe power industry

as 100,000 miners have lost their jobs, and the communities have been broken up by the closure of 100 pits since 1985.

Management used the miner's defeat to impose a draconian code of conduct, extend the working week to six days and prepare the industry for privatisation.

New mines

The carrot of new mines, like Margam in South Wales (never built), and the stick of more job losses, forced these measures through. The miner's struggle to save their jobs, industry and communities has seen a 12% increase in productivity in one year and a profit of over £100 million.

Having won the election, the Tories will abolish the Department of Energy leaving just one minister within the DTI whose

coal a year to the electricity industry runs out next March and a 15-year contract, incorporating the CCGTs, has already been signed. Yet at current consumption rates there is only around 20 years of recoverable North Sea gas compared with over 350 years worth of coal. Even in the short-term, although it would only cost 2.64p to produce 1kw/h of electricity in a CCGT compared to 2.73p per kw/h at current coal prices, when you add the capital costs of building CCGTs, the "dash for gas" becomes economic madness. Coal fired stations already exist and investment would be better spent cleaning them up, reducing emissions which cause acid rain, improving health and safety and increasing efficiency.

Last month the British Association of Col-

liery Management warned that the Tories' re-election would lead to British Coal's market being cut from 65m tonnes to 20m by 1995, forcing all but 7 of Britain's deep mines to close and 40,000 jobs to be lost. The best they could offer under capitalism, even under Labour, was that by scrapping the new gas stations, using import controls against foreign coal, and signing new contracts with the electricity companies, they would only need to close 15 pits and axe 20,000 jobs!

Investment

There would be no investment in new technology to make mining safer or in cleaning up coal-burning to protect the environment. There has already been a spate of mining accidents this year. Many of these could be avoided by reducing the working week (instead of lengthening it as the Tories have done in preparation for privatisation) and by investing in more computer controlled technology.

The alternatives to coal, oil and gas, are rapidly running out and cannot be imported in sufficient quantities to meet demand. To convert back to oil and coal burning would take years and the billions of pounds spent converting to North Sea gas would be wasted. Unless, that is, there is investment in producing natural gas from coal! The gasification of coal would create demand for another 120m tonnes of coal a year, and, combined with new technology could extend the life of coal reserves to 1,000 years, reducing the miners working week drastically. Large scale investment is necessary to implement new technology for using coal itself. Presently, when coal is burned in a power station, only 35% of resulting energy produces electricity, the rest is lost through cooling towers. Combined heat and power stations, already used in Denmark, can utilise this waste in domestic heating systems, increasing efficiency from 35 to 80%.

However, the cleanest, most efficient way of burning any fossil fuel is the fluidised bed combustion of coal. In this process powdered coal and sand are mixed and burned in a moving bed, improving efficiency by increasing the rate heat is transferred from the coal and dramatically reducing harmful emissions.

Burning all fossil fuels gives off large quantities of CO₂ which contributes to

global warming. Additionally none of them will last for ever. There must be investment in the research and development of alternative energy sources. If the economy were planned under democratic control, energy production could be made largely reliant on renewable forms of energy like wind, wave, solar and geothermal energy which do not produce pollution or irreversibly damage the environment.

The only obstacle to these developments is capitalism. The capital cost in research and construction is prohibitive say the bosses. This did not stand in the way of developing nuclear power but it will clearly be a barrier to the development of new technology in a period of deepening economic crisis where the bosses' motto is, "as cheap as can be and hang the consequences."

Switching from nuclear to new coal technology could create half a million jobs

Powergen, for example, is currently burning a bitumen based fuel, orimulsion, at its Ince and Richborough power stations. Both National Power and PowerGen have arranged to import 5.5m tonnes of it a year. It is cheaper than coal and can be burned in converted oil-fired power stations. It also gives off huge quantities of harmful gases. Inspectorate of Pollution threats that stations burning orimulsion may have to fit Flue Gas Desulphurisation plant, raising its cost by £17 per tonne, have forced plans to convert Pembroke power station to be dropped and placed further imports in doubt.

Resources

Socialists should demand that resources earmarked for the nuclear programme be diverted into research and development of coal technology and renewable energy sources. The capitalists interest in nuclear energy is not based on society's needs. In the short-term its cost is astronomical, but it is the side product of weapons grade plutonium and attempts to weaken the labour movement which dictates the capitalist's energy policy. A Central Electricity Generating Board leaflet issued after the

Chernobyl disaster stated it was "in the interests of economy and security of supply....to diversify its fuel sources."

Despite catastrophes at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, leaks at Sellafield, the rise in Leukaemia near nuclear sites and the inability of capitalism to safely dispose of nuclear waste, the health and safety of workers, communities and the planet are "a price well worth paying" for the profiteers.

Alternative work

All new nuclear power plants must be halted and those already operating closed. But workers must not be made to pay the cost. Local alternative work, without loss of pay, must be guaranteed. Investment in developing techniques for the safe storage of spent fuel could guarantee the nuclear power workers jobs, while switching from nuclear power to new coal technology could create a further half a million jobs. Investment in alternative forms of energy could create six times as many jobs as a similar nuclear programme. As the next century approaches, nuclear energy of a different kind, nuclear fusion, holds out promise. Future generations could benefit from a near infinite source of safe energy if fusion can be developed. Fusion fuses together atoms of Deuterium (heavy water, found in almost infinite quantities in the world's oceans) and produces energy with very little, if any radiation.

Oil, gas, electricity and coal workers face an uncertain future. The political calculations of the ruling class and the short-term profit motive of the bosses determines energy policy. This short-sighted method must be replaced by an integrated energy programme run by the workers and the community in the interests of health and safety, protection of the environment and the most efficient use of resources. Such a programme, at the heart of a socialist plan of production, would serve the needs of society not the profit of a few.

But, you cannot plan what you do not own. The labour movement must put backbone into the leadership's vague demand to bring electricity back "under public control" by calling for its renationalisation, along with oil and gas, under the democratic control of workers to enable the drawing up of an integrated socialist energy plan.

ALL-OUT ACTION NEEDED TO DEFEAT UNION-BUSTING PLAN

London Underground's (LUL) top management have been promised an extra £350 million by the Tories over the next few years on condition that their union-busting "Company Plan" is implemented. The Tory's re-election means that they will want that "debt" paid by LUL, and quickly. The Company Plan aims to:

- * Cut 5,000 jobs - the six depots will be reduced to three with multiskilling and competing teams.
- * Abolish seniority - allowing management to pick and chose and discriminate against certain workers.
- * Contract out cleaning, maintenance and repairs.
- * Regrade the current 15 grades in to just two.
- * Introduce new medical standards.
- * Scrap pay in between shifts, introduce variable booking on and off points with unpaid travel time.
- * Set up competition between depots, lines, teams and workers as a step towards introducing performance pay and short-term contracts.

Ballot

The plan leaves no grade or department untouched. Depot foremen are already under attack. They are being "invited" to reapply for their own jobs. Some jobs have already been cut so they cannot all get their job back, and even if they do the conditions and wages are far worse. As LUL has refused to back down, after months of dithering, the RMT are balloting all its LUL members for industrial action. The CONFED (craft) unions are also likely to ballot.

LUL's strategy is to pick each grade off separately, starting with management and foremen in all sections. The biggest attack on us ever has not united our trade union leaderships in action. All are condemning one another for things done or not done, pointing accusing fingers to cover their own deficiencies and they are all already

preparing alibis and excuses should things go badly wrong.

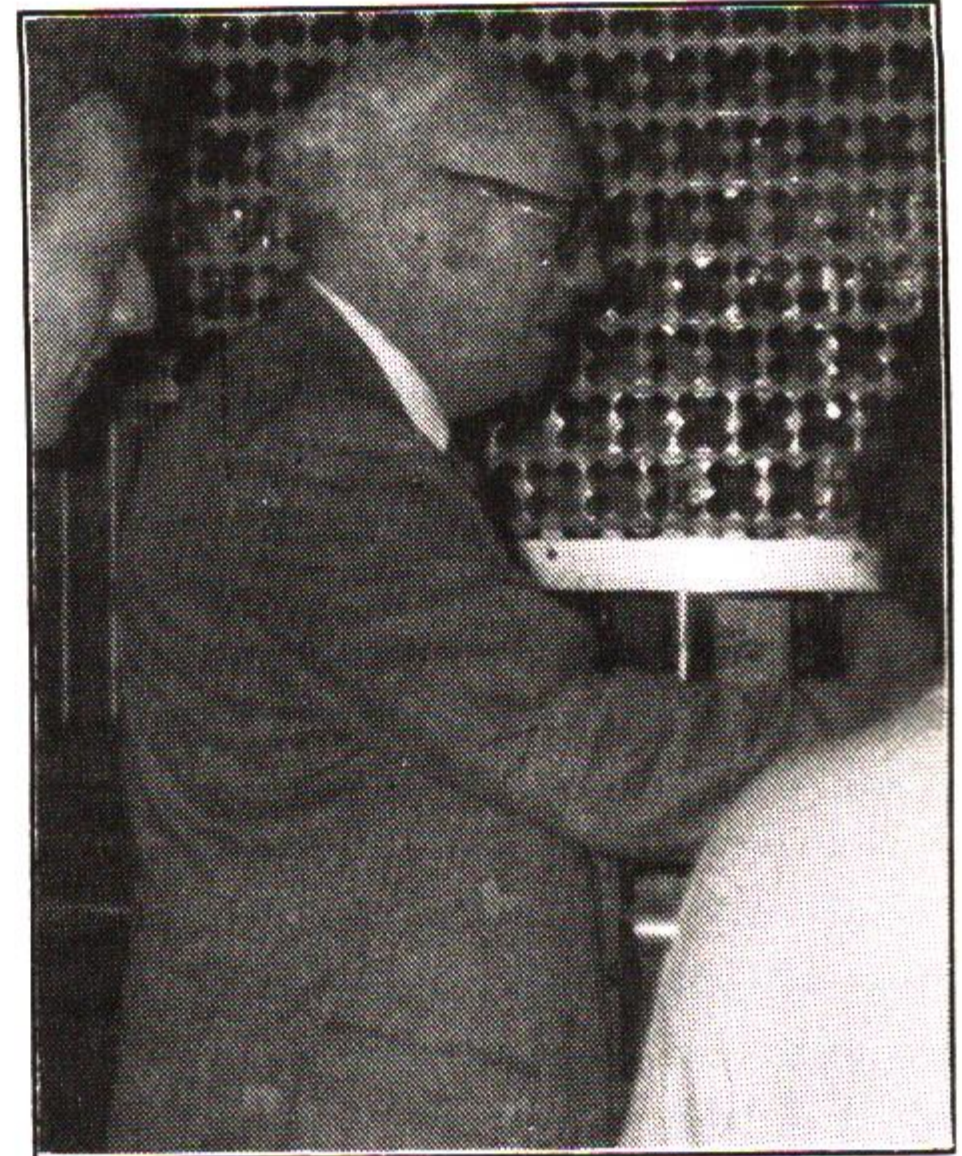
In contrast, a Tube Workers Action Group (TWAG) is up and running, uniting and organizing all grades, departments and unions on a rank and file basis but firmly oriented towards pushing the official unions to take up the fight. Our meetings and bulletins ensure that an unofficial body is in place if the union officials back down or won't fight or if Tory laws are used against official action. The difference between now and April 1991 is that the RMT will be able to carry RMT traincrews and a layer of ASLEF along with them. The material that the ASLEF leadership puts out and pressure from their rank and file and TWAG will determine to what extent this occurs.

Attack

Unfortunately ASLEF (representing the majority of traincrews), and TSSA (representing booking clerks and admin grades) are not currently balloting. ASLEF's leaders say they're not under attack yet. Neither have yet registered a failure to agree. Their primary concern is to watch other grades under attack and fighting, until its their turn to defend themselves.

Top management are exploiting these divisions between the unions. Once the RMT and CONFED engage in strikes, with pickets in place, other union members must not cross. ASLEF and TSSA will possibly be deemed to be taking unofficial action and breaking Tory laws. More importantly this leaves their members open to victimisation as unofficial action means you cannot be represented by trade unions at disciplinary hearings according to the law. More than ever this shows the need to move towards one rail union.

The RMT rally on April 14 urged a massive YES vote in the ballot. LUL director Straker's infamous warning of "corpses" quoted in the press was taken as another declaration of war on the trade unions and calls were made to ensure that any corpse



RMT leader Jimmy Knapp - turning away from the fight?

was only that of Straker not more real corpses like those at King's Cross. Speakers from the floor pressed home the necessity of all going out together and all coming back together, victorious. It is now clear that everyone will be asked to reapply for their own jobs. This has made the mood more determined. One person said that if the drivers alone could win in '89 while the Tories had a 100 seat majority, then all grades can win again, officially or otherwise, in 1992. Trains can't be stock-piled and track and stock will quickly and constantly deteriorate.

Pressure must be exerted now for a united fight meaning everyone balloting together if possible. Failing this, the basic trade union principles must be adhered to - solidarity in not crossing picket lines. The Plan can and must be defeated.

TWAG calls for:

- A massive YES vote for all-out action
- Unity and solidarity among all grades and all unions
- Respect all picket lines
- ASLEF and TSSA to ballot too
- Total scrapping of the plan; Any changes to be reversed.

UNIONS MUST FIGHT TO SAVE OUR HEALTH SERVICE

For nearly four years I have been training to become a nurse. In that time staff morale has plummeted whilst administration has risen rapidly, to the extent that the job of nursing has become more that of an office worker and less that of a carer. Even ward clerks are now counted in the figures as nursing staff!

At the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, where I'm working at present, staff have to complete PCH (Patient Care Hours) forms every morning for every patient - supposedly to show how many nurses the ward requires. But of course it never gets the number it needs.

In the Northern General Hospital (a trust status hospital) across the city, thousands of pounds were spent using an interior designer to come up with an appalling colour scheme for the corridors. Neither the staff nor the patients were consulted so they got red, black and white - hardly the most tranquil colours! The same hospital has a new care of the elderly wing. Within a month of opening fixtures and fittings were coming off the walls. A safety officer told me the materials used were so flimsy that if a trolley was to hit a wall it would go straight through. Staff are still angry about regrading, and now, to gain experience, in a different specialism you have to

accept downgrading and loss of pay. Auxiliary nurses are becoming support workers with extra responsibilities but no increase in wages. In order to save money sterile scissors have become rare commodities, while computers are being introduced on every ward yet staff are not being trained to use them properly. Ward sisters/charge nurses are responsible for their own ward budgets, so it is increasingly difficult to borrow essential items when your own ward runs out.

The result of the Tory approach to health care? More managers, less nurses, poorer patient care and more dangerous practices.

For what? Privatisation and profit. Health union leaders have done little about it. Token strikes have frustrated staff and they will need much convincing before they move in to action again. Now the Tories are back in power there is a sense of fear among health workers for their jobs and their hospitals. Now more than ever it is urgent to pool our experiences of working in and using the health service, to design a strategy to fight the Tory's opt-out plans and to help formulate a real socialist programme for the NHS.

Alan Anderton
(COHSE)

Do you work in the health service? What do you think a socialist programme for the NHS should demand? Send all correspondence to The Editor, 306 Sherbourne Mill, Morville St, Birmingham B16 8DG.

NHS IN CRISIS

There is growing evidence that increasing numbers of patients are being offered quick hospital treatment at the expense of other patients, as hospital managers attempt to make a profit in the new market style NHS. Christie Cancer Hospital in Manchester offers "fast-track" treatment for patients from districts which agree to pay towards the cost of reopening closed wards. Watford General Hospital offered speedy treatment for patients from two fund-holding GPs in return for contracts worth £1.5million.

***The Universities Funding Council has warned that teaching hospitals face closure because their higher costs make them uncompetitive in the NHS market system.**

*A leaked report written by senior health managers at Guy's and Lewisham revealed that while 600 nursing jobs were to be cut the trust hospital would be spending £750,000 on new offices for its board members.

***It wasn't a good first year of operation for Bradford Hospitals Trust. The chief-executive resigned, 300 jobs were lost, more than 70 hospital beds were closed and recruitment of nursing staff was frozen. NUPE believes the trust is already £14.5million in the red. What will they cut next?**

*The number of nurses employed in the NHS has continued to decline while the number of administrative staff has steadily increased under the Tories. In 1986 the NHS employed less than 1,000 managers. By 1990 almost 10,000 were employed.

TEACHERS WILL FIGHT EDUCATION REFORMS

I returned from NUT conference heartened by the fact the Left made gains and we are at last making progress towards putting up a real fight against the reactionary Tory education reforms. Conference showed there was a strong mood in the left of the union. There was no defeatism about the election but rather an even stronger determination to fight to get things done and defend education.

Resources

All teachers are aware that the Tories are starving schools of cash and damaging children's education through not just a lack of resources but also by attacking teachers and lowering morale in the classroom.

Over the past few years NUT conference has been moving slowly to the left as teachers see our lack of action has allowed the Tories to push through even more damaging reforms. This shift to the left was reflected this year where almost every debate was split 50-50 between the right and left. Left speakers won most of the debates but the Broad Left, (in reality the controlling arm on the executive) resorted to manoeuvres to defeat the resolutions and calls for action.

Defeated

At the start of the conference the executive tried to force through a policy which would have meant the section of each resolution calling for action would be separated from the main text of the motion and all the "action sections" would be voted on in one block at the end of conference. Needless to say this was roundly defeated.

Despite the executive's manoeuvres some good motions were

passed. Motion 26 on teacher's conditions of service has tied the union to a policy of defending teacher's conditions under Local Management of Schools (LMS). The main strike motion was narrowly defeated, the media playing their part in affecting the mood of some delegates with their constant "classroom chaos" scare stories and emotional blackmail.

But despite this the conference was in combative mood and it is highly likely a number of local strikes will take place over the next twelve months. The local strikes last year succeeded in saving jobs and winning new members to the union.

The argument of not doing anything and waiting for a Labour government cannot now be used and teachers are determined to fight the Tory education plans.

*Tim Hales, General Secretary
Leeds NUT
(Personal capacity)*



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SIXTY YEARS ON - LESSONS OF ILP SPLIT

By
Rob
Sewell

“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it” (George Santayana).

SIXTY years ago this month, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was engaged in negotiations which would end in their disaffiliation from the Labour Party. This reaction arose from the 1931 betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald and the sharp shift to the left within the ranks of the ILP. However, such a course was to lead to their isolation and eventual disintegration.

Socialists are not interested in history for any sentimental or academic reasons but in order to learn from the invaluable lessons of the past, arising from the victories and defeats of the working class.

Theory

Marxist theory, among other things, can be defined as the generalised historical experience of the class, which acts as the memory of the Labour movement. Past defeats and mistakes can serve to enrich our understanding, and prepare the new generation of Labour and trade union militants for the battles that loom ahead.

Leon Trotsky, reviewing his attempt to influence the leftward moving ILP in the early thirties wrote: “More than two years ago the writer of this article sought to arrive at an understanding with the leaders of the ILP by means of several articles, and in letters; the attempt was barren of results: during that period, our criticism of the Communist International seemed to the leaders of the ILP to be ‘preconceived’, and ‘factionally’, perhaps even ‘personally’

motivated. Nothing remained except to yield the floor to time.” Despite all the tumultuous events of the period, Trotsky’s attempt to influence the ILP came to nothing. The ILP, which had a great influence in the British Labour movement since it helped form the Labour Party, split from the Party in 1932 and moved in a semi-revolutionary direction.

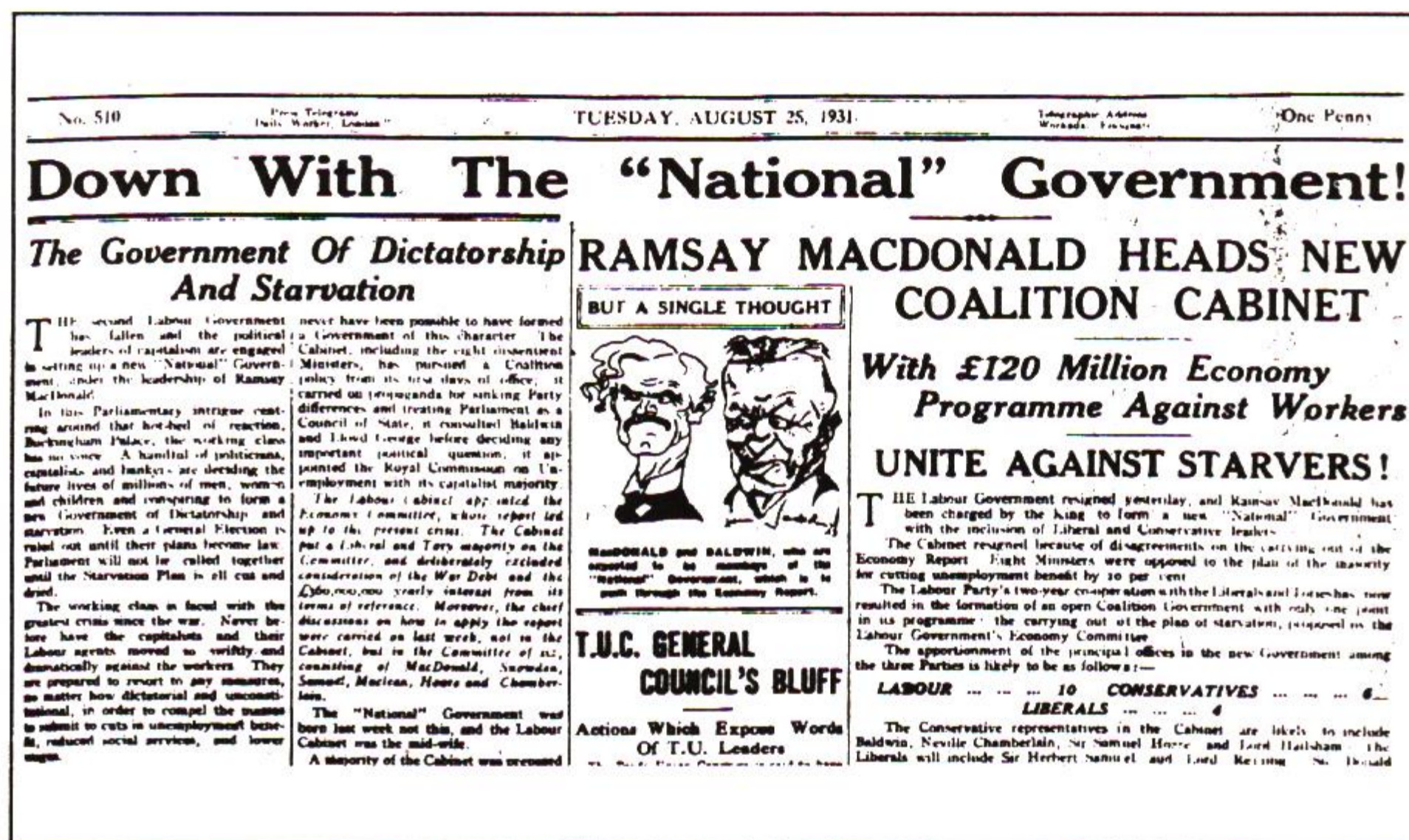
Advice

But its failure to heed Trotsky’s advice to adopt a clear Marxist programme

warn the new generation of class conscious workers in the battle to transform the mass organisations of the working class, the unions and the Labour Party, in the course of the struggle for socialism.

Crisis

The crisis of 1931 and the ensuing split provoked the biggest upheaval in the British Labour Party since its formation. The whole episode was borne out of the stormy events of the 1920s and



The Daily Worker's front page in August 1931

and face towards the traditional organisations of the working class resulted in its decline and eventual collapse. The whole episode was a tragic opportunity missed for building a powerful Marxist force in Britain which could have changed the whole course of history. The experiences of the early 1930s and the ILP split-off will serve to fore-

the failure of the reformist policies pursued by the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929-31. The ILP was not some small sect. It played a prominent role in the British Labour movement. It provided the motive force behind the establishment of the Labour Party and developed a number of leaders from its ranks, including Ramsay MacDonald.

Although ideologically amorphous, the ILP tended to preserve the socialist thread of the Labour Party. Under the mighty impact of the world economic crash, the rise of fascism in Germany, and the betrayal of MacDonald, the rank and file of the ILP moved sharply to the left. The crisis of reformism reflected the impasse of British and world capitalism. In the epoch of capitalist expansion, the development of the productive forces provided the material basis for reformism, and enabled the system to afford certain concessions to the working class.

However, the epoch of capitalist crisis completely undermined this position. The reformist philosophy of changing society bit by bit proved untenable as right wing Labour Governments moved from reforms to counter-reforms.

Decline

Despite the boom years of the 'Roaring Twenties', British capitalism had undergone serious economic decline relative to other capitalist powers. It was now being overtaken by the powerful German and American economies.

The impasse of British industry was epitomised by the crisis in the coal industry. Since the war, the coal industry had been heavily subsidised by the state. The threat to deregulate the industry provoked the coalowners to launch an offensive to cut mine-worker's wages. This was seen by Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister, as a necessary general measure by the employers to "put industry back on its feet". The attempt to slash wages and cut costs met the resistance of the working class and provoked the General Strike of 1926 and the nine month lockout of the miners. This battle was the most important in the history of the British working class and showed its revolutionary potential.

Unfortunately, due to the policies and actions of the reformist trade union leaders - both right and left - the strike was defeated.

In "Where is Britain Going?", Leon Trotsky explained that the British working class, when their aspirations are frustrated, tends to swing from the industrial to the political front and vice versa. The revolutionary wave after the war, resulted in a big strike wave and the explosive growth of the Labour Party. The ebbing of the strike wave after the defeat of Black Friday (1921), pushed the workers onto the political front.

Election

"Paralysed in the sphere of economic action", states Trotsky, "the energy of the masses was directed on to the political plane." The election of the first minority Labour Government in 1924 gave rise to great expectations from the working class. However, its defeat after nine months caused the working class to swing over to the industrial front. The betrayal of the General Strike pushed the class once again to political action and the election of Labour in 1929.

The MacDonald Government proved to be a government of crisis. Steeped in the gradualism of Fabianism and unprepared to challenge capitalism, it tried to work within the confines of the "market economy". Such a policy, on the basis of growing economic difficulties, resulted in their early reforms being replaced by severe counter-reforms.

In September 1929 the Wall Street Crash ushered in the deepest slump in history. The resulting collapse in the productive forces internationally caused spiralling unemployment: in Germany seven million were out of work, in Britain nearly three million of the insured workers, in the US, 25% of the workforce was unemployed. The ensuing trade war between the capitalist powers meant a collapse of markets and widespread over-production. The Depression which followed drove the capitalist governments worldwide to unload the crisis onto the backs of the working class through wide-spread

wage cuts and government "economies". The MacDonald Labour Government, under the pressures of both big business and the working class,



Tory prime minister Stanley Baldwin

was thrown into crisis.

Whereas the working class demanded measures to reduce unemployment, etc., the ruling class demanded savage cuts in "the national interest" to put industry back on its feet. The Government bent its knee to Capital and duly carried through a series of cuts in the dole through its Anomalies Bill. Not content with this, big business demanded further "sacrifices" and "increased production".

Commons

In the Commons, the bourgeois parties, Tory and Liberal, pressed home these demands with an amendment to a censure motion proposing the creation of a committee to investigate further "economies". This committee, in the words of Beatrice Webb, consisted of "five clever hard faced representatives of capitalism and two tame trade unionists".

As expected, its report published in July 1931, recommended draconian cuts in Government spending to balance the books, assist industrial recovery and promote profitability. These measures included a 20% cut in teach-

ers' pay, 25% in service pay and a 20% reduction in unemployment benefits, imposed through a Means Test.

Opposition

In August, despite the opposition of the Trade Union Congress, these anti-working class proposals were scandalously accepted by the Labour Cabinet. As always, weakness invites aggression. The proposed cuts accepted by MacDonald did not go far enough to "restore confidence in sterling" and prevent a run on the pound. Under pressure from the Bank of England and Big Business, the Cabinet were forced to look for further cuts. Despite representation from the unions, MacDonald replied that "nothing gives me greater regret than to disagree with old industrial friends, but I really personally find it absolutely impossible to overlook dread realities, as I am afraid you are doing." Beatrice Webb described the General Council as "pigs" saying "they won't agree to any 'cuts' of Unemployment Insurance benefits or salaries or wages."

Despite MacDonald's subservient attitude, the Cabinet balked at further cuts. For them the extra £12 million proved too difficult to swallow. They had swallowed the camel of £56 million cuts but strained at the gnat. The Cabinet split.

Discussions

MacDonald, determined to overcome the crisis at all costs, went to see the King and opened up discussions with the Tory and Liberal leaders with a view to establishing a National Government. He told the Labour Chancellor Snowden: "Tomorrow every Duchess in London will be waiting to kiss me..."

In order to use the authority of the Labour leaders to confuse and disorientate the working class, the Opposition leaders wanted MacDonald to maintain the Premiership. Sir Herbert Samuel cynically informed King

George V that "in view of the fact that the necessary economies would prove most unpalatable to the working classes, it would be to the general interest if they could be imposed by a Labour Government. The best solution would be if Mr Ramsay MacDonald, either with his present, or with a reconstituted Labour Cabinet, could propose the economies required. If he failed to secure the support of a sufficient number of his colleagues, then the best alternative would be a National Government composed of members of the three parties. It would be preferable that Mr MacDonald should remain Prime Minister in such a National Government." MacDonald failed to convince sufficient of his "colleagues", and on the advice of the Opposition leaders and the King announced the end of the Labour Government and the establishment of a National Government. He then called a panic General Election

towards the end of August. The result was a landslide victory for the National Government of Tories, Liberals and National Labour - which gained 554 seats and 70% of the vote. The Labour Party, which was completely disorientated by the betrayal, was decimated at the polls, capturing only 52 seats and 6.5 million votes.

Dual Soul

Although the more class conscious workers remained solid with the Labour Party, the result revealed what Trotsky termed as the "dual soul" of the British working class. "It surprises one anew," states Trotsky, "what a terrible load of humiliation, conservatism, bigotry, conciliation, respect to the summits, to titles, to riches, to the Crown, drags in its thoughts the British working class which is at the same time capable of grand revolutionary insurrections (Chartism, prewar movements



Sketch of a 1931 workers demonstration in Trafalgar Square

MARXISM

of 1911, movements following the war, the strike movement of 1926). "The British proletariat, the oldest, with the most traditions, is, in its thinking methods, most empirical, carries in its chest two souls, and turns, as it were, with two faces to historical events." (Leon Trotsky, Writings on Britain, p61)

Revolutionary

The revolutionary side of the working class was to quickly show itself in the reaction to the betrayal and the radicalisation in the ranks of the Labour movement, especially in the ILP. "An ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory", wrote Lenin. The debacle of 1931 hammered home amongst the Labour movement activists the inadequacies of reformism. It had been put to the test twice: in 1924 and 1929-31, and both had failed miserably. Fabianism was now discredited amongst wide layers of the traditional organisations. Marxists are not opposed to reforms, but to reformism, the erroneous conception that class society can in some way be changed gradually over a long period of time. History has repeatedly demonstrated the fallacy of this approach, which has paved the way for demoralisation and defeat. "You can peel an onion leaf by leaf", remarked Tawney, "but you can't skin a live tiger claw by claw."

It is the duty of every class conscious worker to fight for every single reform, however small. Only in this way will the working class become conscious of the need to actively transform society on socialist lines. The struggle for day to day demands must be linked to the task of changing society - as only in this way will it be possible to make the reforms permanent. The responsibility of Marxists is to fight for a system of transitional demands, which act as a bridge between the present level of working class consciousness and the need to overthrow capitalism: a living wage for all, work or full pay, workers' control, nationalisation of the monopolies, and a workers' government.

The revulsion against the gradualism of MacDonald and the impasse of capitalism internationally, pushed many workers in the direction of Marxism. The ranks of the ILP moved dramatically to the left, causing the whole organisation to move in a centrist direction. Centristism, to use Trotsky's words, was "a general name for most varied tendencies and groupings spread out between reformism and



Punch cartoon calling on workers to discard the red flag

Marxism." The hammer blow of events caused profound changes in the consciousness of the class, which was evolving in a revolutionary direction.

Possibilities

The whole of the ILP was in flux. Its Easter Conference stated that "the class struggle which is the dynamic force in social change is nearing its decisive moment ... there is no time now for slow processes of gradual change. The imperative need is for Socialism now." This provided a tremendous possibility for the building of the forces of Marxism in Britain. Unfortunately the reaction against the reformism of the Labour leadership pushed the ILP ranks towards a sectarian position in regard to the Labour Party. Again, at its 1932 Easter Conference a debate took place over disaffiliation from the Labour Party, with a large section voting to give the party an ulti-

matum over its Standing Orders for the Parliamentary party. This organisational issue - the independence of the five ILP MPs from the discipline of the Parliamentary Labour Party - served to disguise the real issues behind the imminent split. At its special Conference in July, given the lack of response from the Labour Party, the ILP voted to disaffiliate.

Split

The decision to split was compounded by the lack of any clear perspective for the subsequent development of the ILP. This caused Trotsky to comment that the "ILP split at the wrong time over the wrong issue."

The British Communist Party, which had become completely Stalinist in its policies and methods, proved unable to take advantage of this turmoil in the movement, particularly given its ultra-left stance. Originally the CP had a significant basis in the trade unions through the establishment of the Minority Movement, as well as the Labour Party itself. However, from 1928 the Stalinists, burning their fingers with their previous opportunist line towards the trade union bureaucracy, adopted the theory of "social fascism". This bankrupt theory stated that capitalism had entered a new "Third Period" of crisis which meant that social democracy played the role of the left face of fascism! This sectarian policy resulted in a big fall in their membership and growing isolation in the Labour movement.

Confusion

However, the ILP leadership due to its theoretical confusion and lack of perspective began to flirt with the Stalinists. Despite the ultra-left course of the CP they eagerly seized upon a 'united front' with the ILP to gain a foothold in its ranks. Trotsky in a number of articles and letters attempted to influence the ILP and win it to a clear revolutionary standpoint. In so doing Trotsky explained it was necessary for it to turn its

back on the Stalinists and face towards the mass organisations which were in ferment.

“The ILP”, wrote Trotsky, “can save the workers’ movement of Britain from this new danger only by freeing itself from all unclarity and haziness with regard to the ways and methods of the socialist revolution and by becoming a truly revolutionary party of the proletariat.” However, “what is...dangerous is a sectarian approach to the Labour Party.”

He drove home this point forcefully, “for every revolutionary organisation in England its attitude towards the masses and to the class is almost coincidental with its attitude towards the Labour Party, which bases itself upon the trade unions.” (*Writings on Britain*, vol 3, p107)



1931 National Government poster

Trotsky dismissed those arguments then circulating in the ILP that the Labour Party was “dead”, “exposed”, “incapable of change”, etc., which have been echoed year in and year out by every sectarian group since then. “It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform. For example, by its decision at Brighton.

For us - yes! But not for the masses, the eight million who voted Labour. It is a great danger for revolutionists to attach too much importance to Conference decisions. We use such evidence in our propaganda - but it cannot be presented beyond the power of our own press. One cannot shout louder than the strength of his own throat.”

Liberation

The same remains true of the trade unions, the basic organisations of the class. The most important task has become, in Trotsky’s words, “the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade union bureaucracy”. This could only be done not by turning away from the unions, as the ultra-lefts argue, but by patient systematic revolutionary work inside them. For Trotsky, “the trade union question remains the most important question of proletarian policy in Great Britain, as well as in the majority of old capitalist countries.”

Unfortunately, the leaders of the ILP ignored this advice. Not only did they fail to clarify their ideas, they continued to turn their backs on the Labour Party and called upon their members to withdraw from its ranks and opt-out of paying the union political levy. This orientation had dire consequences for the ILP. From 100,000 supporters in 1930, with nominally 140 MPs, the ILP was reduced to around 17,000 members by the time of the split, and 4,400 by 1935.

Betrayal

Tragically, the split from Labour took place as the Party was swinging to the left, in which the ILP could have played a decisive role. MacDonald’s betrayal, the slump and the depression, the growth of mass unemployment, as well as the rise of fascism, all contributed to a growing radicalisation in the mass organisations. Even a number of the Labour leaders, reflecting the pressures from below, were affected by these events.

In 1932 Harold Laski, a leading Labour theoretician, asked whether “evolutionary socialism (had) deceived itself in believing that it can establish itself by peaceful means within the ambit of the capitalist system.” Another leading left figure, Stafford Cripps, in a pamphlet entitled “Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Means?” warned that “the ruling class will go to almost any length to defeat Parliamentary actions if the issue is the direct issue as to the continuance of their financial and political control.” He then went on to advocate emergency powers for a Labour Government to tackle the crisis.

Dictatorship

If the Tories threatened to institute a military dictatorship, states Cripps, “it would probably be better and more conducive to the general peace and welfare of the country for the Socialist Government to make itself temporarily into a dictatorship until matters could again be put to the test at the polls.” Despite the split-off of the ILP, the ranks of the Labour Party moved steadily leftwards. The 1932 Labour Party Conference passed a resolution, without discussion which declared that “the main objective of the Labour Party is the establishment of Socialism” and that “the common ownership of the means of production and distribution is the only means by which the producers by hand and brain will be able to secure the full fruits of their industry.”

A further resolution moved by Sir Charles Trevelyan demanded that “on assuming office, either with or without power, definite Socialist legislation must be immediately promulgated, and that the Party shall stand or fall in the House of Commons on the principles in which it has faith.” “Let us lay down in some such resolution as this the unshakable mandate that they (the Labour Government) are to introduce at once, before attempting remedial measures of any other kind, great socialist measures, or some general

measure empowering them to nationalise the key industries of the country.” Henderson, the Party chairman on the eve of resigning, was practically howled down when he opposed the resolution as it would tie the hands of the leadership!

Attlee

Clement Attlee, the future leader of the Party, spoke in favour saying: “The events of the last year have shown that no further progress can be made in seeking to get crumbs from the rich man’s table...”

With the split of the ILP, the remaining left regrouped around a new organisation, the Socialist League. The League however, had a primarily middle class basis, and proved ineffective in the struggle with the Party’s right wing. By 1935, the League had joined the so-called “Unity Campaign”, involving the ILP and the Communist Party which had moved 180 degrees on Stalin’s orders to establish ‘popular fronts’. The initiative proved barren.

According to Fenner Brockway, then secretary of the ILP, “Its result was the destruction of the Socialist League, the loss of influence of Cripps, Bevan, Strauss and other ‘lefts’, the strengthening of the reactionary leaders, and the disillusionment of the rank and file.”

Manifesto

The “Unity Manifesto” issued by the Campaign in 1936 was rejected by the Labour Party, which had largely recovered from the debacle and was making gains. It used the League’s association with the CP to proscribe it. This ban was accepted by the left, which had been largely demoralised by the experience. This set-back was a product of opportunism of the League, the ILP and the Stalinists. Their “unity” programme rather than being based upon a principled position was used to paper over their differences. The ILP, instead of offering a way forward for the British working class, disorientated its

forces and lost great opportunities. This was borne out of theoretical confusion, incorrect perspectives, and a false orientation.

instead for “an inquiry into the role of Trotskyism in the working class movement.” This political confusion, which was the hall-mark of centrism, was the



A Star cartoon during the General Strike of 1926.

While flirting with the CP in Britain, on the international scale, the ILP made an alliance with a number of centrist groupings and parties in the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. Occasionally balancing between Stalinism and Trotskyism, this Bureau played an increasingly damaging role in fostering illusions in Stalinism, and spreading confusion where it had any influence. Its most damaging role was in Spain where its sister organisation, the POUM, despite the heroicism of the Spanish proletariat, played a fatal role by entering the Popular Front government, and using its great authority to subordinate the interests of the Spanish working class to the Liberal republicans. This policy resulted in the shipwreck of the revolution and the ultimate victory of Franco.

Dewey Commission

At a time when the ILP’s co-thinkers in Spain were being hunted down and murdered by the agents of the Stalinist secret police, Fenner Brockway refused to support the Dewey Commission into the Moscow Trials, calling

ultimate cause of its downfall. Sectarian mistakes have been made throughout the history of the British Labour movement. As Lenin explained, “the movement pays for the opportunism of the leadership by ultra-left tendencies”.

Sectarian

Despite the warnings of Marx and Engels, the early British Marxists in the Social Democratic Federation maintained a sectarian attitude to the organised Labour Movement. Although they participated in the founding of the Labour Party at the turn of the century, they walked out within 12 months after failing to persuade the rank and file of the need for a Socialist programme. Under the impact of the Russian Revolution such a programme was adopted by the Party and enshrined in Clause Four of the Party Constitution.

In the meantime, the ‘Marxists’ of the SDF remained isolated in the outskirts of the movement for the last 90 years. Even when the British Communist Party was formed in 1920, Lenin argued for it to affiliate to the Labour Party.

However, such was the sectarianism of the early CP that their application was couched in the most ultra-left manner, inviting rejection.

Lenin himself took up these ultra-left tendencies that threatened to wreck the movement in "Left-wing Communism an Infantile Disorder". Once the British CP managed to overcome its "infantile leftism", which proved to be a general feature of the Communist Parties at this time, they began to develop a wide spread influence in the Labour movement. This was largely destroyed by the zig-zag policy of the Stalinists, ending up with the suicidal policies of the Third Period. The swing to the left in the early 1930's provided a further golden opportunity for the development of genuine Marxism. Leon Trotsky recognised this potential and attempted to influence this movement and win it to a clear revolutionary position. The failure of the centrist leaders of the ILP to carry through this transition from reformism to Marxism, resulted in a debacle for this developing left wing.

Lessons

Marx explained many years ago that History repeats itself first as a tragedy, and then as a farce. The experiences of the SDF, the CP and the ILP are tragedies for the movement. The later experiences of the different sectarian groups, despite all these graphic lessons, can only be seen as a farce. Their repeated attempts to establish phantom 'Revolutionary' Parties in competition with the Labour Party have always ended in shipwreck with their remnants scattered on the fringes of the Labour movement.

Marxists cannot, as was explained in the 'Communist Manifesto' nearly 150 years ago, establish their own sectarian preconditions for participation in the organisations of the working class. They are distinguished, on the one hand, as "the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which

pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

Ultra-Left

Our task is not to "shout louder than our own throat", which has been the hallmark of the ultra-left groups and who believe history begins with themselves. They lack a sense of proportion and attempt to jump over reality by shortcuts and panaceas. The prime role of Marxism is to win the working class to its banner and prepare the forces politically and organisationally for the overthrow of capitalism and Stalinism. However there is no simple or straight line to this objective. It can only be achieved on the basis of mighty events that will radically change the consciousness and outlook of the working class.

Marxism will play its vital role in arming the working class with a clear programme, strategy and tactics. To achieve this end, Marxists must actively participate in the struggles of the class and in the life of its organisations. This does not mean that we strive to impose our ideas and programme artificially on the movement, but participate with the workers and "patiently explain", to use Lenin's words, our views at each stage. That is not to say that we simply sit back and wait on events, any more than Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Approach

Our participation in the struggles of the class is not done from a haughty sectarian approach, but in order to assist and point the best way forward. We "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole"(Marx). Those who remain outside of these organisations will be doomed to sectarian isolation.

This attitude and approach is essential

if Marxism is to penetrate not only the advanced organised sections of the working class, but the mass itself. The reformist leaders attempt to frighten the workers away from Marxism by portraying it as something alien. Unfortunately the actions of the sects give some credence to this assertion. In reality nothing could be further from the truth. Marxism has always had a basis of support in the British Labour movement, even before the creation of the Labour Party. Marxism is not some foreign creed but is, in essence, the generalised historical experience of the class internationally. It provides the class conscious worker with a doctrine and outlook that can cut through the smoke-screen of the ruling class and provide a scientific materialist explanation of events.

Perspectives

In other words Marxists do not set themselves up in opposition to the working class and its organisations, but struggle alongside the workers to transform them into genuine fighting organisations. In Britain this means the trade unions and the Labour Party. There are no short cuts to this problem. There are no panaceas. It requires theoretical clarity and correct perspectives. On the basis of big events, which will radically transform the consciousness of the class and burn out any lingering illusions in capitalism, as well as a "patient approach", Marxism can provide the necessary lever for the crucial transformation of the organisations of the working class.

For further reading on the ILP see page 31 or write to Well Red Books at:
306 Sherbourne Mill,
Morville Street,
Birmingham B16 8DG.

**Send your letters to:
The Editor,
306 Sherbourne Mill,
Morville Street,
Birmingham B16 8DG.**

Socialist Greetings

Congratulations on the first issue of *Socialist Appeal*. The fight to defend genuine Marxism in Britain now has a voice. We support you in your struggle

From the supporters of **SOCIALISTEN**,
the new Swedish Marxist Paper

Strong Start

Dear Comrades,
Congratulations on an excellent first issue. It is refreshing to see that the legacy of Marxism is being carried forward in to the new conditions of the 1990s in such a dynamic, modern and internationalist way, but based on the historical experience of socialist struggle. May it go from strength to strength.

Fraternally,
Alan Anderton, Sheffield.

The Good, the Bad and the...

Dear Comrades,
A few points about the first issue of *Socialist Appeal* - good and bad!
The trade union material was excellent. No other left journal has any real analysis of trade union developments. Keep it up.
I also enjoyed reading the greetings which brought out the true internationalism of the struggle for socialism. I was disappointed there was no editorial and hope that in future issues we will see one. I would also like to see a letters page and maybe some details of labour movement events coming up.
Finally congratulations to Alan Woods on an excellent article, "In Defence of Marxism." It reminded me of Lenin's "Where to Begin."
I look forward to the next issue, Yours fraternally,
A London reader.

Green policies for Labour?

Dear Comrades,
I have read the first issue of *Socialist Appeal* carefully, and in considering the way forward for Labour and the working class, I have to say that there is a danger of missing the point.
Why should we accept the capitalists' definition of wealth, as though human life was all about acquiring more and more material goods? It shouldn't be. Socialist's ideas of wealth ought to be clean air, a plentiful supply of pure water, efficient drains, a cheap public transport system, medical treatment whenever required, a warm, dry, comfortable place to live, peace and quiet and protection from crime.
I'm convinced that Labour could restore its electoral fortunes by embracing, if not the detailed manifesto of the Greens, then at least their underlying philosophy. If education is about anything, it must be chiefly about instilling a strong measure of sales resistance in to the young and teaching them that life is about something higher than a self-perpetuating cycle of industrialisation and consumption. I don't claim to have all the answers, neither do the Greens. But Labour must listen to them and work for the same ends wherever possible, yours fraternally,
Jim Murphy, Manchester.

MANIFEST SUCCESS

Greetings from Nuremburg
supporters of the German
Marxist Tendency,
MANIFEST.

We wish *Socialist Appeal*
every success and would
welcome international
contacts.

If any comrade wishes to
write to us please do so:

**D.Hollis,
Rollnerstra. 25,
W-8500 Nurnburg
10, Germany.**

MEXICO

POVERTY AMIDST PLENTY

The horrendous images of death and destruction caused by gas explosions in Guadalajara, Mexico's second city forcibly brought home the plight of the masses in the Third World.

Like the Bhopal disaster in India, it was the poorest sections of society, the workers and their families, who paid with their lives for the irresponsible greed of the big companies who dumped dangerous chemicals in the sewers beneath the overcrowded slum districts. This man-made disaster is only the most graphic expression of the terrible conditions in which millions of men, women and children are forced to live on the eve of the twenty first century in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In this report from Mexico City by the editor of the Mexican Marxist paper *El Militante*, Juan Andrade explains the real situation in Mexico.

Late last year, Aspe, the Mexican Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared that the country was on the road to a new "economic miracle" comparable to the 1930s or the 1970s. Like all capitalists Aspe always tries to fool the workers with the aid of global economic statistics or fancy graphs, but the truth is always concrete.

Last year the Mexican economy grew by 3.6%. But who has benefitted from the economic growth of the last three years? What the capitalists call a miracle really amounts to a massive increase in their profits and a growth in Stock Exchange fiddles. The 37-member Mexican Businessman's Council, the real "shadow cabinet", controls 22% of the country's gross domestic product. Approximately 7,000 big-time speculators control wealth equivalent to another 13% of GDP. For working peo-



To escape poverty many Mexican workers and their families still try to dodge the border guards and find their way to the US.

ple on the other hand the future under capitalism is not so rosy.

The number of Mexican poor has risen to 55 million, out of a total population of 86 million. Real wages in 1992 represent just 32.9% of their 1975 value.

A further 180,000 workers joined the ranks of the unemployed last year. With inflation at 18.8% the government is now trying to impose a wage rise ceiling of between 13 and 15%.

Imperialism

The policy of the Salinas government, of subordinating Mexico to imperialism and the International Monetary Fund has solved nothing, but merely deepened the crisis in the Mexican economy. What growth has taken place, has been of a speculative, non-productive character. Eight out of every ten pesos of foreign investment and capital repatriation has ended up on the stock exchange. The 500,000 jobs created in 1991 have been mainly on short-term contracts in the service sector and the *Maquila* (factories for assembling components for US companies.) The problem of nine million unemployed (out of an active population of 31 million) has not been resolved. Nor has that of the "black

economy" which encompasses about 50% of the workforce, being one of the few means of escaping absolute poverty. The capitalist media does not reflect this reality which completely contradicts the government's demagogic assertions that economic growth benefits us all. Moreover, the future plans of Mexican capitalism threaten every one of the social conquests of the past - the wages, conditions and rights of the workers. The government are planning:

***Massive redundancies** - PEMEX, the state oil industry, plans to shed 35,000 jobs in the next few years despite its huge profits. The state railway company has announced plans to sack 18,000 workers.

***Higher prices** - Water rates and electricity prices, which rose by 155% in the past 18 months are set to rise again.

***Wage Cuts** - Workers have already experienced a loss of purchasing power of 60% in recent years, which will be further aggravated by the wage ceiling and the freezing of the minimum wage at \$110 a month. No wonder the consumption of meat has fallen by 70%.

***Public expenditure cuts** - Last year public expenditure fell by 16.2%. In the current year Mexico will invest less in

education than Egypt or Costa Rica.

***Increased exploitation** - More overtime will have to be worked and the government has plans to lengthen the working day. This will not only lead to an increase in industrial accidents and fatalities but also an increase in unemployment.

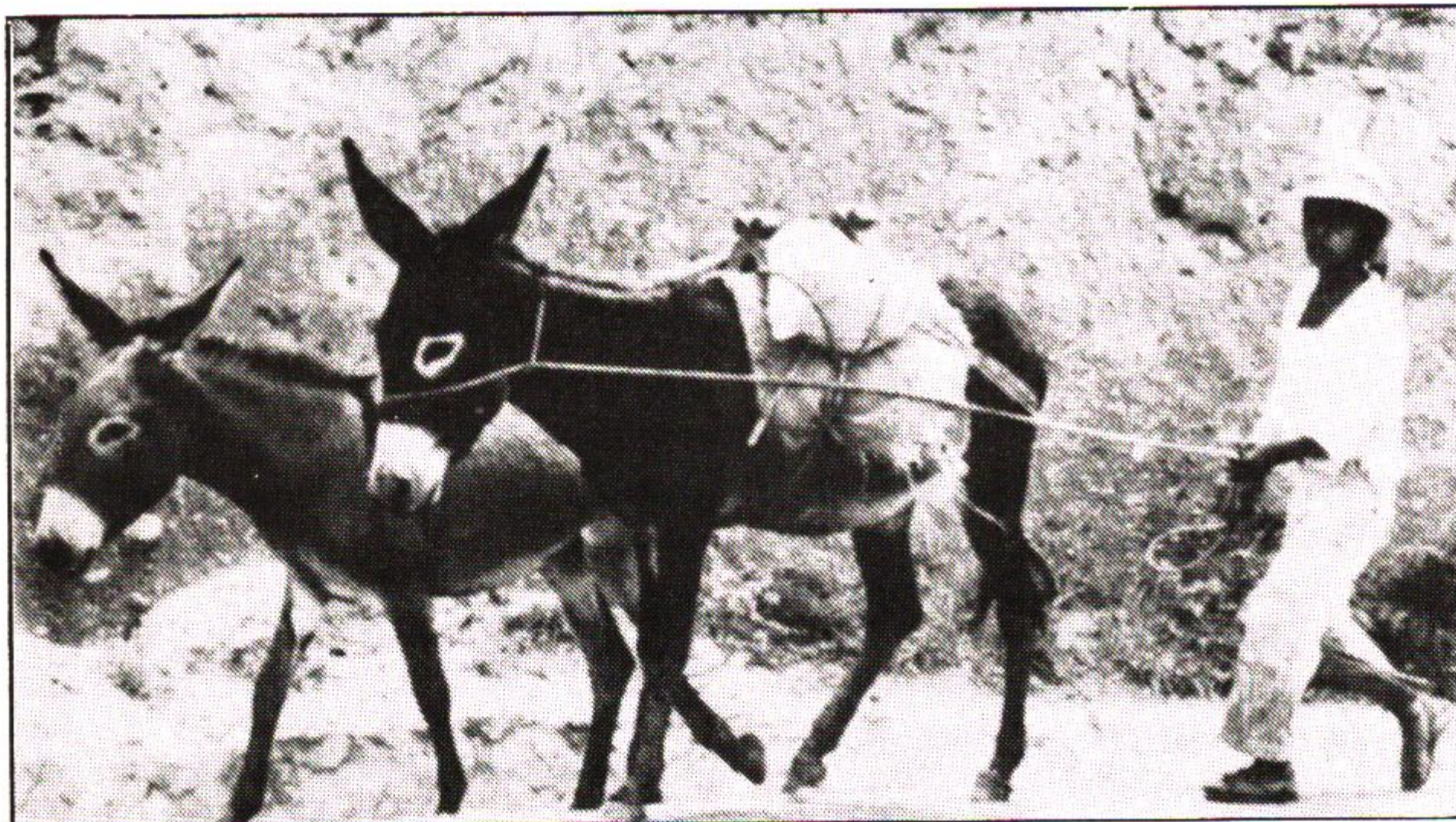
Salinas

The Salinas government is also planning more attacks on the conquests of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. They plan to change the Agrarian Law which protects poor farmers against the big Mexican and foreign landowners. Now agricultural land could all end up in the hands of the 10,000 *latifundists* (large landowners) and Mexico could go back to the situation that existed in the days of the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship with massive emigration from the land to the cities or the USA, of those who do not

trade deficit, already \$100,000 million!

The PRI (the governing party) is carrying out a "neo-liberal" policy, in other words a savage capitalist policy thereby cutting the ground from under its own feet. By abandoning real reforms and ditching the populist "anti-imperialist" demagogy of the past it has upset the basis of past stability. They are preparing the way for a new period of struggles.

All the oppressed sections are under attack. Students are faced with attempts to create a "university of the elite" by the imposition of matriculation fees of between \$100 and \$200. It would make it impossible for workers' sons and daughters to go to university and is a direct attack on the principle of free education established by the 1910 revolution. Workers are faced with redundancies, low wages and the privatisation of pension



Many Mexican peasant farmers are still landless. Now the Salinas government threatens to change the law forcing more farmers to lose their land.

wish to be reduced to servitude on the estates of the *latifundists*.

The recent signing of the Free Trade Treaty with the US will not improve the lot of Mexico's workers and peasants. At best the treaty will lead to the creation of a few thousand jobs in the *maquila* assembly plants on the US border, but this will be at the cost of destroying jobs in other sectors. It will provide the trade union bureaucracy with the excuse for signing the National Productivity Deal linking wages to productivity and impose plant by plant bargaining in place of sector-wide negotiations. In reality it is a government attempt to sideline the unions. The dependence on US imperialism will lead to an increased

funds, which means, that after 40 years' contributions the average pensioner would receive scarcely enough to live on for two years in retirement. Many poor peasants are still landless 82 years after the revolution. Women workers continue to face discrimination and lower wages and are also denied abortions.

Now factories and branches of industry which never before participated in the struggle are taking action. We are still in the early stages. The struggle still has a predominantly economic character but the fight is becoming more generalised and is beginning to achieve results. Coupled with these struggles are the struggles against the trade union bureaucracy for greater union de-

mocracy. In the union elections in the IMSS (civil service union) two union sections were won for the first time by the Bloc of Democratic Trade Unionists, a left grouping. These advances will inevitably be repeated in other unions, leading to increased co-ordination of the struggle between the different sections of the class.

Pressure

There will be a stepping up of pressure on the PRI union officials who will be overtaken by events and pushed to one side. This process will give rise to splits in the leadership of the official unions of the CIM (the Mexican TUC) and between the latter and the government.

Salinas has already been forced to retreat on electoral fraud. In Tabasco state, as a result of the mobilisation of the rank and file of the opposition PRD party, the PRI mayors and councillors were found guilty of ballot rigging, and removed. The PRD, which split from the PRI with the support of many workers and left-wingers, managed to get its electoral victory confirmed in this state, although elsewhere it has been cheated of victory by fraud.

Struggles

The only way to defeat the capitalists and their government is by waging a consistent struggle to democratise the unions and turn them in to genuine organs of working class struggle. It is necessary to unite and co-ordinate the struggles of working people, with a concrete programme against redundancies and the counter-reforms in agriculture and for a decent living wage and a 35-hour week, against privatisation, for the cancellation of the foreign debt and for this money to be used to pay for education and other social expenditure. The experience of the movement will serve to convince the workers that the only alternative is to join hands in an all-out struggle for economic demands, linking them with democratic demands. Through their struggle they will come to understand that it is not possible to maintain the conquests of the past on the basis of the present system of exploitation. Then the question of socialism will be directly raised in their minds.

**Juan Andrade,
Mexico City**

DE KLERK'S REFORMS OFFER NO WAY FORWARD

The recent South African referendum resulted in an overwhelming majority among the country's white voters for De Klerk's reform programme. Big Business used the media, radio TV and press, to persuade the white electorate. The attempts by the right-wing and sections of the police and security forces to create panic by organising elements of civil unrest in the black townships had the opposite effect. Moreover the question posed in the referendum was innocuous, only asking if "negotiations" should continue.

The background to the referendum has been the slump in South Africa with half the black proletariat now unemployed, living in barrack-like hovels in the townships and shanty towns with tarpaulin or corrugated iron roofs. They are forced to live in abysmal conditions of poverty and deprivation. The black proletariat, organised in COSATU unions, is extremely militant and combative - among the best working class fighters in the world. The recent 24-hour general strike was just one of many in recent years. Impoverished blacks were hit hard when zero VAT rating on maize, meal and other staples was dropped after six months, remaining only on milk and rice. Malnutrition already exists and will undoubtedly be increased.

Real GNP per capita has fallen from around 3905R in 1981 to 3075R in 1991. Unemployment continues to rise and inflation is in double figures with capital productivity remaining low.

But there is a shortage of skilled labour. South African industry is looking for a market in the whole of Africa. In effect, despite the official boycott by black

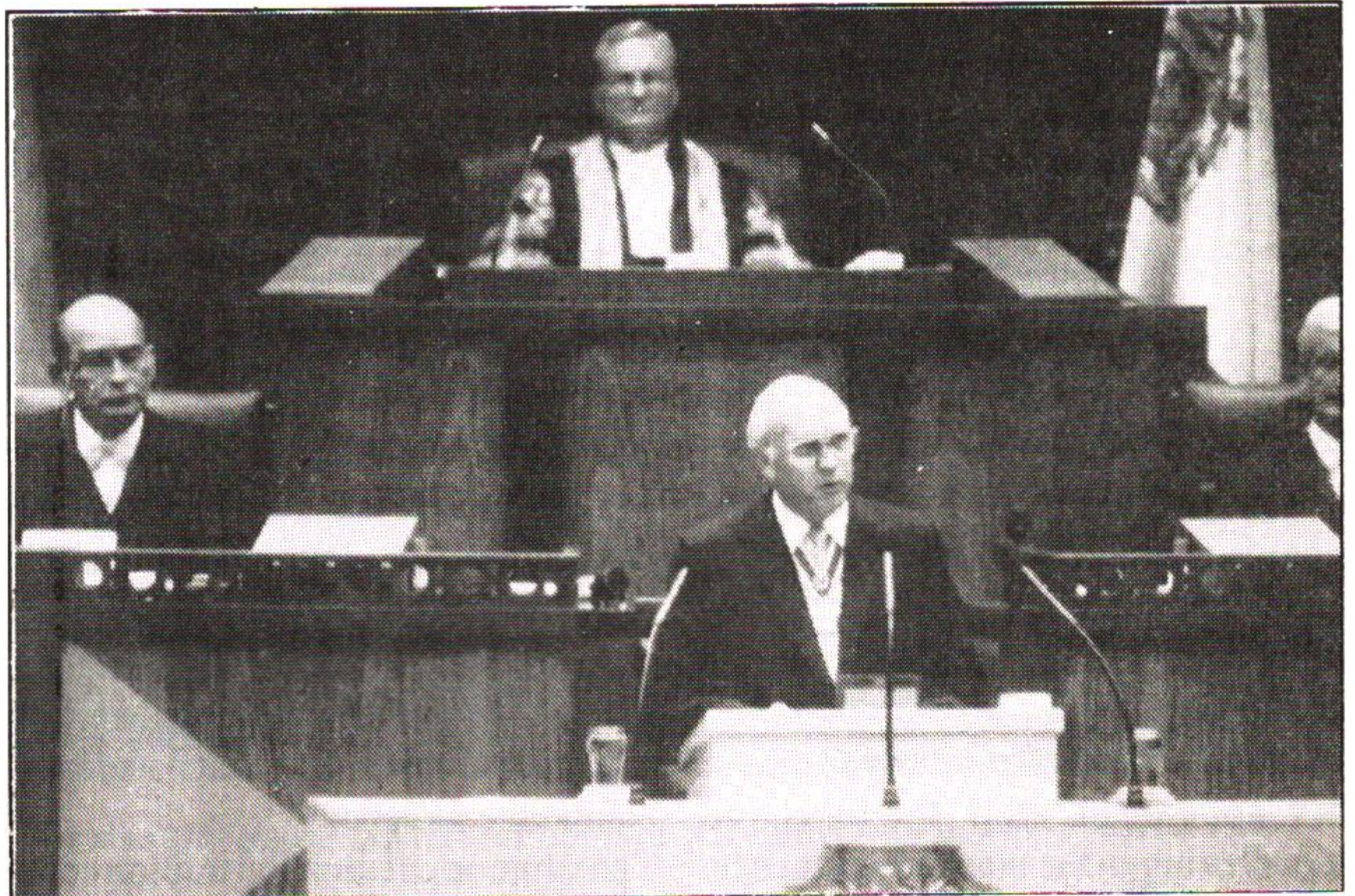
African governments, South African goods have already found their way in to other African markets.

Coalition

This is one of the reasons that finance capital and the big industries and monopolies are in favour of a coalition government comprising the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) of De Klerk - but on De Klerk's terms. But the interests of big business, in and of themselves, are not capable of determining the outcome. Other factors are involved.

a fair election and a majority ANC government on a one person, one vote basis.

The white ruling class has initiated a change in tactics from the blanket suppression of the majority blacks without any representation in parliament, resting on the brute force of the police and army. Suppression has continued by the systematic organisation of death squads round the thugs of Inkatha, the Zulu gangs organised by Chief Buthelezi. The security forces are involved backing and assisting the murder squads.



De Klerk at the opening session of parliament - his reforms will solve nothing.

The expectations of the mass of blacks have been aroused. Active workers and supporters of the ANC interpret "liberation" and a black government as meaning the taking over of the monopolies and the land so as to provide jobs, homes, pensions, education and health care.

This would not be provided even with

There is a dual tactic by the ruling class of negotiation and mass murder. In Natal and the black townships of the Witwatersrand, murder, arson and crime are flourishing. During the referendum campaign, and since, murder gangs continue their nefarious activities. Buthelezi's Inkatha represents perhaps three per cent of the population, not

even the majority of Zulus, but has the backing of the state machine. So much so that Mandela - the "partner" of De Klerk - in a public meeting was forced to denounce de Klerk's killing machine. 2,700 blacks have been killed in the past two years. There has been the systematic assassination of ANC activists - 83 were killed, 241 injured in a week. In another week, 150 were killed

financed Inkatha serruptitiously. Now the ANC complains; "There are men in the hostels (where Zulu men live in barrack-like accomodation on the Witwatersrand townships) who are not working. Their task is to commit murder. They are not being arrested." The government and security forces are behind the campaign. No real organised defence of the townships

or rent accommodation in these areas. So in practice, segregation is maintained though formally abolished.

Ruling Class

De Klerk and his ministers and the ruling class they represent want all this to continue. They have decided to have a coalition Government to defend these privileged whites, conceding nominally one person one vote. They will add a small black elite but will fundamentally maintain the status quo. The negotiations show that clearly.

In Namibia the national government changed tactics because of the drain of resources in the war against SWAPO (the South West African People's Organisation). Nevertheless the security forces destabilised SWAPO by organising murder gangs and playing off one tribe against another, thus preventing SWAPO from gaining a two-thirds majority in the elections which would have allowed them to change the constitution. Namibia is now nominally independent but under the domination of the white ruling class of South Africa.

Similar tactics have been used for the past two years. While supposedly negotiating an agreement between the ANC and the national Government, the De Klerk cabinet and security forces have been systematically trying to undermine the ANC in the townships by the murder campaign.

Negotiations

Now there is the negotiations with CODESA, Convention of Democratic South Africa, a committee of 19 parties supposed to be organising an interim Government and constitution and elections in late 1992 or early 1993. De Klerk wants to maintain economic, military and social power.

In a leaflet addressed to the white electors in the referendum, the De Klerk government outlines this clearly. Constraints on the power of future presidents will ensure that there will not be a "black dictator". A presidential



Police arresting ANC activists protesting about rent increases

and 10,000 made homeless. That is the grim background to the negotiations. The weakness and lack of insight of Mandela and the ANC is shown by his new proposals for security. Rebuffed by De Klerk and the security forces in his appeal to stop the massive bloodletting in the black townships he wants international aid. He is now advocating the setting up of an "international peace-keeping force" - as if the national government would agree to this when it is they who are behind the violence!

The ANC says that Inkatha and "pro-apartheid extremists" are provoking violence to ruin his chance of leading South Africa's first black majority Government. The De Klerk government

against Inkatha gangs and death squads has been organised by the ANC for fear of alienating the De Klerk government and the state, with the consequent breakdown of negotiations - that self-same government and state which is behind the violence!

The white population is 5 million compared to 34 million blacks, coloureds, mixed race and Indians. There is palatial housing for the middle and upper classes - swimming pools, two or more cars per family and low paid black servants. They want to preserve these privileges, keeping their own schools, neighbourhoods and Government. There is no longer open segregation in the neighbourhoods, but only a tiny minority of blacks could afford to buy

college is proposed sharing the presidency with more than one party in the executive. The party with most seats will be forced to seek support from other groups.

In reality white big business would maintain domination of the economy and the state. There would be supremacy of the constitution instead of the sovereignty of parliament plus a charter of fundamental rights with an "independent" judiciary, "impartial" control of the security forces. Not loyalty to the government but the maintenance of the (rigged) constitution would be their most important duty.

The protection of property rights, the entrenchment of the key elements of a market orientated economy in the constitution and the charter of fundamental rights in order to ensure that the economy is based on free enterprise is the maintenance of capitalism intact. De Klerk has imposed a set of preconditions which black leaders will have to accept if negotiations are to continue. Regional assemblies are proposed which would separate white from black areas. This in reality would mean separate schools, housing and so on.

Segregation

A further example of the fraudulent character of this constitution is the question of so-called "language rights." In theory, this would mean that parents could control their childrens' schools. In practice however, apart from a tiny minority of rich blacks who will be able to afford to live in white areas and whose children could then attend white schools, the overwhelming majority of white schools would in reality still be segregated.

Reform on De Klerk's terms means largely the maintenance of the status quo. The transitional parliament would consist of two houses; a national assembly elected by proportional representation and a senate of regional representatives elected on a basis of disproportional representation, a senate designed to inflate the strength of

minority parties to act as a white blocking mechanism. The proposed parliament must legislate only through consensus, ie a further blocking mechanism.

The ANC in negotiations correctly argues; "We feel that constructing two houses on the basis of assuming inequitable conflict between the majority (blacks) and the minorities (whites, coloureds, indians) is designed to maximise rather than reduce differences."

A constitution of this character would be a formula for paralysis. It would entrench the social privileges of the whites. It is clear that apart from minor changes that this is the constitution on

formula of George Orwell's Animal Farm, where some are "more equal" than others, in other words a travesty of democracy.

The ANC tries to conciliate De Klerk by arguing that with one constituent assembly no single party would have two thirds of the seats. Consequently the ANC would have to bargain with the whites. But De Klerk and big business cannot risk the possibility that the ANC might gain a two-thirds majority. They want to tie down Mandela, Ramaphosa and the ANC in such a way that power would remain in their hands, with the state and security forces largely intact.

The ANC general secretary objected to



The struggle against apartheid has struck a chord with workers everywhere.

offer. In fundamentals it will not be changed.

The ANC, of course, advocates a constituent assembly of 400 to 440. If there were a genuine acceptance of democracy and majority rule of one person one vote, that would be the constitution, at the same time guaranteeing the equal rights of all minorities, including the whites. The projected rights of De Klerk are based on the

promise of De Klerk that there would be a further white referendum on the projected constitution. He objected to De Klerk's "foolhardy" pledge to whites that they would be able to veto a new constitution in a referendum. "A referendum based on race would be completely unacceptable to us," he said.

But fine words butter no parsnips. The leader of the ANC has continually is-

sued such "ultimatums" to De Klerk, who has continually ignored them. Instead of damping down the masses the ANC leaders should have mobilised them to fight for a genuine democratic constituent assembly. They should have exposed the cynical manoeuvres of De Klerk, who wants to maintain all the power and privilege of big business, while relinquishing the trappings of "open Apartheid".

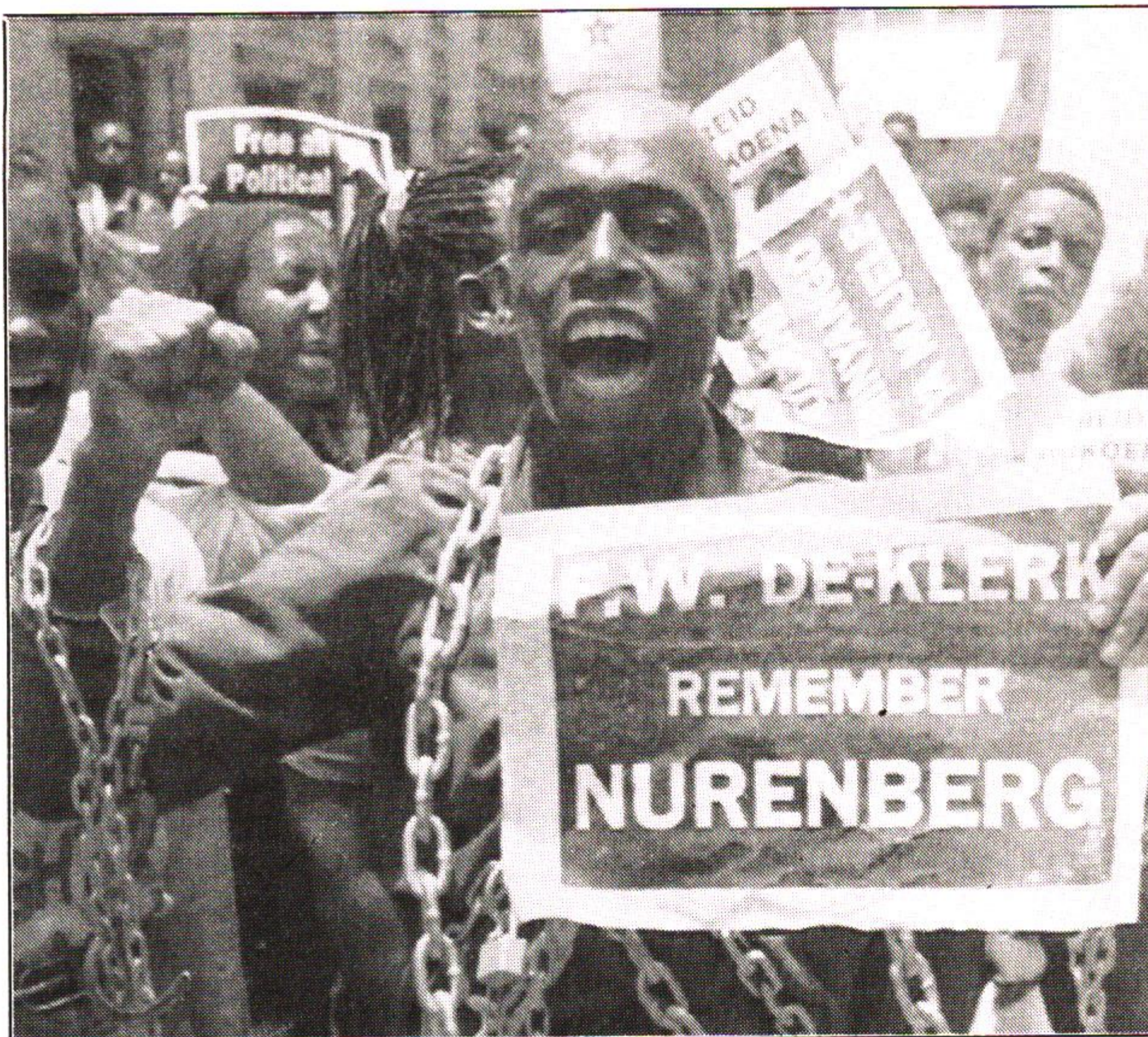
Enemies

Instead they are trying to aim at a "gentleman's agreement" with the most implacable enemies of genuine democracy. This whole policy is based on the idea of class collaboration, the "collaboration" of the tiger and the lamb. This is clearly shown by the fact that COSATU has gone into a committee with the multi-millionaire chamber of mines and the chamber of business, representing the industrialists and commerce and the banks.

This is precisely "foolhardy" of COSATU and the ANC. In the west every attempt at collaboration of the workers and big business has always ended in disaster, how much more will that be the case in South Africa, where there has been 300 years of white domination and the virtual enslavement of the blacks.

The only way in which an agreement could be reached would be through the complete capitulation of the ANC leaders to the interests of big business and the white elite. De Klerk may accept changes on secondary questions, but the essentials will not change. That is the least that the state, armed forces and the police will accept. That is the position which is backed by the media in South Africa, it will be supported by British and US big business. That is what they mean by the dismantling of apartheid.

Macmillan, in his speech to the South African parliament when he was prime minister of Britain, spoke about the "winds of change" sweeping Africa. He wanted the white ruling class to base



A December protest against the detention of political prisoners in Johannesburg.

themselves on a black middle class. This is still very small but now the South African government wishes to create a black elite, which as privileged and corrupt politicians, would collaborate in the exploitation of the black majority. Important but secondary concessions would be made but the basis of class and racial rule would be maintained. This would be the consequence of the policy of capitulation pursued by the ANC leadership.

Masses

Over a period, when the masses begin to realise this, it will undermine the basis of the ANC, which would suffer a series of crises and splits. The self-styled realists of the leadership are, in reality, the worst of utopians. They are trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. However, an agreement may not be reached because of the stringent conditions of De Klerk and the Government. Even if it were, it would not be too long-lasting.

It could work in Namibia because the overwhelming majority of the population were peasants. In South Africa the overwhelming majority are workers. What they want through majority rule is increased living standards, a bigger share of the wealth they produce, jobs decent housing, equal education, equal pensions and so on. This is the constitution they are interested in.

Therein lies an insoluble contradiction. The aspirations of the masses for a better life are irreconcilably opposed to the interests of the ruling class and the white elite, whose constitutional proposals, for leading to equal rights and "one person, one vote", are intended to block the road to real democracy. A possible coalition would be formed only on De Klerk's terms. This is a formula for massive social conflict and even civil war.

Ted Grant

WORKERS' PARTIES FAIL TO GAIN AS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS SLUMP

Despite the recession and massive redundancies the workers' parties were unable to take advantage of the Christian Democrats slump in the Italian General Election. A member of the editorial board of *Falce Martello*, the Italian Marxist paper, analyses the results.

The general election of 5-6 April put paid to the idea that voting never changes anything in Italy. For the first time in its history the Christian Democracy (DC), in power since 1945, fell below 30%. The four party governing coalition lost its majority. To understand the importance of these elections it is necessary to look at the nature of the DC and the Italian political system. Since its birth the Italian capitalist class has been in a weak position due to the relative backwardness of industry and has always had to accept compromises with other social forces in order to be able to govern. The unified state was built on the basis of an agreement between the industrial bourgeoisie and the farmers of the south, which was a factor in the underdevelopment of the south. Later the revolutionary upheaval of 1919-20 pushed the big capitalists to hand power to the petit-bourgeois and lumpen gangs organized by fascism. When the fascist regime crumbled the capitalists were faced with a state in ruins and a strong labour movement which between 1943 and 1948 could have taken power.

Concessions

The bourgeoisie called the socialist and communist leaders in to the government to hold back the workers movement while they tried to form a party to govern with. This party was the DC, which was able to gain a mass social base only by making big concessions to the interests of the petit-bourgeoisie, the Church and the mafia. The DC was a coalition of various parties and interests, held together by "anticommunism" and by its control of public funds, which through corruption and "jobs for the boys" guaranteed the power of various local cliques. For almost half a century the Italian capitalists have accepted and utilised the DC as the only possible instrument for

governing, in spite of the high cost of this apparatus and its bureaucratic slowness. The bourgeoisie could afford this thanks to the long post-war economic upswing, which guaranteed social stability and high profits.

The upturn in the workers struggles in the "hot autumn" of 1969 and in the struggles of the early 1970s threw this system in to crisis. As in the 1940s the capitalists were forced to lean on the leaders of the PCI (Communist Party) and the unions to stay in power. In the 1976 elections the PCI reached its historical high of 35%.

Coalition

A left government seemed within reach, but Berlinguer (then PCI leader) although never formally admitted in to the government, entered in to a de facto coalition with the DC (governments of national unity, 1977-79) as union leaders launched the "policy of sacrifices" accepting redundancies and rationalisations.

After utilising and discrediting the PCI, the bourgeoisie removed it from the majority (1979) and took its revenge on the labour movement with savage restructuring programmes which expelled a million workers from the factories and wiped out many of the gains of the 1970s.

With the "great fear" over, everything seemed to be back to normal for the capitalists. The boom of the '80s brought record profits and the governing coalition (DC, socialists, republicans, liberals and social-democrats) was fairly stable.

But the capitalists problems had only been postponed and reappeared with the current recession and with the agreements on European unification. The stability of the government had been bought at the price of an enormous growth in the public debt. In 1991 it was 103% of GNP which is a huge burden on the economy and would at present

prevent Italy from joining the European monetary union.

The capitalists solution is simple - cut social spending and pensions and abolish wage-indexing. Their problem is that this policy cannot be carried through by the DC. It is not possible to cut the annual deficit by 60-80 billion lira through a party for whom every lira cut from the budget of a local authority means long negotiations between the various power cliques.

Thus the bourgeoisie began to prepare for the possibility of a government without the DC even before the elections. A year ago the Republicans, the party most closely connected with big business, left the government, saying that they would no longer support a government that did not take drastic measures to deal with the public debt. The programme of the big capitalists is to change the constitution and electoral law (to something similar to the British system) to reduce the number of parties and put a muzzle on the DC apparatus.

Split

This programme has split the DC, with the emergence of a new current in sharp conflict with the old leadership. Its leader, Segni, even came close to expulsion from the DC. The election results demonstrate this crisis of the DC, but have not solved the problems of big business.

The Republicans, who had the open support of the big bourgeoisie, have remained a minor force with 6-7%. The petit-bourgeoisie of the North has broken with the DC but has not lined up on the side of big capital. Fearing they would have to pay the price of entry into Europe they voted massively for the Lombard League, a right-wing party with a demagogic programme which combines attacks on corruption with racism. In many cities, including Milan, they exceeded or equalled the DC vote.

exceeded or equalled the DC vote. In this crisis of the DC, the labour movement seems totally passive. A year ago the PCI changed its name to "Democratic Party of the Left" (PDS) and there was a split-off of about 100,000 members. They formed Communist Refoundation, PRC. But neither the PDS nor the PRC have managed to deal with the reasons which brought about the crisis of the PCI. Their combined votes

explains why attacks like the abolition of the law on wage-indexing (signed on December 10) or proposals for a wage freeze have gone through without arousing an organized response from the factories.

In the election this mood was reflected in the fall of support for the workers' parties and in the growth of the League which won votes from unorganised layers of the working class too. Now there is no clear majority



Workers on the streets of Milan. As the recovery comes more demonstrations will be seen.

show a fall in relation to the old PCI. The workers saw the split as a sign of weakness and can see no solutions from either party. On October 23 there was a four-hour general strike against the 1992 budget proposals. It was well supported by the workers but the union leaders did not take up the struggle and no alternative proposals came from the PRC.

Recession

Workers are aware of the difficulty in mobilising now. They see a divided party, the trade union leadership moving further to the right and feel the weight of recession. 300,000 industrial jobs are threatened. Fiat, Olivetti, Pirelli and Montedison are closing factories. This ex-

to form a government and the bourgeoisie is weighing up all the possibilities. They may call the PDS into the government and new elections in the short-term cannot be ruled out.

All the parties, mainly the DC, are internally divided and the absence of struggles is increasing the confusion. But this situation will not last for ever. As soon as the workers feel a little stronger, particularly if the economy begins to recover, they will move to regain what they had to concede in these years. This will create the conditions for reopening discussion in the ranks of the workers' parties and rebuilding the unity of the labour movement.

BELGIUM

People are calling it Black Sunday - the day the extreme right-wing Vlaams Blok doubled its vote in the elections. The Vlaams Blok won a seat in Brussels and another ultra-racist group, the AGIR won a seat in the industrial city of Liege. The Vlaams Blok have now become the largest party in Antwerp, the biggest city in the north of Belgium, scoring around 25% of the vote, and they are the second party in Mechelen. The results shocked many workers and in particular the youth in the schools and universities. But it did not paralyse them. On the contrary it has had the effect of a whip.

The bourgeois parties fear the election results but for quite different reasons to the youth. They fear a radicalisation and mobilisation of the youth against the fascists. Their fears are coming true. In the ten days after the results, students from the main universities organised numerous, massive demonstrations. In Antwerp 3000 took to the streets. In Brussels, the Socialist Teachers Union and workers from some of the big factories joined a national protest, and the mood for unified, national action became clear. This pressure led to the calling of a national demonstration on March 22nd with the backing of the socialist parties and the two main unions. The call for a demonstration captured the mood in many of the larger factories as workers have begun to understand why they need to fight the fascists who represent a threat to the whole working class not just the ethnic minorities. For example, when 25,000 shopworkers organised a national strike in February, the pickets were provoked and intimidated by gangs from the Vlaams Blok. On one of the picket lines they threatened strikers by saying that the police had given them the go-ahead to beat the pickets up. The awareness of the workers to the dangers of racism and fascism has coincided with a wave of struggle, especially in the metal industry where many immigrant workers are employed.

But there still remains a problem. Much of the anti-racist activity lacks a clear direction and no real attempt has been made to link it up with the struggle in the factories. Both the bourgeois and the socialist parties limit their demands to increased democracy without calling for the right to vote for immigrant workers. But the youth are beginning to play a greater role in the anti-racist activity and instinctively understand the need to change the society which produces racism and fascism. The next year could see an increase in support for the Vlaams Blok largely due to the recession but it will also see the building of a powerful movement against them.

by Erik in Brussels

CAN THE WEST AFFORD THE EAST?

Will the capitalists of the West be able to transform the former Stalinist economies of Eastern Europe including the huge economy of the former Soviet Union into fully fledged capitalist economies without major upheaval and with the acceptance of the workers in those countries. Michael Roberts juggles the figures.

The collapse of Stalinism, in some cases without much of a fight, created illusions in many people in Eastern Europe that "democracy" also meant the end of the public sector and a move towards "the market" as the only way to peace and prosperity. At least that is what the pro-capitalist leaders of these countries - Walesa, Yeltsin, Kohl and Havel, backed by the US and EC, told the people was necessary.

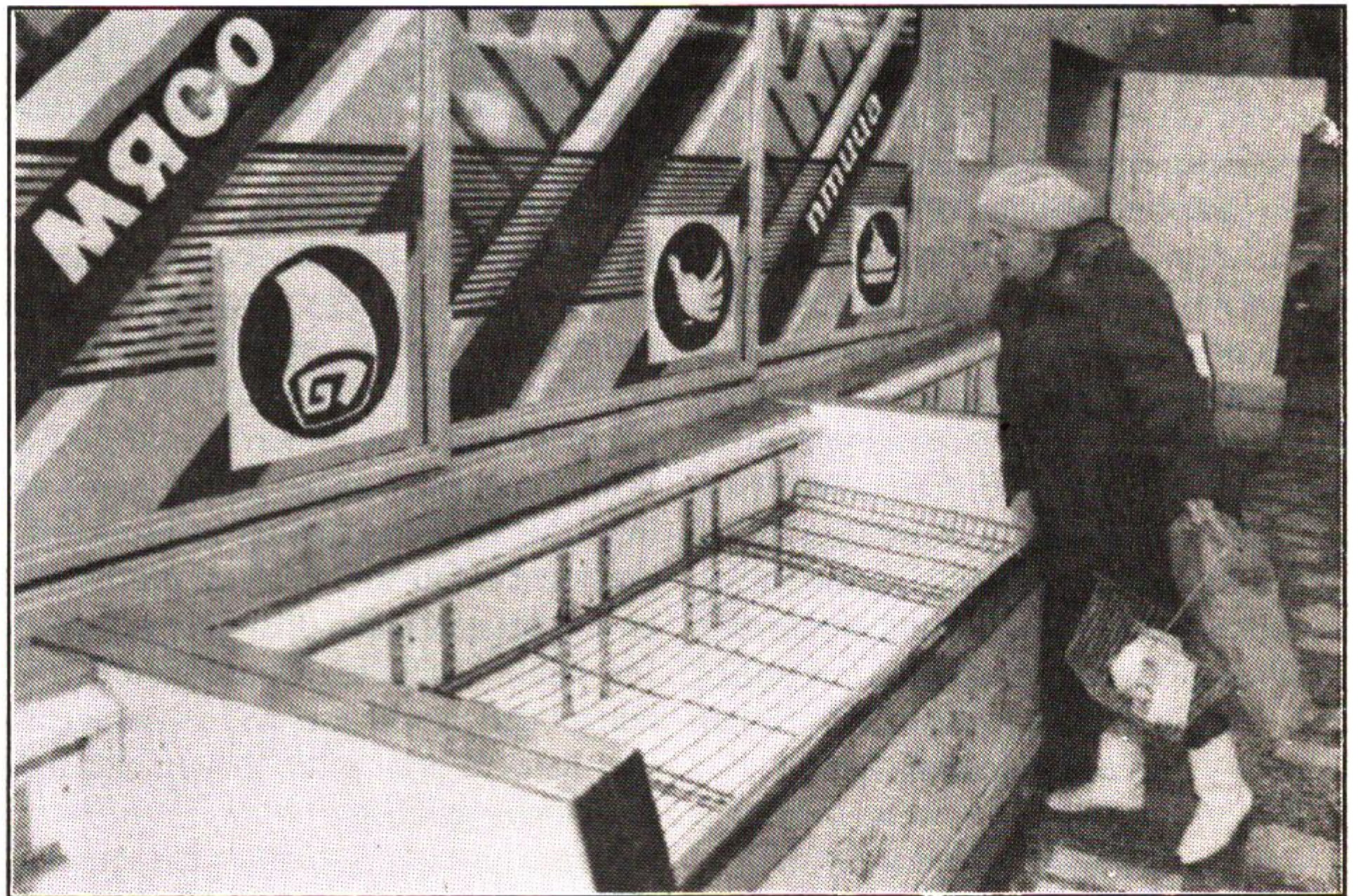
And what did these people propose as a programme for prosperity under capitalism? Egged on by economists in the West, they began a crash package of measures to "free" prices from state controls and to privatise state industry.

Shock Therapy

But this "shock therapy" has been a disaster for the economies and for the mass of people in Eastern Europe. The UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) estimates that throughout Eastern Europe output fell in 1991 by 14%. This means that since Stalinism was overthrown in 1988, output in the former Stalinist states has fallen 25%.

The ECE report comments that the "invisible hand of the market is really an iron fist." The slump is now as serious as that of North America in the 1930s. In the CIS the jobless rate is likely to reach 24% by the end of this year. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates there will be 15 million unemployed this year (12%) and another 30 million in state sector jobs now under threat.

Nearly 80% of workers in Russia are now on wages below the official poverty line as prices shoot upwards. Inflation is now at 1% a day! In Poland, shock-therapy pro-capitalist measures have produced a 40% cut in living standards and 12% unemployment, rising to 20% by the end of 1992. One-fifth of those unemployed are officially homeless and 15,000 are sleeping on the streets. And this in a country which has not seen unemployment since the 1950s.



Can the West provide the aid to fill the shelves in Moscow

The Russian government's own forecasting unit expects output to fall 25-30% this year, with oil production to fall 14%. The rouble is increasingly worthless and the government cannot pay back any of its \$70bn foreign debt. No wonder that there is increasing disillusionment with the market and "democracy". Support for the Russian government's economic counter-revolution of price rises and wage controls has fallen to one-third. Only 25% of industrial workers now support Yeltsin's programme according to an opinion poll in *Izvestia*. Election enthusiasm is waning fast: only 40% voted in the last Polish general election.

In response, the pro-capitalist governments have launched attacks on any opposition. Yeltsin has been fighting the fledgling independent trade unions in Russia. He has banned political parties and other "public organisations" from the workplace. This decree was ostensibly designed to attack the old Stalinist CP. But it is now being used by management to ban trade unions. The new McDonalds restaurant in Moscow has banned unions and there is now a draft bill before the Moscow parliament to stop the

right of unions to negotiate collective agreements with employers.

Unions

Mikhail Shmakov head of the 5.5 million strong Moscow Federation of Trade Unions said: "Yeltsin's decree on trade unions in the workplace is in clear breach of ILO standards and is part of the drive to create a super-cheap, highly qualified labour force in Russia." Support for organisations that helped bring down Stalinism but now support the pro-capitalist privatisations and market reforms is waning fast. In Poland, Solidarity now has only two million members compared to 10 million in 1981. The old Stalinist union OPZZ, which is campaigning against pro-capitalist measures now has 3 million members and is still growing. The Walesa regime is trying to bankrupt it by seizing its assets and is also calling for a "limitation on the right to strike in certain areas because of the damaging economic consequences."

In Hungary 20,000 health workers demonstrated against IMF-imposed public spending cuts and in support of a 50% wage increase. The old Stalinist union

MSZOSZ, with two million paid-up members is leading the opposition while the government-financed pro-capitalist unions remain small and weak. The supporters of capitalism argue all will be well once the economies are converted to private ownership - nothing can be done while the state sector constitutes 88% of output as it still does in Russia. But increasingly workers fear that moving to the market will only benefit a few speculators and foreign investors and will do nothing for them. Yeltsin sought to assuage that fear when he spoke to the Russian Parliament in April: "we must create millions of property owners, not hundreds of millionaires." But that is precisely what privatisation, if it is successfully implemented, would mean. In Russia, managers are offered up to 20% of the stock of privatised companies. They can only buy them by borrowing from foreign investors or raising cash through the black market. That means productive wealth will be in the hands of a few, rather than Yeltsin's Thatcherite sham of the "property owning democracy."

Expertise

But can privatisation be achieved and will it be successful in taking a capitalist economy forward? In Germany, Treuhand privatisation agency aims to privatise 10,000 companies in the East employing 5 million people. They aim to sell 15% of these assets to the capitalists of the West. One Western banker commented that the treuhand "did not have a prayer" of doing it because of the state of the economy and the lack of capitalist expertise. Moreover, privatisation in Russia will not eliminate monopolies because of the concentration of assets in such large plants. Over 40% of the former Soviet Union's output is in goods produced on just one site. Single sites produce all the sewing machines, tram rails, turbines, freezers and cooking equipment, 97% of trolley buses, and 95% of locomotives. These units cannot be broken up easily. No foreign competition means that it is easy for any privatised monopoly to raise prices rather than raise output. So inflation is boosted and production slowed. If wages cannot match these price rises then demand for workers goods falls. The Russian Institute of Forecasting expects total industrial output to fall 25% this year and consumer goods output to collapse 40-45%, if the energy prices planned by



Lech Walesa - from hero to villain

Yeltsin are implemented.

Inflation is lowering the demand for farm produce while forcing up equipment costs and fertiliser for the farmers. Agricultural prices have risen 400% in the last year, but prices of farm inputs have risen 800%. With output and demand falling there's no incentive to invest. Capital investment is predicted to fall 30% this year, profits will be non-existent and so therefore will taxes for public spending. Consequently the budget deficit will soar and governments will have to print more money and fuel inflation or go bust.

Reliance on exports to offset the slump in the domestic economy is hopeless in such a large home market as Russia's. Only a recovery in domestic output and investment can turn the Russian economy around. And Russian capitalism cannot achieve that on its own. It needs massive foreign help. So the future for capitalism in Eastern Europe comes down to the question: can and will the West pay for the east?

Rouble

A US stockbroking firm estimated the West would need to supply each year to the CIS alone at least: \$18-24 billion in direct aid to meet the needs of the population for food and basic commodities and stabilise the rouble: \$15-50 billion to rebuild the infrastructure: \$25-45 billion to restore the energy industries particularly oil: \$5-15 billion to modernise the power stations and more to help agriculture, benefits and so on. In total it makes \$76 billion to \$167 billion each year for the next decade. So far the the West has announced aid of \$24 billion which may help the immediate emergencies and keep Yeltsin in power for a little longer.

Yeltsin's economics minister Gaidar says this assistance is "comparable to the Marshall Plan." It is true that the Marshall

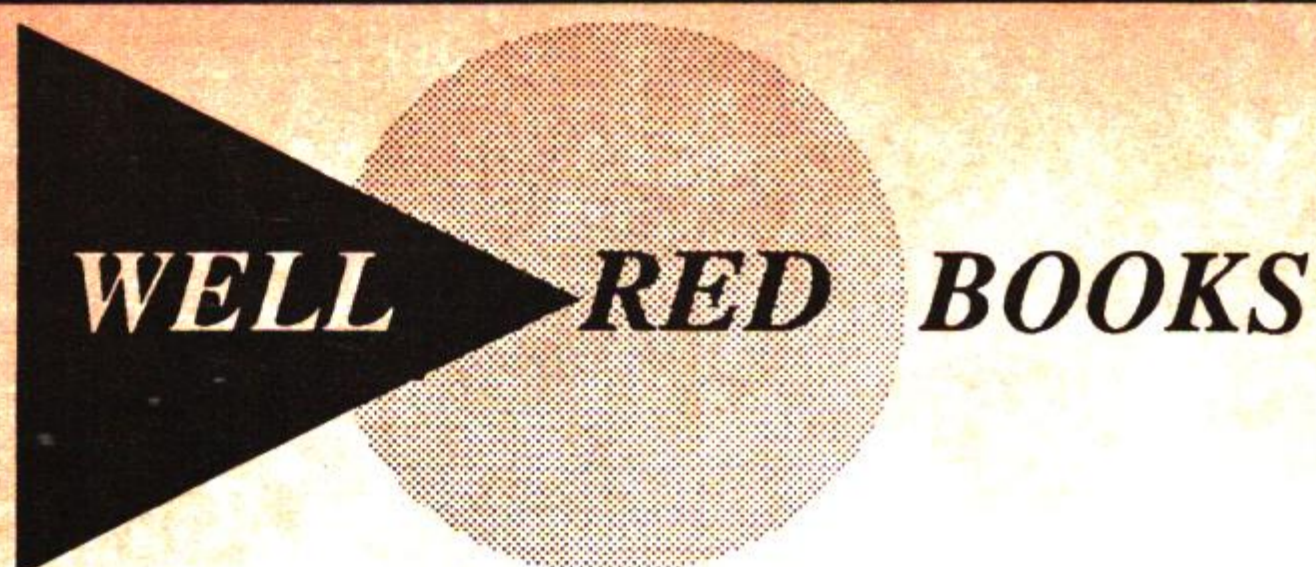
Plan used to restore capitalism in Europe after the second world war cost about \$17 billion a year-but that figure was provided every year for ten years and it was in the form of direct grants. This time as the ECE says, "the amount of genuine aid has been small. The \$24 billion package is mostly loans at commercial rates and there is no more help planned. So it is no way near enough to begin to solve the overall problem of transforming Russia."

Yet the cost of meeting an overall recovery package is not beyond the means of the West. The annual estimated cost would be less than the proportion of GNP that the US economy spent on the Marshall Plan. It amounts to about 4-8% of Soviet GNP each year or about 2% of the West's GDP each year. A 50% reduction in the West's defence spending would cover the cost. But is it possible? Can a British government agree to reduce growth by 2% a year for the next ten years and divert these resources to Russia? And that is the choice of an economy which will barely achieve 2% growth. A 2% cut in GNP growth rates each year for the next decade could produce social upheaval in the economies which barely reach that growth rate at present.

And what would happen if the West entered another recession in the mid-1990s. Even in relatively rich Germany, the Kohl government is finding that the cost of funding the transformation of east Germany in to capitalism is stretching the economy to breaking point. The opposition SPD estimate it will cost DM140 billion in annual transfers from the West to the East each year for ten years - or one trillion dollars.

Unification

Capitalist unification will never bring the workers of Eastern Germany the land of milk and honey they expected. How can the US cut defence expenditure by 50% in order to fund recovery in Russia? Such a cut, would mean huge cutbacks in jobs and living conditions for US workers who depend on the military-industrial complex. The governments of the West could finance the transformation of the east. But such a diversion of resources threatens the social fabric at home if they do. But if they don't, how much longer can the pro-capitalist governments of the east survive before there is an eruption against the market by workers there.



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Steve Jones, Journal Manager

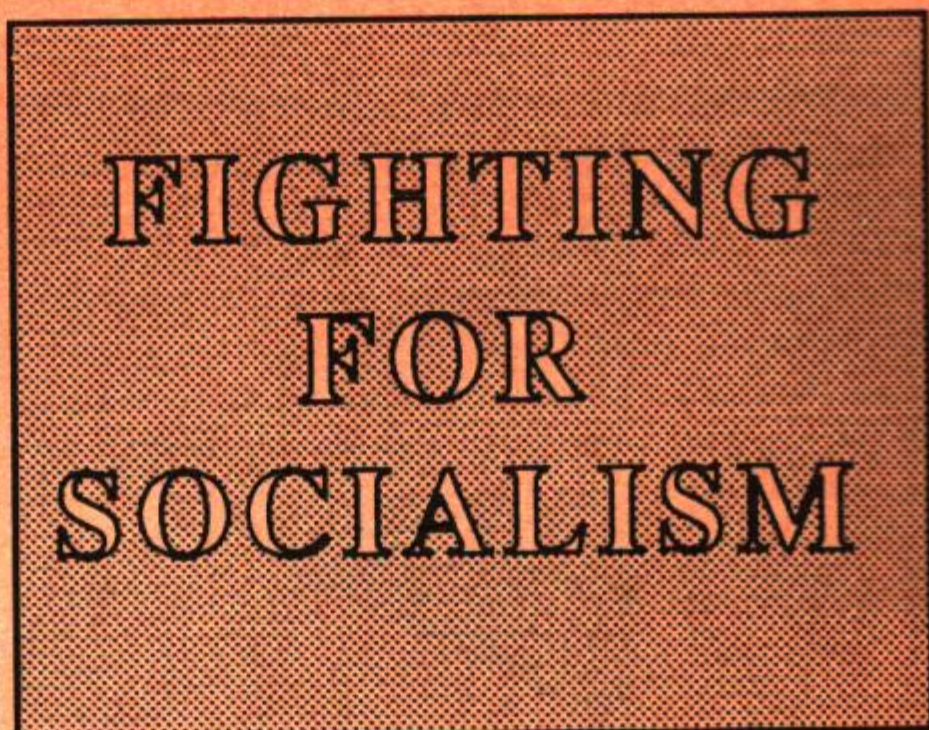
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