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WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING?



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EDITORIAL

TORIES TO BAIL OUT SPECULATORS

The fragile basis of the so-called prosperity of British and international capitalism is shown by the crisis that has developed in the property market.

This development is not a new phenomenon. In 1974-75 the secondary banks, which had lent money to the swindlers and speculators had to be bailed out by the Labour government and the reason for this is that if the secondary banks had gone bust it would have affected the major banks too. This would have led to a crisis in the whole economy.

Now property speculation has reached much higher levels than it had previously.

As the Daily Express reported on May 29:

"This property recession is deeper and worse than 1974-75. At that time the entire banking system was threatened.

Now loans outstanding to UK property companies at £40 billion are more than twice as high in real terms as the loans granted in 1974 and nearly 20% of central London office space is vacant. Twenty years ago it was never more than 10%." (Daily Express 29/5/92)

Thus the fragile nature of the "recovery" in the Western world.

Canary Wharf has loans from banks in Canada, USA and Britain and if they allowed Canary Wharf to go completely broke it would have international repercussions.

Now the glorious free market of Thatcherism and Majorism can tolerate 3 million unemployed and counts every penny doled out to the sick, unemployed and old age pensioners while at the same time bailing out the property billionaires with public money.

According to press reports the government intends to fill the vacant office space at Canary Wharf by redeploying thousands of civil servants.

They pretend that they need this space through sleight of hand in order to bail out the banks and property speculators.

The elaborate structures of capitalism are built on chicken legs.

According to the Financial Times, even the attempt to bail out the banks will not be sufficient to guarantee a boom.

The banks "will not generate nearly enough retained earnings to meet the level of loan demand generated by even a fairly modest recovery....The consequence will be continuing deflationary pressure on public spending.

"As the ERM precludes this route, (the lowering of interest rates) the prospect is that the pain now emanating from Docklands will spread widely through the economy for a long time to come." (Financial Times 29/5/92)

Thus the standard of living and job prospects of tens of thousands are affected by the greedy speculators and their attempts to increase their wealth at the workers expense.

SUMMIT FARCE

The earth summit taking place in Rio has become a farce. The leaders of the main Western nations have made it quite clear - they will not sign anything which costs them money.

George Bush, facing pressure from US big business not to do a deal has made it quite clear who calls the tune in the White House when he told reporters at a press conference that he would not agree to any measures which were not acceptable to American businesses. The Germans too, with the mounting costs of reunification are adamant they won't be forced into cleaning up the environment if it costs them too much.

But what price can they put on clean air, water and a safe environment?

And the leaders of these countries who claim to care so much for the world's poor are doing their best to avoid actually meeting any by driving on a specially built motorway from the airport to the conference centre so as to avoid the slum areas of Rio.

As one slum dweller told a US television reporter: "This conference can only make global warming worse with all the hot air that is being talked."

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SUBJECTS:

Morning - Dialectics
Afternoon - Historical Materialism
All Socialist Appeal Readers Welcome

FOOTBALL CRAZY, FOOTBALL (PROFIT) MAD!

The whole of Leicester went mad last month as Leicester City made it to Wembley in the play-offs. We didn't win anything in the end this season but some people are still happy enough - the club made millions this year, at the expense of the fans!

For one match I travelled on the train to Brighton which cost me £26. As I arrived the station announcer informed everyone that the game had been cancelled because of a waterlogged pitch. The game was called off at 1.30pm after 1,000 fans had made the journey down.

The following Monday I wrote to Leicester's secretary to complain at the way fans are treated by the clubs and he wrote back saying that bad weather was "the hand of God." Yet most clubs have done nothing to protect their pitches from the elements, despite all the money made from "the people's game." In the scramble for the super-profits to be made out of the multi-billion pound business known as Association Football, fans are bottom of the list of priorities.

This season Leicester made millions from gate receipts and transfer deals. We queued for hours for Wembley tickets and thousands went home disappointed. What was the club's main concern? That people were using the club logo to sell shoddy merchandise and the club lost a few thousand pounds which they would have made from the sale of "official" goods.

In the next few years, clubs plan to reduce the capacity at their grounds even more. This can only mean two things: fans being refused entry and prices rocketing. The way the game is going means that away supporters will be discouraged from travelling by being offered no tickets, matches will lose their atmosphere, television will dictate the way the game is run and the majority of clubs will go bust or part-time like Aldershot or Carlisle.

The new Premier League will be the death of football as we know it. A few wealthy people will get even richer and the weak will go to the wall. It is a pity that the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) didn't go ahead with its planned strike. I haven't met a single fan who wouldn't have supported them. Instead they've settled for an improved deal worth £1.5 million per year, which won't be enough with all the unemployed footballers who'll be knocking on the PFA's doors in years to come as a result of the Premier League.

Local authorities have to step in by taking over grounds, as in Halifax, and the government must be forced to act to save clubs by spending the revenue it takes out of the game in tax. This is an issue which could unite fans everywhere.

Mike Pullin, Leicester

Journalists Fight to Save Union Rights



Metro News NUJ members demonstrate outside the company's office during their day of action.

Reed Midland journalists are waging a major campaign to fight to save their trade union rights. The company, who own several titles across the Midlands, derecognised the National Union of Journalists earlier this month and introduced new personal contracts which remove the right of the union to bargain collectively on pay or conditions and which have already cut workers' holidays and unilaterally changed the grievance procedures.

The "Don't Read Reed" campaign has already won the support of thousands of trade unionists throughout the Midlands and NUJ members at the Birmingham based Metro News held a demonstration and rally outside their office to build the campaign for industrial action across all the group's titles.

NUJ National Executive member Jeremy Dear said: "The workers at Reed Midland have shown they are prepared to take action to defend the most basic rights to organise collectively. They deserve the full support of the union. At the moment the campaign is relying on the efforts of local activists. Now the union as a whole must

put its weight behind the dispute and take up the campaign. The Metro News has already voted for industrial action and now we have to take the campaign to the other titles and win the case to spread the action. The overwhelming majority of journalists at the major titles have refused to sign their new contracts and are looking to the union to provide a clear lead. So far all the union nationally has managed to do is question the validity of the ballot papers at Metro News. Despite this we are getting on with organising the boycott campaign in conjunction with trades councils, local Labour parties and trade unions. As a result of journalists seeing union members fighting on their behalf we have recruited more members at Reed since the campaign was launched. It is vital we win this dispute and give confidence to members in other companies looking eagerly at the result of this dispute. It has taken four months to actually get a meeting of the union representatives from each paper. We must increase the pressure on Reed immediately.

By a Birmingham NUJ branch member

'Ello, 'Ello, "Ello, What's Going On 'Ere Then?

On hearing of the Director of Public Prosecutions decision not to prosecute members of the now disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad on the grounds of insufficient evidence senior police officers were falling over themselves to claim the squad had now been totally vindicated. The Police Superintendents Association branch in the West Midlands said: "Many of the complaints were made by dangerous criminals who did not miss the opportunity to attempt to damage the reputation of a professional and very effective team of police officers who served the public of the West Midlands very well for many years."

Maybe that's what they think. But the Birmingham Six and the others who have had their convictions overturned on the basis of unsound confessions may well think differently!

WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING?

The general and local election results have been greeted with jubilation by big business and despair by many workers. But as **Ted Grant** explains - the celebrations of the Tories and their friends in the City will be short lived.

"Today they are ringing their bells, tomorrow they will be wringing their hands." (Walpole)

Following their victory in the general election, the Tories have secured an increased number of seats in the local elections. The Labour Party lost ground in comparison to the general election, and the last local elections.

The results were greeted with jubilation in the city. The Stock Exchange rose, as did the pound. The capitalist press, which had expected Labour to win the general election, returned to the old theme that Labour could "never win a majority again." But the euphoria of the ruling class will be short lived. The serious strategists of capital have understood that the new Conservative government will be faced with a disastrous economic situation.

It was not generally realised that the Financial Times actually advocated a Labour vote on the eve of the general election. They understood that whoever won would be in a difficult position. The CBI warned the Labour leaders that they must abandon even their programme of timid reforms, or face massive sabotage in the form of an investment strike. This would have begun from the very first day of a Labour government. It is not even certain the Labour leaders would have been able to deliver the promised reforms on child benefit and pensions. On the other hand, the Financial Times pointed out that if the Tories won, they also would have to drop their policy of tax cuts.

Thatcherism

In reality, any government which operates on the basis of capitalism must obey the laws of the capitalist system. It is no accident that the "socialist" leaders in France, Spain, Australia and New Zealand have all carried out the same policies as Thatcher did in Britain. A Labour government which accepted the rule of the banks and monopolies would have



Euphoria in the City at the Tories' election victory will not last for long

behaved no differently. Normally, the main parties of the capitalists come to power in a period of boom, and then, when the economy gets into difficulties, hand over power to social-democracy to carry out a policy of cuts and austerity.

Had Labour won the election, it would have been compelled to do the bidding of the CBI and the City, carrying out a policy of cuts in living standards. Having taken upon itself all the dirty work of the capitalists, the way would have been prepared for a comeback of the Tories in 1997. Now all this has changed. Despite all the brave talk about "economic recovery", the British economy is in dire straits.

Under Thatcher, there was a budget surplus. This was because of the £100 billion revenue obtained from North Sea oil. In addition, to use the expression of Harold MacMillan, they "sold the family silver," disposing of nationalised assets such as British Telecom, gas, electricity, water and British Airways, at knockdown prices. Now there is little more to be sold off, and returns from North Sea oil are declining.

John Major is already facing a budget deficit

of £28-30 billion, which may rise to £40 billion in 1993. The huge revenue from North Sea oil has been frittered away, mainly on unemployment benefit, instead of being used to renovate the infrastructure or invest in re-tooling and modernising British industry. British capitalism remains the "sick man of Europe."

British Decline

The boom in world capitalism in the period 1982-90 served to mask the relative decline of Britain vis-a-vis her main competitors. In the former "workshop of the world," the share of manufacturing industry in gross domestic product dropped from 28.4% in 1971 to 23.1% in 1989. The number of workers employed in manufacturing fell from 8.4 million in 1969 to 5.1 million in 1990. On the other hand, the parasitic banking sector grew from 9.3% in 1971 to 18.7% in 1989.

In the past, Trotsky said that the far-sighted British ruling class made its calculations not in years, but in decades. Now the blindness and ignorance of the British capitalists is faithfully reflected in their leaders, crude and obtuse parvenus like Thatcher and Major.

Under Thatcher, 25% of Britain's manufacturing base was destroyed. Now right-wing journals such as the *Economist* describe this, in the indecent expression of John Maynard Keynes, as the "creative destruction of capital." There is nothing "creative" about it. The wholesale closure of plants and factories is merely a graphic expression of the sickness of capitalism.

The mythological figure Procrustes cut off the arms and legs of his guests to make them fit his bed. Now capitalism, in its period of decay, is destroying the means of production to force them to fit into its own Procrustean bed.

World Market

The argument that the closure of steel mills and mines is merely a preparation for a new "industrial revolution" based on computers and information technology is false to the core. On a world scale, the market for computers is already saturated. Japan alone has sufficient productive capacity to supply the entire world market with micro-chips and computers.

The Japanese were developing a whole new generation of super-computers, capable of carrying out eight trillion calculations in one second. This fact in itself gives us a tantalising glimpse of what wonders could be accomplished by a democratically planned socialist economy. But the Japanese project has been abandoned because, on a capitalist basis, there is no market for it. The big Japanese companies like Sony, NEC and Toshiba are cutting back on their investments. The fundamental reason for this is over-production, although it is expressed as overcapacity.

For a whole period, capitalism developed the productive forces on the basis of an enormous expansion of world trade. This is what sustained the growth of the British economy, in common with all the other developed countries of capitalism. But now we are entering into an entirely different phase. The enormous upswing in world trade is reaching its limits. The increased contradictions between the industrialised capitalist countries is shown by the current GATT negotiations, which have dragged on for years with no deal in sight.

The next period will see an increasing tendency towards protectionism and trade wars between the USA, Japan and Western Europe. Within the EEC itself, there are heightened tensions between Britain, Germany, France and the other member states.

In such a period British capitalism is in a weak competitive position. This fact is reflected in the balance of payments deficit.

Normally, in a recession, the balance of payments ought to improve because most people do not have money to spend on imports. Despite this, there is already a balance of payments deficit of £8 billion this year. In the event of a small upturn in the British economy, there will be a big increase in imports, because British industry has been decimated and will not be able to meet demand for cars, fridges, TVs and other goods. This, in turn, will lead to a rapid deterioration of the balance of payments and a fall in the pound, forcing up interest rates and pushing the economy into recession once more.

The entry of Britain into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) means that British capitalism is boxed into a corner. Therefore the only way to confront their rivals is by a ruthless policy of slashing public spending, holding down living standards and piling on relentless pressure to squeeze every ounce of profit from the workers' sweat, nerves and muscle.

Higher Wages

This is the real policy of Major and the Tories. It is a finished recipe for class struggle in Britain in the coming period. In spite of the present lull on the industrial front, beneath the surface of apparent calm, seething discontent is beginning to build up.

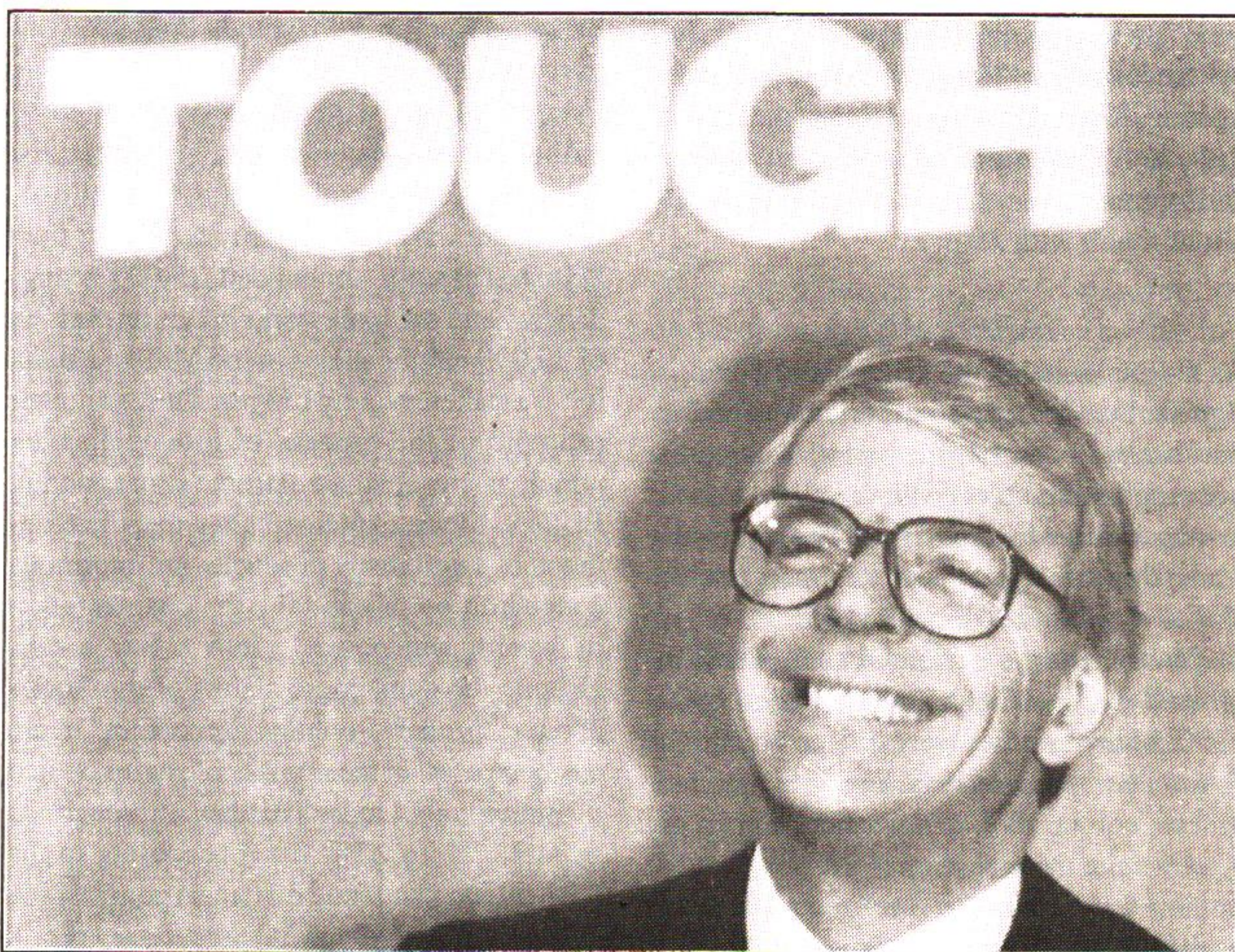
In Sheffield alone, 44% of the workers are being treated for stress-related illnesses, as a result of the continual pressure at work, speed-ups, productivity deals and so on. In the past period, the workers were prepared to put up

with these conditions in return for higher wages, although this was at the cost of their health and family life.

In conditions of boom the bosses could afford to give concessions out of their increased profits. But this process has now reached its limits. In reality, the British capitalists want to compete against Japanese and German technology by basing themselves on cheap labour. British workers are now the "coolies" of Western Europe. But all history shows that an economy based on cheap labour alone can never prevail against an economy based on modern machinery and technology. There is a limit to how much stress and strain the workers can tolerate. By piling on the pressure, the capitalists are preparing the way for social explosions at a later date.

On the surface of it, the victory of Conservative reaction appears complete. The right wing Labour and trade union leaders have inevitably drawn the conclusion that they lost the election because they were not right wing enough! In reality, Labour could have won the election if they had explained to the workers and middle class the real nature of the crisis of British capitalism. Instead, Kinnock and the Labour right wing had the policy of "me-tooism". On the fundamental questions their policies were virtually indistinguishable from those of the Tories and Liberals.

They did not wage a serious election campaign but concentrated on American-style "razzamatazz" and "TV spots." They never mentioned the working class. They did not



Despite his pledge to bring about a classless society Major will attack workers living standards.

attack big business, even to the extent that Harold Wilson did in the 1960s.

The Tories spent £20 million on the election, donated by big business. Yet when they launched a furious attack on Labour's links with the trade unions, the Labour leaders did not counter-attack, exposing the Tories big business links, but apologised and retreated. And shamefully they are still retreating.



Labour's campaign relied on razzamatazz and "soundbites" but it failed to inspire the workers.

Both John Smith and Bryan Gould have called for a reduction of Labour's alleged "dependence" on the unions. It was said of the kings of France that they "forgot nothing and learned nothing." The right wing leaders of the Labour Party and the unions have learned nothing and forgotten everything. They are completely out of touch with reality.

Alternative

As we explained in the last issue of *Socialist Appeal*, the victory of the Tories was mainly due to the effects of a long period of capitalist boom, plus the abject failure of the Labour leaders to offer an alternative. The right wing leadership tried to appear as much like the Tories as possible. So why vote Labour? In reality, many workers experienced increased living standards in the period 1982-1990. Many families were able to buy things they never possessed before - telephones, videos, colour TVs, dishwashers and so on. And despite the recession many people were hoping for a return to the "good old days" under a Conservative government. It was a triumph of illusions over reality.

In fact, the outlook for the British economy is bleak. The present recession is already the longest since the 1930s and it is proving very difficult to get out of it. One of the factors in the boom was an enormous expansion of credit. This was even greater in Britain than other capitalist countries. Credit takes capitalism beyond its limits, expanding the market in the short run but only at the cost of un-

dermining it in the future and deepening the crisis. This is one of the main reasons why Britain is finding it difficult to drag itself out of recession.

Unemployment will officially reach three million by the end of this year. In practice, the number of jobless will be nearer four million. No sooner did John Major enter No. 10 than British Telecom announced 25,000 redundancies and the bankworkers' union warned of 30,000 redundancies in the Midland Bank if it was taken over by Lloyds. This is another example of the process of monopolisation which has reached an extreme expression in Britain. Marx explained that the development of capitalism produces an enormous concentration of capital - the concentration of wealth and power - into a few hands. Despite the demagogic claims of the Tories about a "property-owning democracy" there has been a fall in the number of shares owned by individuals. Under Thatcher, this declined from 37.5% to 20%. Even according to the CBI, 50 financial fund managers control 80% of the wealth involved in company shares. In 1975, individual shareholders held 38% of

the total shares. By 1990 that had dropped to 10%. Big pension insurance fund managers held 47% in 1975. By 1990 the figure was 88%.

Speculators

One of the main factors in the boom of the 80s was the construction industry and the property market. Huge fortunes were made by property speculators.

The "respectable" bankers lost no time in joining in this carnival of money-making. Why waste money on productive investment when millions could be "earned" overnight by speculation?

Now the bubble has burst. Everywhere offices stand empty. Who will build offices now? Nobody wants them. Canary Wharf stands as an accusing monument to the madness of capitalism. This government of big business which presides over three million unemployed and hundreds of thousands of bankrupt small businesses is now rushing to the aid of Olympia and York. Michael Heseltine proposes to occupy empty offices on the Isle of Dogs with civil servants. This is a blatant attempt to bail out the big banks and property speculators with public money.

At the same time, the Tories demand that "wasteful" public spending be cut. Already Britain's infrastructure is in a calamitous state of disrepair because of cuts in public spending. The standards of the roads, schools, hospitals, transport, sewers and housing have all declined rapidly. In the inner-cities conditions akin to barbarism now exist with the reappearance of terrible diseases like rickets and dysentery.

Expenditure

Britain used to be pre-eminent in science and technique but her expenditure on research and development in 1987 was only £9.7 billion compared to £12.8 billion in France and £19 billion in Germany. This means that British capitalism will fall further behind her rivals. The Tories and capitalists will have no alternative but to attempt to put even more pressure on the working class. In many ways the situation is similar to the 1920s. The entry into the ERM will have similar effects to the return to the Gold Standard in 1925. This proved to be an absolute disaster for British capitalism. It meant that the capitalists had to reduce the cost of industry by cutting workers wages in order to maintain the value of Sterling. This prepared the ground for an intensification of the class struggle which culminated in the General Strike of 1926. Ultimately it led to the devaluation of

1931 and the "devaluation war" between Europe and the USA. This kind of scenario can develop again in the future.

Like Stanley Baldwin, John Major has come to power with the promise of sweet reasonableness and harmony between the classes. But the catastrophic decline of British capitalism and the changed world situation will compel the government to put the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the working class.

Confrontation

After an initial period of shock and disorientation, the workers will come to realise that there is no question of a return to the "good old days."

On the contrary, it will be necessary to fight hard, not only to obtain higher wages, but even to defend existing living standards and jobs. The stage will be set for a new period of confrontation between the classes.

One of the main factors which has held the movement back has been the unparalleled degeneration of the right wing Labour and trade union leaders. This process has gone on for a period of forty years, reflecting the pressures of capitalism in a long period of upswing. The Labour right have abandoned any pretence of standing for socialism and the working class. They stand for the Lib-Lab policies of one hundred years ago. In effect, they stand for breaking the historic link with the trade unions and the abandonment of the socialist aims of the Labour Party. These ideas are openly advocated by right wing union leaders like Bill Jordan.

However these leaders are flying in the face of history. The new period of capitalism will not be a period of economic upswing, full employment and prosperity, but of downswing, crisis and social, economic and political instability. Under such conditions the chronic weakness of British capitalism will mean even greater convulsions than in the other capitalist countries. Sooner or later, this will find its expression in the consciousness of the workers, beginning in the unions, and inevitably, at a certain stage, being reflected in the Labour Party.

In the struggles which will take place, after an initial delay, on the industrial front, a new layer of young fighters will come to the fore. In the last period, a large number of older activists in the unions and Labour Party have dropped out of activity or merely remain out of loyalty, but without enthusiasm or a clear perspective. In the course of struggle, many of these will be enthused and revitalised. Others will be replaced by a new generation which will be hardened by their experiences.

A fresh breeze will begin to blow, sweeping aside the cobwebs and accumulated rubbish. The British workers, unlike their brothers and sisters in Southern Europe, are traditionally slow to move. By contrast, they instinctively see the need for organisation. Despite widespread unemployment and factory closures, there are still nearly ten million workers organised in trade unions. This represents a colossal power once they begin to move. And move they will.

It is no accident that Major is preparing new anti-trade union laws, despite the fact that the British unions are now more hamstrung by legal restrictions than unions in any other advanced capitalist country. However, what is written in workers' organisations cannot be abolished by the stroke of a lawyer's pen. Once the workers begin to move, these laws will not be worth the paper they are written on.

Economic Upturn

At the moment, the media is speculating on a possible upturn in the British economy in the second half of the year. Even a sluggish boom of one or two percent growth would solve nothing for British capitalism but it would anger the workers who would present the bill. But even such a feeble recovery is far from certain.

The prospects for the world capitalist economy are extremely doubtful. The much-heralded recovery of the US economy has so far failed to materialise. Both Germany and Japan are in difficulties. There is the possibility of a new stock exchange crash in Japan which could cause a chain reaction on a global scale. Under present conditions, which are different to 1987, this could mean a world slump or depression similar to 1929-31.

Either way, the position of British capitalism is one of extreme weakness. It is the underlying crisis of the British economy which will be the decisive factor, and not all the vagaries of election results, in determining future developments.

The present lull on the industrial front is the calm before the storm. Within six to eighteen months there can be big movements, although mainly of a defensive character. In the present economic situation, the ruling class will not be able to buy peace with big wage increases as they did during the boom. Every gain will have to be fought for. The present mood of "doom and gloom" among the active layers of the class will not last long. The explosive developments of the strike movement in Germany and Spain underlie the fact that this is a period of sharp and sudden changes. The myopic leaders of the Labour and trade union

movement have no understanding of the process and no perspective. This applies not only to the right wing but also to the left reformists who have collapsed to a great extent, although that will change.

None of them understood what Trotsky described as "the molecular process of the socialist revolution" - the gradual accumulation of discontent, malaise and frustration which is silently building up within the class, and which will inevitably break out into open struggle at a certain point.

We will predict now that the Tories' electoral success will prove to be their undoing. In the coming period, the Tory Party will be reduced to a rump in the South of England as they have been reduced to a rump in Wales and Scotland. The idea that Labour "cannot win" an election is nonsense. The workers will inevitably turn back to the Labour Party, not because of Smith and Gould, but in spite of them BECAUSE THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE. Time and again, the workers will move to change and transform their traditional mass organisations. In the process they will move in the direction of socialist ideas.

New Period

The long period of capitalist upswing from 1948-73 has had a profound effect on the consciousness of all classes in society, including the working class. The illusions in reformism and capitalism, the idea that workers could solve their problems within the confines of the market economy were reinforced by the boom of 1982-90.

However, that period has now come to an end. The next period will be a turbulent period, more similar to the 1970s, or the period between the wars. That does not mean there cannot be periods of economic recovery.

Booms and slumps, as Trotsky explains, are an inherent feature of capitalism. But in a period of downswing, the booms will be more feeble and the recessions increasingly deeper and more difficult to overcome. Great events will be necessary to change the consciousness of the mass of the working class and the youth.

In the next few years, British society will be shaken by one shock after another. In the heat of battle the new forces will be forged which will carry the struggle for socialism to a triumphant conclusion in Britain and internationally.

WORKING UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE TOWER OF BANKRUPTCY

It's now three months since I and several hundred others moved from our cramped offices in central London to work in the flagship of the "free market" of the 1980s; the Canary Wharf complex in London's former docklands. Nobody was enthusiastic about moving, even though staff were offered "loyalty" bonuses to go, and now we are under the shadow of the Tower, we are even less excited about being there.

By a Canary Wharf Office Worker

So we arrive, go into our air conditioned office, eat in the subsidised restaurant and then go home again. We hardly ever get out into the Canary Wharf square and experience "reality". Not that there is much to do when you do. Canary Wharf Square is like a huge mausoleum, there are few people around because so many of these expensive buildings, including the Tower, have nobody in them.

Also there are few shops and facilities - and most of the shops are silly: like the one that sells only exclusive Brazilian perfume! Still there is the water of the Thames and the docks to look at...

What a nightmare using public transport is.. The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) which runs from the City to Canary Wharf is just that - light. It is a toytown rail line not built to handle all the people which are supposed to use it. It is infrequent and continually breaking down. They are trying to upgrade it now, but nothing has happened yet.

There is no tube, although an extension to the Jubilee Line is planned to be completed by 1996 at a cost of £1.4 billion - that is, it was, until Olympia & York, the developers of Canary

"Now the whingers and sceptics about the success of this venture in private enterprise will have to shut up."

Michael Portillo 1987, then Environment Minister opening the Canary Wharf development.

Wharf defaulted on their initial £400 million payment towards the cost last month. Now this scheme, which the government so far refuses to finance, is in jeopardy and may never be built. Of course, there is the road. The present route is jam packed with traffic. The trip home is no fun if you are car sick or don't like to sit in jams on Friday night. A new motorway, the Limehouse link, is expected to be completed by next summer. Now this is financed by you and me, the taxpayer, at the exorbitant cost of £200 million for just two miles. It is the most expensive piece of road in Europe!

Even so, Canary Wharf is an example of how not to develop a new centre: by leaving it to private developers. In the mid-1980s Michael Heseltine set up the London Docklands Development Corporation, taking development in the area out of the democratic control of the local councils and putting into the hands of an unelected quango. The LDDC got the lion's share of urban development grants from the government, squeezing funds for other cities. It allowed complete freedom for O&Y and other developers to build without planning permission, rate and rent free and with no regulations. So huge amounts of public money went into backing "free enterprise" in docklands, with

what result? While O&Y spent its money on lavish buildings and on trying to get companies to go there with "rent-free holidays" and other incentives, they spent little on basic infrastructure or on the people who were living there. As a result, even if all the transport connections, tube, train, and road are completed, they can only cater for 87,000 people a day, while to make Canary Wharf profitable by filling all the office space, O&Y need to get 126,000 people to go there each day!

And now we have the collapse of O&Y, one of the biggest property developers in the world and run by the secretive Reichmann brothers from Canada. In the wild property price boom of the mid-1980s when commercial property like a 12ft sq office in the City cost £9,000 a year, huge profits were being made by property speculators.

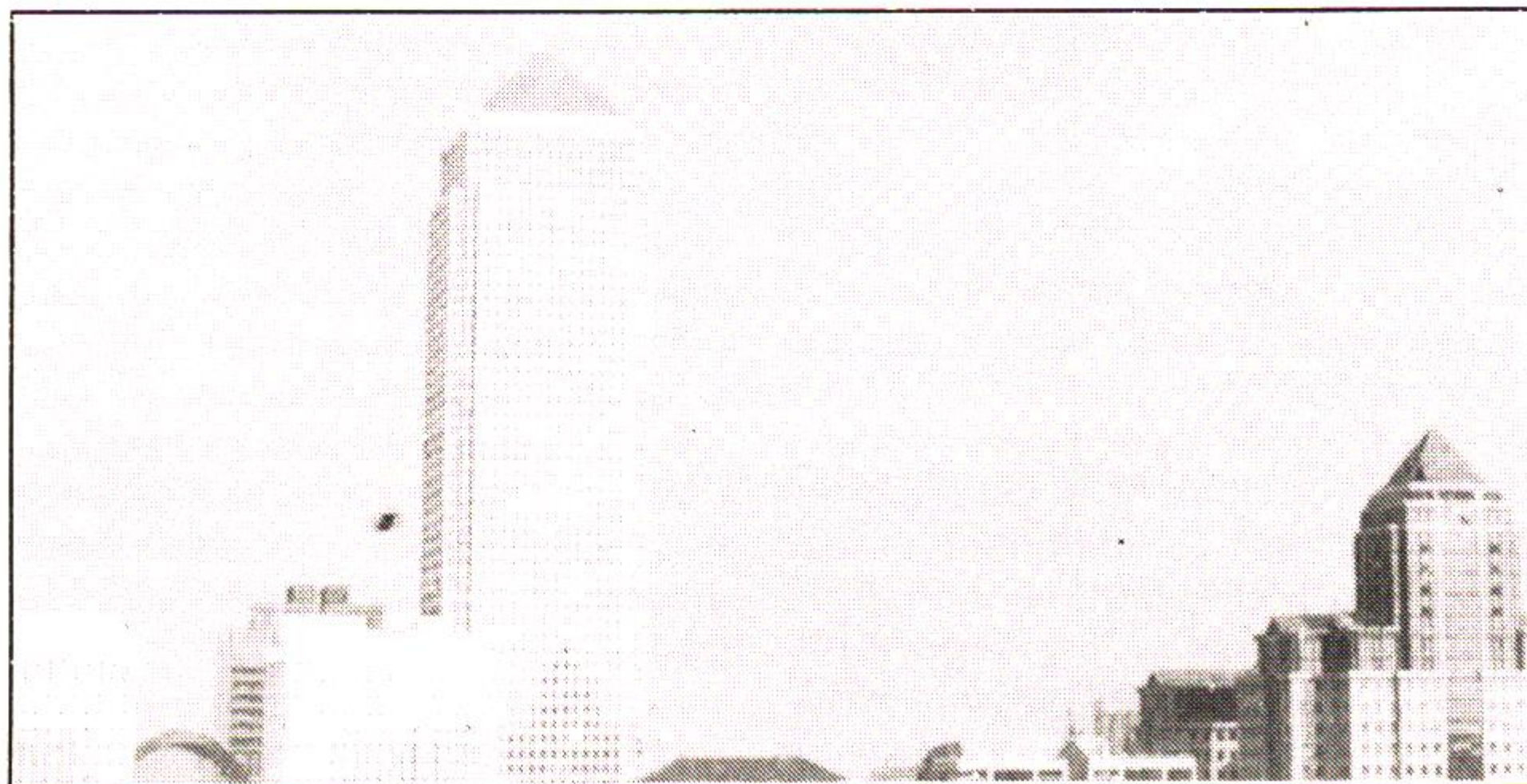
But only a few years after the Reichmanns decided to build Canary Wharf, the property market crumbled under the impact of the deepest recession (especially in property) that Britain has suffered since the Great Depression. The apparently lower rents at Canary Wharf were now matched by the City where office space exceeded demand many times over and where it was easier to get to. Now nobody wanted to move to docklands and O&Y found that it could fill most of its space.

O&Y has now declared itself bankrupt in North America and it only seems a matter of time before it collapses in the UK, where the banks are now owed £500 billion by property developers. It will collapse unless the government steps in. Already Heseltine apparently plans to move the Department of Environment to Canary Wharf - using public money again to prop up private enterprise.

Canary Wharf represents everything that the 1980s stood for: Thatcherism, "free enterprise", no unions, no public services and profit before people. Now it totters under the weight of the recession.

"Ninety per cent of the people round here will tell you that they couldn't care less if they (O&Y) went bankrupt. They've done nothing for us at all".

Tony Bezzina, landlord at Rose and Crown (forced to move from the flat he lived in for 28 years when it fell within the route of the Limehouse link road).



Will the Tories use public money to bail out the Canary Wharf speculators?

Since the election there has been a hue and cry by Big Business and their kept press to destroy the links between the unions and the Labour Party. According to these Gentlemen, one of the main reasons for Labour's defeat was this outdated association.

This campaign is nothing new. Since the inception of the Labour Movement and the creation of the unions, the ruling class has acted to block its progress. From the Combination Acts of the early 19th century which outlawed the unions, to the Tory Acts of the 1980s which attempted to emasculate them, the capitalist class has acted ruthlessly in its interests.

Trade Union Act

The formation of the Labour Party in 1900 saw the attempt to subordinate the party to the Liberals and to sever its links with the unions - the Osborne Case (1909) stopped union funds being used for political purposes. The Trade Union Act of 1913 partially reversed this position. Through a thousand strings Big Business has attempted to mould the Labour Party into a Liberal Party and prevent it articulating the aspirations of the working class to change society.

Today a chorus of right wing parliamentarians and union leaders, reflecting the pressures of big business, are waging a campaign to break the union link and move towards a pact with the Liberal Democrats. Already Kinnock has pushed proposals through the rightwing NEC for the October Conference ending the right of trade unions to ballot on selecting MPs. They are proposing the end of the electoral college and the introduction of "one member one vote" as the cover to disenfranchise the trade unions. They want this rushed through as the basis for the new round of reselections that will take place next summer.

Smokescreen

Kinnock has argued that the present arrangement allows Tories and Liberals as trade unionists to have a voice in selecting candidates. This bogus argument is a smokescreen to eliminate the 5 million trade union affiliated members from participating in this decision. If they pay the political affiliation then they should have a say in the party's affairs. If there are a layer who don't vote Labour then it is a condemnation of the Party leadership and it is down to the party to champion their interests and win them over.

If you start from Kinnock's false premise then trade unionists would be excluded from the Party at all levels as they owe their election to non-party trade unionists in the branches, Conferences, etc.

DEFEND LABOUR'S UNION LINKS



Labour activists must defend the party's vital historical link with the trade unions.

Kinnock's proposals have received the rapturous backing of the Tory Press in their drive to break these class links. Right wing trade union leaders such as Gavin Laird and Bill Jordan of the AEEU have also backed this move. "We see the adoption of one member one vote for the selection of MPs as the first move towards the complete abolition of the block vote", said Laird. They have swung so far to the right that they have become the open mouthpiece of the Tory press. They want to transform the Party into a version of the Liberal Democrats or even the capitalist US Democratic Party. They have turned their back on the traditions of the Labour Movement and have openly embraced the capitalist market and sweetheart deals with the employers.

Affiliation

The trade unions created the Labour Party to represent the interests of the working class in Parliament. To this end it provided the backbone for its development. Today 80% of Labour's finance comes from the affiliated trade unions. This vital link is not secondary, but provides the Party with its class character. The Labour Party is the political expression of the organised working class through the trade unions. On the other hand, the Tory Party, as the main Party of capitalism, gets its backing and finances from the monopolies, banks and insurance compa-

nies. The Tory Party carries out policies in their class interests. This state of affairs is backed up by the millionaire press and media, which in turn launches a hue and cry against the links between Labour and the unions!

Such is the hypocrisy of capitalist society which daily attempts to discredit the labour movement and the struggle for socialism. Unfortunately the Labour leadership has bent the knee to this pressure, attempting to accommodate and ingratiate itself with the Establishment.

The latest spectacle was, among others, the boasting of frontbench spokesperson Majorie Mowlem that she had attended her 150th business lunch in the City during the election period. "The party might have benefited from 150 lunches in worker's canteens", replied the Euro MP Alf Lomas.

The whole election campaign, the abandonment of socialist policies, the acceptance of the market, and the grovelling after the industrialists and the City, reflect the colossal influences of capitalism affecting the leaders of the movement. The move to break the links with the unions is merely an extension of their political shift to the right.

The reason why the ruling class wishes to go down this road is not due to any sympathy with improving Labour's electoral appeal, but the fear of the Labour Party moving to the left with a future leftward swing in the trade unions.

They do not want a repeat of 1978-1982 when the radicalised unions in reaction to the pro Tory policies of Callaghan swung the party to the left. To prevent such a recurrence, the union links must be broken. At least that is their hope. For many party activists the block vote has been seen as a means of maintaining the position of the right wing in the past. There has been genuine hostility towards the way it has been used.

For us, the block vote is an essential part of maintaining the trade union basis of the party. It is not the block vote that is bad but the way it is abused by General Secretaries who ignore the democratic decisions of the membership. The main task is to democratise the block vote by



John Prescott has attacked the leadership's plans to break the union link.

ensuring that it is cast according to the decisions of the union conferences. It poses very sharply the need for trade union democracy to bring back the control of the unions into the hands of the rank and file.

The trade union college must be maintained with the proportion of votes at 40% for the unions, 30% for the CLPs, and 30% for the PLP. Attempts to water down this down will only be used to undermine the relationship and weaken the trade union base.

Reselection

The right-wing Labour leaders, under the pressure of big business, are attempting to prevent any accountability by the rank and file. They are abandoning all the democratic gains of the early 1980s, starting with mandatory reselection of MPs. They want to drastically alter the powers of the annual conference, dissolve the activists into the mass, and concentrate power in unelected sub-committees under the leader's patronage. Even now John Prescott complained: "I sit on both the NEC and in the shadow cabinet, but I had to look on TV to see who was making the decisions in the election campaign."

The need to turn the conference into an ineffective talking shop, has gone hand in hand with the proposal to support the state financing of

LIVINGSTONE CALLS FOR SOBER ANALYSIS AND RADICAL POLICIES

The Campaign Group of Labour MPs have decided the undemocratic 55 parliamentary nominations rule is not going to stop them touring the country challenging the views put forward by the other leadership contenders.

The public meeting in Birmingham attracted about 150 Labour Party members who were keen to analyse the reasons behind Labour's election defeat and plan a strategy to fight for radical policies.

Campaign group MP Ken Livingstone blamed Labour's defeat on their drift to the right and their tax plans which he said would hit people in the South-East especially hard. He also called for Labour to commit itself to massive cuts in defence spending to fund better social services and stimulate the economy by investing more. He also attacked the leadership's plans to cut democracy in the party even further by abandoning the trade union link and making conferences less democratic.

But many at the meeting failed to find a clear analysis of what was needed not just to make Labour "electable" but to use its power for the benefit of working class people.

Livingstone's whole theme was about piecemeal reforms and although he spent a long time speaking about the role of finance capital in controlling the economy he failed to pose the dilemma for all Labour governments. How can they carry out reforms when real control lies in the hands of the City of London and in the boardrooms of the multinationals?

To carry out a massive programme of public works creating jobs, to cut the dole queues, to provide decent services and so on Labour would have to take on those who control the nation's

wealth. Anything less would mean inevitably Labour would be forced in a short time to carry out counter-reforms no matter how radical its policies (or leaders) were.

And many at the meeting were startled to hear him call for a vote for Bryan Gould in the leadership election. Livingstone said the only real difference between himself and Bryan Gould on economic policy was the degree of intervention they believed in!

Socialists cannot contemplate supporting the economic policies of Gould or Smith. They are both openly pro-capitalist, both acted as Kinnock's loyal lieutenants, supported the witch-hunt of socialists in the party and are committed to taking Labour further to the right.

The job of socialists in the party at present is to expose the undemocratic nature of the leadership election and the other "reforms" which have taken place within the party in recent years and to consistently explain the reasons for Labour's defeat and wage a campaign for socialist policies for Labour.

That means explaining the true nature of the capitalist system where 200 companies control 85% of the economy and of raising the demand of the need to nationalise these companies under democratic workers control and management.

The Campaign Group should be congratulated for giving Labour's rank and file the chance to debate the issues facing Labour in the next period by organising public meetings around the country. But it is vital we learn the lessons of the recent election defeat and the lessons of previous Labour governments so we can plan a serious strategy to fight for a socialist programme for Labour.

political parties.

The link with the unions is difficult to break when they contribute 80% of the income. As Bill Morris said, the unions are being asked to "pay for the privilege of keeping silent.. Some are suggesting that we should become no more than collection agencies for membership dues." To overcome this 'difficulty' they propose state funding which in reality would make the party leadership, as in Spain and other countries, more independent from the rank and file. The party would then become just a vehicle for the personal advancement of the careers of Labour parliamentarians.

Labour activists must fight to maintain the trade union base of the party and for Labour Party democracy to allow the ranks to decide.

The election for leadership has become a farce with the introduction of the barrier of 55 parliamentary nominations before being able to stand. This has ruled out the left. The choice for leader

between Smith and Gould is between Tweedledum and Tweedleedum.

In the deputy leadership election, the candidate that is putting forward opposition to this position is John Prescott. He has rejected the new image Kinnock has attempted to put forward and has stressed the traditional roots of the party. His election would mean a defeat for the openly right wing candidates of Gould and Beckett.

Whatever the immediate outcome, the developing crisis of British capitalism will push the workers' organisations to the left. No amount of manipulation of the rule book or constitution will prevent the British workers taking back control of their traditional organisations and preparing the road for the transformation of society on socialist lines.

Rob Sewell

AN POST WORKERS FIGHT TO DEFEND THEIR JOBS

Irish Post Office (An Post) workers are fighting to save their industry and their union as Ireland's right-wing coalition government and An Post management try to force through drastic cost cutting measures which would decimate jobs. Dublin Trades Council Executive member **Helen Mahony** looks at the prospects for the strike and Irish workers.

An Post management are determined to try and break the Communications Workers Union. The right-wing coalition government of Fianna Fail

and the Progressive Democrats is adamant in its support for An Post's cost cutting measures. Their policy provoked the current dispute which has now been going on for over a month. Nearly 1,300 workers have been laid off and a further 2,700 have had their pay withheld. Soon the entire workforce may be laid off for the duration of the dispute.

The dispute arises from An Post's strategy to reduce their workforce from 10,500 to 9,000. The company is also intent on closing 550 of its sub-post offices.

Bank Strike

This conflict follows hard on the heels of a bank strike. For three weeks around Easter the main Irish banks also pursued a strategy of trying to break the Irish Bank Officials Association. New

working practices, including changed hours and conditions were unilaterally introduced. Low paid workers were recruited in large numbers to undermine the union's position.

Now the post office management have employed casual and part-time labour on a wide scale for the same purpose.

Weakened

Echoes of the great Dublin Lock-Out of 1913 return time and time again. The big capitalist firms are hoping that the trade union movement as a whole will be weakened by these recent events.

Against this background the leadership of the official trade union movement have knitted themselves into the entire strategy and programme of the government.

In January 1991 they accepted the government's policies on pay and the public service - the Programme for Economic and Social Progress. That Programme has another year and a half to run.

Earlier this year when the government unilaterally altered the pay terms of the Programme and jettisoned other sections of it, the leadership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions went along with this and abandoned a massive national strike movement which would have involved the entire public service - even the police force!

Opposition

These "leaders" have largely been on the sidelines during the recent major industrial battles. They are called in only when the government require a concession to be won from the workers. At the same time the top leadership of the Labour Party are now pre-occupied with considering whether they can get away with forming a coalition government with Fianna Fail after the next general election.

A clear lead from the labour and trade union movement is required. Though the government itself is in a state of crisis, the Labour opposition is unable to capitalise on it.

Support

Even though the Minister for Industry and Commerce is in the process of giving evidence against the Prime Minister as part of an enquiry into corrupt government methods Labour are not exposing the government sham.

The Post Office workers need the support of all the workers organisations to win their fight and defend their jobs and industry.

Church Hypocrisy Over Women's Rights



Pro-Abortion demonstrators clash with police outside the supreme court

The current abortion crisis in Ireland is the consequence of the 1983 referendum which was manipulated by the ruling Fianna Fail party and the Catholic Church. The constitutional ban on abortion has been used to prevent women from having access to information on abortion facilities abroad, and last February became the justification for stopping a 14-year-old rape victim from going to England with her parents for an abortion.

A clear majority in the country want the mess rectified. Recent opinion polls show a majority in favour of abortion in certain circumstances. Even the Maastricht Treaty, which is causing the government near hysteria in their obsessive drive for its ratification, has been dangerously compromised by Fianna Fail's insertion of a Protocol limiting women's rights.

And the recently published sexual escapades of the Bishop of Kerry have highlighted the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, not just on sexual morality, but on general issues which relate to the treatment of women in society.

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL QUESTION: SOCIALIST APPROACH NEEDED

The launch of the "Scotland United" campaign and the demands of the nationalists for a referendum on Scotland's constitutional future are failing to tackle the real issues facing Scottish workers. Alastair Wilson explains.

The defeat of Labour in the general election and in the May local elections is having big repercussions in Scotland. The Tories fourth successive election victory, despite winning only 25% of the vote in Scotland, has led many workers to ask themselves what is the best way to organise resistance to the continuing Tory attacks.

The launch of the "Scotland United" campaign is attempting to put the question of a referendum on the national question as the first point on the agenda. What, then, should be the attitude of Marxists to this campaign and the issues it raises?

Firstly, we should see that on April 9, workers in Scotland overwhelmingly turned out to vote Labour. The much discussed surge to the SNP did not materialise - they even lost their one seat in an industrial area, Jim Sillars in Govan losing to Labour. They are now reduced to 3 MPs representing rural areas in north east Scotland.

National Trend

Overall, there was a small swing to the Tories in Scotland. They held on to their nine seats, some with increased majorities, and won two other seats - Kincardine and Deeside (which they had lost in a by-election) and Aberdeen South (which they took from Labour). **This increase in the Tory vote reflected the national trend: the impact of the boom and the failure of the Labour leadership to pose any real alternative to the Tories.**

Secondly, we must understand the background to the demands for more autonomy. Scotland has a distinct national identity and consciousness, but this should not be confused with the "nationalism" of the SNP. For generations the national question was submerged in Scotland - industry was growing, world trade increased and, most importantly, the working class was developing in strength and organisation. This did not make Scotland any less a nation than it is now. It was not until the 1970s, however, that the national question re-emerged with a vengeance - in the general election of October 1974 the SNP polled 30% of the vote.

With the beginning of economic crisis and the abject failure of the Labour leaders to do any-

thing in the interests of working class people, nationalist ideas, particularly on the back of the "It's Scotland's Oil" campaign, began to develop.

Scotland is not an oppressed nation like Ireland, or like the Basque country - nations which have suffered generations of physical repression. But we now have the situation where there is a huge latent support for some form of assembly or autonomy amongst workers in Scotland. Alongside this, though, there is a real fear of "separation" and "isolation" which, in reality, go against the grain of the national consciousness the nationalists like to pay lip service to. The SNPs demand for "independence in Europe", apart from being totally meaningless, is an attempt to appease these feelings.

Democratic

As Marxists we support the democratic demand for the establishment of an assembly. We say it needs to be an assembly with real economic powers if it is to take decisive action in the interests of the working class. We would campaign for an assembly with an overwhelming Labour majority. **But we should remember that every tier of government in the past period, from the Tory government in Westminster to Labour and SNP controlled local councils has ended up attacking working**

class people.

An assembly would be no different - unless it was a Labour assembly committed to socialist policies, prepared to break the power of the capitalist class, and this is only possible with a united class movement throughout Britain.

While supporting the demands for an assembly it must be one of the primary tasks for Marxists to defend the unity of the working class against the poison of nationalism and vehemently oppose the "petty small nation mentality" of the nationalists.

Alex Salmond, SNP leader, in the wake of the general election called on people to make the May local elections a referendum on the constitutional question. But the only thing of note in relation to these elections was the massive level of abstentions. Labour MP George Galloway has called for a "patriotic front" to defeat the power of the Tories.

Frustrations

Rather than leading a genuine broad movement the leaders of "Scotland United" are rather victims of their own frustrations. The assembly is the straw for these "Leaders" to clutch at.

What more sickening sight than Charles Grey, leader of Strathclyde Regional Council, who inflicted the poll tax and every other attack on the workers of that area, calling for a campaign



Labour's failure to fight the poll tax has angered many Scottish workers

of "civil disobedience" to secure an assembly. The Labour MPs and activists involved in "Scotland United" are sidestepping the main issues. The question of an assembly was only sixth in a list of priorities for Scottish voters in a pre-election poll. Unemployment, bad housing, low wages, health and education - how should we be taking up these issues? It was the Labour leaders failure to take up these issues on class lines that has allowed the Tories their fourth term.

Constitutional

If workers can really be mobilised on a constitutional issue then why not mobilise on the vital social and economic questions. This is the way to fight back against the Tories. We have the example of the recent strike wave in Germany to show us what is possible.

Labour and the trade unions need to adopt an independent, class position. We should not be running for cover with the nationalists and Liberals and who make up the "Scotland United" campaign. Let's have a movement - but why just for an assembly? We need to build a movement to topple the Tories and start working in the interests of working class people.

The Tories could compromise but given their increased vote in both the general election and the local elections, they could haughtily sit out the storm on the national question. To mobilise a movement for a Scottish assembly in the teeth of this would inevitably have to be a movement that directly challenged the Tory government and all that it represents. To have any chance of success it would have to call on all the reserves of strength of the working class. It would not be a question of persuasion, but of class action. What then would be the position of the SNP and Liberals?

The development of the national question is one perspective but, given the frailty of the British economy and the impossibility of the Tories rekindling the boom years of the 1980s, then it is far more likely we will see the development of struggles in industry and the workplace as workers fight to maintain their living standards. In Germany the whole political situation has been transformed on the basis of the struggle of the public service workers. Similar processes can unfold here. On this basis, the national question would be relegated to the background as workers on both sides of the River Tweed take action. It is our task to prepare for these events with the ideas of Marxism.

MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In contrast to the centrifugal break-up of the East European states which is now taking place, the Bolsheviks under Lenin's guidance, achieved a voluntary union of the many nationalities that made up the old Russian empire. Thus after the 1917 revolution a sensitive approach was taken to peoples who had suffered years of murderous oppression under the Tsarist state. Lenin and Trotsky's approach was in sharp contrast to the forced unity maintained under Stalin which underlies the present break up of the USSR as the extracts from two of the Marxist classics show:

"Lenin early learned the inevitability of this development of centrifugal movements in Russia, and for many years stubbornly fought for that famous paragraph 9 of the old party programme which formulated the right of nations to self-determination - that is to complete separation as states.

In this the Bolshevik Party did not by any means undertake an evangel of separation. It merely assumed an obligation to struggle implacably against every form of national oppression, including the forcible retention of this or that nationality within the boundaries of the general state. Only in this way could the Russian proletariat gradually win the confidence of the oppressed nationalities.

But that was only one side of the matter. The policy of Bolshevism in the national sphere had also another side, apparently contradictory to the first but in reality supplementing it. Within the framework of the party, and of the workers' organisations in general, Bolshevism insisted upon a rigid centralism, implacably warring against every taint of nationalism which might set the workers one against the other or disunite them.

While flatly refusing to the bourgeois states the right to impose compulsory citizenship, or even a state language upon a national minority, Bolshevism at the same time made it a verily sacred task to unite as closely as possible, by means of voluntary class discipline, the workers of different nationalities."

LEON TROTSKY - HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

"The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible, for this is to the advantage of the working people; it strives to draw nations closer together, and bring about their further fusion; but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free fraternal union of the workers and the working people of all nations.

The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organises itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of voluntary attraction to such a republic on the part of the working peoples of all nations.

Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and the elaborate guarantees of the rights of national minorities - this is the programme of the revolutionary proletariat.

LENIN - THE APRIL THESES

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THE YUGOSLAV INFERNO

by
Alan
Woods

“How complacent were the generation of Europeans who grew up after the Second World War thinking that such barbarous behaviour was something that happened nowadays only in unfortunate and far-away countries like Ethiopia and Bangladesh”.

“Villages from which the Serbs have fled in Croatia have been burned. Muslim villages in Serb areas of Bosnia are being burned to encourage their residents to leave. Under the noses of the United Nations peace-keepers, Croats in Serb-held territories of Croatia are being driven out. Serbs are fleeing towns in Bosnia where they are shot at, and towns in Croatia where they are frightened they will be. All sides have used massacre and mutilation to drive their message home”

(The Economist. May 23rd 1992)

The war in Yugoslavia is a ghastly testimony to the meaning of the New World Order. On the eve of the twenty first century, we are confronted with a vision of barbarism, like a throw-back to the Dark Ages. And this is taking place, not in some distant country, but right on the doorstep of peaceful, prosperous, “civilised” Europe.

Not long ago, British, French and German tourists basked in the sunshine on Adriatic beaches, and wandered through the tranquil medieval alleys of Dubrovnik. Now the hotels are full of wounded men and terrified

Now, like some monstrous epidemic of collective madness, the war has taken hold of Bosnia, where it has assumed a still bloodier character than the war in Croatia. What is the explanation for the carnage in Yugoslavia? And what message does it hold for Europe and the rest of the world?

For centuries the Balkans have been synonymous with wars and national conflicts. The word “Balkanization” has passed into the English language as an extreme expression of the splitting up of entire regions into tiny warring states. The spark which ignited the



Yugoslav tanks enter Vukovar - But will they bring peace?

refugees. Cultured Europeans shook their heads at the sight of Dubrovnik’s battered walls and churches. But Dubrovnik’s walls still stand. Vukovar, and countless nameless small towns and villages, are just heaps of smoking ruins. Thousands have died. Hundreds of thousands are homeless. Almost one and a quarter million are refugees.

For a whole period after 1945, it appeared that the national problem in Yugoslavia had been resolved. The old hatreds and racial antagonisms seemed to have been relegated to the history books.

Up to the recent period, and even after the secession of Slovenia and the civil war in Croatia, the Serbs, Croats and Muslims of Bosnia continued to live peacefully together.

First World War was struck in the Balkans, which also played a role in the Second World War.

Centuries of migration and the mixing of the peoples have turned the Balkans into a complex patchwork quilt of language, nationality and religion: Greeks, Turks, Albanians, Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenes, Vlachs, Bulgars, Germans, Hungarians and gypsies do not occupy neat spaces, conveniently separated by natural boundaries. They are inextricably mixed.

All attempts to “solve” the national problem on the Balkans by establishing small nation states have led to nothing. Even before the World War II, the more far-sighted representatives of Capital were forced to recog-

nise the intractable nature of the problem.

A study produced by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, written months before the outbreak of war, when all eyes were once more fixed nervously on South-East Europe, had this to say; *"History and politics together have thus produced the extraordinary motley of nationalities that one finds in Macedonia and the Banat, in Southern Bessarolia, in the Dobrogea, and in Transylvania, to name only the most striking examples. One finds in these districts several nationalities not only inhabiting different villages side by side, but often three or even four of them with as many languages and nearly as many religions sharing one and the same village. In these conditions, it is difficult to see how the principle of national self-determination could ever lead to a satisfactory political settlement in the Danubian region"*. (South Eastern Europe, A Political and Economic Survey, May 8th, 1939). [my emphasis, A.W.] For centuries, the whole region was under the rule of Turkey. Beginning with Greece (1829), Serbia and Montenegro (1878), Rumania (1878), Bulgaria (1908) and Albania (1913) all secured their independence through wars and struggle. The Balkan wars (1912-13) and the First World War completed the process of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

Versailles

Through the Versailles Treaty, the victors of World War One divided up the spoils between themselves. Britain and France took the lion's share. The rising imperialist power of the U.S.A. consolidated its new world role. Its president Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the principle of "national self-determination", as a means of Balkanising Europe and securing the attachment of some of the smaller powers. The ones which supported the victorious camp of Anglo-American and French imperialism were thrown a few bones to chew over. They were allowed to take chunks of territory from their neighbours. Romania got Transylvania and part of Banat from Hungary, as well as Bessarolra from Russia and Bukovira from Austria. Czechoslovakia was carved out of the wreck of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yugoslavia was formed by the union of Serbia and Montenegro, with the former Austro-Hungarian territories of Croatia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavonia, Vojvodina and part of Banat.

The new states, created by a predatory peace treaty, forcibly united different nationalities and peoples regardless of their wishes. Thus, the seeds were planted for new wars, conflicts and racial strife.



It is civilians who are the main victims of the war in Yugoslavia.

Despite their formal independence, the tiny statelets were so much small change in the calculations of the big powers. Economically backward, they were dependent on the markets of Britain, France and Germany. With the exception of Czechoslovakia, they were vicious bonapartist dictatorships and feudal absolute monarchies.

Semi-Colony

In the case of Yugoslavia, in 1938, 71.2% of the population were occupied in agriculture, and only 12.3% in mining, industry and transport. In 1921, 51.5% of the population were illiterate. Even before the Nazi occupation, Yugoslavia was really a semi-colony of German imperialism. In the three years before the War, 40% of her imports came from Germany and 40% of her exports went there. From its foundation, the Yugoslav state was based on national oppression. The dominant Serbs oppressed the Croats, Slovenes and Macedonians. The relations between Croats and Serbs were particularly tense. Although the spoken language of both peoples is virtually identical, Croat is written in the Latin alphabet, while the Serbs use Cyrillic script. The predominant religion of the Croats is Roman Catholicism. In Serbia it is the Orthodox Church. Culturally, the Croats and Slovenes looked West towards the former

Austro-Hungarian empire, while the Serbs had long been part of the Ottoman empire, and had pro-Russian tendencies.

The national oppression of the Croats, who were about 3.5 million before the War, compared to approximately 5 million Serbs, provided a fertile breeding-ground for reactionary nationalist demagoguery. During the War, when Yugoslavia suffered the brutal occupation of German and Italian fascism, the Nazis established a puppet state in Croatia which was responsible for the mass murder of Serbs, Jews and gypsies. Once again the national question in the Balkans was used by the big imperialist powers to throttle and oppress all the peoples of the region.

The real war of resistance against German fascism and its Croat Ushtashe collaborators was not the bourgeois Serbian Chetniks, but the Stalinist partisan army, led by Joseph Broz Tito.

Partisans

The bourgeois nationalist forces were rapidly crushed by the invaders. But Tito's guerilla forces waged a heroic struggle, which culminated in victory. The occupying forces were defeated partially by the Red Army, but to a greater extent by the Yugoslav partisans. For more than 100 years, the democratic and progressive forces on the Balkans have striven

INTERNATIONAL

to overcome national divisions and hatreds, and to unite the peoples of the Balkans on the basis of a federation, based on genuine equality and fraternal relations. However, on a capitalist basis, the idea of a Balkan Federation remained a hopeless utopia. Each national bourgeoisie, each feudal monarchist clique sought to dominate and exploit its neighbours.

Imperialist

Dialectically, formerly oppressed nations can become transformed into the most predatory imperialist states. The United States of America, after all, began as an oppressed colony of Britain. The newly independent small state on the Balkans, no sooner freed from the Ottoman yoke, engaged in a whole series of vicious wars of conquest against their neighbours. Behind the facade of "defence of national rights" and "self determination" lurked the national egotism and greed of the nascent bourgeoisie, expressed in the notion of "Greater Bulgaria", "Greater Romania", "Greater Serbia" and so on.

For generations, the weak bourgeoisie of the Balkan states demonstrated their total inability to solve any one of the problems of society. Not only were they incapable of overcoming the age-old problems of social and economic backwardness, but above all they failed to solve the national problem.

The rule of the landlords and capitalists not only meant the exacerbation of the national problem, with the increase of national oppression, fear and hatred, but the outward show of "national independence" barely disguised a humiliating dependence of even the biggest of these states on one or another of the imperialist powers

The abolition of landlordism and capitalism in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and other countries of Eastern Europe and the greater part of the Balkans after 1945 represented a great step forward. Had the revolution taken place in a healthy way, with the working class running society on democratic lines, the peoples of the Balkans could have at last begun to solve their problems on the basis of a democratic Socialist Federation.

Stalinists

However, under the leadership of the Stalinists, the revolution took place in a distorted, caricatured form. Tito, Dimitrov and the others manoeuvred between the classes to install totalitarian, one-party states in the image of Stalinist Russia.

Even so, Tito and Dimitrov initially proposed

the formation of a Balkan Federation. This would have been a great step forward, although it was undoubtedly motivated by the interests of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian bureaucracies, who wished to join forces in order to withstand the pressure of Moscow. The narrow nationalism of the Russian bureaucracy prevented this from happening. Stalin brutally stamped on the plan for a Balkan Federation. Moscow deliberately maintained the national divisions on the Balkans, and "Balkanised" the whole of Eastern Europe, in order to facilitate its control.

A genuine Leninist regime would have immediately proposed the formation of a Socialist Federation, not only of the USSR and Eastern Europe, but also including China. Such a federation would have been in the interest of all the peoples.

The abolition of frontiers, and a common plan of production, based on democratic control and management, and the harmonious integration of all the economies, would



Thousands of refugees are fleeing the towns and cities

have led to a rapid increase in living standards for all.

The area around the Danube basin forms a national economic unit. For centuries it has been one of the principal trade routes and channels of communications in Europe, and, furthermore, constitutes a corridor linking Central with South Eastern Europe, and Eu-

rope with the Steppes of Russia and Asia Minor.

A Socialist Federation would have linked all the economies of the region - Poland, with its enormous reserves of coal, Czechoslovakia and East Germany with their industry and technology, the oil and wheatfields of Romania, the agriculture of Bulgaria, and the huge populations, heavy industry, vast agriculture potential and immense reserves of raw materials of the USSR and China.

Instead, each bureaucracy pursued its own narrow-minded path, developing "its own" economy within the confines of outdated national frontiers. Thus, we had the insane spectacle of backward agricultural Romania and tiny Albania attempting to develop heavy industry. It is a scandalous fact that the degree of integration of the nationalised economies of Eastern Europe was less than that established within the capitalist economies of the Common Market. The pursuit of the national interests of each bureaucratic clique, under the guise of "socialism in one country", led to the clash between Tito and Stalin in the late 1940s.

Thereafter, Yugoslavia developed in isolation from the other Stalinist states. Nevertheless, despite its specific peculiarities and "liberal" image, which made certain self-styled "Marxists" describe it as a "healthy workers' state", Yugoslavia remained a bureaucratic, totalitarian one-party state.

Nevertheless, the introduction of a nationalised planned economy, in spite of the bureaucracy, permitted a rapid development of the production forces. For a time, the economy went forward at a rate of 10% per annum. There was a major development of industry and the working class, which became a majority of the population. Illiteracy was abolished, living standards rose.

Constitution

Lenin explained that, in essence, the national question is a question of bread. The development of the productive forces and the increase in living standards led to a decline in national tension. Despite the terrible massacres and pogroms of the war years, Serbs and Croats, Muslims and Macedonians lived in peace. There was an increased mingling of the population, with a large-scale emigration from the land to the cities and from one Republic to another.

Tito, himself a Croat, worked an elaborate constitution which was intended to establish a balance between the different Republics, avoiding the domination of one nationality. For a long time, it appeared to work.

In fact, however, each national bureaucracy in the six Yugoslav Republics was pursuing its own narrow interests. The Serb, Croat and Sloven bureaucrats, each building "socialism" in their own Republics, jealously looked over their shoulder at the others.

After the break with Moscow, Tito was compelled to allow Yugoslavia to participate in world markets. Concessions were made to capitalist tendencies and "de-centralisation". Yugoslavia swallowed the advice of Western economists, which led to hyper-inflation and one million unemployed. Another million were forced to emigrate to Western Europe, especially to West Germany, to find work. The decline in the economy caused the return of what Marx described as "all the old crap". National antagonisms, long submerged, came to the surface in an exacerbated form. The narrow-minded bureaucracies, especially in the wealthier and more industrialised Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, looked for a scapegoat in the link with the more backward provinces, to the East and South. Injected with the nationalist poison of Stalinism, they increasingly began to lean on nationalist and chauvinist elements in their own Republics.

Bureaucracy

The centrifugal tendencies which were already building up beneath the surface, began to acquire a rapid momentum after the death of Tito. The reaction of the central bureaucracy in Belgrade, represented by Slobodan Milosevic, was to unleash the terrible forces of Great Serbian chauvinism. All the most rotten and retrograde elements, long suppressed, rose to the surface: monarchism, racism, the Orthodox Church and militant nationalism, with the war-cry of Greater Serbia "on its lips".

The bloody suppression of the Albanians, who are now a big majority in Kosovo, which the Serbs regard as historically theirs, was a warning to all the Republics. But far from curbing separatist sentiments, it had the opposite effect. Fear of increased Serb domination rapidly increased the tendency towards a rupture.

The breakaway of Slovenia, the most developed part of Yugoslavia, last June encouraged the Croat leaders to follow suit. Belgrade was ill-prepared for the actions of the Slovenes, but Croatia was a different matter. The Yugoslav army, together with Serbs irregulars ("Chetniks") confronted the Croats in a fratricidal war.

The intention of the Yugoslav military caste was to prevent the break-up of Yugoslavia. But in practice, the Serb-dominated army has

been used for the purposes of carving a Greater Serbia out of the wreckage of the old federation. To accomplish this end the most atrocious methods have been used.

Milosevic

The war aims of Belgrade are self-evident, Slobodan Milosevic seeks to hold onto power by stealing the clothes of the extreme Serb nationalists. In Croatia, the murderous "chetnik" guerillas, with regular army backing, were sent to seize chunks of Croatian territory, driving out the inhabitants by the most brutal means, under the pretext of "protecting" the Serb minority.



A Bosnian woman cries in front of her bombed home as the war moves to Bosnia-Herzegovina

This war had absolutely nothing progressive about it on either side. While the Serbian "chetniks" carried out atrocities against Croat villages, the Croat "Ushtashe" did the same to Serbs, living in Croatia. The anti-Serb chauvinism of Franjo Tjudman is the mirror image of the anti-Croat chauvinism of Slobodan Milosevic. The nationalist regime in Croatia glorified the exploits of the pro-Nazi wartime "Ushtashe" who massacred the Serbs. And now, the nationalist regimes of both Zagreb and Belgrade are engaged in a cynical exercise of carving up the neighbouring Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. That is the real reactionary content of the war-cry of "self-determination" in present-day Yugoslavia.

The people of Bosnia had no interest in the break-up of Yugoslavia. Its 4.3 million inhabitants are a complex mixture of Serbs (33%), Croats (17%) and Muslims (44%). There are no really clearly defined areas, but a jumble of towns and villages of all the different ethnic groups. Most areas are of mixed nationality, and the rate of inter-ethnic marriages is very high. Thus, for Bosnia, the idea of a split on national lines is a terrible

nightmare.

Faced with the fait-accompli of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Croats and Muslims of Bosnia were afraid of coming under Serb domination in a new "Serbo-slavia". Similar considerations led the people of Macedonia to vote for independence. The population of Bosnia voted in a referendum by 61% for the same thing. But in the given situation, problems are solved not by votes but by guns and tanks.

Although, probably a majority of Bosnian Serbs would have accepted independence, Belgrade immediately began a war in Bosnia under the old excuse of "defending" the Serb minority. The methods used to "cleanse" whole areas of Bosnia of Muslims were even more savage than in Croatia.

Despite the hypocritical pledges of Tjudman and Milosevic to respect Bosnia's territorial integrity, Croat and Serb leaders met in Graz on May 6th to plot the division of Bosnia between them. Serbian gunmen, by prior agreement, abandoned the town of Kiseljak to Bosnian Croats. Only where Bosnian Serbs and Croats disagree over the spoils do they fight each other. The Bosnian Muslims, the largest group, are not consulted. The reactionary character of the war on both sides is transparent.

Eastern Europe

The war in Yugoslavia has given the excuse for imperialism to intervene, as so often in the past. The collapse of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe was the green light for German imperialism to move once more into the Balkans. Germany's aim was to break up into its constituent parts, in order to increase its influence over Slovenia and Croatia, the most developed areas. This has exposed the existence of national antagonisms within the E.E.C. itself, which have not been eliminated by the move towards greater economic integration. The other European powers are uneasy about the colossal economic weight of Germany. Despite the problems caused by German unification, the longer term prospect of a mighty industrial power of 80 million people in the heart of Europe is not at all to the liking of Britain and France.

The diplomatic manoeuvres of Germany in Yugoslavia sounded a warning bell in the Foreign Offices of Paris and London. The British and French made it clear that they were against the break-up of Yugoslavia. Initially, their policy gave tacit support for Serbia, until their hand was forced by Bonn's unilateral recognition of Slovenian and

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Croatian independence. Cursing beneath their breath, the British and French were compelled to fall into line.

The subterranean power struggle between Germany, Britain and France, reveals the existence of deep-going contradictions which were partially covered over by the long period of economic growth, but will increasingly come to the forefront in a period of capitalist downswing. The European powers and the United States do not want to be drawn into a bloody and intractable war. But the break-up of Yugoslavia, which now seems inevitable, will completely destabilise the Balkans, especially in the event of a downturn

Serb "militias". On the other hand, despite the presence of UN troops (or thanks to it) the Serbs have now tightened their hold on the conquered areas of Croatia. The Serb militias in Croatia will refuse to disband, arguing the need to protect the Serb population against reprisals by returning Croat forces. These Serb-held areas represent no less than one third of the former territory of Croatia.

Referendums

Sooner or later Belgrade will try to hold referendums in Serb-held areas of Croatia and Bosnia which will vote for union with a new "Yugoslavia" formed by Serbia and

formally the victor has inherited a ruined country. The Serbian economy is collapsing. Inflation is running at an incredible annual rate of 36,000%. In terms of hard currency, Serbs earn one-tenth of what they did twelve months ago, and with the imposition of new tariff barriers and the collapse of trade with the former Republic, the workers and peasants, whether Serbs, Croats or Muslims, will pay a terrible price in unemployment, inflation and poverty, in the coming years. Large numbers of embittered refugees will add to the general chaos, providing fresh material for new wars, terrorism and conflict.

All the Republic benefited from the unity of Yugoslavia in the past. To go back to the creation of tiny nation states, each with its own army, taxes, currency and tariff barriers, would be crazy from an economic and social point of view. The so-called "independence" of these statelets would be a farce. As in the past, they would be mere puppets of the big imperialist powers, engaged in endless wars and upheavals.

Socialist Federation

The European powers look with dread at the prospect of new wars on the European mainland. They have proved powerless to halt the war in Yugoslavia, despite all their efforts, just as they were powerless to prevent the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Future wars, civil wars, revolution and counter-revolution on the Balkans will threaten the stability of the whole of Europe.

The history of the last eighty years has shown that neither capitalism nor Stalinism can solve the problems of the peoples of the Balkans. On a capitalist basis, the only future which awaits them is one of fratricidal strife, war and all-pervading misery.

The workers and peasants have no interest in such a future. Only the victory of the working class can point the way forward on the basis of a Socialist Federation of the Balkans, which would pool all the resources of the area in a common plan of production.

The democratic administration of industry and the state by the working class is the prior condition for a free and harmonious development of society, and the establishment of equal and fraternal relations between the peoples.

The establishment of a Balkan Socialist Federation, with full autonomy for the different nationalities, would be the starting point for the Socialist United States of Europe, and the Socialist Federation of the world - the only alternative to the nightmarish future which confronts the human race under capitalism.



Croatians fly the EEC flag - but they cannot agree on a solution

in the world economy.

Serbia, despite its relative economic backwardness, remains the most powerful military state in the region. The ruling clique in Belgrade is pursuing the single-minded aim of establishing "Greater Serbia" over the ruins of Yugoslavia.

All the peace treaties, diplomatic manoeuvres and "ceasefires" in the world will not stop it. The systematic shelling of Sarajevo, like the bombardment of Dubrovnik and Vukovar, is intended to soften up the other side (in this case Bosnia) to accept Serbia's terms at the peace talks organised by the E.E.C. in Lisbon.

The so-called "withdrawal" of the Yugoslav army from Bosnia is a ruse, an attempt, to prevent international sanctions. In reality, the only troops to pull out are Serbs who live in Serbia. Those Serbian Troops who come from Bosnia will remain behind, as will the

Montenegro. The creation of Greater Serbia will sow the seeds of new wars and upheavals.

Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, Croats and Hungarians are all affected. The Macedonian question which was at the centre of two wars on the Balkans and caused terrible violence and upheavals between the Wars, has raised its head once more with the risk of Bulgaria and Greece becoming embroiled.

On the other hand, in the aftermath of the Gulf War and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey has ambitions of becoming a regional super-power. It is extending its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where it is vying for positions with Iran. But it is also casting its eye on the Balkans, as the "protector" of the Muslims in Bosnia, Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The break-up of Yugoslavia represents a crime against all the peoples of the area. Serbia,

NORTH SEA WORKERS - WHICH WAY FORWARD?

In the 25 years of North Sea oil exploration the drive for profits by the major oil companies has seen workers maimed, victimised and killed in one of the most dangerous seas in the world and one of the most dangerous occupations on earth. Who can forget watching the horrors of Piper Alpha when 167 oil workers were killed bringing grief to families all over the country who lost their loved ones.

"Never again" must have been the cry from oil workers and their families everywhere, yet, astonishingly, less than one year later we had a potential disaster of Piper Alpha scale almost occurring on the Brent platform followed by the explosions on Shell's Fulmar platform in 1991. For the oil companies safety is a dirty word and the health of workers is of no concern to them. It is a scandalous fact that in the most dangerous occupation in the world, multinational oil corporations, aided and abetted by various governments, have denied oil workers basic human rights. Even the very basic EEC safety rules do not apply on the rigs. After the recent disasters the oil companies have had to be dragged kicking and screaming to even attempt improving safety conditions. Against this background the need for strong trade union organisation and leadership is obvious. Yet for years the main unions have been incapable of organising oil workers effectively and fighting to improve conditions. The union leaders have a chequered history when it comes to offshore union organisation even entering into an alliance with the employers in 1978 when the oil workers went on strike for better wages and conditions before eventually conceding defeat and returning to work. These facts lie behind the formation of the OILC, an independent union set up to fight for better health and safety and union recognition following the failures of the official union leadership. In 1990 the OILC led a strike of offshore oil workers which included a sit-in on some of the rigs. Following this action victimisation among the industry's 36,000 workers was rife, particularly those associated with the OILC. Since then a debate has raged about the merits of organising workers independently from the official trade unions. This during a period which is seeing small unions merge with larger unions and even the big unions like NUPE, NALGO and COHSE discussing joining together into one large union grouping.

This is not a new debate. From the formation of the United Mineworkers of Scotland as a split-off from the Miners Federation of Britain in the 1930s to the EPIU split-off from the right wing EETPU in the late 1980s trade unionists have argued the merits of independent unions.

The lesson is that these breakaway unions,

whilst having just cause and genuine grievances, as well as many good class fighters in their ranks, decline in membership and influence and end up playing at best a peripheral role in the affairs of workers and at worst having no influence whatsoever whilst dividing the workforce. In reality such moves play into the hands of right-wing union officials as it often takes the best activists out of the official unions. In 1965, Marxists opposed the actions of the "Blue Union" when it attempted to split the T&G which was under the complete domination of the right wing. The ultra-left sects supported the "Blue Union" as more left wing. This adventure resulted in the emergence of non-unionism in the docks and eventually the collapse and disintegration of the "Blue Union".

Would these activists not have been better inside the T&G fighting to change the leadership? The setting up of the independent Glassworkers union following the betrayal of the then GMWU (now GMB) leaders during the Pilkingtons strike in the 1970s met a similar fate.

The most recent breakaway union, the EPIU has only 4,000 members. All their actions have succeeded in doing is separating the active layer of lefts from the mass of electrical workers. This is despite the fact that the EPIU has been recognised by the TUC, a factor denied to the OILC union. The truth is that shortcuts to building fighting trade unions have been tried before and ended in disaster. The UDM being the only example of a functioning breakaway union but only because they have received support from British Coal and the government in an attempt to undermine the NUM, something which would not happen with a left union such as the OILC. The oil workers, unfortunately, are making the same mistake. No-one can doubt their credentials as genuine fighters, but they are in danger of isolating the best activists from the 36,000 oil workers in the industry.

If, as the OILC leaders claim, they have 3,000 members this could surely form an effective and formidable campaigning force within the official union structures as a broad left grouping fighting for effective change to establish a combative trade union body among oil workers.

- * For a fighting trade union confederation representing offshore workers.
- * For trade union recognition across the industry.
- * No victimisation - Reinstate the sacked oil workers.
- * Health and safety under trade union control.
- * Public ownership of the natural resources in the North Sea.

Graham Wilson, Edinburgh NUPE, personal capacity

MARXISM AND THE UNIONS

For Marxists, work in the trade unions has always occupied a central position. Many Marxist classics deal with the kinds of problems trade unionists face today. We aim to reprint this material which sheds light on many of the burning questions of the labour movement to provide a further contribution in the discussions in the union movement at present. Below we reprint extracts from the Programme of Action of the Second, Third and Fourth Congress of the Comintern.

The communists in all countries must join the unions in order to develop them into bodies consciously struggling for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of Communism. They must take the initiative in creating trade unions where none exist. Voluntary withdrawals from the union movement and artificial attempts to create special unions - unless made necessary by exceptional violence on the part of the union bureaucracy (such as the dissolution of revolutionary local union sections by the opportunist centres), or by its adopting a narrow exclusionist policy of closing the organization to the broad masses of less skilled workers - these represent a great danger to the Communist movement. Such actions threaten to isolate the most politically advanced and class conscious workers from the masses who are sympathetic to communist ideas; they threaten to leave the masses to their opportunist leaders, thus playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The fact that considerable numbers of the less experienced workers have recently been leaving the free unions in Germany, out of disappointment at not receiving any direct advantages, should not alter the principled position taken by the communist International. Communists must explain to the proletariat that their problems can be answered not by leaving the old trade unions for new ones, or by staying outside the unions, but by revolutionizing the trade unions, ridding them of reformist influence and the treacherous reformist leaders, and transforming them into a genuine stronghold of the revolutionary proletariat.

Despite the fierce anti-communist witchhunts being stirred up by the reformists we must continue to fight for the slogan of the Communist International - against the splitting of the trade unions - with the same militancy with which we have fought for it up to now. The reformists are trying to use expulsions to provoke a split. Their aim is to systematically drive the best elements out of the unions, to make the communists lose their patience and nerve, so that instead of completing their carefully thought-out plan to win the trade unions from within the Communists will leave the unions and come out in favour of a split. The reformists, however, will not succeed. The splitting of the trade unions, especially in present conditions, is a major threat to the entire workers' movement. The split would set the working class back many years, for the bourgeoisie would have the opportunity to destroy even the most elementary gains of the proletariat unopposed.

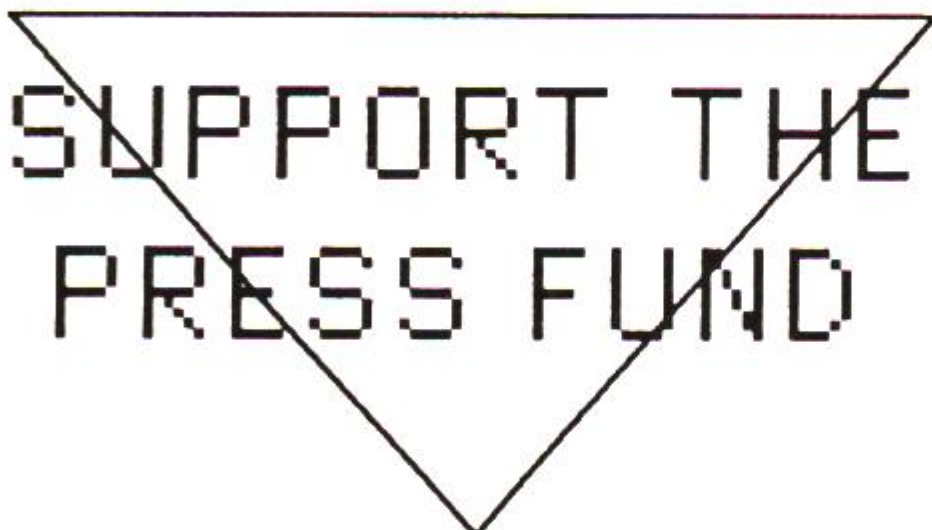
FRENCH DOCKERS STRIKE AGAINST NEW LABOUR LAW

During May France's 8,300 dockers staged a series of strikes against new labour laws being introduced by the "socialist" government.

The docks at Marseille, Nantes, St Malo, Lorient and Rouen were paralysed by the action. In the grain port of Rouen, dockers barricaded the dock manager into his office, and 18 ships were held up.

Unfortunately dockers at Le Havre and St Nazaire did not join the stoppages because they negotiated local agreements, while Brest and Cherbourg worked normally.

The new French labour laws aim to do away with many of the conditions of service that dockers have enjoyed in the post-war period and are similar to the measures which eventually drastically weakened the rights of British dockers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The CGT union believes that up to half of dockers jobs are in jeopardy as a result of the new laws.



During the election campaign the press and the Tories spent millions of pounds churning out their propaganda. But the Tories can afford to, thanks to the millions of pounds which are poured in to its war chests by big business.

Socialist Appeal has no rich backers. We rely completely on the donations from supporters, trade unionists and workers. Only their sacrifices can help us get the necessary equipment to print and publish the journal. We need to raise £10,000 which will provide for our immediate printing needs. Your pennies, pounds, fivers or more, to those who can afford it, are absolutely essential for the regular production of Socialist Appeal and to help us move towards a fortnightly and weekly paper in the speediest possible time.

Please fill in the form and send it off today!

ELECTIONS TO THE RIGHT CONFERENCE TO THE LEFT

A debate on pay opened CPSA Conference on Monday morning calling for the leadership to campaign for, and recommend rejection of the pay deal.

Most of the groupings in the CPSA took part in the debate, and the majority agreed that the two most dangerous points of this pay deal are the threat to national pay bargaining and the extension of performance pay.

Very few could find anything in the deal to recommend to their members, and felt there must be a campaign to defeat it. The debate on pay lasted about two hours after which an overwhelming vote called for a rejection of the deal. In a manoeuvre, which was a blatant attempt to circumvent the democratic decision of conference and to delay taking action, Marion Chambers, CPSA President used a legal device to ignore conference's wishes and therefore the members.

The victory of the right in both the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary elections was a blow to both the left groupings within the CPSA. Even though they had retained control of the union for the time being, it was obvious that it was not because they had won the support of the active members in the branches. Conference made that quite clear as the conference floor belonged to the left and most of the left motions were passed.

The other major debate took place around the question of market testing which is the planned privatisation of the Civil Service. Delegates made it clear that they had a lack of confidence in the leadership to campaign successfully to defend jobs.

This comes from the experience of the 1989 Pay Deal, the battle over Agency Status and their failure to campaign successfully to keep YTS out of the civil service.

The biggest debate within the CPSA is now about union democracy and the right wing abuse of the rules and constitution of our union like using the union journal to promote their candidate for General Secretary and their attempts to manipulate the annual conference agenda.

On the conference floor the main development was the move for unity between the rank and file. An open meeting on how to fight the pay deal took place on the Tuesday of Conference and was attended by about 500. It was a very productive meeting and sent people back to the branches looking to work together to defeat the pay deal.

The left must do all it can to unite within the CPSA and defeat the right wing before it destroys the union and allows our conditions to worsen.

Edwina Phillips, CPSA DNS Glasgow
(personal capacity)

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ANGER IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES

by **DAVE CONWAY,**
Polytechnic Of North London Nalگو

There is shock and horror amongst many Nalگو members following the General Election result. The union leadership spent a considerable amount of the political fund on a national press campaign aimed at putting public services at the top of the agenda for Labour's advantage. All to no avail.

Public service employees realise the seriousness of the situation we are all in.

Over the past 11 years a significant proportion of cuts were borne by blue collar workers, although in the more recent period, "new management techniques" have had some effect on the jobs and conditions of white collar workers.

Deeper Cuts

Now, with no room for manoeuvre in the economy public services can expect a stepping up of the attacks by central government. With a deficit of £30bn this year (and next year probably £34 - 38 bn) the government cannot borrow, there is very little else to sell off, and North Sea oil revenues are running out.

So the public sector can expect a deeper round of cuts. Local authorities will continue to be squeezed while laws on compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), i.e wage cutting, will be extended. Many councils also spent necessary "extra" money expecting a Labour victory in the election.

Meanwhile the employers have offered only 3.2% and rejected the flat rate and other measures aimed at mitigating low pay. There are already signs of a build up of anger amongst members. This could develop into a national strike if the offer is not significantly improved.

Competition

Universities, polytechnics and colleges all face further massive increases in student numbers with smaller increases from the funding bodies. Buildings are often crumbling.

Competition for students has been introduced which will lead to some institutions merging or facing closure altogether. Many are already in financial difficulties.

Polys (awaiting an offer as we go to press) are demanding a quicker resolution to their pay

claim this year and are calling for national strike action if a decent offer is not received by July 1st.

Rejected

Nalگو members in Gas have just rejected a 4% offer and may now have to mobilise for action to receive a better award. NHS staff will continue to be squeezed with the "reforms" and will be forced to defend their jobs, terms and conditions.

All of the public services face cuts in one form or another because the government is boxed in. The forms may differ but "reforms", "audits" or "CCT" in reality will

mean the threat of job losses, wage cuts and the cutting of public services.

The next year is likely to see an intensification of all of these tensions which may erupt suddenly.

Joint Action

The German public sector unions recently inflicted a defeat on their government. We must demand joint action amongst public service trade unions at the workplace level on a national scale. It is not enough to "merge at the top" while we face the attacks of a fourth term of Tory government.

The Tories will not protect our public services and we need to turn members anger into action which can put a stop to the privatisations, cash cuts and attacks on Nalگو members pay and conditions at work.

CONFERENCE DEMANDS ACTION ON PAY

by a London NUCPS member

NUCPS conference was quite clear - we need to take action on pay!

We have just started a ballot for strike action on June 22-24 which given the mood of conference we should win. Compared to previous years the conference was in fighting mood. The mood change was the most evident feature of the debates. Even since March the attitude has completely changed. Although pay is the current issue, in reality, it is only a catalyst. NUCPS members are facing attacks over privatisation, new pay assessments and a range of other issues which have served to stoke members anger.

Pay Conference

At our special pay conference in March the overwhelming call was to wait until Labour was elected and John Smith in the treasury and our problems would be solved. But with Labour's defeat and the Tories back in power things are different. Most members now realise we have to act.

The government are looking for a confrontation with the civil service unions. They have proposed changes to civil service pay and offered us just 4.1% this year. They want to try and marginalise the unions so they can carry through their plans to break up the civil service and

privatise large parts of it.

In the past we have balloted on strike action and the leadership have been slow to act on the ballot. But this year even the leadership is behind the call because they know that their own positions are also threatened if the government goes ahead with the break up of the civil service.

Industrial Action

This is the most serious call for industrial action in the history of the NUCPS.

The problem we face is that with the defeat of the Broad Left candidates in the CPSA it appears as if they will accept the pay offer and we would then be faced with the prospect of them working while we are on strike. As a minimum the demand should be put for them to respect NUCPS picket lines.

Conference also debated a motion on changes in strike pay. The theory put forward was that the changes would make the system fairer but in reality they were simply aimed at cutting costs. Conference defeated the proposals.

A strong motion from the Broad Left was carried against contracting out. The motion said that if any area was opted out then the union should take action up to national strike action to stop it.

TUBEWORKERS: ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY

**by a London
Underground Worker**

As we go to press, the RMT leadership are using their 4,721 - 2078 ballot majority merely to try and bring London Underground (LUL) management back to negotiations. Yet we know LUL are already imposing their vicious anti-union Company Plan!

The all-grades, all-union rank and file Tube Workers Action Group (TWAG) are calling for an all-out strike as the best and quickest

way to win a complete victory and counter intimidation and to have the maximum effect on track and stock.

TWAG's fifth bulletin is underway. We have distributed more than 10,000 of the first four issues and we are planning to lobby RMT District Councils to step up the pressure on all the unions at all levels.

ASLEF leaders are merely waiting to be attacked while the TSSA leaders are collaborating with management despite their conference mandating them to oppose LUL's local machineries and to fight by all means possible.

When the next operational grades are attacked, the rank and file and TWAG must organise themselves - unofficially if necessary. Sooner or later there will be a fightback. Management are taking on too many, with too much, all at once. The German railworkers have shown how laws cannot be enforced when workers

fight united. This is a dispute we can and we must win.

To contact the TWAG ring 071-354-3164 and we'll put you in touch.

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Each issue of Socialist Appeal aims to carry a major article on a current, historical or theoretical subject. Why not use these articles (or one of the others) as the basis for local discussion groups. Additional reading material can always be obtained from Well Red Books.

If arising from these discussions, you have any comments concerning the articles then write and let us know. Equally write if you would like more material published on a subject that you have discussed.

Our letters page is designed primarily as a readers forum - please use it. Of course we welcome comments and feedback from all our individual readers, whether for publication or not.

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Why not check if your local radical bookshop is stocking Socialist Appeal? If not ask them if they would be interested and get in contact with us. We will do the rest. College/Student bookshops are also worth approaching. Our first issue sold out in the shops which stocked it and increased orders have been taken for issue two.

Remember, you can help Socialist Appeal become the number one journal in the Labour and trade union movement by taking the next step and becoming a seller. Ring us on 071-354-3164 to find out how.

Steve Jones, Journal Manager

- * Tell your union reps of any intimidation.
- * Don't sign new contracts.
- * Respect other union's picket lines.
- * Get along to branch and TWAG meetings to organise the fightback
- * All-out to smash the Company Plan.

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GERMAN WORKERS SHOW THEIR POWER

Report by
Hans-Gerd Ofinger
in Wiesbaden

Chancellor Kohl said he would crush the unions. He didn't. The German employers said that they would never increase their first wage offers. They did. The "five wise men" of the major German economics institutes said that wage rises must be kept below 4%, if German capitalism was to continue to prosper. They have not been.

After a wave of strikes across Western Germany involving both private and public sector workers, the German employers conceded increased wages and the conservative German government was shaken to its roots.

But relief is now evident among the bosses, the government and the union leaders. They faced a catastrophe. There could have been several long strikes all at once in engineering, motor vehicles, railways and the public sector, which could have forced the employers to concede in full the 9% wage increases demanded by West German workers, and thus threaten to bring down the Kohl government. Alexander Batschari of the VDMA, the engineering employers association, when asked why they had offered 5.8% after saying they would make no further offers, said: "What was the alternative? There would have been lockouts and strikes and we could have ended up with an even higher deal".

So having started with a 3-4% offer, as soon as the workers raised their little finger and exerted their overwhelming bargaining power, the engineering bosses raised their offer to about 5.4 - 5.8%.

Public Sector

In the public sector it took a few weeks action, in engineering just the threat of a strike brought the employers to heel. While the 21-month engineering deal initially applies to just 400,000 in one state, out of four million engineering workers, the other states are expected to conclude similar deals.

An overwhelming victory was within the grasp of the West Germany's powerful organised trade unionists, except for the actions of their union leaders. Public service union leader, Monika Wulf-Mathies immediately accepted the 5.4% offer from the government negotiators after nearly two weeks of strikes. But when she put it to the ballot her members

threw it out overwhelmingly. Nevertheless, she and her executive announced that they would not be renewing industrial action and still accepted the offer.

What a misjudgement of her members' resolve to fight, and where was the democracy? She faces reelection at her annual conference next month and has refused to resign, saying: "I have thought about it, but I do not want to leave the union leaderless". Some workers are saying that this is just what she did do!

Leadership

Even the more left-wing IG Metall union leaders were relieved that they did not have to lead a strike and were happy to accept the employers' offer. As one leader said, "it's a compromise, but I am pleased that there is not a strike, although I am worried that in 21 months, the settlement may be overtaken by inflation."

Exactly, that is the danger. That by accepting the first increased offer from the employers, the union leaders have missed a chance to protect properly their members' living standards in the face of the coming assault on jobs that the government and industry is preparing for German workers.

The engineering union leaders feared that, once started, the strike may have gone much further than they wanted. "It would have been like a raging fire over a wide area", said one leader. Given the just-in-time methods now used in modern German industry, stocks at factories are not high, so even a short strike would have brought German manufacturing to a standstill. While some small to medium manufacturers (called the "mittelstand"), particularly components firms who have been suffering from lack of demand in the last year, may not have minded if there had been a shutdown and so wanted to stay firm on the wage demands, the larger motor manufacturers like Audi had just begun to experience an increase in demand and so preferred to reach a deal without a break in production. Their view prevailed among the employers.

Strike Pay

The government had hoped that a new law which stops welfare payments being paid to workers laid off by strikes elsewhere might deter strikes. However, it seems that it may have boosted the possibility of wider strikes, because by calling out all sections, the union could then pay strike pay to those taking



A picket watches over stationary trams during German strike wave

action to compensate for lost welfare. A short and decisive strike that did not break union funds could have broken the employers, and that is what the bosses feared.

The public sector strikes had started just around May Day and involved hundreds of thousands of workers bringing administration and services to a standstill.

It was the first real strike by that sector for 18 years, and the first one that Wulf-Mathies had ever led.

Over 100 firemen struck at Frankfurt airport, the key European airways tumpike, and paralysed it. Over 100 highly skilled mechanics who struck had the same effect on the new German highspeed train, the ICE.

The dispute affected everybody and engendered a remarkable level of solidarity, sympathy, or at least understanding by the wider public. That was because all sections of working people in Western Germany have faced sharp tax rises, rising prices for all

goods and very high interest rates. This is partly because of the huge transfers of public funds (DM 180 billion a year or 6.5% of GNP) and resources to Eastern Germany to subsidise wages and industry there as part of the capitalist unification that the German bosses have undertaken; and is partly because of the rapid slowdown in Germany's economic growth in the last year. German capitalism is being stretched to the limit and the bosses have been trying to make the German workers pay for their difficulties.

Unification

But workers fought back, particularly the low-paid sections like bus drivers, dustmen, hospital workers, post office and railway staff. Apart from striking, workers rushed to join the unions and tens of thousands have joined in the past month. Some groups of workers took action without waiting for the official call. And even in the East, where up to 50% unemployment in many areas has discouraged workers, bus and train drivers in East Berlin took sympathy action.

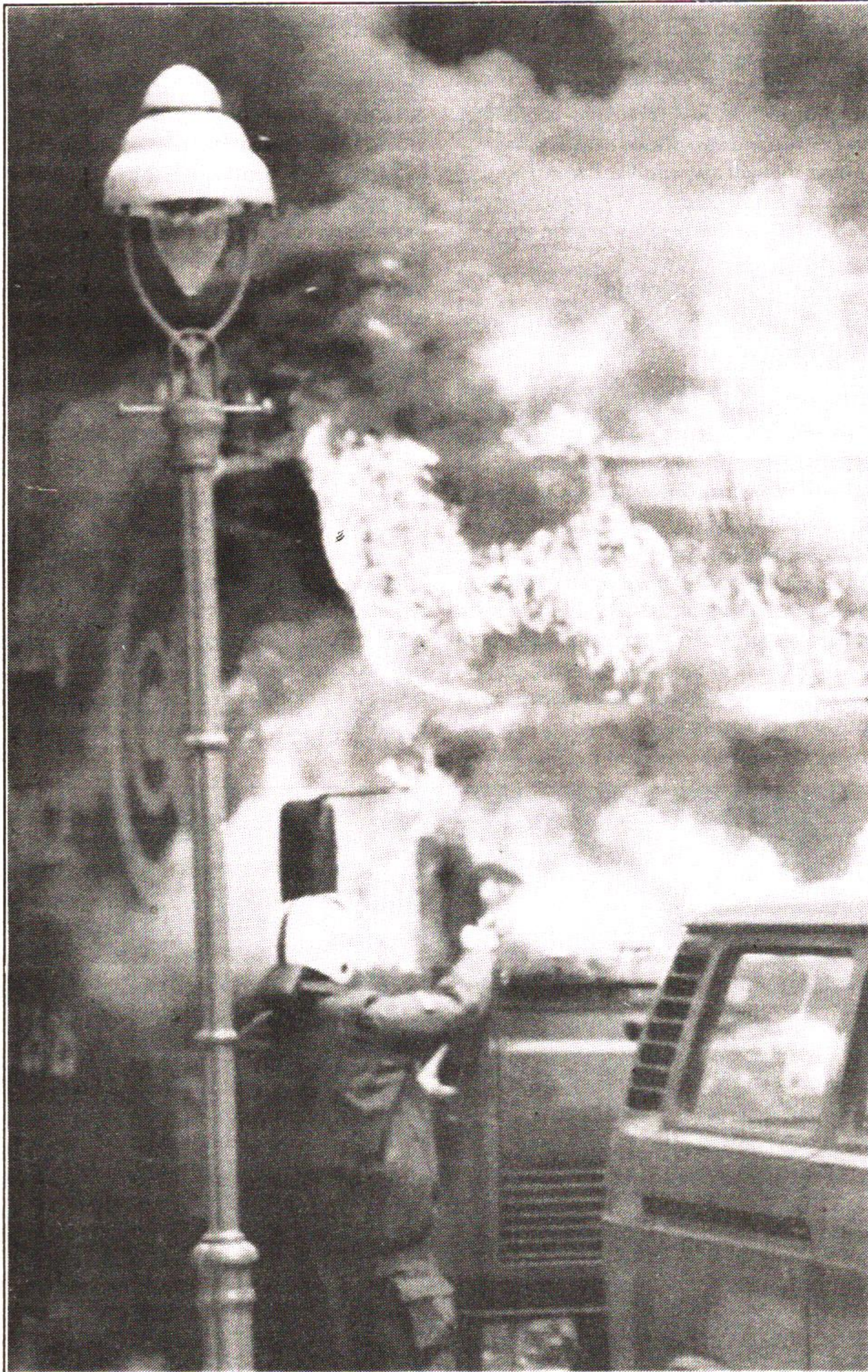
Many strikers recognised that their battle was a direct struggle with the Kohl government and his big business backers. Before the strikes Kohl had pledged to cut ministers' salaries by 5% to show that "everybody" was making sacrifices for unification. But only a few days later his representative announced that it was not really a cut but just a "freeze" on salaries.

For many workers that was just another example of the lies that Kohl had been telling workers. When unification with the East was promoted by Kohl, he won a landslide election victory on the promise that taxes and prices would not rise. But in the last year, he has introduced a 7.5% income tax levy and parallel rises in tobacco, petrol and heating oil duties, and VAT is planned to go up 1% next January.

Unpopular

Now Kohl has never been so unpopular since he came to power ten years ago. The government has been further damaged by the resignation of the Liberal leader Genscher as foreign minister, so threatening the maintenance of the Christian Democrat-Christian Social Union-Liberal coalition that has held power throughout the 1980s.

However, the SPD leaders have not seized the advantage that the workers in struggle have created in weakening the Kohl government. Some right-wingers have merely advocated the formation of a "grand coalition" with Kohl.



Berlin's May day demonstration ended in rioting after groups gathered to protest about unemployment caused by reunification

So it is not high workers' wages but the economic crisis in German capitalism which has brought this confrontation to a head.

Redundancies

Chancellor Kohl has been humiliated by this just limited show of German workers' power. The wage increases won are well above the limits he had insisted on before the struggle began. But it could have been worse, even threatening the government itself. This partial victory for the workers will mean renewed efforts by big business to make German workers pay for the crisis. Interest rates will be kept up longer, firms are planning increased redundancies as the recession stretches on, and inflation will remain above 4% for at least another year.

Only a decisive break by the union leaders from "social partnership" with the employers and a radical socialist lead from the SPD can provide a lasting improvement for German workers. In the meantime Germany will enter a period of discontent, doubts, instability and confusion.

TROUBLED TIMES

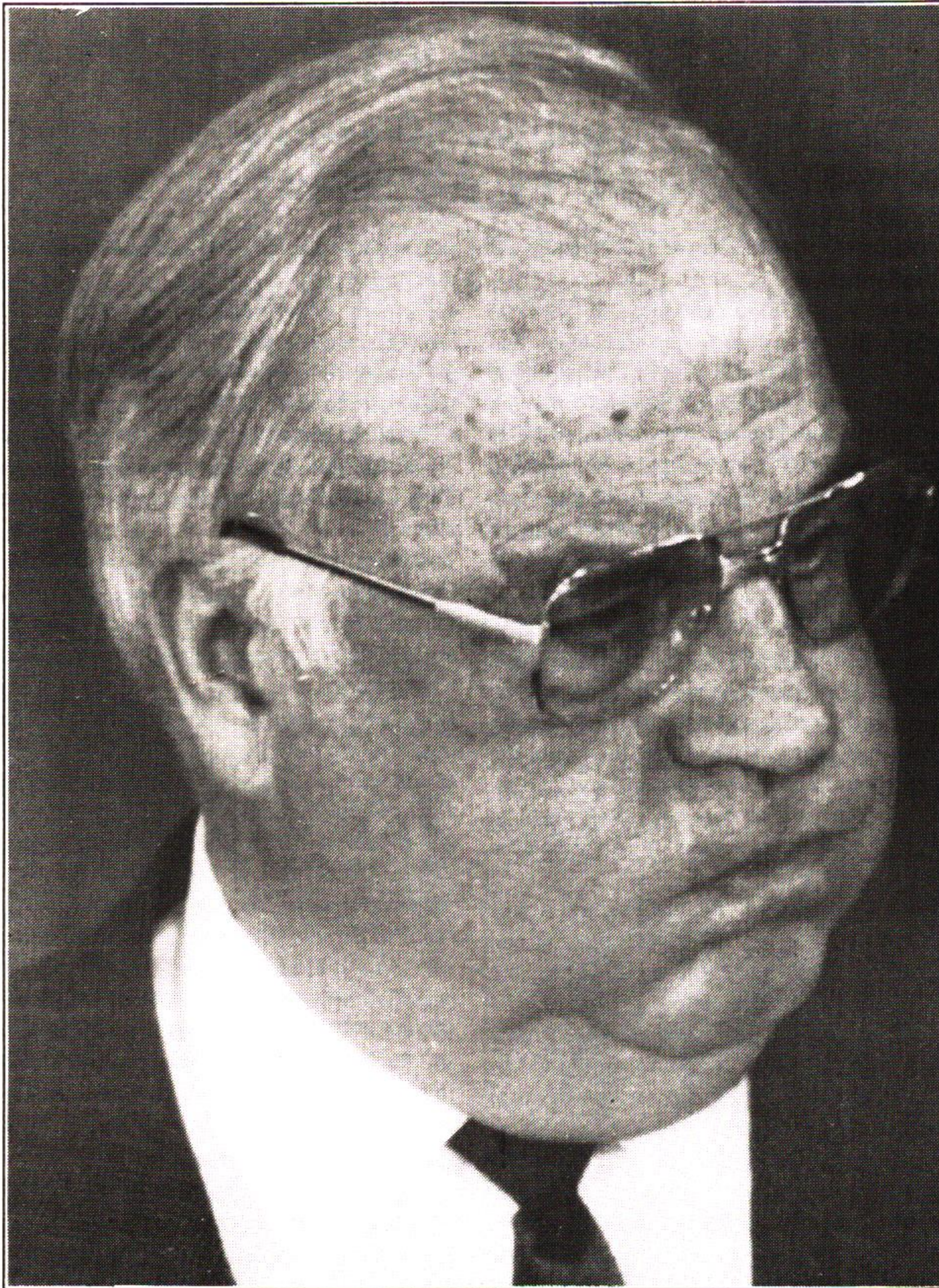
The Economist's economic forecast for Germany for 1992 has been shattered by recent events.

As the year began the Economist predicted "small sacrifices" would have to be made but talked about "so much coming right" and the German economy "moving forwards."

Now they are having to eat their words! Inflation is rising, growth slowing down and the budget still heavily in deficit.

But even this would be "nothing much to worry about" if workers wages could be kept under control and there was no adverse reaction to soaring unemployment in the east. In other words, if the capitalists could make the workers pay for the crisis of capitalism in Germany.

Now the workers have spoken: "We're not paying!"



Chancellor Kohl is under increasing pressure

In other words they are prepared to do the dirty work for Kohl in lowering living standards for German workers to allow German capitalism to recover and the unification to succeed. The failure of the SPD leaders to provide a radical socialist alternative to Kohl has led some sections of unemployed, particularly in the east to turn in despair to extreme right-wing parties like the Republicans, which gained 6-11% in recent regional (Lander) elections.

These parties are feeding on racialism and trying to blame the rising unemployment, housing and social problems on immigrants and refugees from eastern Europe and the Middle East who now live in some numbers in some German cities.

Many German bosses are worried about the rise in labour costs. German manufacturing is becoming increasingly expensive, they argue, because wages are too high, some 60% above those in Britain. The truth is that German business has been able to afford higher wages before when it was outselling and outproducing its rivals in world markets. But the recession and slowdown in investment and production coupled with the massive outgoings to eastern Germany has stretched resources to the limit. The cost of subsidies to the East have now reached 81% of East German output, and with East Germany's unemployment near 40% and output per head collapsing, there is no prospect of these subsidies being reduced.

CRISIS ON HOLD AFTER MAFIA MURDER?

The recent general election campaign in Italy began with the assassination of Salvo Lima, regarded as one of the most powerful men in Palermo and leader of the Andreotti faction in the ruling Christian Democrats (DC). On May 24 a bombing killed judge Giovanni Falcone, his wife and three policemen in Palermo. Thirty-six hours later Parliament ended its stalemate and finally chose Christian Democrat, Scaifaro as the new President.

This is not the first time bombings and killings have been used in Italy as part of political competition. This has been a feature of the last 25 years, starting in 1969, when the secret services and neo-fascist killers organised a bombing in Milan killing 12 people, and then tried to blame the workers' organisations for the outbreak of violence following the "hot autumn."

Open Clashes

This latest killing cannot be understood outside a general analysis of the crisis of the DC after 45 years in government. The last 18-24 months have been a period of growing tensions and even open clashes between the Italian bourgeoisie and its traditional party, the DC. This was clearly shown in the elections when big sections of the bourgeoisie in the north deserted the DC and vote for the Lombardy League and the Republicans.

Even more striking were the developments of a new enquiry in Milan, where 40 politicians and members of the council have been jailed for corruption. A new feature in this investigation is that industrialists themselves began to go to the judges denouncing the politicians they used to bribe in order to get contracts from the public administration.

With the economic recession and the prospect of missing the opportunity of Europe the capitalist class came to the conclusion that a new series of attacks on the state sector and on wages is necessary.

The problem is that this will mean attacking part of the gigantic system of corruption upon which the DC has built its support over decades. The bourgeoisie is divided over the

method that should be employed to carry out its programme.

A section of the small and middle capitalists in the north have come to the conclusion that the only way to participate in the European market is to bring "into Europe" only the most advanced regions of the country, that is northern Italy. They are afraid to be forced to take some part of the burden (new taxes and so on) and accordingly support and finance the Lombardy League.

Reactionary

A decisive section of big business however is prepared to tolerate the demagogy of the League only in order to divide the working class and petit bourgeoisie of the north and south. The League's attacks on "lazy, good-for-nothing southerners who don't want to work but live on handouts" are an indication of this process.

The suggestion that the north should divide from the south is utterly reactionary and utopian. It is not taken seriously by big business and finance capital.

Another part of the bourgeoisie feel the only way to apply their programme is to call the PDS into their government, in one form or another.

This situation of division among the ruling class was expressed in the vote of 6-8 April. Formally in the new parliament the old coalition (DC/PDS/Liberals/PSDI) still holds a majority, but it was undermined by internal divisions in the DC. The Milan scandal further accelerated the disintegration of the old coalition. The parliament was at an impasse, unable to elect a new president. It was against this background that Falcone was killed.

Despite the confusion, one thing is clear - this was not a classical mafia killing. Since 1989 Falcone had left Palermo and was working in Rome in contact with the socialist Minister of Justice, Martelli. He was not working on specific cases. He was not killed in order to stop a specific investigation, or to avenge old actions. This bombing could have been organised at any time in the last three years.

We must remember that the Mafia is one of Italy's most important entrepreneurs with an estimated £40 billion turnover. It is deeply involved not only in drug trafficking but also in the financial system and tourist and build-

ing industries and is a large underwriter of the public debt.

As a part of the general crisis of the DC regime, the traditional link of the Mafia with parliament was also in crisis. The Mafia businessmen, like the other capitalists came to the conclusion that they must be directly involved in politics, that they can no longer limit themselves to support for one or other faction.

The killing of Falcone is an indication of this fact that the Mafia are not prepared to sit on the sidelines while the ruling class try to reorganise the country's political and industrial system.

But there is another important factor. The possible involvement of the PDS in the government would pose various problems to Occhetto and his leadership. This government would carry out a programme of severe cuts. While Occhetto and his friends are well prepared to carry out such a programme in order to get into the government, they know very well that the working class would not accept so easily the programme. The situation of the PDS leadership was shown in the past six weeks when they repeatedly refused to join the coalition in order to elect the new president.

New Coalition

This was to change very quickly after the killing of Falcone, and in 24 hours the PDS MPs decided to support Scaifaro and to vote with the four parties of the old government "in order to give an answer" and to "avoid a right-wing president being elected."

Thus if the scandal in Milan has definitively destroyed the old coalition, the killing of Falcone has built a new one that could be the basis for a new government with the PDS leadership inside it as hostages of Italy's "national emergency."

By
Claudio Belio
in Milan

AFGHANISTAN: STATE OF COLLAPSE

The collapse of the PDPA (Watan) government and the dash towards Kabul by rival Mujahideen groups ushered in a new phase in Afghanistan's traumatic history. Lal Khan, a supporter of the Pakistani Marxist paper, *The Struggle* points the way forward for Afghanistan.

Events in recent weeks have shown that the formation of a stable, unified, Islamic democratic capitalist government in Afghanistan is no more than wishful thinking amongst ruling sections in Pakistan and elsewhere.

The end of the turmoil and conflagration in Afghanistan is far from a reality. The proclamations of "victory" by the Jamaat-a-Islami and celebrations by the other fundamentalists are nothing but a farce. They themselves know it was not a victory of the "jihad" or the Mujahideen.

The fact of the matter is that the resignation of Dr Najib and the sudden fall of the PDPA government in Kabul even took certain Mujahideen groups, including Hikmatyar's Hezb-a-Islami by surprise. The whole rush towards Kabul to fill the power vacuum created by the disintegrating regime showed that they were not even prepared for such a sudden turn in the situation

Revolt

The immediate cause of the collapse of the regime was the revolt of the main Uzbek militia lead by General Abdul Rashid Dostam against Dr Najibullah's regime. With the takeover of Mazorr-a-Sharraf and the complete blockage of the Solang highway by General Dostam's forces even the trickle of aid from the central Asian republics, which was Kabul's last lifeline, was stopped.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its stalinist model and ideology had left little for the PDPA "communists" to strive for. The re-emergence of nationalism on a world scale and the conversion of the former republics of the Soviet Union into separate states on national lines had a profound impact on the ideology and thinking of those who had followed the Moscow line to achieve socialism. Most members and leaders in the PDPA had started diverging on national and ethnic lines ever since the

dramatic events started erupting in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

With the shortages in Kabul and the intensification of the crisis these contradictions exploded into a revolt. Dr Najib, being a Pashtun, had also gone to new extremes to achieve some sort of accommodation with the Mujahideen. The concessions granted by him in the Benon Sevan United Nations Peace Plan created fears both among PDPA hardliners and the Uzbek/Tajik generals and militia leaders. His announcement to quit in March proved the last straw.

His actual resignation in April and the revolt of General Dostam struck a decisive

tween the Tajik, Ahmed Shah Masood and the Pashtun, Hekmatyar had exploded with strong ethnic overtones. The overtures by Tajik and Uzbek PDPA leaders towards Ahmed Shah Masood had been in the offing for some time. With the deposing of Najibullah this Uzbek/Tajik alliance came to the forefront and the leaders of the Military Command Council led by General Nabi Azimi took control of Kabul in coalition with Masood's and Dostam's troops. Najib's foreign minister Abdul Wakil Khan even went to the extent of renouncing him. But then came Hekmatyar's Pushtan forces marching towards Kabul to drench the city



Mojahideen guerilla armed with US Stinger missile launcher

blow to the Afghan army. This army, which had successfully repulsed the Mujahideen onslaught after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in February 1989 for the past three years, fell like a house of cards.

But quite some time before this the whole dimension of the war in Afghanistan had changed. The rebellion of General Tanai against the PDPA and his decision to join forces with Hekmatyar's Hezb Islami had sent a clear message to the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara generals and officers of the PDPA. On the other hand the conflict be-

in blood. Exactly 14 years since the Saur (spring) revolution, Afghanistan took a sharp turn towards even greater turmoil and chaos.

Saur Revolution

The Saur revolution which took place through a bloody military coup led by left wing army and airforce officers, was the most significant step forward for Afghanistan since the reforms introduced by King Amanullah in the 1920s.

The Daud government which had taken

INTERNATIONAL

power by ousting King Zahir Shah in 1973 through a palace coup was moving to crush the left wing. On April 17, 1978 it had assassinated Mir Akbar Khyber and was planning to kill the leaders of both the Khalq and Parcham factions of the PDPA. The left radical officers struck just before the assassinations could be executed.

Noor Mohammed Torakeai, the leader of the Khalq faction was brought from the prison and installed as President of Afghanistan.

The new revolutionary government started a programme of wide-ranging reforms in most sectors of social and economic life. Radical land reforms were started and most of the industry, including trade, mining and other sectors, was nationalised. The sale of women, the largest trade in Afghanistan, was totally banned. The system of high interest lending by speculators, which had subjugated the majority of the poor peasants to bonded slavery, was attacked.

Similarly, in other fields, such as health education, the PDPA government tried to introduce radical reforms in an economically backward and socially primitive Afghanistan.

This represented a major blow to the landlords and the Mullahs especially in the countryside, who had been sponsoring the usury and other forms of exploitation. Hence the "jihad" started.

But the main problem of the Saur revolution and the PDPA government's reforms was that they were introduced from the top. The apparatus of the state and the party was weak and fragile. Its control over the countryside, submerged in the tribal system, was limited. The proportion of the masses who participated in the reform process was minimal and was mainly confined to the cities. Hence the incapacity of the new regime to develop the reforms deep down, and the resistance of the landlords and Mullahs created new conflicts within the PDPA itself. Tarakai was overthrown in 1979 by Hafizullah Amin and his policies of ultra-leftism and opportunism brought Afghanistan to the brink of a fundamentalist counter-revolution.

Intervention

Due to the incompetency and flagrant betrayal of Marxism by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin, its own control of Asiatic republics would have been

threatened by such a counter-revolution. After the Islamic revolution in Iran a new wave of fundamentalist revival surged through the whole area.

Counter-Revolution

A counter-revolution in Kabul, led by the Islamic fundamentalists would have created new problems for the Soviet bureaucracy in maintaining control of the southern Asiatic republics. It was largely these national interests of the Russian bureaucracy which led to the military intervention of the Soviet Union in December 1979. Babrak Karmal, the leader of the Parchamite faction of the PDPA was installed as President in Kabul.

With the rise of Gorbachev and the subsequent change in Soviet foreign policy concessions and conciliation was forced on the Kabul government. Karmal's resistance to change led to his removal and Najibullah was installed as president in 1986. The more he tried to compromise the more the mess grew. The collapse of the Soviet Union sealed his fate.

In spite of the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the fall of the PDPA the war has gone on unabated. The cause of the conflict has clearly been shown to be the lust for power and control over the heroine trade and the poppy fields. It never was, and it is not

now, a war between "Kufr" (infidelity) and Islam.

The efforts of the Pakistani ruling classes to achieve a stable and subservient Afghanistan to act as a trade route to the southern Asiatic republics will not bear fruit. Neither can the dream of Pan-Islamism of Jamaat Islami or General Hameed Gul come true.

Turmoil

The "jihad" was fought with American weapons and American money. The CIA carried out its biggest covert operation in Afghanistan for 10 years. Priorities, dimensions and sides have changed. The US which used to finance and favour fundamentalism now sees it as a threat. This shows just how fragile and jittery their "new world order" really is. Smuggling, lawlessness, drugs and a rising crime rate have been the results of the CIA's intervention in the region.

The whole region is in turmoil. The fires in Kashmir are blazing. The battle for economic and political hegemony is leading to renewed contradictions between India and Pakistan. The conflict between Pushtun and the other minorities in Afghanistan could spread into Pakistan. This could lead to the revival of a resurgent Pushtun nationalism in the frontier areas and



Seized drugs are burned. But Mojahideen strongholds remain the second biggest supplier of drugs in the world.

Baluchistan. The ethnic and nationalistic frenzy in Afghanistan could take many new directions. The Uzbek/Tajik alliance could disintegrate and a new bout of infighting could start.

The Afghan economy is in a state of devastation. The Pakistani state exchequers are nearly bankrupt so there is little possibility of Pakistan coming to the rescue and helping to rebuild the Afghan infrastructure. The racial massacre and violence in Los Angeles has exposed the intensifying poverty in American cities and coupled with the US debt problem and its financial commitments to the former Stalinist states the US treasury will have little to spare for Afghanistan.

Strategical

Afghanistan's demise from its strategical position (due to the "end" of the cold war) further reduces its chances of receiving further foreign aid. Even if it does receive aid it will not put a stop to the war. The vicious circle of debt and interest would in no way solve any of the problems facing the new regime.

The developing world economic crisis will result in US and western imperialism further tightening the squeeze on the colonial and ex-colonial countries, sucking every drop of blood they can from the peoples of these countries.

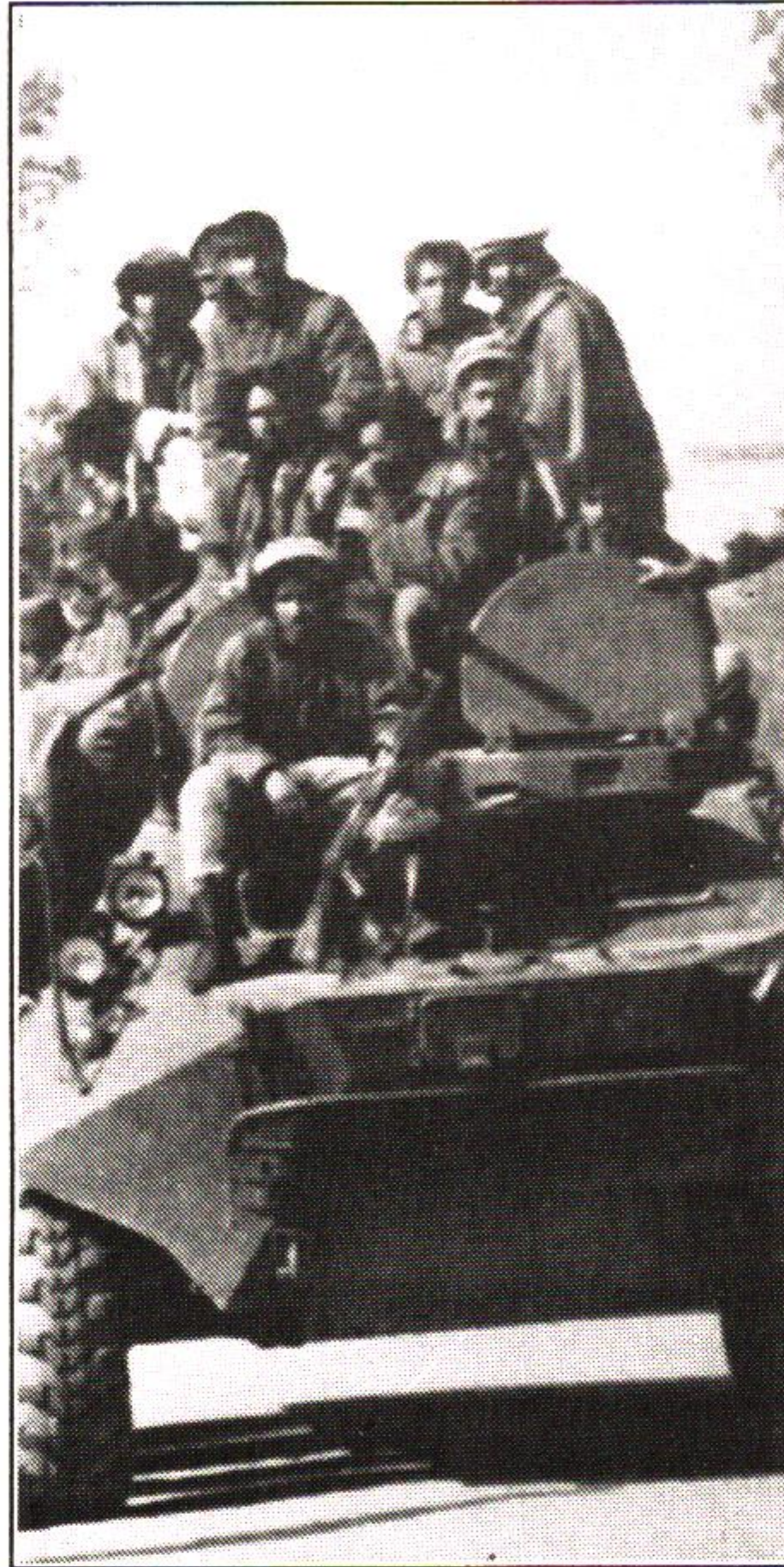
The present conflict in Afghanistan will continue in the period ahead. There will be lulls, primarily due to the exhaustion of the warring factions, but the eruption of the conflict again and again is inevitable. The Mullahs and Mujahideen along with the drug traffickers are pushing Afghanistan into barbarism as the 20th century nears its end.

The break-up of Afghanistan on ethnic and nationalistic lines is becoming a strong possibility. But that would represent another disaster for the Afghan people. Some ex-left Pushtoon nationalist leaders are in secret contact with Hikmatyar to form a pushtoon state including pushtun areas in Pakistan. That would only lead to the extension of the conflict over a much wider area. It would bring Pakistan into the conflict.

The sloganeering about the Islamic state and Pan-Islamism is nothing but a reflection of the desperation and inability on the part of our rulers to solve the problems of the region. The present economic and so-

cial system can only offer Afghanistan a future of horror without an end.

The situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan are more linked today than ever before. Without the overthrow of the loot and plunder of the ruling classes under the guise of Islam the devastation will continue. Only a movement on a class basis, uniting the people of all religions, races, ethnic groups and national minorities can avert this descent into barbarism which is



Afghan army troops fell like a house of cards after years of holding back the Mujahideen.

engulfing the region. The wealth, raw materials and human resources can be developed and mobilised only by breaking the stranglehold of the financial oligarchy. This under a democratic plan and control of the people can unite all the peoples of the region transforming their lives out of misery and poverty. Only on this basis can the horrifying spectre of doom and gloom haunting us be removed once and for all.

Lal Khan

SPANISH WORKERS DOWN TOOLS

Throughout Spain workers downed tools against cuts in unemployment benefit implemented by the government. The call for a four hour stoppage by the trade unions, UGT and workers commissions was supported throughout the state. In the Basque country the nationalist unions insisted on striking on the 27th, the day before the other strikes.

The pressure for a 24-hour stoppage was great as many workers could not understand the logic of a four-hour strike, and despite the national union leaderships there were one day stoppages in many industries such as the steel, mining and education and in regions such as Asturias, Balears and Murcia. Between five and seven million workers were on strike. To this we must add the two million students who struck, supporting the 24-hour strike called by the Marxist-led SE (Sindicato de Estudiantes) against education cuts and the government decree, and in support of the strike call by the workers' organisations. Unlike in December 1988, this time they had to face a campaign to break the strike. The government organised a massive show of police strength to defend the so-called "right to work." This is ironic as the government is not concerned about the right of the unemployed to a job, or the rights of temporary Workers (who make up one-third of the workforce) to a decent job with security. The strike in the Basque country on the 27th and the rest of Spain on the 28th was overwhelmingly supported. The employers and government talked a lot about the so-called violent pickets. The truth is the only injuries were suffered by pickets at the hands of the police. In a number of cities there were violent attacks by police against pickets. In Valencia where a number of workers were hospitalised.

The Interior Minister Corcuera had instructed the police to deal forcefully with the pickets. However, the power of the workers was shown in one incident in Vitoria on the 27th. The police arrested two UST pickets (Union of Socialist Workers, a marxist led union) including their general secretary Arturo Val del Olmo. When thousands of workers demonstrated outside the residence of the civil governor, not only were they immediately released but the judge came to speak to the mass meeting to explain that no charges would be made.

The strikes showed the strength of workers. The policing policy showed the determination of the bosses and government to resist. If the union leaders fail to show the same determination there is a danger this strength will be dissipated.

Gerry Lerner, Madrid

Send your letters
to: The Editor,
PO BOX 2626
LONDON
N1 6DU.

WHAT PRICE VICTORY

Dear comrades,

Thank you for Issue Two of Socialist Appeal which I received and enjoyed. I agreed fully with your editorial comments on the election. Kinnock and co have told us that moderation was the price of victory meaning the abandonment of socialist policies, witch-hunts against socialists and the refusal to support the miner's strike and the battle against the poll tax.

In Issue two I especially enjoyed Ted Grant's election analysis, the article on the lessons of the ILP and the article on nuclear power. In the future I would like to see articles on Marxist economics and how the planned economy will work, the current strikes in Germany and what American socialists are doing in this election year.

Socialist Appeal should in my opinion encourage socialists to join and stay in the Labour Party. Maybe there could be an article on this subject.

Nigel Donovan, Sussex

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Dear Comrades,

I have just received my first wage packet following Chancellor Norman Lamont's tax changes. And do I feel rich!

Lamont claimed his proposal to reduce the tax rate to 20p for the first £2000 of taxable income would help the low paid. It is a fallacy. The new 20p band gives me with a wage of £80 a week just an extra 69p in my pocket. Somebody on just above average earnings of £300 a week gets an extra £2 a week, more than twice as much.

For the same money Lamont could have raised personal allowances, which would have taken many low-paid out of paying tax altogether, and given me an extra £1.78 a week.

So with my extra 69p a week I can now almost afford to pay the higher taxes on cigarettes, beer and petrol!

A low-paid worker, Bristol

KEEPING BRANCHES ACTIVE

The general election results, followed by the local elections have meant that rank and file members of the Labour Party have had to address why Labour lost. The leadership have done their "analysis". Bill Jordan, typically, gave on Question Time the same position as that of all the party leadership. This entails cutting links with the trade unions, more policy "Reviews" and so on.

My experience locally has been that more members are seriously questioning the lurch to the right in the party and the way the campaign was conducted. Our MP, Jim Marshall, was re-elected with an increased majority yet in the post mortem of the election the discussion centered on the lack of a radical programme and that there was no mention of socialism or class issues in the campaign. We have relaunched our ward newsletter and will concentrate on local campaigns to keep the branch active. Marxists in the ward are finding that members are willing to put in some work, yet they have no illusions in the leadership.

Obviously moods will vary up and down the country. However if our ward is indicative of the anger and disillusionment amongst rank and file members could be directed into activity providing the opportunity for the spread of the ideas of Marxism.

Rob John, Leicester

DEFEND THE BBC

Defending the BBC isn't an issue that tops the agenda of many revolutionaries.

But in the wake of media workers' one-day strike in May against job cuts socialists need to start confronting the problem of privatisation in British broadcasting. Producer Choice - the nicely named policy that sparked off the strike - is chillingly similar to the Government's NHS reforms. The aim is to create an internal market where BBC staff need to bid against outside companies to win work from their colleagues.

It means producers spend their time negotiating cheap deals, rather than working as journalists, technical and support staff face the sack in their thousands, collective agreements are undermined as work goes out to non-unionised firms, and solidarity action becomes illegal as colleagues on the same programme are employed by different companies. This comes against the backdrop of Government attacks on the Beeb for alleged left wing bias - just because it doesn't ape the Tory tabloids and presenters dare ask ministers difficult questions.

A campaign is needed to defend the BBC along the same lines as those to stop privatisation of the NHS, British Coal, and British Rail.

Journalists who voted narrowly against backing the day of action, and members of BECTU, who only narrowly supported it, need their confidence boosted by support from outside.

Miles Barter, Chair, Birmingham NUJ

FILM REVIEW

BOYZ N THE HOOD

Despite its many faults *Boyz N The Hood* with its graphic portrayal of ghetto life is at least a welcome relief from the normal offerings of the American film industry in this area.

Recent releases such as *New Jack City*, almost romanticise the violent drug barons and street gangs of the USA, while the 1989 film *Colors* effectively justified the repressive and thugish tactics of the Los Angeles Police Department. It is appropriate that "*Boyz n the Hood*" should go on general video release the week that the riots in Los Angeles dominated the news.

It tells the tale of a black youth trying to rise above the barbaric conditions of a Los Angeles ghetto. But Hollywood never quite pulls it off when it comes to social realism; it can't resist putting the true ugliness of American capitalist society into soft focus.

And *Boyz n the Hood* carries an appalling portrayal of women. They are either prostitutes, drug addicts or going to pieces. The whole story line is that the youth's mother can't cope with him as he enters his teens, so she deposits him on her estranged husband. He's a good 'ole boy, a Vietnam Vet, albeit with Black Panther tendencies, and the predictable male-bonding scenario keeps the young lad on the straight and narrow.

The fact is of course that young women single parents are in the main the stalwart defenders of the remnants of family life in the ghettos, holding body and soul together against formi-

By Bob Williams

BOYZ N THE HOOD is available
now on general release.

Harry DeBoer - Teamster Hero

Readers will be saddened to hear the news of the death of Harry Deboer at his home in Minneapolis, USA, earlier this year.

Alongside Farrell Dobbs, Harry, born in Crockston Minnesota in 1905, became politically active during the famous Teamster strikes of 1934. Both joined a small revolutionary organisation which evolved into the American Socialist Workers Party. His Trotskyist views stayed with him until the very end.

Harry played a leading role in the "Teamster Rebellion" where martial law was declared, the National Guard was sent in, two strikers were killed by the police and massive protest rallies numbering up to 40,000 were regularly held.

As a key member of the original 100-strong strike committee of Teamster Local 574, he was appointed a picket captain to organise the "flying pickets." On 20 July, 1934 the bosses with the assistance of the police attempted to break the strike. One hundred and fifty police with riot guns were sent in to guard a scab convoy. It was an attempt to provoke the pickets and provide the excuse to shoot the strikers. The 5000 pickets amassed

to stop the truck.

According to Farrell Dobbs in *Teamster Rebellion*: "Harry Deboer was in command of the operation. Although a considerable number of cops were on hand, they did not appear at first to be looking for trouble." Harry reported at the time: "I was in charge and a committee of Stalinists came to me and proposed that we go down and take over the Court House, rather than waste our time stopping one truck. Fortunately, I already had some knowledge of Trotskyist methods, plus I was almost certain that would be a sure way of personally getting shot. So I said no."

Later, a scab truck, escorted by 100 or more police pulled up and without warning the police opened fire on the picket truck. Over 50 pickets were wounded and two killed. Harry was shot in the leg while he had "been among those advancing into the gunfire to rescue wounded pickets." (*Teamster Rebellion*) It was four months before Harry could walk again.

It was Harry's original idea to set up the "cruising picket squads" which enabled the strikers to close down 65 of the city's 67 coal

yards and win recognition for Local 574 in just three days.

In 1936 Harry organized the Bakery Drivers Union and became their first president. Newspaper Guild President Randy Furst recalls: "He always had time for the workers even when they would call on him in the middle of the night. It sounds heroic, but that was the kind of man Harry was. He was a hero."

Harry always saw the need for a Labor Party with elected officials directly accountable to the workers. "He was a Labor Party advocate before there was such a thing," said Furst.

In 1939 Harry went to visit Trotsky in Mexico, and undertook a period of guard duty. He recalled many times the excitement of meeting the "Old Man" and of discussing the problems that faced the Trotskyist movement at that time.

In 1941 he was convicted with 17 other members of the American SWP under the infamous Smith Act for his opposition to the war and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

After his release in 1944, he participated actively in the building of Marxist ideas in the United States. The SWP, to which he was a member, adhered originally to the ideas of Trotsky. In the post-war period it degenerated, turning its back on the working class and basing itself on the students, peasants and trendy issues.

In resisting this move away from Marxism, Harry with a whole layer of past militants were bureaucratically expelled by the leadership.

Harry's political education began listening to his father, a Wobbly, (member of the Industrial Workers of the World) discussing with other workers on their farm. By the age of 15 Harry was already a Wobbly.

He continued to lecture in Minneapolis and elsewhere on the lessons of the Teamster strikes right up to this year. He spoke during the 1980s at Teamsters for a Democratic Union meetings and even attended a rally in Britain.

Furst said: "He was extremely optimistic that the labor movement would begin to become a powerful force again. 'Never give up on the workers' was his favourite phrase."



Harry DeBoer - A key leader of the 1934 Teamster strikes

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Labour Must Fight for More Resources as...

Riots Erupt In "Estate of Despair"

The riots in Wood End came as no surprise to anyone in Coventry. Resentment, frustration and despair have been simmering on the estate for years. Its plight is typical of many of the post war council estates built on the peripheries of cities throughout the country.

The collapse of the manufacturing industry in Coventry in the late 1970's and early 1980's has left whole pockets of long term unemployed on Wood End, while many youth in their early twenties have never had a job. 41% of local tenants are unemployed, while over 40% describe themselves as unskilled.

Low Incomes

With this comes low incomes - 67% of local tenants receive housing benefit.

If this burden wasn't enough, there is an appalling lack of facilities on the estate, and because of original bad road planning, a bus journey to the city centre takes over forty minutes - when a bus eventually turns up. Many tenants feel they are trapped on the estate.

With these ingredients, trouble was inevitable. But while understanding the causes - and supporting the right of workers to defend themselves when attacked by the police or other state agencies - Marxists do not condone mindless rioting. Indeed there were many reactionary elements to the Wood End rioting.

In the preceding two weeks leading up to the riot, Asian businesses on the edge of this mainly white estate have been attacked. Firstly, there was a fight between a local Wood End gang - of black and white youths - and owners of an Indian takeaway, and during the incident one of the gang was injured by a hit and run driver, allegedly an Asian. This gave the green light to racists on the estate to go on the rampage, and the Indian takeaway and a nearby Indian restaurant were gutted by firebombs, and an Asian off-licence attacked. During the main riot itself, buses were stoned - but the only buses attacked were those with Asian drivers.

In addition, when the rioting spread to the Willenhall estate on the Friday night, a petrol bomb was thrown into a crowded chip shop.

The actual incident that sparked off the riot was the Police swoop on local youths who race motorbikes around the estate, not just on the roads but across open spaces and along pavements. There have been three petitions from local tenants calling for action against the bike riders. The youth of Wood End turn to the excitement of 'off-road' biking because of the lack of any other amenity on the estate, it is the only 'rush' they can achieve in their drab existence.

Tension High

But tensions between the families on the estate and the young riders have been running high. As many tenants point out, it

is only a matter of time before a child or young mum is run over. If this happens, the tenants will probably follow the example of workers in Toxteth last year where - after a child was killed by a 'joy-rider' - they barricaded off their streets and policed them themselves.

Criminalised

At the same time however, many tenants have been angered by the overreaction of the Police. Instead of a consistent approach meeting the real needs of the community, they get riot police and paddy waggons by the convoy when trouble comes to a head, with the whole estate 'criminalised' by the Police which can only lead to further conflicts.

In addition, more resources are needed for the estate, but they are unlikely to come from the local council, which has already slashed £6.9 million off its current budget to avoid being poll tax capped, which has led to widescale cutting of local services. The way forward is for Coventry's Labour council to unite with other local authorities up and down the country to force adequate funding from the Government, so that the hundreds of council estates in the UK, like Wood End, have decent facilities, at the same time demanding Government policies that can ensure decent jobs for all.

The local authorities must also link up with the trade unions, tenants and community organisations to ensure democratic control of the Police.