

Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League (Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency/Britain)

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COMMENT

Walton and the Labour left

THE DECISION of the Broad Left to contest the Walton by-election on July 4 has raised serious questions for left-wing activists both in Liverpool and nationally.

Workers News believes that the duty of all socialists in the North West was to campaign for and advocate a vote for *Militant* supporter Lesley Mahmood. Faced with a contest between Mahmood and Kinnockite loyalist Peter Kilfoyle, socialists had no option but to support Mahmood's campaign, which not only opposed sackings, cuts and the poll tax, but attracted the most advanced sections of workers.

At the same time, we think that the Broad Left campaign was ill-thought out and tactically inept. Billed by *Militant* as a battle 'to win back [?] the Labour Party for the working class and socialism', it signally failed to deliver Kilfoyle's easy victory enables the Labour leadership to boast: 'Look, these people claim to represent the working class of Liverpool, but it has decisively rejected them.' No sooner were nominations announced than Walworth Road was rubbing its hands at the prospect of a mass purge in *Militant*'s traditional heartland.

Mahmood's candidacy was not frivolous. It had roots in the working class, among militant trade unionists and Labour Party activists angered by successive attacks both from the Tories and the Labour leadership. It was, however, not only a considerable miscalculation but revealed a complete absence of serious strategy.

Clearly *Militant* thought it could win the seat and get itself an MP. This marks something of a sea change within *Militant*, which now refers to people joining it, where previously its public face had been that of a paper with *sellors*. It is an open secret that this change of tack has led to a rift within the top leadership.

This abrupt turn from a group which has always insisted on total entry into the Labour Party towards an 'open party' orientation lacks any preparation or rationale. It

echoes Gerry Healy's lurch towards forming the SLL in 1959, when the 'Group' came under pressure from the right wing. What next? A break-out in the North West? Nationality? And if not, why the Walton campaign? Mahmood's stand as the 'Real Labour' candidate tried to have it both ways, but succeeded only in falling between two stools. Claiming to represent the true inheritance of Eric Heffer, her programme was strictly left-reformist in its demands.

None of these reservations excuses the disgraceful position of *Socialist Organiser* which attacked Mahmood from the right. Not only did its supporters campaign for Kilfoyle but it had the gall to claim that 'rivers of blood' separated Heffer from *Militant* (SO, June 20) on the grounds that *Militant* defends the existence of workers' states in eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, etc. This position was held by *Socialist Organiser* itself until quite recently, but that doesn't seem to worry Sean Matgamna's personality cult, which is concerned not with fighting the right wing but with securing a slice of the action in Liverpool for itself. The irony is that the distance between Heffer's left-reformism and *Militant*'s right-centrism is not a river of blood but a wafer.

Socialist Outlook and, implicitly, *Briefing* came out unenthusiastically for a vote for Kilfoyle, without any clear line on how to carry forward the fight against Kinnock.

The Socialist Workers Party, although it campaigned for Mahmood, had no perspective to offer workers other than to desert the Labour Party and join it. This sort of sectarian stupidity represents no alternative to the opportunists who tell workers to toe the line laid down by the right wing.

The disarray of the left over Walton demonstrates the need for the building of a genuinely Marxist tendency, capable of combining both open and entry work, together with active intervention in the trade unions. This task remains to be accomplished.



Slovenian militiamen prepare to confront the Yugoslav army

YUGOSLAVIA ON THE BRINK

See pages 4-5

UNEMPLOYMENT: TIME TO FIGHT

By David Lewis

THE EVER-RISING toll of unemployment highlights all the major problems facing the working class. From the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, who says that millions out of work is a 'price worth paying' to get inflation down, to the trade union leaders who have done nothing to hold back the tide, every supporter and apologist of rotting British capitalism views unemployment as a 'necessary evil'.

In the face of the most sustained world recession since the 1930s, Britain stands out as the advanced country least able to cope. A level of industrial activity already decimated by the Thatcher 'revolution' of the early 1980s is being hacked to pieces by today's Tory strategy of high interest rates and a squeeze on public spending.

The chronic crisis of the British economy ensures that there can be no lasting resolution of its problems this side of the socialist revolution. But, for the working class, the question of how to replace capitalism with socialism is inextricably linked with that of how to deal with the immediate problems arising from unemployment. Even to set out on the road to the former requires the removal of a number of blocks to dealing with the latter.

The first block is the trade union bureaucracy. The leaders of the unions not only make no attempt to fight unemployment, they see little alternative to it. When lay-offs are demanded, their reflex is not to raise the banner of struggle but first to seek 'natural wastage', second to propose 'voluntary' redundancies, and finally to negotiate

the 'best' financial terms. To combat this collaboration, a policy of strike action against job losses and occupation of workplaces threatened with closure, combined with the defence of the unemployed, must be fought for.

In place of the Tory (and Labour) policy of fighting inflation by keeping down workers' pay and attacking their working conditions, the demands must be raised for a sliding scale of wages to keep pace with inflation and a sliding scale of hours with no loss of pay.

These must be coupled with the demand for a guaranteed minimum wage. The Labour leaders under Kinnock pay lip service to this demand as a vote-gathering electoral ploy. In any case, Kinnock's minimum wage is not exactly princely. The proposed level of £3.40 per hour is more accurately termed minimal than minimum. However, properly fought for, the demand for a minimum wage could become a powerful weapon around which millions could be mobilised.

Recognising this, the most reactionary of the trade union leaders oppose even Kinnock's verbal commitment. The Bill Jordan/Gavin Laird leadership of the Amalgamated Engineering Union vies with the scab Hammond leadership of the electrician's union, the EETPU, to be the most hostile. They argue for caution, using the Tories' own threat that pay rises will be punished by job losses and fuel increased demands from other workers. Behind their caution lies a desire to keep the millions of low-paid in their place and maintain the relatively high pay of their own skilled members.

The AEU leaders do not shout too loudly about the fact that at the same time they are

entering negotiations with the Ford Motor Company aimed at keeping pay rises at 'realistic levels'. With Ford making a loss for the first time in 20 years, the main concern of Jimmy Airlie of the AEU is to help maintain Ford's competitiveness with Japanese car makers in Britain.

The other wing of the TUC, led by John Edmonds of the GMB, supports a guaranteed minimum wage along Kinnock's lines precisely because it will be very cheap to implement and not cause a pay spiral. In line with this, the GMB has now gone one better than the Tories and adopted a position that young workers should be paid less, ostensibly to release funds for training and so that they won't 'price themselves out of a job'.

Not a day goes by without more job losses being announced: 10,000 at British Telecom, 6,000 at Rolls Royce, 2,000 at National Power. At Ford's Halewood plant on Merseyside, there are plans for 2,800 jobs to go and a question mark over the future of the entire plant. In Liverpool, where unemployment is already double the national average, Kinnock's supporters on the council are busy putting hundreds on the scrap heap, privatising services and planning thousands more redundancies. The national total moves inexorably towards the three million which is predicted to be the official figure by next year. The real number without a job will be more like four million, but unlike the early 1980s, it will be under conditions of a continuous right-ward development in the leadership of the trade unions, and with union membership having fallen from 13.3 million to 10.2 million in the ten years to 1989.

The demands that all workers should have a job and

decent living conditions must become the rallying call for the whole working class. Wherever possible, the unemployed must be united with those in work through full union membership, in the same branches and with the same rights. But this is only the beginning. Non-unionised workers who are thrown out of work and youth who go straight from school into unemployment can provide a reserve army of labour for the capitalists to use against those who still have jobs. Or, they can be organised against the capitalists, to defend themselves and extend their rights.

A movement of unemployed workers must be built. Not against the unions but alongside them, not to divide those with jobs from those without jobs but rather to unite them. Such a movement should fight for affiliation to the TUC and demand that the trade unions defend the unemployed. It should demand that the Labour leadership commits itself to a programme of public works to provide jobs. At a local level, it should organise, advise and protect the unemployed, and campaign for an adequate level of dole. Unemployment must be turned against the class which creates it.

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The Fourth International & Yugoslavia (1948-50)

Local Government

THE ANNUAL group meeting of NALGO's National Local Government Committee, representing half a million workers, was held in June during the course of the union's conference in Glasgow. It failed to provide a single serious initiative for a campaign to defend those members already on strike (Liverpool, Camden, Lambeth, etc), let alone prepare for the onslaught faced by members in the coming year. A special group meeting will be convened in September to consider the need for a 'new strategy', called for by Strathclyde branch. But the meeting has only a consultative status and its decisions have frequently been ignored in the past by the National Executive Council. No new initiative was brought forward on the poll tax.

In the forefront of the NEC's opposition to calls for national demonstrations and days of action was Jim White. He moved a resolution from the NEC calling for the defence of national negotiating machinery. A measure of White's cynicism can be seen from the role he played when Kent County Council established local negotiating procedures in 1989, effectively de-recognition Kent County NALGO. At the time, White successfully undermined members of the Kent branch who were demanding national backing for their fight to defend national agreements.

Faced with a pay offer of 6.1 per cent from local authorities, well below inflation, members asked White why a ballot for industrial action had not been prepared. His reply was that 'we haven't been campaigning because we haven't been asked to campaign' by the branches! He told delegates to wait for a future Labour government.

The National Health Service

The annual conference of NUPE in April set the tone for retreats throughout the NHS when six motions calling for campaigns, including demonstrations and industrial action, were barred from the agenda by Bickerstaffe and the national executive. Delegates were told that the focus of campaigns to defend jobs and services must be at 'local' (branch) level.

A motion to the COHSE annual conference in June from 615 branch (Bloomsbury), calling for industrial action on July 5, the 41st anniversary of the establishment of the NHS, was opposed on behalf of the national leadership by Colm O'Kane, who accused the movers of 'working for the Tories'. O'Kane went on to say that members would not fight the Tory attacks. 'We would not get enough people to walk around the lions, let alone Trafalgar Square.'

At NALGO's annual group meeting for NHS staff, and in debate in the annual conference, national committee members put forward similar arguments: the members were not prepared to support calls for action, the timing was wrong, sit back and wait for a change of government.

A resolution moved at the group meeting by Bloomsbury Health branch NALGO, instructing the leadership to organise a national conference jointly with other trade unions organising in the NHS, received near unanimous support. The resolution called for the joint conference to be convened this year and for it to be delegate based. It should draw up a balance sheet of government attacks on the NHS and 'accept motions from

The fight against NHS and local government cutbacks

UNION LEADERS APPLY BRAKES

WORKERS IN the public sector, particularly local government and the NHS, had every right to expect a lead in the fight to defend jobs from the annual conferences of their trade unions this year. Tory legislation threatens to destroy nearly 50,000 jobs in local government in the period ahead with councils drawing up drastic cuts in services, spearheaded by Haringey (1,200), Lambeth (600), Harrow (200), Liverpool (1,000) and Newcastle (850).

Labour-led councils in Liverpool and Camden have now privatised refuse collection and Lambeth has closed a number of youth centres. In Southwark, the Labour council is threatening to halt direct deductions of trade union subscriptions, while Camden is to introduce a charge for this 'service'. Local government workers in Scotland face substantial cuts, particularly in Strathclyde.

Scottish NHS managers are set to introduce redundancy packages for the over-45s, the age group considered least able to adapt to changes under the Tories' NHS counter-reform measures.

At Oldham Health Authority, the core of organised NALGO members has been sacked in preparation for the move to Trust status. In Bradford, the new Trust is preparing to sack hundreds of workers. The same fate awaits several hundred COHSE and NUPE members at the Guy's and Lewisham Trust in south London.

Throughout Britain, members of the public service unions, NALGO, NUPE and COHSE, are being forced to undertake industrial action and prepare for wholesale cuts and closures, under circumstances where many branches in the forefront of government attacks report serious difficulties in winning strike ballots. What was required from the leaders of these unions was a bold call for joint industrial action to win the confidence of rank-and-file members and rally them for a fight to defend jobs, trade union rights, national negotiating machinery and services. In the event, the national executives and general secretaries Jinkinson, Bickerstaffe and Mackenzie used the machinery of their unions to deny support for members in struggle, to apply a huge brake on the spontaneous initiatives of their members.



Health workers demonstrate outside Guy's Hospital in south London, May 29, 1991

trade union branches with proposals for action to defend members' jobs, rights and service conditions'.

The National Executive Committee tried to amend the resolution with a proposal for a joint seminar, by invitation, to be held in 1992. Speaking for the NEC's amendment, Paul Marks (National Officer for Health Staffs) said that 'the other unions would not come' to a joint working conference. At this point, a number of delegates who had lined up to speak against the resolution crossed the floor to speak for it. Many pointed out that they had fought for years alongside COHSE, NUPE, MSF and GMB members against cuts in local services and in defence of a nationally planned NHS.

Replying to the debate, the delegate from Bloomsbury spelt out the necessity for national leaders and full-time officials to be brought under the control of the rank-and-file members - 'to be elected by and accountable to them for all their actions'. 'Leaders who are not prepared to organise a

fight now should be removed and replaced by those who will,' he said.

A resolution from Guy's and Lewisham Trust branch, calling for an official national day of action in July to highlight Tory attacks on the NHS, won unanimous support at the group meeting and was subsequently endorsed by the whole conference. Moving the resolution, Andy Young attacked the cynicism and betrayal of Labour leaders 'who won the Monmouth by-election on the basis of redundancies sustained by health workers but then opposed national action to defend our members' jobs'.

The COHSE-NALGO-NUPE Merger

The conferences of all three unions endorsed decisions taken by their leaders to merge by 1993. The new union would have 1.5 million members, over 850,000 of whom would be women workers in low-paid jobs. Billed as a union based on democratic principles, promoting women's issues and

the rights of oppressed groups, it would have a national conference as the sovereign policy-making body.

Members of NUPE and COHSE found out just how democratic Bickerstaffe and Mackenzie intend it to be when they were deprived of the opportunity to amend the 60-page merger report submitted to all three conferences. They were only allowed to vote for or against the report, which had been circulated to branches just before the conferences took place.

The NALGO conference, on the other hand, debated amendments to the merger report for nearly two days. According to *Socialist Organiser*, this makes NALGO the hub of working class democracy. Their leaflet on the merger debate supported the NEC and gave 'Red Jinkinson' (the general secretary) the glowing accolade 'Arthur Scargill of the Nineties'. While NALGO branches experience a degree of autonomy in control over finances and local policy-making, and have the right to

prevent full-time officers going over their heads to the employers, this hardly constitutes a basis for workers' democracy. When it came to the vote on the last amendment, the new president, Mike Blick, let

the cat out of the bag with an aside to Jinkinson: 'There's nothing there we cannot handle.'

All three union bureaucracies are motivated, of course, by self-preservation. They see the merger as a means of securing their own futures in a time of declining membership and falling income. By contrast, the majority of members see it as a vital step towards overcoming some of the barriers in the way of a united struggle against the Tory onslaught.

At the end of the day there are no principled differences between Jinkinson, Bickerstaffe and Mackenzie or, for that matter, between Jinkinson, Neil Kinnock and John Edmonds. When Jinkinson stated, moving the resolution for a minimum wage, that 'there will not be a return to beer and sandwiches at No.10 as predicted by John Major and as hoped for by GMB general secretary John Edmonds', he did, however, make clear that he stood for a social partnership between 'the government and employers and trade unions'.

There is no difference between Jinkinson's 'social partnership' of the Nineties and the centre-right trade union leaders of the Seventies who, in anticipation of the return of a Labour government, spoke of a 'social compact'. Overnight the social compact became a 'social contract'. Thus it was and so it shall be. Jinkinson, Bickerstaffe and Mackenzie will continue in that tradition to police their members on behalf of the employers and government of the day.

That said, it is necessary to support the merger, while advancing demands which represent the interests of the rank and file. Socialists must fight for a thorough-going democratisation of the unions; for the election of all national and full-time officials by members; for the accountability of all officials to members and a reduction of their salaries to the average wage earned by those they represent.

Under conditions of deepening recession, rising unemployment and, by no means least, a number of serious defeats sustained by the whole trade union movement, the task of building and maintaining stable trade union branches will be a difficult one. The defence of trade union organisations, and of members already in the front line of attacks, calls for the establishment of national shop stewards' combines and rank-and-file action committees. Their task must be to link up the struggles taking place, the better to defend them from the isolation imposed by the trade union bureaucracy and the attacks of the government and employers.



Workers International League

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ETHIOPIA

THE FALL OF THE DERGUE

By Richard Price and Jabu Masilela

DESERTED BY its president and its army, and without any semblance of a popular base, the Dergue regime in Ethiopia collapsed on May 28. Forces loyal to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took the capital Addis Ababa, meeting hardly any resistance, one week after Mengistu Haile Mariam fled to Zimbabwe to become a guest of fellow 'socialist' Robert Mugabe. Thus ended 17 years of the Dergue's brutal military dictatorship which had usurped the popular revolution of 1974 following the overthrow of Haile Selassie.

In demobilising the upsurge of workers and peasants which had led to the fall of the monarchy, the officer caste which formed the Dergue had

performed a valuable task for imperialism, alarmed by the radicalisation of the masses throughout the Middle East, and it was rewarded with a measure of Western aid for its first three years. Although like many Bonapartist regimes in Africa, it was compelled out of self-preservation to carry through nationalisations and land reform, in its treatment of oppressed nationalities - Eritreans, Tigrayans, Oromos and Ogaden Somalis - it took up where the old regime had left off.

It was the acute crisis it faced in its war with Eritrea that led to the Dergue's espousal of 'Marxism-Leninism' in 1977 at the point where it turned to the Soviet bureaucracy for assistance. Not only did Soviet military

aid flow freely - an estimated \$9 billion until it was curtailed in the last two years - but 15,000 Cuban technicians, military advisers and troops were sent, along with a substantial commitment from East Germany.

Furnished with 'socialist' credentials as well as military hardware by Moscow, Mengistu was able to prolong the series of civil wars for a further 14 years, inflicting untold suffering not only upon 'rebels' but also on the Amhara people - the traditional foundation of the Ethiopian state. The conscription of hundreds of thousands of peasants into the Dergue's 'Red Army', the

forced removal of entire populations and the bloody suppression of all dissent within the regime itself in a series of purges between 1977-9 earned from the Kremlin ideologists the title of 'revolutionary regime'.

Six years into its rule, the Dergue established a Commission for Organising the Party of the Working People (COPWE). Evidently the rulers felt, after Soviet prompting, that in a 'socialist' state there should be something resembling a 'vanguard party' to lead the building of socialism - even if it was after the event! COPWE's 93-strong central committee contained

no less than 79 army or police officers. The outcome of its deliberations was the launching of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1984 which, while it enthused the 'anti-imperialist' organisation Liberation in Britain (cf Kay Beauchamp and Tony Gilbert: *Ethiopia, an African Giant Awakes*), found no echo of support among Ethiopian workers and peasants.

Caught on the hop by the collapse of Stalinism in eastern Europe in 1989, and in the face of declining Soviet support under Gorbachev, Mengistu abruptly ditched 'Marxism-Leninism' and renamed the WPE the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party. Red stars were hastily painted out and portraits of Marx, Engels and Lenin removed.

The immediate consequence of this turn was a revival in November 1989 of the Dergue's on-off relations with Israel, anxious to maintain an anti-Arab ally on the Red Sea. Support for the UN-imperialist war against Iraq gained Mengistu aid from Saudi Arabia and a softening of the US position.

Growing military reverses at the hands of the increasingly co-ordinated forces of the EPRDF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), however, drove army morale to rock bottom, while a decree in April attempting to call up all males under the age of 60 failed to halt the regime's disintegration. The second major famine in six years, threatening seven million people with starvation, brought the regime to the brink of collapse.

On May 27, the government, with rebel forces on the outskirts of the capital, declared a unilateral ceasefire in the hope of salvaging something from the round table talks which began on the same day in London. One day later, EPRDF forces entered Addis Ababa with the blessing of the US Assistant Secretary of State, Herman Cohen, who supported their restoring 'law and order'.

Like the Dergue, the main component of the EPRDF, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), together with the EPLF, had flown 'Marxist' flags of convenience. Until recently the TPLF had damned Gorbachevite 'revisionism', extolled the socialist paradise of Albania and characterised the Dergue as 'fascist'. (In the course of the TPLF's long march to Addis Ababa, the Albanian government had meanwhile fallen.) The EPLF, founded in 1977 as a 'Marxist-Leninist' organisation

had been more adroit in switching horses, and in May 1990 declared for a multi-party system and market economy. Immediately on assuming power, EPRDF representatives dissociated themselves from Marxism and assured the imperialists that they were committed to 'democracy'.

Although the population of the capital had not lifted a finger to save Mengistu, it saw the EPRDF forces not as an army of liberation, but as an army of occupation. On the day after the new regime was installed, a large demonstration protesting against both the EPRDF and the US was fired on, killing at least ten people.

The coalition of potentially competing nationalisms showed early signs of stress with the Oromo Liberation Front complaining that one faction of the EPRDF had taken upon itself the capture of Addis Ababa. And while the proclamation of a provisional Eritrean government on May 29 fulfilled on paper the struggle for independence opposed for so long by successive Ethiopian regimes, the Organisation of African Unity and the imperialists alike, genuine self-determination for Eritrea cannot be won under the present leadership, which will compromise with imperialism and the Arab bourgeoisie.

The 17-year rule of the Dergue confirms the Marxist truth that a petty-bourgeois military caste is incapable of substituting itself for the revolutionary role of the working class. On the contrary, it has led the Ethiopian and Eritrean masses into a catastrophe. The fate of workers and peasants menaced by famine and economic dislocation in the Horn of Africa is intimately bound together. Somalia, where the regime of Said Barre collapsed in February and the northern portion of the country declared independence in May, faces similar conditions.

Genuine workers' parties must be built afresh throughout the region. They must champion the right of all oppressed nationalities to self-determination, while waging a consistent struggle against bourgeois nationalism, which divides the masses. They must advocate a revolutionary agrarian programme, in distinction to the vicious and disastrous collectivisation drive of the Dergue. They must patiently explain that deliverance from the crisis wracking the region lies not in Western aid programmes but in waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialist domination.



An EPRDF fighter in Addis Ababa in front of a defaced mural of Marx, Engels and Lenin

Call to ANC militants

1. Speak the truth and state what is; no reliance on complicated politicking and diplomacy. This is the only way to crystallise an alternative political pole of attraction to the present ANC leadership.

2. Speak openly against all sentimentalism and spurious calls for unity. Your first allegiance is to the proletarian masses and not to an organisation that is on a course of betraying them. Fight mercilessly against the centrists who secretly agree that the leadership is badly misguided but maintain that to break the unity of the ANC as an organisation would be suicidal.

3. Concentrate the struggle on political and programmatic questions. Realise that the idea of democratising the ANC gradually over time or capturing the organisation through clever manoeuvres is an illusion.

4. Recognise the inevitability of a political split and develop a tactical line in accordance with this. In all ANC branches and organisations, in all organisations within the ANC-SACP milieu, fight openly for a clear, consistent alternative revolutionary line to that of the ANC leadership and the centrist confusionists.

5. On every occasion, struggle to separate the proletarian revolutionary militants from the petty-bourgeois reformist politicians. Draw the class

At the time of the ANC's conference, a group of South African Trotskyists offers the following comradely advice to all honest militants within the organisation

lines of demarcation within the organisation. Lead an open struggle on the basis of the real material antagonistic class interests which wrack South African society and which, as the leadership draws ever closer to the bourgeoisie, are ever more clearly reflected (for those who do not give way to the spirit of capitulation) within the ANC itself.

6. Speak consistently against the negotiationist framework, with its unscientific, anti-Marxist idea of reconciliation between antagonistic classes. In all mass structures and organisations, resist the logic of negotiation with its idea of the 'politics of reconstruction'. Demonstrate in every instance how the leadership's ever-closer alliance with the bourgeoisie only leads to more rotten compromises and will soon enough give rise to a complete betrayal of the interests of the black masses.

7. Realise that time is becoming increasingly short; that the present line only produces growing confusion amongst militants, crushes their fighting spirit and produces a mood of cynicism and despair. Offer

the tens of thousands of fearless, tried and tested militants a clear way forward.

8. Turn to the masses, especially the black working class. Concentrate efforts on bringing the masses to active political life around all their political and economic demands. At present, this means centring the struggle around a nationwide campaign for a genuinely democratic constituent assembly convened by the masses themselves.

9. Explain clearly that the capitalist 'mixed economy' framework propagated by the leadership is nothing but a programme for an alliance with the bourgeoisie and a betrayal of the interests of the black working class and the oppressed masses as a whole. Rely on the natural and correct instincts of black workers, which are based on rich and painful experience. Again and again expose the bankruptcy of the ANC leadership's policy of trust in the bourgeoisie. Prove through living struggle - and there will be ample opportunity to do this - that the sugary words of the suddenly converted bosses and the new-

found 'friends' of the masses mean nothing; and that the policy of the ANC leadership will not end the apartheid reality that the black masses have endured for so long, but only perpetuate these barbaric conditions in a new form.

10. Draw the lessons of the dramatic developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. With the bankruptcy of the South African Communist Party clearly exposed, as it simply substitutes the stinking corpse of Stalinism with that of social-democracy, it is time to re-arm yourselves ideologically for the revolutionary battles to come; it is time to rediscover revolutionary Marxism. Base your entire struggle on its method and programme. This can only mean rediscovering Trotskyism and its internationalist programme. Study the works of Trotsky, learn about the struggle for revolutionary internationalism against Stalinist degeneration and betrayal in the 1920s and 1930s, and, in the revolutionary struggle within the ANC today, apply these lessons.

11. All of the above means recognising the need to build a genuine revolutionary vanguard party of the South African working class, committed to socialist revolution in South Africa and worldwide, and therefore to the building of a world party of socialist revolution.

Palestinian prisoners

Dear Editor,

We write to appeal for support for certain comrades in Palestine whom the Israeli state has imprisoned.

Mahmoud Ahmed Massawra, a socialist, is in prison on a trumped-up charge of espionage. His case is publicised by *International Viewpoint*.

Munir Mansour and four others with him are charged with being members of the political wing of the PLO. They have the support of the well-known American anti-Zionist, Ralph Schoenman.

Munir and his comrades were leaders of the

community-based Prisoners' Friends Association which provides support for prisoners' families.

The plight of the Palestinians has worsened with the Gulf War. Amid the talk about a 'Middle East settlement', has everyone forgotten them?

Please support BOTH campaigns.

Write to Mahmoud at Ayalon Prison, PO Box 16, Ramleh, Israel, and to the Munir Mansour Defence Campaign, PO Box 90609, Santa Barbara, CA 93190, USA.

John Archer
Mike Calvert

EDITORIAL

India after Rajiv Gandhi

THE ASSASSINATION of Rajiv Gandhi on May 21 did not fundamentally alter the political situation in India. It merely provided further evidence of the country's growing instability.

Marxists oppose such acts of individual terror not on moral grounds but because they do not advance the struggle of the working class. Indeed, they serve to strengthen the grip of the ruling class and divert the passions of the oppressed masses into communal feuding.

But while internationally the capitalist press, social democrats and Stalinists alike mourned Gandhi as a lost leader of Indian 'democracy', tens of millions of India's poor and oppressed minorities will share no such sentiments.

Permanent civil war in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam, together with the bloody intervention against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, had already discredited the image of Rajiv the peacemaker and unifier, as the Indian army brought murder, rape and social dislocation to successive parts of the sub-continent.

Rajiv Gandhi took over the reins of power on a wave of popular sympathy after the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi, in 1984. An electoral landslide gave this latest figurehead of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty and his Congress (I) Party four-fifths of all parliamentary seats. Yet by the time of his defeat in 1989, his government was riddled with corruption scandals, and beset by nationalist and communal uprisings, inter-caste tensions and growing economic problems. Ever strengthening the power of the capital over the regions, Gandhi the 'democrat' had dismissed 30 state governments in five years and routinely implemented direct rule.

Until the fall of Rajiv Gandhi in November 1989, Congress had been the governing party, with only one brief interruption, since independence in 1947. It had gained power through a compromise with British imperialism, and in office it represented an ongoing compromise between the most important elements of the Indian ruling class - industrialists and landowners, Hindus and Muslims, cemented by a ruling dynasty.

One of the legacies of colonial rule was that India, despite low productivity and vast pools of poverty, was more developed along capitalist lines than its neighbours. Relatively high levels of state intervention and 'planning' were thus able to yield the economic growth which sustained Congress rule. But the world recessions of the Seventies and Eighties, together with sharpening competition from other Asian states, undercut Indian development. For those with their hands in the till of government contracts it was business as usual. But for the regions, the oppressed nationalities and minorities and the poor it meant increasing hardship and corresponding disillusionment with Congress.

Under these strains, rifts within the Congress leadership grew. The resignation of V.P. Singh in 1988 and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism split off bases of support on the liberal and right wings of the party. Singh's populist rhetoric against corruption in high places led to his forming a minority coalition government in November 1989, sustained by parliamentary support from the ultra-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the two Stalinist parties. Singh attempted to paper over growing tensions by promising to reserve half of all government jobs for lower castes. The result was a wave of violent assaults by high caste Hindus and the formation of a new coalition under Chandra Shekhar.

But the most significant development of the last two years has been the growth of Hindu fundamentalism fanned by the BJP. As if to mock Congress's claim to have built a modern and non-sectarian country, the BJP is a capitalist party pumping out the most backward and reactionary pre-capitalist prejudices, in order to divide the masses. Whilst upholding the privileges of high-caste Hindus, it incites the lower castes against the Muslim minority. At the same time it opposes all demands by minorities for self-determination. In identifying India with the Hindu religion, the BJP places religious minorities, and in particular Muslims, beyond the pale, although they have been present for centuries.

That such a movement - which two years ago had only two seats in parliament and was regarded as a fringe group of zealots - can advance to the point where it is the second largest party is an index of India's social decay. In this sense, although Congress returned to office as a minority government, it is the BJP which is the real victor of the election which claimed the life of Rajiv Gandhi. With their party divided and weakened, Congress bosses desperately tried to persuade Gandhi's Italian-born widow, Sonia, to take over the figurehead role, despite her often-stated distaste for politics. When she refused they were left with little choice but to pick a compromise candidate - Narasimha Rao, a 70-year-old Gandhi loyalist and apparition man without public appeal and in failing health, but considered one of the few people acceptable to all factions of the party.

All major parties entered the elections advocating free market 'reforms' and privatisation. With inflation at 15 per cent and the country on the verge of defaulting on its foreign debt, the stage is set for an offensive against workers' jobs and living standards. Indian capitalism will increasingly drop its democratic mask and adopt dictatorial measures to survive. The working class faces a moment of truth. Either it will unite across religious boundaries to fight for its common interests or the spiral into communalist barbarism and dictatorship will accelerate. The creation of a revolutionary workers' party, fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and guaranteeing the rights of national minorities to self-determination, is the burning task facing Indian workers if this threat is to be averted.

YUGOSLAVIA ON THE BRINK

ON JUNE 25, Slovenia and Croatia, the two most northerly of Yugoslavia's six constituent republics, declared their independence. The move was the culmination of a campaign by the two republics for the reorganisation of Yugoslavia as a loose confederation of sovereign states. On June 27, implementing what was clearly a prepared plan, the troops of the Yugoslav federal army entered Slovenia to 'secure state borders'. The assault was carried out with random brutality, involving the use of British-made cluster bombs, attacks on civilian buildings, and the strafing of commercial and personal vehicles on open roads. An estimated 50 Slovenians were killed and some 200 injured.

The hard-line Stalinists of the army's top brass acted on the assumption that the attack would be welcomed, or at least tolerated, by the major Western powers. Secretary of State James Baker had declared that the US government would not recognise the two independent republics 'under any circumstances', and the leaders of Western Europe had made plain their support for a united Yugoslavia.

But, in the event, the threat of separatist conflicts spilling over the Yugoslav border, bringing destabilisation to eastern and central Europe, forced an intervention. On June 30, a three-man delegation from the European Community flew to Yugoslavia in an attempt to broker a ceasefire. It was unable to persuade either Croatia or Slovenia to suspend their declarations of independence, while federal army chiefs rejected the proposal that their forces should withdraw to barracks. General Blagoje Adzic announced his intention to crush the Slovenian rebels. 'We shall dig out the beasts from their caves,' he threatened.

But this was easier said than done. For the army had seriously underestimated the effectiveness of the Slovenian resistance. The 9,000 troops proved inadequate to defeat the 60,000-strong Slovenian territorialists. Supply lines were cut, and federal army units left stranded in enemy territory. There was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the invasion among the multi-ethnic conscripts. Serbs, whose nationalist passions had been stirred up by populist demagogue Slobodan Milosevic were not convinced that the retention of Slovenia within the Yugoslav Federal Republic was a cause worth dying for. Surrenders and defections by federal troops occurred en masse. By July 4, the army agreed to withdraw to barracks.

On July 7, the EC diplomats appeared to have achieved at least temporary peace on the Slovenian front, although the declaration of independence had not been retracted. Milosevic himself made it clear that he was prepared to swallow Slovenian secession if necessary. Croatia, however, was a different matter. Here the authoritarian centralist outlook of the Titoist military

chiefs coincided with the aims of anti-Croat Serbian nationalists. Clashes between federal troops and Croatian separatists intensified, while within the areas populated by Croatia's Serbian minority armed vigilante groups were organising to retain these areas as part of the Yugoslav federation in the event of a successful breakaway by Croatia.

Despite continued bellicose talk by Adzic, the Titoite 'old guard' in the military who favour the maintenance of the post-war federation by force have been comprehensively humiliated in Slovenia. This has evidently strengthened Serbian nationalist elements within the army, 70 per cent of whose officers are Serbs. At the time of writing, the prospect of the armed forces launching a civil war against Croatia with the objective of establishing a 'Greater Serbia' is a real threat.

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Yugoslavia was created in 1918 as part of the redrawing of the European map at the end of

12,000 in 1940. But during the course of a bloody struggle against the occupying German and Italian forces, as well as against the local bourgeois collaborators, the YCP-led partisan forces under Tito were able to establish themselves as the dominant political force by the end of the war. The partisans' appeal to all nationalities in Yugoslavia - in contrast to the Serbian chauvinism of the pro-royalist Chetniks - was a decisive factor in their victory. Although, under pressure from Stalin, a short-lived coalition government headed by the bourgeois politician Subasic was installed in 1944, in 1945 the YCP ousted the bourgeoisie from the government and proceeded with a programme of wholesale nationalisation. The country was reunified as a federation of six republics - Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia.

The prestige acquired by Tito and the YCP during the partisan war, the initial economic growth achieved on the

revolution, but of a peasant-based guerrilla war led by a Stalinist party. Bureaucratised from birth, the Yugoslav state resolved the mutual antagonisms of its component nations not by the methods of workers' democracy but through the exercise of a centralised political dictatorship. The right of self-determination, formally guaranteed by the 1946 constitution, was in reality a fiction.

The policies of economic decentralisation pursued by the Titoite regime from the early 1950s evolved into fully fledged 'market socialism' in the 1960s. By reducing the economic role of the federal government, this system destroyed any prospect of reducing regional economic imbalances. The reform of 1967, which allowed the penetration of foreign capital, together with the encouragement of tourism to bring in hard currency, promoted the economic development of the richer northern regions at the expense of those in the south. While the Yugoslav economy continued to expand, unity

With Slovenia and Croatia declaring independence, the state is threatened with collapse. Martin Sullivan looks at the historical context and points to the road workers must take to avoid both capitalist restoration and nationalist restoration.

the First World War. Originally named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, its formation was the result of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The independent states of Serbia and Montenegro amalgamated with Slovenia and Dalmatia from the Austrian part of the empire, and Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina from the Hungarian part, while Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had been under the joint administration of both Austria and Hungary, made up a seventh part. The country's inhabitants were divided along ethnic, religious and linguistic lines. In addition, the southern regions were poorer and less economically developed than the north. During the inter-war period, a succession of bourgeois governments failed to resolve the resulting national question.

The pan-Slavic ideology behind the federation - renamed Yugoslavia ('Kingdom of the South Slavs') in 1929 - was further undermined by the fact that the monarchy and the state machinery, along with the army, were dominated by the Serbs. Fierce nationalist opposition to Serbian centralism developed in Croatia, the most dramatic expression of this being the assassination of King Alexander by a Ustasha (Croatian fascist) agent in 1934. The German invasion of 1941 brought about the country's disintegration, with surrounding states annexing parts of Yugoslavia and puppet regimes being set up in Serbia and in Croatia, where the Ustashi pursued a policy of genocide against the Serbian minority.

The Yugoslav Communist Party had numbered only

could be maintained. But when the post-war boom in the world capitalist economy - into which a heavily-indebted Yugoslavia was now closely integrated - came to an end in the 1970s, centrifugal pressures intensified.

From 1979 onwards, workers' incomes suffered a steep decline in the face of soaring inflation, provoking a wave of strikes for increased wages during the 1980s. This development coincided with political difficulties for the regime



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following the death of Tito in 1980. The loss of this Bonapartist figure, around whom a cult of the personality had been consciously cultivated from the early post-war period, could not but provoke a crisis in Yugoslav Stalinism. The eight-man collective presidency, headed each year by a representative of a different Yugoslav nation, failed to provide a focus for national unity. Confronted by mounting workers' struggles, the Stalinist bureaucrats consciously played the nationalist card in order to undermine the consolidation of the Yugoslav working class as a unified force.

With the collapse of other European Stalinist regimes during 1989-90, however, the YCP found itself unable to uphold its monopoly of political power. And in its appeal to chauvinist sentiments, it was usually outbid by the emergent bourgeois-nationalist formations. Elections in April 1990 ousted the ruling Stalinists in both Slovenia and Croatia. The Democratic United Opposition of Slovenia (Demos) government was committed

Yugoslavian workers' take in order to fight reaction

ted to the restoration of capitalism in an independent Slovenian state, while the extreme right-wing Croatian Democratic Union, led by former Titoite partisan Franjo Tudjman, was swept into office on the basis of anti-Serbian Croatian nationalism.

In Serbia, the Stalinist bureaucrat Milosevic had won popular support on the basis of demagogic appeals to Serbian chauvinism. In 1989 Milosevic reincorporated into Serbia the autonomous province of Koso-



vo, provoking demonstrations by ethnic Albanians which were suppressed with the loss of scores of lives. Milosevic has used the media to whip up the most backward racist attitudes towards the Croats, who are regularly characterised in the Serbian newspapers as fascists in the pay of the Vatican. The slaughter of Serbs during the Second World War is blamed on the Croatian people as a whole, while the fact that Croats played their part in the partisan forces is studiously ignored. On the basis of such reactionary chauvinism, Milosevic managed to win a majority in the December 1990 elections, although his position is far from secure, as his rival, Vuk Draskovic of the restorationist Serbian Movement for Renewal, tries to outmanoeuvre him from the right.

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The post-war 'settlement' of the national question has now definitively broken down. Having stoked the fires of nationalism, the dominant Serbian element of the bureaucracy has given the reactionary forces a stick with which to beat the workers' state and set workers against each other. Grave dangers face the working class throughout Yugoslavia from both the threat of capitalist restoration and the rise of ultra-right chauvinist movements. Workers who want to retain the framework of a workers' state and fight for socialism face the challenge of both proposing a progressive policy on the national question and defending nationalised property from the restorationists. These tasks must in turn be part of an overall programme for political revolution to smash the bureaucracy and the reactionary nationalists.

In all republics, factory committees and workers' councils must be established to defend nationalised property and to organise a genuine workers' militia to deal with the chauvinists and pogromists. Within the federal army, soldiers' councils must be formed, and the demand raised for the election of officers from the ranks. Attempts by army chiefs to maintain a unitary Yugoslavia by military repression must be fiercely resisted, as must efforts to use the federal army as a direct instrument of Serbian nationalism.

The position that socialist forces take in the present conjuncture on the national question is of decisive importance. Despite the reactionary character of the existing national leaderships in Slovenia and Croatia, the mass support in these regions for independence cannot be wished away. Socialists must defend the right of all minority nationalities to secede from the Yugoslav Federation, but at the same time warn of the dangers of secession. They should argue that the post-war creation of the Yugoslav workers' state, even though in a bureaucratized form, was a gain for the working class, which it should not surrender to the nationalists. The re-balkanisation of the Balkans would mean unemployment and misery for millions of Yugoslav workers.

If the move for secession becomes irrevocable, then socialists should argue for independent soviet states. The strategic line, however, must be the struggle for workers' democracy throughout Yugoslavia based on a voluntary federation of equal nationalities. The demand for a Socialist Federation of the Balkans, raised by Christian Rakovsky earlier this century, becomes directly relevant today.

POLAND

Strong man Walesa brandishes the axe

By Philip Marchant

SIX MONTHS as president of Poland and any resemblance between Lech Walesa and the leader of a workers' revolt against Stalinism is very hard to discern.

Drawing his support from Centre Alliance, a right-wing party modelled on Germany's ruling Christian Democratic Union which started life as his presidential election campaign team, Walesa has parted company with almost all his former Solidarity colleagues. His repeated threats to dissolve the Sejm (parliament) and push through reform legislation by decree have led them to compare him with Marshal Pilsudski, Poland's pre-war military dictator. The lessons of his evolution - from militant strike leader in the Gdansk shipyard in 1980-81 to president who threatens to 'take an axe' to trade unionists if they disrupt his economic plans - must be understood and urgently acted upon by the Polish working class.

For while the return of Poland to the capitalist fold has been accomplished in the political sense - all main parties are agreed that therein lies the country's only salvation and are working closely with the West to achieve it - the actual restoration of a capitalist economy in the deformed workers' state is proving a more difficult nut to crack. Under conditions of major unrest in the working class and political paralysis in the Sejm, the opportunity exists to rally the masses around a programme which combines the defence of the workers' state against capitalism, the ousting of the pro-capitalist leaders, the smashing of the remaining bureaucratic apparatus of the Stalinists and the establishment of a republic of workers' councils.

The stagnation of Poland's bureaucratically-controlled economy throughout the 1960s and 70s gave rise to two sustained periods of working class struggle - 1970-71 and 1980-81. The second saw the formation of Solidarity, which was declared as a nationwide union by a committee of 35 local unions on September 17, 1980. When attempts by Solidarity leaders and the Catholic Church to negotiate a compromise failed because of rank-and-file militancy, the response of the Stalinist government was to introduce martial law on December 13, 1981, ban all union federations and purge the Polish United Workers Party of all 'reformist' elements.

But far from helping the Stalinists tackle the economic crisis, these authoritarian measures only aggravated the situation. Had workers been able to wrench control for themselves through a political revolution against the bureaucracy, they would undoubtedly have been prepared to make sacrifices to defend the nationalised property relations. As it was, they were ever more alienated from them.

The 1980s saw the economy decline precipitously. With no money available for modernisation, industrial production plummeted as heavy plant and machinery built during the period of rapid growth in the 1950s decayed. The foreign

debt rose to \$39 billion, discouraging what was, for the Stalinists, the lifeblood of foreign capital investment. Inflation climbed steeply, the zloty became almost worthless, and there were shortages of basic foodstuffs and consumer goods. By 1988, there was again a wave of strikes affecting the country, this time demanding, among other things, the unbanning of Solidarity.

Despite adopting an increasingly pro-market approach to resolving the economic catastrophe through the 80s, it began to dawn on the Stalinist leadership under General Jaruzelski that 1) its privileges could now only be defended by a bolder 'reform' programme, and 2) the Solidarity leaders had to become partners in the process in order to prevent the working class from seeking a more radical solution.

The result of this shift in thinking was the series of 'round table' negotiations in early 1989 between the Stalinists, Solidarity and the official OPZZ trade unions. On April 5, these talks reached agreement on the legalisation of Solidarity, a joint strategy for tackling the economic crisis which acknowledged that workers' living standards would be severely hit, and the holding of 'semi-democratic' elections in June in which 65 per cent of the seats in the Sejm would be reserved for the Stalinists.

After winning all but one of the freely-contested seats, the first 'Solidarity' government took over in September. By the end of the month it had announced its economic programme - factory closures, privatisation, incomes control, and the end of state subsidies and index-linked wage increases. It called for the restoration of capitalism in Poland to be carried out at breakneck speed. In December, it introduced a package of fiscal measures agreed by the IMF which included a two-thirds devaluation of the zloty against the dollar.

From mid-1989, Solidarity leaders, with no perspective other than introducing 'market forces', began to have mixed feelings about the union having a role in government, conscious that being identified with harsh economic policies might mean them losing their ability to control the working class. Lech Walesa confined his role to that of 'fixer', backing Tadeusz Mazowiecki as prime minister but staying out of the firing line himself.

Sure enough, by the opening months of 1990, workers were feeling the impact of the government/IMF policies. Inflation spiralled upwards, reaching 1,000 per cent in February. Thousands were laid off each day as factories either closed or went on short time. Strikes over wage-cutting broke out in some of the country's coal mines, led by the OPZZ union federation and local Solidarity branches.

Within Solidarity, a row broke out over how fast to proceed with the reforms - with Walesa attacking the government for dragging its feet

and then launching his bid to become Poland's president. By July, against a backdrop of strikes by railway workers and protests by farmers, the row had become a split, with Walesa's right-wing Centre Alliance challenged by a more liberal grouping led by some of Solidarity's best-known intellectuals. The government, meanwhile, lurched from crisis to crisis. Walesa was able to trade on his past reputation as a militant to dragoon sections of the working class behind his 'fast lane to capitalism' approach and pin the blame for falling living standards on the government's slow progress over reforms.

However, since his election as president on November 25, 1990, Walesa has found it increasingly difficult to play the 'humble electrician from Gdansk' card. Now closely identified with the government, despite his protestations to the contrary and continuous threats to 'dismiss' it, he has to contend with the fact that 80 per cent of Poles have seen their living standards fall since the Solidarity takeover. Unemployment is almost two million out of a population of 38 million, and is expected to reach three million by the end of the year, and a further devaluation of the zloty has taken place - by 14 per cent against the dollar - which will increase prices by at least three

of Polish exports.

Walesa has blamed the hold-up in passing legislation on the Stalinists' gerrymandered majority in the Sejm, implying that they are opposed to the privatisation of the economy. In fact, they are in favour of it. If they are using delaying tactics, it is to ensure that the transition to capitalism is made to the advantage of the old *nomenklatura*. Former Stalinist local leaders in Gdansk have already incurred the wrath of workers by using the facilities of the shipyard to set up 69 private contracting companies. In January, workers picketed the yard, calling for the closing down of these 'parasitical' firms.

The main reason why the economic reforms are stalled and the government in crisis is fear of the working class. There has been a rising tide of strikes this year, most of them directed against the wage freeze. Workers in the shipbuilding, mining, glass, textiles, light engineering, water and sewerage industries have all taken action in protest at pay packets which have shrunk by one-third in real terms while prices have risen by 600 to 700 per cent.

Walesa himself stepped in to halt the air traffic controllers' dispute in June, threatening to bring in the military if they didn't back down. The role he projects for himself is in-



Lech Walesa

per cent. Although small private capitalists are flourishing and the shops are consequently better stocked, few can afford the extortionate prices.

The government which took office in January 1991 under Jan Bielecki is deadlocked. The IMF insisted that Leszek Balcerowicz, Mazowiecki's finance minister responsible for the 'shock therapy' programme, be retained in the same post, but in six months the government has been unable to pass any economic reform legislation through the Sejm. This includes what the Polish press has dubbed the 'leap into capitalism' law, which proposes the 'commercialisation' of 1,000 state-owned enterprises by the end of the year as a prelude to their privatisation. The government is anxious to begin the break-up of the huge state sector, where the fall in production has been assisted by the collapse of the Soviet market, which only two years ago accounted for 30 per cent

creasingly that of the 'strong man' who can save Poland from a descent into anarchy. Now lashing out with equal ferocity at the government, the Stalinists, swindling entrepreneurs and the working class, he calls on the one hand for a special police unit to combat economic crimes and on the other for a crackdown on strikers. In a meeting with Solidarity leaders on June 12, he warned them that 'the law is violated also by the organisers of strikes' and threatened to 'use all force and means... to defend our ideals of 1980'.

But, to a large extent, Walesa is hoist with his own petard. For the mass of Polish workers, the 'ideals of 1980' have nothing in common with the extreme hardships they are now suffering. Unwittingly, Walesa taught them that the way forward is by fighting collectively for their independent class interests. They must now turn this knowledge against him.

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

PART TEN

BY 1958 the strategy of 'deep entry' into the Labour Party, which Healy had pursued since 1947, was under attack from two sides. Not only had the Group's intervention in industrial struggles prompted a witch-hunt in the capitalist press, but a number of ex-CPers - headed by Brian Behan - were pushing for the declaration of an open party. A genuine revolutionary leader would have opened a thorough discussion on the whole question of entryism, drawing up a balance sheet of the 11 years' work in the Labour Party. Needless to say, this was not an approach that Healy would countenance.

Healy pre-empted any debate over the Group's future strategy by launching a new policy of confrontation with the Labour bureaucracy. Having kept his head down at the Rank and File Conference of November 1958, a few weeks later Healy suddenly changed tack and called a press conference, where he announced that he was joining the Newsletter editorial board. Journalists were handed copies of an article by Healy denouncing the press campaign, which was to appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.¹ The article - later reproduced as a pamphlet, *Our Answer to the Witch-hunt and Our Policy for Labour* - featured the usual Healyite exaggerations. The employers were supposedly plotting to make the trade unions 'part of the official machinery of the state', while renewed activity by the Moslevites was enough to convince Healy that 'unless the Labour Party takes real socialist measures to solve the problems that capitalism places before the British people, then the middle class will be won over to fascism'.

The Newsletter described the article as 'the most trenchant and hard-hitting political document that has appeared in any left-wing paper in Britain for years'. And its author was introduced in no less hyperbolic terms. 'Gerry Healy', readers were told, 'brings to our paper a rich experience of working class struggle. He is known throughout the country for his firm adherence to socialist principles, his forthright opposition to both Stalinism and right-wing reformism, and his insistence on the need to speak the truth to the working class...² The cult of the personality might have been dispensed with in Moscow, but it was clearly undergoing a revival in Clapham.

This raising of Healy's public profile can only have been calculated to stoke up the press campaign against him. In his home base of Streatham the witch-hunt was vigorously conducted by the local Tory

rag, the *Streatham News*. It had little effect on his standing in the Streatham Labour Party, which in December rejected a right-wing motion calling on the National Executive Committee to investigate Healy.³ And in January 1959, Healy was re-elected chairman of his ward party. It was, the *Streatham News* conceded, 'an indication of the popularity of the genial Mr Healy. His foes may find it difficult to dislodge him'.⁴

His foes could no doubt scarcely believe their luck when Healy called another press conference in February, this time to announce that the Group had transformed itself into the Socialist Labour League. The aim of the League, Healy explained, was to 'carry forward the fight for socialist politics inside the trade unions and Labour Party'.⁵ The new organisation was 'not a political party', he insisted, and its members would work for Labour candidates in the forthcoming general election.⁶ Healy sent off a letter to Morgan Phillips, the Labour Party secretary, requesting that the SLL should be allowed to affiliate on the same basis as the Fabian Society and Victory For Socialism.⁷ Given that there was not the remotest possibility of this request being granted, it can only be seen as a deliberate provocation. As Healy himself would later boast: 'It wasn't Transport House that picked a fight with us, it was we who picked a fight with Transport House'.⁸

Throughout his career, Healy had made a speciality of changing his political line abruptly and without explanation. But this was his most dramatic U-turn yet. For years past, Healy had insisted dogmatically on the necessity for total entry into the Labour Party. Indeed, when Ted Grant's 'open' RSL was formed, Healy had furiously denounced this as a Pabloite plot designed to sabotage the Group's Labour Party work.⁹ Yet Healy now launched his own open organisation in such a provocative manner that the 'Pabloites' themselves condemned his actions as 'monstrously irresponsible'.¹⁰

In 1960, Healy would retrospectively justify his change of course on the grounds that the Group's recruitment of industrial militants required 'a more open organisation... to educate and train them for the forthcoming struggle inside the Labour Party. Therefore... when we faced a wave of expulsions that could not be avoided as well as the need to compete more openly with the Communist Party in the trade unions, we proposed to launch the SLL'.¹¹ But this was very much rationalisation after the

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy



Witch-hunt against Healy in the south London press

event. The real explanation, according to Ellis Hillman, is that 'Healy panicked, because he thought his own position was being threatened in Streatham, so he formed the SLL as a panic reaction... that was the real basis. And secondly, it served his purpose in that it could make a concession to the pressure from Brian Behan to form an open party... So he killed two birds with one stone, as it were'.¹²

That a combination of open and entry work was needed should have been obvious to Healy long before. But at the Group's annual conference in 1958, when Hillman had proposed the formation of a 'Marxist League' in order to prepare for the expulsions that were plainly in the pipeline, Healy had strongly opposed this.¹³ Now Hillman himself attacked Healy's new turn as a 'serious blunder', pointing out that it was contrary not only to conference policy but to everything the Healy tendency had stood for since the days of the Revolutionary Communist Party. 'The circle has been completed from ENTRY to EXIT,' he wrote. 'With this difference. Whilst the old RCP hammered the issues out in a serious and responsible - if prolonged - discussion... the abandonment of the work that resulted from the old discussion appears to require but a few desultory and confused contributions and points of view from the National Committee'.¹⁴

When the Labour Party NEC responded by immediately proscribing the SLL, Healy adopted a policy of open defiance, circulating a letter to local Labour parties throughout Britain appealing for support for the SLL. The *Streatham News* noted gleefully that Healy had thereby 'sealed his automatic expulsion'.¹⁵ Healy successfully moved a resolution on the

Streatham general management committee demanding that the NEC withdraw its proscription of the SLL.¹⁶ The refusal of the Streatham party to expel Healy only resulted in its suspension, however, and the party was subsequently reorganised, with known SLLers like Healy excluded.¹⁷

Other members prominent in the Labour Party were ordered to provoke their own expulsion. Hillman, who was a London County councillor, was hauled up in front of a 'provisional national committee' of the SLL and instructed to publicly announce that he was a member of the League. When he refused, he was expelled from an organisation he had never joined in the first place!¹⁸ In Salford, Harry Ratner was assured by Labour Party members that they would cover for him if he denied being a member of the SLL. But Healy told him to proclaim his membership and demand the right to remain in the Labour Party - a course which effectively guaranteed that Ratner would be thrown out.¹⁹

This crisis in Healy's organisation in Britain coincided with a mounting conflict inside the International Committee. The IC conference of June 1958 had passed a resolution calling for the 'reorganisation' of the Fourth International, but this formulation was opposed by the US Socialist Workers Party, who advocated unity with the International Secretariat on the basis of parity leadership. In November, therefore, Healy met with Cannon and other SWP leaders in Toronto, where it was agreed that he would argue for the SWP line within the IC. A subsequent IC meeting in Paris, however, issued a call for an international conference open to 'Trotskyists all over the world', which provoked further objections by the SWP.

Healy found himself caught between his own and the French section's hostility to unification, and his long-established organisational loyalty to Cannon. Instead of defending his position against the SWP, Healy offered to break with the French and join Cannon in seeking unity with Pablo.²⁰

Under pressure at both a national and international level, and incapable of handling these problems on the basis of political principle, Healy showed increasing signs of personal instability, repeatedly throwing fits of rage on the least pretext. On one occasion in the print shop, Celia Behan tried to defend a young comrade from an unjust attack by Healy. This led to a row which lasted a whole hour during which Cde Healy shouted and raved, he kicked the wall and banged on it with his fist. He said I had no right to criticise him, that he had been 30 years in the movement...²¹ It was after one 'especially irrational tantrum' by Healy in February 1959 that Newsletter editor Peter Fryer walked out. And although he was persuaded to return for a few more months, in August Fryer left the SLL for good.

Fryer explained his reasons for quitting in an 'open letter'. The SLL he described as being ruled by 'the general secretary's personal clique, which will not allow the members to practise the democratic rights accorded to them on paper, and which pursues sectarian aims with scant regard for the real possibilities of the real world'. Fryer revealed how the panel for the elections to leading committees at the League's founding conference in June 1959 had been drawn up by Healy himself. The Executive Committee was no more than 'a sounding board for the general secretary, packed with his own nominees

who not merely never raised their voices against him but in some cases never raised their voices at all'. Fryer quoted Healy's bizarre claim, 'I am the party', characterising this as a form of solipsism which provided the philosophical underpinning to the fantasy world Healy inhabited - a world in which Healy could claim to have the ports of Britain watched in order to prevent Fryer leaving the country, when Healy had 'in cold fact, less than 400 members'.²²

The next prominent figure to go was *Labour Review* editor John Daniels, who had entertained doubts about the organisation for some time, particularly with regard to the policy of support for Messali Hadj's MNA in Algeria.²³ For Daniels, the final straw came when he went on a working holiday in France with two other comrades - one of whom, questioned disapprovingly by Bob Shaw as to what they would be doing there, replied drily that apart from lying on the beach and swimming there was 'always Pablo to see! On the basis of a report of this conversation, relayed to him by Shaw's daughter Aileen, Healy informed the SWP that 'Pablo continues his relentless work against this section... John Daniels... is now the prime bearer of a ticket to Cannes to see Pablo'.²⁴ Another report emanating from Shaw, concerning a contribution by Daniels to a branch meeting where he had argued that the British economy was undergoing a partial upturn, was taken by Healy as proof that Daniels 'doubts the whole of our economic analysis'.²⁵ Daniels returned from his vacation to find a stern letter from Healy demanding that he should explain his visit to Pablo and put down in writing his differences with the League. Unable to tolerate such hysteria, paranoia and outright lying, Daniels too broke with the SLL.²⁶

To be continued

- NOTES
1. *News Chronicle*, December 4, 1958.
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The Churchill coalition versus the Trotskyists

THIS IS the second pamphlet by Jack Gale to be published by the Workers International League. Reprinted from a series of articles which originally appeared in the WRP's *Workers Press* in 1975, it is a detailed account of the state attack on Trotskyism which took place during the latter part of the Second World War.

The Special Branch raided the Revolutionary Communist Party, British section of the Fourth International, on April 5, 1944. Subsequently, four members of the RCP were jailed under the Trade Disputes Act of 1927, after being found guilty of furthering a strike of shipyard and engineering apprentices opposed to compulsory transfer to the mines. The strike began on the Tyne, spread to the Clyde and Huddersfield, and was declared illegal under emergency wartime legislation.

Gale shows that the attack on the RCP was part of the coalition government's response to a rising tide of militancy as industrial workers began to resist the steady erosion of their wages and conditions carried out in the name of the war effort.

While promoting 'national unity' (ie, industrial peace) as the way to win the war, the Churchill government was in fact obliged to resort to increasingly repressive measures in order to raise production. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour in the coalition government and a former member of the TUC General Council, favoured the 'military control of the whole nation' - what he called 'the totalitarian method'

LTT at the LO fête

MEMBERS of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency from four countries attended the Lutte Ouvrière fête, held near Paris from May 18-20. This annual event is attended by thousands of socialists from France, the rest of Europe and North America.

The LTT held two public forums - *Rebuilding the Fourth International: Problems and Perspectives* and *Where is South Africa Going?: A Trotskyist Analysis*. The LTT's stall attracted widespread interest, generating animated and sometimes heated debate. The new pamphlet *South Africa at the Crossroads: Draft Theses on the Present Situation* was successfully launched.

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Class Struggle in the Second World War The 1944 Police Raid on the RCP By Jack Gale Workers International League, 1991; £1.95

- in order to carry on fighting.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the role of fostering the illusion of 'national unity' was particularly pursued by the Communist Party. Its members worked night and main to prevent strikes, sacrificed hard-won trade union conditions and collaborated with the employers in raising productivity. Whereas the Trotskyists of the RCP called for the breaking of the coalition and for Labour to take the power on a socialist programme, the Communist Party argued in support of the convention whereby Labour did not even contest by-elections if the government candidate was a Tory. The pamphlet gives many examples of the treachery of the Stalinists, including one of a shop steward called Jim Crump who actually prevented a strike in the Birmingham car plants over his own victimisation.

But in the eight months up to March 1944, a wave of strikes by dockers, miners, shipyard and aircraft workers, and finally the apprentices, convinced the government that sterner measures were required. Gale explains what lay behind the Special Branch raid on what the government knew was only a small group of Trotskyists in the RCP.

'In order to impose reactionary laws... on the working class, the capitalist state had first to attack its most conscious expression - the

Fourth International. This was necessary both to create the political climate for such laws to be regarded as "necessary" by the confused middle-class and some backward workers, and also to try to behead that organisation which alone was capable of leading the working class in struggle against such state measures' (p.32).

Moreover, it was clear from the secret memorandum to the Cabinet prepared by Home Secretary Herbert Morrison (who also gave the go-ahead for the prosecutions) that the government considered the RCP might become a pole of attraction for militant workers. Gale quotes the relevant section of the memorandum:

'The party seeks not only to take the place vacated by the Communist Party as the leader of the normally discontented elements, but to attract to itself the larger body of workers who, while not yet ready to take up a militantly anti-government attitude, are suspicious of the employers, doubtful of the sincerity of the government's promises of post-war reforms and tiring of the industrial truce and the leaders who seek to enforce it' (p.33).

The culmination of the state's witch-hunt came on June 19, 1944, with the jailing of Heaton Lee and Roy Tearse for 12 months, Jock Haston for six months and Ann Keen for 13 days. Lee, Tearse and Haston had been found guilty of



RCP, CP and Labour Party posters during the Neath by-election, 1945

furthering an illegal strike, and all four of aiding and abetting others in acts furthering an illegal strike.

Gale goes on to look in some detail at the model campaign waged throughout the labour movement by the RCP in defence of the four. An 'Anti-Labour Laws Victims Defence Committee' was set up, supported by a number of left Labour MPs and prominent ILPers, which raised money for legal fees and campaigned against the Trade Dis-

putes Act and all other anti-working class legislation. Gale gives a list of the union branches which condemned the victimisation as a result of this campaign which runs to over a page in the pamphlet. He also reproduces a letter sent to the Home Secretary from 82 soldiers in the Royal Engineers protesting at the arrest of the Trotskyists.

However, as Gale points out, the RCP realised that the main task was not solely to force a handful of left MPs to take a principled stand on the issue, but to turn to the working class. He quotes from an internal RCP document which stresses that 'this limited United Front will only be of value to our party if it brings us into closer contact with wider circles of the organised working class and if we can draw broader sections of the adv-

anced workers into common work with us'.

On August 23, 1944, Haston, Tearse, Lee and Keen successfully appealed against their convictions. As Al Richardson notes in his introduction to the pamphlet, the four Trotskyists were the only people ever to be prosecuted under the Trade Disputes Act. That the RCP was able to repulse the attack was a crucial factor in frustrating the plans of the ruling class for the more widespread use of this and other anti-labour legislation, and led to the discredited Trade Disputes Act being repealed by the 1945 Labour government.

This is a well-researched and readable study that covers an important period of working class struggle and of the history of Trotskyism in Britain. Its reappearance in pamphlet form is most welcome.

Oskar Hippe and the FI

Dear Comrades,

Richard Price's book review 'Homage to Oskar Hippe' (*Workers News* No.31) mentioned the attempts by the ICP and the WRP/*Workers Press* to 'claim' Hippe for their respective political currents. The review was right to condemn such attempts. During his last years, Oskar Hippe was a partisan of uniting all Trotskyists into a single and reunited Fourth International. Because of this, he had a critical position towards the leaderships of existing national

and international currents. In 1984, he even proposed a reunification 'from below' to create revolutionary parties in time to block imperialist war preparations. Holding this position, it is not surprising that he tried to encourage all attempts to further collaboration and unity between Trotskyist forces.

In a letter to our German LTT group dated August 16, 1984, he wrote: 'With me, you are of the opinion that the Fourth International has failed, but that the ideas and programme of Trotsky are more topical than ever. My diagnosis: our position as revolutionary socialists is now worse than in 1945 and during the first years after. This you question. Certainly we did not succeed in developing our organisation in illegality into a strong and steered organisation. But up to the end - even if only on a regional basis - we continued our conspiratorial fight. But what was important was that our organisation was maintained as a fighting cadre, able to attract new forces, and thus able to play a role within the recreated workers' movement, not only in the Western zones of control, but also under the Soviet occupation. I am still of the opinion that the break-up of the "closed" organisation which started at the beginning of the Sixties was

the basis of the present weakness. Personally, I have from the beginning been an enemy of tendencies towards splits, and have defended the view that in front of us stands a long period of the concentration and construction of a cadre party. The existing differences, which to a certain extent are brought in by alien forces, could be discussed within the organisation on a factional basis.'

This quotation contains positions with which we did, and continue to, disagree - as indeed from different angles would *International Worker* and *Workers Press* if they were honest. For instance, neither are in favour of unity with the United Secretariat. Nor would they find themselves in agreement with Oskar Hippe's assessment of the IC tradition, which both defend.

For ourselves, we enjoyed friendly relations with Oskar Hippe. On his own initiative, he contributed financially to the paper we published at that time, *Sozialistische Rundschau*. But we have no reason to conceal our differences over how to overcome the crisis of the Trotskyist world movement, or on the analysis of the SPD.

Dieter Wilhelm
Cologne

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THAMESMEAD

THICK BLUE LINE PROTECTS RACISTS

By Graham Fenwick

AS UNEMPLOYMENT rises and the living standards of the working class are driven down by the Tories to pay for their crisis, the number of racist attacks grows. Thamesmead, a predominantly white estate in south-east London, has been the scene of two murders and an increasing amount of attacks on the black population over the last months.

Many of these attacks have been inspired by fascist activity in the area, but this has itself been encouraged by the problems already existing on the estate. Thamesmead was conceived as a new town by the GLC in the mid-1960s and was originally designed to house and provide employment for 60,000 people. In 1969, when the first residents moved in, they were promised that an underground link with central London, 12 miles away, would not be long in arriving, along with a new road bridge over the Thames, a shopping centre and plenty of jobs.

None of these promises were kept, and most of the large factories in the surrounding area had closed within a decade. Today, 30,000 people live in Thamesmead, with less than 3,000 jobs to go round. There are 10,000 unemployed – half of the adult population. There are no restaurants, laundrettes, banks or cinemas, and only one bus service. The present recession has aggravated an already tense situation, and has created the conditions for the fascists of the British National Party to intervene.

In 1989, the BNP set up its headquarters in Welling, only three miles from Thamesmead. Since then, racial attacks have increased on the estate by two and a half times – 110 this year alone. On February 21, 15-year-old Rolan Adams and his 14-year-old brother left the local Hawksmoor Youth Club to go home when they were attacked by 15 white youths. Rolan was killed by a stab wound in the neck, his brother managed to escape. A few days later the youth club was fire-bombed.

Following a march and a campaign meeting, young people in the area established the Thamesmead Youth Organisation to combat the growing number of racial attacks and the BNP presence. By then the situation was so bad that nine black families, including that of a youth worker at the Hawksmoor Youth Club, had been re-housed outside the area for their own protection. Then another black man, Orville Blair, was stabbed to

death by two white youths outside his mother's flat on May 11.

On May 25, the BNP organised a 'Rights for Whites' march through Thamesmead. Less than 150 fascists assembled for the march and were protected by 400 police from the counter-demonstration attended by local people and left groups.

However, lack of organisation and political confusion allowed the anti-fascist march to become aimless and unable to challenge the BNP. Mounted police in riot gear made ten arrests after charging youth who were dispersing from the anti-fascist demonstration.

The black population of Thamesmead has the right to defend itself against racist attacks. It must turn to other sections of workers in and beyond the immediate area, to youth organisations and to the organised working class. Physical and financial support for the initiatives made by the local community and the Thamesmead Youth Organisation must be given by the Labour and trade union movement.



Police tangle with anti-racist demonstrators in Thamesmead on May 25

But the main political factors which fuel racism are the policies of the ruling class, not the tiny fascist groupings. John Major's most significant contribution to the Luxembourg

summit of EC heads of state in late June was a call for greater collaboration between European police forces in containing immigration. According to Major, immigrants, not the

degenerate capitalist system, are the source of 'terrorism, drugs, crime and racial tension'.

Only the overthrow of capitalism can create the condi-

tions for ending the scourge of racism. This must become the perspective for all those in Thamesmead and elsewhere who live in fear of racist attacks.

Youth revolt in Brussels

FRIDAY MAY 10 at about 9.00pm. A neighbourhood called Saint-Antoine in Forest, a district of Brussels. An incident takes place.

Belgium's first-ever revolt of the so-called *étrangers* (foreigners) starts like this: a young man of North African origin, Rachid Redouane, is having a drink with friends. A police car stops to check his motorbike. He goes towards the policeman and presents his identity papers, adding that they are okay. The driver of the police car signals Rachid to approach the vehicle. When Rachid is close, the driver grabs him by the collar and tells him that it is he who makes the law here. As another policeman attempts to handcuff him he frees himself. As usual, the police hurl racist abuse at him.

Rachid goes to get his father. He has run away because a couple of months previously, during another ID control, he was beaten up in a police car. Accompanied by his father and two sisters, Rachid returns to the spot where his motorbike is parked. Between ten and 15 police cars and a breakdown truck have arrived in the meantime. Rachid tries to stop them taking his motorbike. He is hit by three policemen before he is arrested. His father proposes to

Marcel Souzin reports from the Belgian capital on the revolt against police racism which shook the city in May

take his place but his request is turned down. Just before his arrest, Rachid's sister interposes herself between her brother and the police. She is also beaten. Then the father and the other sister get the same 'treatment'. Rachid is taken to the police station where he is forced to strip naked in front of the policemen. He is then locked up until the next morning.

Young people who have witnessed this scene are furious. This time is one time too many. More young people gather and more police reinforcements arrive. Then, suddenly, the revolt erupts. The prime target of the year-long suppressed anger is the police. The second target is a discotheque used by yuppies from outside the neighbourhood. This disco was formerly the only public swimming pool in the area until the local council decided to close it down because of 'lack of money'. The excesses of the visitors remain unpunished. As one policeman says: 'What can you do against someone who gives a tip of 5,000 francs?'

Saturday evening: the Forest

police are back on the scene. It is clear that they want to provoke the youth. They start to arrest young people indiscriminately in front of the police station. Then the youth assemble in front of it to demand the release of their friends. Negotiations are opened. The police use this as a tactic to win time so that reinforcements can arrive. Fighting breaks out and after a couple of police charges the youth withdraw. Later in the evening, those who have been arrested are set free.

The next day, Charles Picqué, Socialist and head of the regional government of Brussels, calls for even more ID controls and the re-establishment of public order. He blames 'the hard core that cannot be integrated' for the 'riots'. Further, he deplores the fact that the arrested youths have been freed so rapidly. In the evening, fighting breaks out again in Forest but this time the police are replaced by the gendarmerie, an army unit specialising in crowd control.

At this point the youth revolt starts to spread to six other

districts of the capital and takes on a more militant character. Youth throw molotov cocktails and stones. The media, the police and politicians of every stripe (except the Greens) start spreading the myth that the youth have been manipulated by activists of the extreme left and extreme right or by Muslim fundamentalists. Needless to say, to this day no proof of these allegations has been presented.

There is no doubt, however, that the extreme right would like to provoke the immigrant population so as to create a climate of permanent tension. They plan a meeting in a predominantly immigrant neighbourhood for May 14. Fearing trouble, the mayor of Molenbeek forbids the meeting. This does not stop the extreme right-wing Vlaams Bloc (Flemish Bloc) from widely distributing its poisonous propaganda in the area. On the day set for the meeting, immigrant youth assemble, determined that it will not go ahead. Local shops close as a precaution against being caught up in fighting, but the fascists do not show up. Later in the evening the police are again the target of militant action by the youth.

The media and some capitalist parties escalate their lies. According to them, the revolt

has nothing to do with racial harassment by the police but is the work of drug dealers. Ministers of both Socialist parties call for more repression and miraculously find enough money to increase the number of auxiliary policemen, another name for informers, and for a special communications system for the police. The Christian Democrat Minister of Justice proposes three new drafts of laws that are an attack on democratic rights ('expeditive justice', ten days' prison without trial, etc).

It should be underlined that the official leaderships of the labour movement, whether political or trade union, have at no time expressed their solidarity with these youth, nor even condemned the racist behaviour of the police. They have remained silent on the brutal repression meted out by the police and the gendarmerie, and on the additional powers sought by the Justice Minister. They must be forced to side with the immigrant youth, and to start a political campaign against police harassment, for the dropping of all charges and for full democratic rights for the immigrant population. The workers' movement must remember that 'an injury to one is an injury to all' and act accordingly.