

Labour/TUC leaders shackle unions

Workers: defy anti-union laws! Strike to win!



John Harris (IFL)

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[Left] Dockers outside TGWU Executive meeting, 14 April. [Right] Protesters outside Strathclyde Regional Council, whose Labour Party majority is implementing the poll tax. The trade union and Labour leaders police workers for Thatcher.

Britain is locked in its deepest industrial ferment since the heroic miners strike was defeated a little over four years ago. On 21 June British Rail was shut down by a national strike, with strikes by London tube and bus workers crippling the normal functioning of the political and financial capital of the country. One-day rail and tube strikes have continued. Registered dockers have been balloted for strike action. Ominously for the bourgeoisie, which desperately needs oil revenues, construction workers on about 30 North Sea offshore platforms have begun an indefinite strike over wages and conditions. Already production has been halted at BP. Sporadic strikes have also broken out in the construction industry and among postal workers, BBC journalists, local government workers and others. Taken together, the hundreds of thousands of workers on the front lines of the class struggle wield enormous social power.

The deep-going class bitterness intersects broader social unrest. Not only militant workers, but blacks and Asians, women's and gay rights organisations, sections of the intelligentsia – all are deeply alienated from the government. Mass demonstrations

against the widely despised poll tax have become common in Scotland. Large sections of the petty bourgeoisie are angry over cuts in the NHS, transport and other vital services, and their lives as well have been claimed in such capitalist butchery as Clapham Junction and King's Cross. Mounting trade deficits and inflation rates have generated sharp disputes within the Tory cabinet. Thatcher, acting like the last czarina, lectures the more powerful West German bourgeoisie on NATO and everyone in Europe on the EEC. But even the US imperialists don't fully buy it, and there's a widespread feeling that Thatcher is losing her grip.

This provides favourable opportunities for working class-centred struggle that could mobilise behind it broad sectors of the populace. But to win requires a struggle against the treachery of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy. The Labour Party is being groomed and pushed forward by the bourgeoisie as an alternative reliable tool to discipline the workers and suppress class struggle. Over the last few months the Labourites have recouped considerable support, as reflected in the recent parliamentary by-elections in Vauxhall and Glasgow

Central, as well as the Euro-elections. Recent opinion polls have shown Labour around ten percentage points ahead of the Tories, its best showing since 1981. Editorials lauding Kinnock in the big business press indicate that this represents in part a shift of *bourgeois opinion* to Labour.

SMASH THE ANTI-UNION LAWS!

Smelling the chance to get into office, the labour bureaucracy is already on the campaign trail, seeking to demonstrate to the bosses that it can discipline the working class. The speedy capitulation of T&G leader Ron Todd and NUR head Jimmy Knapp to anti-strike injunctions does not merely reflect the aversion of the trade union bureaucrats to militant class struggle. In the wake of the government's announcement of its intention to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme, the LP tops made it crystal clear to Ron Todd that they needed an "illegal" national dock strike like a hole in the head. Under pressure now from the militancy of the workers, the bureaucrats feel compelled to call some kind of action. But in the face of the poll tax, the cutbacks, the surging inflation

that is shredding workers' real incomes, the bureaucrats have not mounted a single effective strike to date.

The decisive sections of the working class engaged in one-day strikes or balloting to strike are up against the union bureaucrats' servility to Thatcher's strikebreaking, union-busting laws. "Keeping it legal" for the Kinnocks and Bennis is not only a policy of defeat, but will embolden the Tories to prepare new reactionary attacks. The anti-union laws can and must be smashed through hard class struggle. What is needed is all-out strike action not more one-day skirmishes. London underground and bus workers, BR workers, dockers – all out and stay out to win! Don't leave the registered dockers isolated – shut down all the ports! Oil workers, engineering workers, NALGO: all-out strikes to link up with the transport workers. Such a class offensive requires breaking the bureaucrats' stranglehold through the election of strike committees to direct the struggle, organise mass pickets, fight bureaucratic sell-outs and link up the diverse struggles. Above all what is required is a political break with

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Not a Labour government but forward to workers rule!

Worldwide effort for Jalalabad tops £27,000

The US and its imperialist allies have been backing the counterrevolutionary army of *mujahedin* cut-throats in Afghanistan for ten long years. In 1979 the Soviet Red Army intervened on the side of those fighting for elementary social progress. We said "Hail Red Army!" while much of the fake left joined the imperialist howls for Soviet withdrawal. In February of this year Kremlin leader Gorbachev withdrew all Soviet troops from Afghanistan - betraying the Afghan and Soviet peoples in the vain hope of appeasing world capitalism. Washington's Cold Warriors salivated at the prospect of installing an Islamic fundamentalist puppet regime right on the border of Soviet Central Asia. Now they lick their wounds.

As the Russians pulled out, the US stepped up direct arms shipments, funding and masterminding the bloody *mujahedin* attacks from bases in Pakistan. The Afghan city of Jalalabad became the focal point of the reactionary onslaught. But with their backs to the wall, Afghan soldiers and civilians fought hard and have thrown back the CIA's cut-throats from a horrendous three-

month siege. We salute the heroic Afghan defenders of Jalalabad! Soviet veterans of the Afghan war, too, must take pride in this victory for our side, and satisfaction that all they fought for was not in vain. And we are pleased that through a worldwide campaign launched by the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), which raised over £27,000 (\$42,000) in humanitarian aid to the civilian victims of Jalalabad, we have been of active, if modest, assistance. Our Afghan sisters and brothers are literally fighting for their lives, for a future free of the yoke of a theocratic state, free of the veil and the life of slavery it symbolises for women of the East.

We undertook the campaign to provide desperately needed funds for the beleaguered Afghan fighters as part of an international working-class defence against imperialism. The Partisan Defense Committee is modelled on the International Labor Defense (ILD), the American affiliate of the International Red Aid, launched by the Communist International in 1922. Despite the war-ravaged conditions of the new Soviet Republic emerging from the Civil



TROTSKY

Trotsky on the Labour "lefts"

In 1926, shortly before the General Strike broke out, Leon Trotsky warned that the "left" Labourites like Purcell would betray as readily as the open rightists like Ramsay MacDonald. The young British Communist Party was politically disarmed by Stalin's policy of maintaining the Anglo-Russian Committee, a bloc between the Russian and British trade union leaders,

in the face of the historic betrayals of the TUC. The "lefts", then a majority on the TUC, played a particularly pernicious role in this class treason. So too today a revolutionary party can be forged only through a sharp political break with all varieties of Labourism.

The ideological and organizational formation of a genuinely revolutionary, that is of a communist, party on the basis of the movement of the masses is conceivable only under the condition of a perpetual, systematic, inflexible, untiring and irreconcilable unmasking of the quasi-left leaders of every hue, of their confusion, of their compromises and of their reticence. It would be the crudest blunder to think - and this can be seen to happen - that the task of the struggle for a united front consists in obtaining a victory for Purcell, Lansbury, Wheatley and Kirkwood over Snowden, Webb and MacDonald. Such an objective would contain within itself a contradiction. The left muddleheads are incapable of power; but if through the turn of events it fell into their hands they would hasten to pass it over to their elder brothers on the right. They would do the same with the state as they are now doing in the party.

- Leon Trotsky, *Writings on Britain*, vol 2, 6 January 1926



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER



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	Donations Transmitted	+ Donations Deposited (Not yet cleared)	= Total Collected
Australia			
Partisan Defence Committee Receipts Nos 1-37	A \$4,727.12 [£2,305.95]	A \$0.00	A \$4,727.12 [£2,305.95]
Britain			
Partisan Defence Committee Receipts Nos 1-100 £ 2/1-2/100	£3,884.05	£324.59	£4,208.64
Canada			
Partisan Defense Committee Receipts Nos 95401-95484	C \$3,833.91 [£2,082.05]	C \$30.00 [£16.29]	C \$3,863.91 [£2,098.34]
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Comite de defense sociale Receipts Nos 1/1-1/50 £ 2/1-2/23	FF 31,501.10 [£3,009.85]	FF 555.00 [£53.03]	FF 32,056.10 [£3,062.88]
Italy			
Comitato di difesa sociale e proletaria Receipts Nos 1-114	L.2,644,565 [£1,170.59]	L.30,400 [£13.45]	L.2,674,965 [£1,184.04]
Japan			
Partisan Defense Committee Receipts Nos 1-13	¥44,992 [£201.70]	¥0	¥44,992 [£201.70]
United States			
Partisan Defense Committee Receipts Nos 5001-5200	US \$14,779.27 [£9,606.29]	US \$2,935.02 [£1,907.72]	US \$17,714.29 [£11,514.01]
West Germany			
Komitee fur soziale Verteidigung Receipts Nos 1-87	DM 8,517.77 [£2,789.24]	DM 0.00	DM 8,517.77 [£2,789.24]
International Totals (in £ sterling)	£25,049.72	£2,315.08	£27,364.80

War and invasion by 14 capitalist armies, Red Aid nuclei sprang up all across Russia because Soviet workers knew that their cause was intertwined with the fate of the international class struggle. The Partisan Defence Committee was launched in Britain in conjunction with the fundraising campaign for the civilian victims of Jalalabad, as were fraternal social and defence organisations internationally.

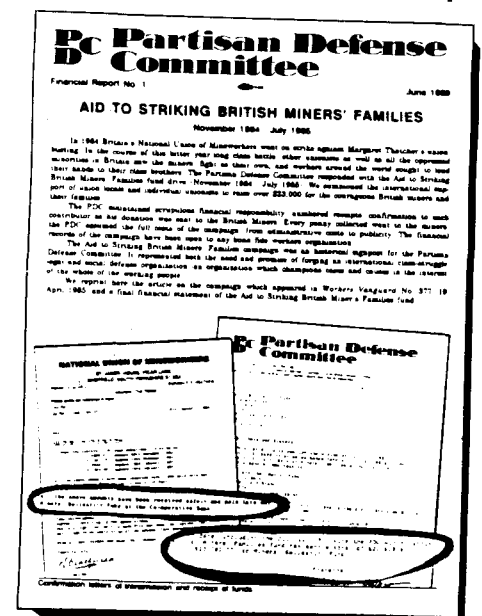
We list here the contributions from 9 April to 16 June to the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund (JCVAF), launched by the Partisan Defense Committee in the US and joined by fraternal legal and social defence organisations in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and West Germany.

A separate account has been established in each country for the fund drive. All funds collected are securely forwarded to the "Victims of Jalalabad" account established by the Afghan Embassy in Paris as donations clear the accounts. All administrative costs and any costs for publicity connected with the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund campaign, amounting to thousands of pounds, are being paid for by the respective legal and social defence organisations in each country.

Contributors receive numbered receipts, and the financial records of the fund drive are open to inspection by any bona fide workers organisation. Listed are the amounts

transmitted to the Afghan Embassy account, the amounts deposited in JCVAF accounts but not yet cleared, and the sum of these amounts which equals the total collected in each country. This is reported in each country's currency and in £ sterling, shown in brackets, at the exchange rate in effect on 16 June 1989. ■

JUST OUT! 40p



Available from: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU.

Racist murder in Edinburgh: avenge Ahmed Shekh!

GLASGOW-In the early morning of 16 January Ahmed Shekh, a 28-year-old Somali refugee and Stevenson College student, was knifed to death in a hideous racist murder. As Ahmed Shekh and his friend Abdirizak Yusuf were coming out of The Cavern pub near Edinburgh's city centre, they were set upon by a gang of eight to ten white youths. Ahmed shouted to his friend, "Run, they've got knives!" Screaming racist abuse, the thugs repeatedly punched, kicked and stabbed the two black students on the head, arms and body. Yusuf somehow made it home before realising he had been stabbed in the stomach. Ahmed got to a phone box, then collapsed. A witness called an ambulance. But despite two emergency operations at the Royal Infirmary, Ahmed Shekh died of internal haemorrhaging from his stab wound.

The police arrived at the scene of the crime within seconds. At least one of the three thugs arrested on the spot - Terence Reilly - has turned out to be a self-confessed fascist who was caught with a knife in his hand and blood on his shirt sleeves. Yet, after an eight-day "trial" last May, an all-white jury cleared all those accused of murder and attempted murder. This obscene spectacle of racist "justice" gives the green light for the fascists to carry out their murderous attacks. And the murder of Ahmed Shekh and subsequent whitewash gives the lie to the myth that in Edinburgh, the so-called "Athens of the North", seat of Labour-administered Lothian Region and capital of "enlightened" Scotland, there is "no racism".

After the acquittals, 1500 outraged students, trade unionists - including a contingent of teachers from Stevenson College, leftists and minorities joined a militant protest - widely described as Scotland's first anti-racism demonstration - called by the Lothian Black Forum (LBF) in Edinburgh on 3 June. The Spartacist League contingent carried placards reading "Avenge the Murder of Ahmed Shekh! Smash Fascist Terror!" "For Union/Minority Mobilisations to Stop the Fascists!" "Smash Tory/Labour Racist Immigration Laws!" and "Anti-Soviet War Drive Fuels Fascist Terror - Defend the Soviet Union!" Placards also defended Salman Rushdie and the right of *Satanic Verses* to be read and counterposed "Forge a Bolshevik Party" to the Labour traitors Kinnock and Benn.

Throughout the demonstration, the cops tried one provocation after another - forcing a T&GWU banner displaying a portrait of Edinburgh-born socialist and Irish Republican James Connolly to the back of the march (after failing to suppress it); harassing chant-leaders using megaphones; trying to censor our placard demanding that Ahmed Shekh be avenged; attempting to prevent LBF supporters from taking up a collection and noting down their "particulars". But the banners stayed defiantly up and slogans were loudly chanted. Rally chair Mukami McCrum called on the demonstrators to come forward to the platform with donations in defiance of the cops who had

earlier detained collectors: "We are so noticeable when we collect money, but they don't see us when we are being kicked in the streets". The crowd donated £300 on the spot. A spokesman from London's Southall Monitoring group told the marchers he was reminded of the first demonstration that was held in Southall in 1976 under similar circumstances, after an Asian was stabbed to death by white youths. "Then, too, we had arrogant police officers who said who could march and who couldn't - just like today when the police tried to stop the TGWU banner" (*Observer Scotland*, 4 June 1989).

Disgusted with the legal amnesty of the murderers, the LBF is considering calling for a public enquiry into Ahmed's murder. Speaking to the *Edinburgh Evening News* (5 June) Mukami McCrum stated: "We feel very strongly that someone out

ing "Let's stab these ones". The defence counsel meanwhile littered his presentations with racist filth and innuendo about "these young coloureds" coming to Scotland to take advantage of its education system and lusting after blonde women.

Glancy turned state's evidence ("Crown witness") in the fifth day of the trial. Still, for "repeatedly punching" Shekh and "assaulting two men in the Grassmarket by presenting [!] a knife at them, and assaulting two other men in Tollcross", Reilly got slapped on the wrist with a 21-month jail "sentence". Nailing the verdict as "a victory for racists", LBF spokesman Abdourahim Said Bakar declared:

"It looks as though they have been given a free hand to go about bashing or murdering black people knowing that nothing will be done about it.... If it had been the other



Ahmed Shekh

Speaking to *Workers Hammer* about Ahmed as one who knew him personally, the LBF's Bakar pointed to the irony that Shekh was "someone who was, let's say, fleeing or running away from oppression, let's say political oppression of some kind, right? - to come in a so-called democratic country and be killed for no particular reason but for the colour of his skin". Recalling the Home Office's racist treatment of his friend, Bakar denounced "the mistrust which is put on people like Ahmed, who have to justify everything, you know, so the state can see this is a real refuge" adding "the Race Relations Act is just pure shit". When Ahmed arrived in Britain two years ago to escape from deadly political persecution in Somalia, he was immediately "detained" for three months on a prison ship moored off Harwich. Only when the ship broke free in the hurricane of October 1987 was he given a temporary, annually reviewable licence to stay. At the time of his murder, Shekh was still awaiting word from the Home Office on his application for permanent status in Britain.

Bakar described how Ahmed Shekh had hopes of going into medicine, not least because he wanted to help his father in Somalia who is suffering from failing eyesight. Following an emergency meeting organised by the Scottish Refugee Council in the immediate aftermath of the murder, friends and sympathisers raised £900 for Shekh's family and encouraged people to send messages of condolence and solidarity. Highlighting the crucial importance of mobilising all the working class in the fight against racist capitalism, Bakar told *WH*: "We feel that, especially in Britain today - you know, at the height of capitalism, which thrives on division, we need to make people understand that they also ... have an interest against racism.... Because if they understand the nature of capitalism - which thrives on division - and if they are serious about defeating capitalism, they'll have to fight against all forms of divisions and segregation and discrimination."

In a letter protesting the police provocations against the 3 June demonstration, the LBF called attention to the "growing tide of racial attacks and harassment" in the Lothian Region. On 26 May, a Sikh temple in Edinburgh's Leith area was vandalised and set on fire. A landmark seven-page report in the *Glasgow Evening Times* (10 June 1986) stated that "Two independent surveys among Indian, Pakistani and Chinese families in the South of the city showed a massive 96 per cent have suffered some form of racial harassment".

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For trade union/minority mobilisations to smash fascist terror!



Philadelphia, USA, 5 November 1988. Over 1000 join integrated trade union-centred rally against Ku Klux Klan and their skinhead allies.

there knows who murdered him. Ahmed is dead, and if Terence Reilly didn't kill him, someone else must have." But as the outrageous proceedings of the "trial" showed, black and Asian people can expect less than nothing from British courts and proceedings.

From the outset, it was clear that the victims were going to be put on trial in Edinburgh Sheriff Court. Of the three white attackers arrested, two - Reilly and Francis Glancy - were later charged with murder and attempted murder. At the trial, a detective sergeant described some of the letters written by Reilly in Saughton Prison. "On the flap of one envelope were written the words: 'What is black and red and runs at 50 mph? The n---er that died.' On another he had written 'Britain for the British' 'CCS' (a group of football casuals [ie fascists in "casual" dress - *WH*], and 'NF'" (*Observer Scotland*, 21 May). At one point during the trial, a host of fascist types sat directly behind front-row LBF supporters in court, openly threaten-

ing round and a black person had killed a white person, some parts of the media would have gone wild. Yet this has been reported in the local paper and nowhere else. It is appalling. It is as if the death of a black person is not important." (*Observer Scotland*, 21 May)

Contrast the treatment of the racist murder of Ahmed Shekh with Britain's zealous protection of its Nazi war criminals. There's the case of 51-year-old Nikola Stedul, 'a Croatian "student", president of the sinister Croatian Movement for Statehood, an organisation linked with Ustasha fascism and which revered Pavelic's wartime "Independent State of Croatia", the most sadistic and bloodthirsty of Hitler's European satellite states. When Yugoslav Vinko Sindic bungled an execution attempt on Stedul last October, the government immediately drew Stedul into protective custody. Sindic got 15 years. The case was all over the media, but the press has by and large treated Ahmed Shekh as a "non-person".

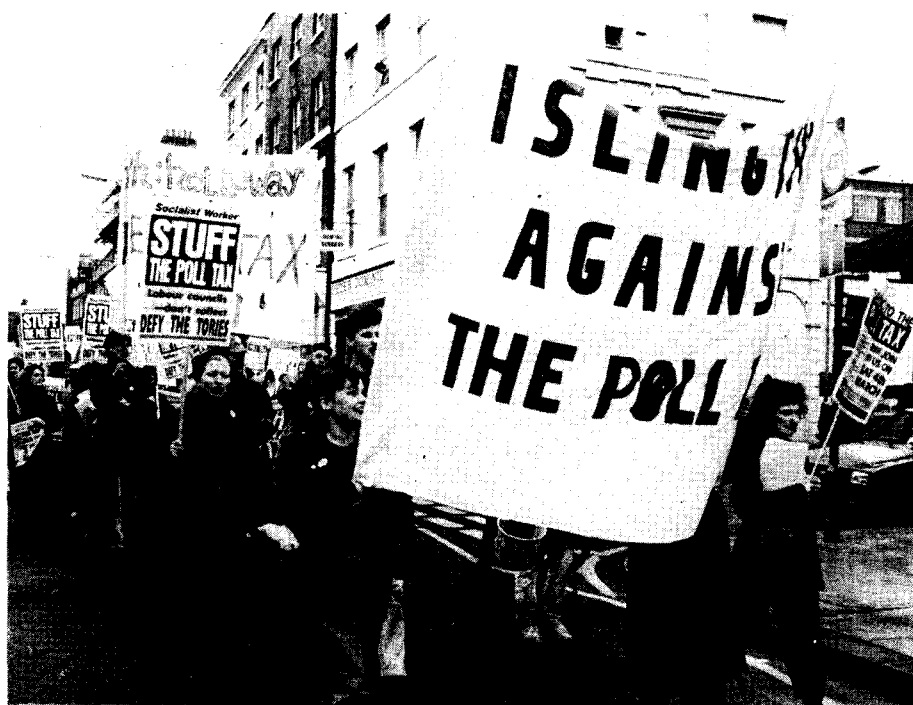
Down with the Parliament of the ruling class and its Labour lackeys!

Smash the poll tax!

The Westminster Parliament's poll tax is reactionary and punitive, a flagrant example of the Thatcher government's "let them eat cake" arrogance towards the working people of Britain. The tax has already been imposed on the people of Scotland, whose electorate overwhelmingly voted against the Tories and their poll tax scheme in the last general election. Registration has begun in England and Wales and tax collection will begin in April next year. One area of the "United Kingdom" whose "subjects" will not be compelled to pay the poll tax is Northern Ireland. The costs of trying to collect there would undoubtedly be more than the government could afford. There is widespread outrage and resistance against this illegal act of Parliament. But there is a gaping discrepancy between this felt anger and the servile established Labourite leadership and nationalist demagogues who pretend to have answers for the working people. The necessary struggle against the poll tax demands the leadership of a Bolshevik-style party, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and tribune of the people.

The imposition of the poll tax is a point-blank invitation to mass struggle. The grotesque quality of the tax was savagely captured by a series in Steve Bell's cartoon strip "IF ...". Who is exempt from the poll tax? Foreigners who live in other countries, monks and nuns, "visiting" armed forces, international headquarters of defence organisations, the severely mentally impaired and some prisoners (not those in jail for non-payment of fines - including non-payment of the poll tax). The deceased are also mercifully exempt. Bell's cartoon shows smiling faces on Eskimos, prisoners, bed-ridden patients, Trident submarine captains and bodies in coffins.

Otherwise everyone over the age of 18 is liable for the tax. The poorer you are, the more adults live in your dwelling, the more dependants over 18 within a family unit, the more this tax financially disables. Meanwhile the rich get fat tax cuts. An article in the *Scotsman* (7 April) entitled "Let them eat toast ..." states simply: "The poll tax will push many young people into a state of semi-starvation." Colleges and universities are being dragged into the registration of students, over 64 per cent of whom are in debt by the end of the first term of their first year. They face as well the prospect of more cuts in grants and benefits. Every winter a significant number of pensioners freeze to death ("hypothermia"); now many others barely



Kayte Brimacombe (Report)

Widespread opposition to the poll tax lacks the necessary leadership.

able to pay for fuel and food will be pushed beyond the survival limit. Those who have temporarily moved in with their families for care but kept their own homes will be taxed twice. Asian people with extended families living together will be particularly hard-hit as will most immigrant communities. Those simply unable to pay face losing house and belongings, and in England and Wales, prison. The ranks of the homeless will be swelled. This poll tax is neither a share of income or assessment on property but a punishment for existing. It will disenfranchise those who cannot or will not pay: the "right" to vote has now an explicit price.

In effect and intent this levy is part of the attack on local government services. As with the National Health Service, much negative can be said about the state of local government and the futile tinkering that is the preoccupation of the Labourites. But Thatcher is attacking what services are still provided. The local governments are liable for further cuts should they fail to produce adequate revenues from the poll tax. With the local administrations turned into tax farmers, those in most need of their services - the poor unable to pay - will fear to use the services. More than 26,000 have "officially" disappeared from Scottish cities" to escape payment; in terms of all social services as well as the ability to vote, these "disappeared" have become non-people.

The tax also serves as part of the general onslaught against elemen-

tary democratic rights: draconian union-busting regulations, increased censorship and police powers. The government's ability to maintain detailed files on every individual is greatly enhanced and centralised. The compilation of information required to administer the tax will come from the electoral register, the valuation roll, the Department of Social Security and most local authority files (eg housing department files, library tickets, social work files). In line with the poll tax provision to make people living together responsible for each other's compliance, some local authorities have already violated the Data Protection Act with questions about "details of personal relationships" in registration forms.

This iniquitous decree has evoked historical memories of the 1380 poll tax, which played a significant part in provoking the English Peasants Revolt. But even that was intended as an emergency measure to pay for the war in France, and was graduated with dukes paying most and beggars and those living on alms exempted. Another poll tax in 1641, to pay off the Scottish army occupying Northumberland and Durham for their "brotherly assistance" against Charles I was also graduated out of fear of provoking popular resistance. After that the idea of poll taxes was dropped until the present government reached back centuries for a model for its own reaction. But Britain's once imperial rulers are well versed in the use of such taxes in

the colonies. One of these sparked the first American Revolution and the cry "No taxation without representation!" (After the Civil War had destroyed slavery in the second American Revolution, poll taxes were used in the South explicitly to prevent the formally emancipated black people from exercising their democratic rights.) Poll taxes imposed on Catholics as part of the English Protestant Reformation and Revolution became in Ireland an oppression of the Catholic majority. Elsewhere in the colonies hut taxes were used to force people out of subsistence farming into wage labour and the clutches of landlords and moneylenders. In India the Imperial Raj imposed the salt tax, doubling the price of a barest necessity of the poor. Gandhi's salt tax march in 1930 rallied the national struggle against British rule and evoked peasant uprisings. Irish, Asian and other former colonial peoples in Britain will recognise the poll tax as of a piece with such past measures of British imperialist domination.

In Scotland, as many as a million people, a quarter of the "paying population", have refused to pay the poll tax. In Tower Hamlets in the East End of London, 43 per cent of the canvass forms warning people to register have been returned. A Labour councillor there reported that people "had scrawled 'get lost' and stronger insults on the forms" and in Islington the main poll tax registration office was badly damaged by a fire. However, the hatred of and defiance against the tax has not been solidified behind a serious class-struggle challenge. "Opposition parties have failed so far to put up effective resistance to the poll tax" was the succinct statement in the *Scotsman* (8 April). The Labour Party leadership has cleaved to the sanctity of Parliament, opposing even token acts of civil disobedience (non-registration, non-payment). Given the choice of breaking the law or breaking the poor, Neil Kinnock chooses the latter. Some of the Scottish Labour MPs (the "feeble 49") have joined the Committee of 100 non-payment campaign in a supremely token gesture. TUC head and sworn agent of the bosses Norman Willis, addressing 20,000 anti-poll tax protesters in Manchester, insisted that payment now and Labour later was the only road.

The imposition of the poll tax first in Scotland is an aspect of the oppression of the Scottish nation. The prolonged historical betrayals of the Labour Party and the present sense that while Scotland may vote

Labour, they end up with a Tory government, has fuelled the growth of nationalism. The bourgeois nationalist Scottish National Party (SNP) has been able to cash in on Labour's abysmal stance on the poll tax in particular and Scotland's rights in general, notably trouncing Labour in the Govan by-election. But its call "can pay, won't pay" is windbagery; these aspiring rulers of a devolved capitalist Scotland fear and loathe the unleashing of the social power of the organised workers movement. The last thing either Ramsay MacKinnock, the TUC scabherders or the gentlemen of the SNP care to see is mass proletarian-led protest against Westminster's vile tax.

As Labour's electoral fortunes improve in the polls, by-elections and Euro-elections, there will be increasing pressure to channel social discontent into the parliamentary strait-jacket. Despite the Labour Party's present treacherous and unpopular poll tax line, many working people will be led to believe that Labour can depose the unspeakable Thatcher, abolish the poll tax from No 10 Downing St and ease up the relentless pounding on their living standards and rights. However, a Kinnock government would – even more than he has already promised – be forced to attack the working class at least as much as the Tories. That is what is demanded to administer the decaying capitalist society: strike-breaking, austerity measures, bilking and "disciplining" the workers and oppressed. Kinnock's role as arch scab during the heroic miners strike, his loyalty to the imperialists' anti-Soviet war drive, his gross racism give a taste of what Labour in power would mean – the bosses' poodle in office.

But opposition to the poll tax need not be derailed into the cruel hoax of electing the Labour traitors who seek to do the Tories' job better. There is another road. The struggle against the poll tax looms as a potential decisive focus for the anger and bitterness felt against ruling class depredations. Strike action backed up by mass protest of tenants' organisations, women's groups, pensioners, youth, students and the unemployed is necessary and possible. Key sections of the trade unions are now engaged in sporadic strike actions over wages and in the case of the dockers, a strike over the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme is posed (see article, p 1). Broad sections of the population could be rallied to class-centred struggle against the poll tax and the entire gamut of Thatcherite viciousness: crashing trains, tube infernos, mass death on the soccer terraces, rent hikes, the destruction of the NHS, draconian anti-gay legislation, press censorship, racist cop rampages. Mass refusal to pay the tax, intersecting renewed combativity among trade unionists, could well provoke a social and political crisis in which the present government's ability to rule would be in question. Revolutionaries in this situation would seek to split the working-class base from the pro-capitalist leaders of Labour, and win them from nationalist demagogy, to fight for workers rule.

The spark could be in Scotland. Between 1914 and 1919 the Glasgow area earned its name as "Red Clydeside". The workers in the engineering and munitions factories fought against the bosses' and government attacks on their rights and living standards. Women, themselves munition workers or the wives of Scottish soldiers being slaughtered at the front, were in the

forefront of the rent strikes. Rent strike committees were formed to coordinate the struggle and resist the bailiff's goons. The trials of the revolutionary John Maclean became rallying points for working class resistance while the Labour Party and TUC tops fervently backed the imperialist war effort. In 1918 demonstrations demanded "Hands off Russia" and "Release Maclean". It was aptly said then that "Our rulers fear Maclean more than they do the whole Labour Party". Even with the heroic stand and efforts of Maclean and other revolutionary militants, what was lacking was an organised Bolshevik leadership.

Today, the de-industrialisation of Britain has hit Scotland with a vengeance, the heavy engineering industry and shipyards of the Clyde barely exist. Experiencing the same social rot and immiseration faced by those in Wales, the Midlands and North of England, the working people of Scotland have a felt sense of national oppression heightened under Thatcher's rule and Labour's betrayals. Counterposed to Labourite Unionism and



Glasgow Herald Picture Library

Rent strike demonstration, Glasgow 1916: Red Clydeside showed workers' willingness to struggle and need for organised revolutionary leadership.

English chauvinism as well as to the NATO-loyal nationalists of the SNP, we communists fight for a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles. We uphold the right of self-determination for the Scottish and Welsh nations and a working class democratic resolution in Ireland. The prospects for an independent Scotland however would be bleak, and for Wales even more so. Our perspective of triumphant, unified class struggle to overthrow the entire rotting edifice of capitalism points to amiable and easy resolutions of the national questions. Its defeat leads less clearly in other and likely miserable directions. The tradition of the Red Clydeside will be claimed and realised in victory by the party of the British October.

The fake revolutionary left has remained within the political framework of the Labour "left". Proposing a more "genuine" and "fighting" fight against the poll tax, their various "tactics" are separated from the struggle for working class power. The state-capitalist *Republican Worker* of the heavily Scottish-based Revolutionary Democratic Group (RDG) more harshly polemicised against Labour than most, denouncing its "absolute bankruptcy", "its complete subservience and capitulation before the norms, needs and ideas of the capitalist Establishment" and its role in Scotland as "the main agent for implementing the poll tax" (RW, Spring 1987). But despite its accurate description of

Labour's "cringing to the ossified political structures and archaic Westminster rules of the game", the RDG's conclusion doesn't go any further than "mass non-payment and non-implementation of the tax" and the call to turn registration in England and Wales into a "carnival of chaos". This is classless civil disobedience that a left-talking SNP politician could spout. A genuine workers party which functioned as a tribune of the people would seek to mobilise the power of the organised working class – the trade unions – in strike action against the poll tax in the interests of all the poor and oppressed who justly hate the tax and have been abandoned to a course of individual non-payment. But such a class struggle perspective is inimical not only to the labour bureaucracy but the entire fake left as well.

The *Militant* tendency – the largest left force active in the non-payment campaign – has no real perspective outside of pressuring the reactionary Labour Party, which is in fact the majority party in Scot-

land and is therefore centrally responsible for allowing the poll tax to be implemented there. Its article "How to beat the poll tax" (*Militant*, 30 June) warns against "ultra-leftism", lecturing: "The anti-poll tax campaign therefore must continually orient itself towards the labour movement and aim to push its leaders onto the field of battle." *Socialist Organiser's* version is "Make Labour councils resist" ("Don't Pay, Don't Collect!"). The centrist Workers Power group headline their recent article "Don't Pay, Don't Collect!"

arguing for "local groups" to "build city-wide action councils of delegates from the areas, the workplaces and the trade unions. Together they should organise a mass campaign of non-payment and non-collection" (*Workers Power*, July 1989). This is not far from Matgamna's *Socialist Organiser*, in fact. In March, *Workers Power* called for strike action and was singing a different tune – warning that the very tactics it now advocates are not "sufficient" and furthermore "can be sabotaged by using the law: anti-union laws against workers who refuse to implement, surcharges for councillors who do the same, stiff fines and 'collection at source' for those who refuse to pay." Now, however, WP wants "councils and council trade unionists" to be "won to refusing to handle Poll Tax work" along with pay clerks and computer programmers. Refusing to call for strike action by key sections of the workers movement, these tactics smack of the same impotent moralism as do consumer boycotts.

Its permutations on tactics notwithstanding, *Workers Power* is consistent in its refusal to address the key question of leadership and the need to *break from Labourism*. Its attitude to the special question of Scotland is integrally linked to this. In part *Workers Power* simply ignores the question, but more explicitly in its article on the Govan by-election (December 1988) *Workers Power* denied that the Scottish nation was oppressed. While denouncing the SNP, the article maintained a deafening silence on what attitude *Workers Power* took to *Labour* in that contest. It admits that the result "was a defeat for Kinnock's do-nothing approach". Since it is normal practice for *Workers Power* to call for a vote to Labour on principle, we can only conclude that it would have called upon the workers of Govan to vote for Kinnock's "do-nothing" approach. Should it acknowledge the oppression of the Scottish nation, furthermore, *Workers Power's* "logic" would dictate capitulation to the nationalists, as is its practice in Ireland. But to capitulate to the nationalists would immediately contradict its policy on the Labour Party. Thus this question puts the English centrists of *Workers Power* in a no-win bind within their present programmatic framework.

FOR WORKERS REVOLUTION!

That the poll tax disproportionately discriminates against Scotland,
continued on page 10

SPARTACIST LEAGUE PUBLIC FORUMS

The homeland of October is in danger!

Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!

The terminal crisis of Stalinism-the fight for communist leadership.

LONDON
Time: 7:30pm
Date: Tuesday, 11 July
Venue: Conway Hall
Red Lion Sq
London WC2
Nearest tube: Holborn

GLASGOW
Time: 2pm
Date: Saturday, 5 August
Venue: City Halls
Candleriggs
Glasgow
(Albion St. entrance)



For more information phone: London (01)485 1396, Glasgow (041) 339 0993

The fight for communist leadership

International Communist League launched

It is with pride tempered with a sober assessment of our responsibilities that the Spartacist League/Britain announces its adherence to the newly founded International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), previously the international Spartacist tendency. The SL/B is thus the disciplined British section of the ICL. Fifty years ago, Leon Trotsky, Lenin's companion in arms and founder of the Red Army, proclaimed the creation of a new International to carry forward the authentic Leninist programme abandoned and besmirched by the Communist International under JV Stalin and his anti-revolutionary bureaucratic clique. The ICL today fights to reforge the Fourth International.

The statement printed below is taken in large part from the announcement by the SL/US appearing in *Workers Vanguard* no 479 (9 June 1989). On 13 May 1989 the International Executive Committee of the (outgoing) international Spartacist tendency voted unanimously to found the International Communist League.

In the shadow of the approaching second imperialist world war, Trotsky observed with increasing urgency that the objective preconditions for world proletarian revolution were overriding, but what was lacking to uproot decadent capitalism on the world scale and establish a socialist world order was an authentic revolutionary leadership at the head of the proletariat. The spread of the barbarism of fascism and the oncoming world war were not the only deadly dangers confronting the workers of the world at that crucial moment; posed also was the question of the very survival of the Soviet Union and the remaining gains of October.

Today once again, those who struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation in what is unquestionably a period preparatory to war still confront that same excruciating crisis of leadership, but in a different situation. The contradictions of Soviet society and the problems of the Chinese revolutionary struggle, both brilliantly analysed by Trotsky, have exploded with pent-up force. In the capitalist countries, the working class lacks the level of social consciousness and organisation it possessed in the 1920s and 1930s. The legacy of Stalin's reign of terror inside the Soviet Union, and of the repetitive betrayals of crucial revolutionary opportunities, has been the massacre of pro-Communist militants from China to Spain to Greece to Chile to Iran. Stalinism has created millions of anti-Communists and the general level of identification of human progress with the idea of communism stands



Banner of newly founded International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) raised at annual Lutte Ouvriere fete, Paris, May 1989.

at a relative low point. Yet as the workings of capitalist imperialism create millions of new subjective communists across the globe, the absence of genuinely communist leadership is acutely felt by many and the programme of Leninist internationalism can be put forward with great impact.

THE HOMETLAND OF OCTOBER IS IN GRAVE DANGER—ALL POWER TO WORKERS SOVIETS!

Under Gorbachev we have witnessed an attempt to "restructure" the Soviet economy in the direction of encouraging powerful forces towards capitalist restoration, combined with a "diplomacy" of apparently limitless appeasement of imperialism which is being paid for in blood in Afghanistan (although the *mujahedin* siege of Jalalabad has evidently been thrown back, much to the dismay of the Western imperialists and Pakistani annexationists), and which has devastating implications as well for the working people from southern Africa to Nicaragua to Indochina. Now within the USSR, national antagonisms—spurred by the recent "reforms" termed "market socialism" which encourage the richer Soviet republics to seek greater autonomy from their poorer neighbours, but also nourished by decades of the bureaucracy's Great Russian chauvinism—threaten to dismember the homeland of the October Revolution. The slogan of "free elections" and the agitation for "national independence", particularly in the Baltic states, in this context can be nothing but a transparent cover for the programme of capitalist restoration. Should nationalist unrest spread to the Ukraine,

this would be extremely ominous. The anti-Semites of the Russian nativist "Pamyat" fascists have grown dangerously, protected by elements of the bureaucracy.

Today, the continued existence of the bureaucratic caste, the heirs of Stalin, constitutes a more immediate and direct threat to the conquests of October than ever before: what is posed is nothing less than civil war. Only through the return of the rule of soviets (councils of workers and soldiers), can the egalitarian consciousness (the idea that nobody should live off the exploitation of the labour of others) which remains deeply ingrained in sections of the Soviet working masses be mobilised in decisive struggle to uphold the gains of October.

The effects of what is termed "market socialism" are clearly shown in Eastern Europe. In Poland, the Stalinist bureaucracy's gross economic mismanagement and heavy-handed repressiveness opened the road for workers' grievances to be channelled into a reactionary-clericalist company union on behalf of the "free trade union" CIA along with the western bankers and the Vatican. Every leader of Solidarnosc is and has been since 1981 a traitor to the working class on behalf of NATO imperialism. Today the Polish regime, and Solidarnosc are selling the country to the IMF and are prepared to allow historic centres of the proletariat—the Lenin Shipyard workers and the miners of Upper Silesia—to be dismembered. The Stalinist schema of "national autarky" has come home to roost—Down with the Stalinist nationalists in Moscow and East Berlin who allow the imperialist world market to regulate the terms of trade between "fraternal

socialist" trading partners; reforge the historic links between the German and Polish proletarians through proletarian political revolution!

In China, a fully-fledged political revolution began—the Beijing spring. What began as a student upheaval around vague demands for greater democracy was embraced by the working people of Beijing who came out into the streets seeking by their massive numbers to block the unleashing of troops against the demonstrators. Some units fraternised with the crowds; other units were brought in to shoot down the people. Tremendous resentment has been building up among the salaried people against the beneficiaries of "building socialism with capitalist methods"—a full-fledged NEP. The only progressive solution lies in the unity of China under workers' leadership. And this immediately poses point-blank the need for a revolutionary, a Leninist-Trotskyist, party.

DECADENT IMPERIALISM HAS BEEN GIVEN A BREATHING SPACE

Today the capitalist world remains marked by the decomposition of the short-lived "American Century": having emerged as the dominant capitalist power after the devastation of Europe and Japan in World War II, Washington's "new world order" quickly unravelled, beginning with the Chinese Revolution and America's consequent embrace of its former enemy, Japan, as a bulwark against the spread of revolution in Asia, continuing with the Cuban Revolution and underlined by the dirty, losing war against the peasants and workers of Vietnam. The resurgent bourgeois anti-Sovietism of the 1980s, inaugurated by Jimmy Carter's hypocritical "human rights" crusade and escalated under the unashamed Cold Warriors of Reagan/Bush/Thatcher, posed the Russian question point-blank and highlighted the timidity and the demoralisation of the "left".

As a world imperialist power, Britain has been going down the tubes since the end of World War I. After World War II, it became, under Tory and Labour governments alike, a junior partner and staunch ally of American imperialism's anti-Soviet cold war drive, the "special relationship" which under Margaret Thatcher meant using Britain as a launching base for the US' criminal bombing raid against Libya. Indicative of its decline, the once-mighty British fleet was strained in prosecuting the dirty little Falklands/Malvinas War—a war which had the full backing of the Labour traitors and in which the working people of neither country had a side. The "end of empire" has produced a particularly vicious

brand of "little England" chauvinism within the "leftwing" of social democracy – as opposed to the openly CIA-loyal Cold Warriors of the Denis Healey ilk. Capitalist America is the number one enemy of the world's working peoples. But "anti-Americanism" does not equal anti-imperialism. In the mouths of social democrats and Stalinists, anti-American rhetoric only serves to amnesty one's own bourgeoisie. Labour "lefts" like Tony Benn believe that the future of capitalist Britain lies in greater distance from the US. They too are committed to getting East Europe "back" for capitalist exploitation, but they know how to profess "neutrality". Benn would prefer to undermine the deformed workers states by encouraging *internal* counterrevolutionary forces such as Solidarnosc in Poland.

The anti-Soviet war drive had as its domestic corollary unrelenting attack on the working class and bottomless treachery by the Labour and trade union misleaders. Adopting Cold War "new realism" early on in the decade, acting as what Lenin termed the loyal "labour lieutenants of capitalism", the Labour Party and the TUC tops worked as able side-kicks in Thatcher's war against workers and minorities at home. The TUC leadership helped set up and isolate Arthur Scargill and the NUM on the eve of the miners strike, red-baiting him at the 1983 TUC when he quite rightly called Polish Solidarnosc "anti-socialist". During the heroic miners strike of 1984-85, all wings of the trade union and Labour Party leadership acted as scabherders, with Kneel Kinnoch in the lead, "violence" baiting the strikers facing the full arsenal of the bourgeois state. The Labour "lefts" were key to preventing joint strike action, quashing the actions of the NUR and TGWU memberships and leaving the miners to stand alone.

The miners strike was the most significant class battle in Britain in decades. Its defeat, due to the treachery of the Labour Party right and "lefts", was followed by increased Thatcherite viciousness



Pathfinder

James P Cannon, founding leader of American Trotskyism: "We are the party of the Russian Revolution".

against the workers and oppressed and increasingly bonapartist state attacks on elementary civil liberties. Starkly posed in this devastated, de-industrialised and literally decaying society is the alternative between a barbaric solution under capitalism and victorious proletarian revolution led by a Leninist vanguard party.

Today the communists, whose aim is the proletarian conquest of state power and the reconstruction of society on a new basis, are at the same time the most consistent defenders of the ideals of the Enlightenment and the gains of the bourgeois revolution: the right to bear arms; the separation of church and



Novosti

state – against the imposition of religious fundamentalism as a political programme; against censorship, whether by "anti-pornography" feminists or the burning of Salman Rushdie's "blasphemous" novel; for the liberation of women. In Britain, where the bourgeois revolution was early and uncompleted, we say: Down with the monarchy, the aristocracy, the House of Lords, the established churches, and the licensing laws – For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! In Japan, where the bourgeois revolution came late and from the top down, we demand the abolition of the emperor system – For a Japanese workers republic!

WAR AND REVOLUTION

Lenin, in his work on imperialism as the epoch of capitalist decay, showed that the system of class relations had now become (as Marx had analysed) a barrier to the productive forces, leading to inter-imperialist rivalry and war to redivide the world's spoils. The first imperialist war brought unprecedented suffering and mass slaughter of the working people and revealed most of the Socialists of the Second International to be cowardly chauvinist tails on the imperialist ambitions of their "own" ruling classes. But defeat in war can be the mother of revolution, and Lenin and the Bolsheviks, who had built up a hard revolutionary party and broken sharply from the social-patriots, were able to transcend their own inadequate theoretical formulas (which had denied the possibility of proletarian revolution in backward Russia) and thereby to lead the small but militant Russian working class to the taking of state power, on the basis of an internationalist programme.

This historic conquest on behalf of the workers of the world led straight to the foundation of the Third (Communist) International, which was able to expose the "socialist" pretensions of the respectable reformist gentlemen of the Second International and win the allegiance of advanced workers and subjectively revolutionary militants on every continent. Through a pro-

cess of splits in the parties of the Second International and fusions with other left groupings, Communist Parties were born across the globe.

The international revolutionary wave which swept up the working masses from Germany to Bulgaria however receded and was thrown back; the failure to extend the Rus-

sian Revolution, particularly the failure in Germany with its powerful working class, left the young Soviet workers state isolated. Trotsky summed up the causes and future implications of the playing out of that cycle of revolutionary struggle in his *Lessons of October*.

In the USSR, under conditions of extreme poverty and demoralisation, with the working class decimated and exhausted by the Civil War, the way was open for a conservative bureaucracy to arise as a parasitic excrescence upon the working class. By 1924, this bureaucratic caste had acquired self-consciousness and a programme: the self-contradictory dogma of "Socialism in One Country" – the antithesis of the Leninist internationalism which had animated the revolution. Predicated on the illusion that it was possible for an isolated Soviet workers state to survive and coexist with capitalist imperialism over an extended period, this programme in Stalin's hands meant the destruction of the Communist International as an instrument of revolution and ultimately led straight to the murder of all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. In place of soviet democracy was created a monstrous apparatus of bureaucratic control: first by the Stalinised party, then by the Stalin faction, and finally by Stalin backed up by a handful of cronies, after the purge trials wiping out all the Bolshevik Old Guard.

Beginning with Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" and carried forward with new momentum under Gorbachev's *glasnost*, the heirs of Stalin in the Kremlin have been forced increasingly to acknowledge the crimes of Stalin: the brutality of forced collectivisation, the deportations and executions of oppositionists, the purge of the Red Army on the eve of World War II. Gorbachev's call for "openness" in political discussion is centrally intended as an adjunct to *perestroika*, or "restructuring" of the economy in line with market forces, and much of the debate has as its not-so-secret agenda the refurbishing of the reputation of Nikolai Bukharin and the economic programme of the Right Opposition.

Yet the Gorbachevites have been unable to prevent the raising in the

discussion of the archetypal "blank space" of Soviet history: the figure of Leon Trotsky. Even as Stalin's heirs seek to replace their discredited lies with new and different distortions, the question of Trotsky is potentially explosive, for – unlike Bukharin, Stalin's bloc partner until 1929 – Trotsky led a fight against



AP

Leon Trotsky (above), co-leader of the October Revolution, founder of the Red Army, fighter against Stalinist usurpation of the revolution.

Stalin and the epigones, aimed at restoring the domestic and international policies pursued by Soviet Russia to a Leninist course. The policies which Trotsky fought for from 1923 until his murder by Stalin's assassin represented the Leninist alternative to Stalin, the "grave-digger of revolution". Today, Trotsky's road is the only means of survival of the Soviet Union.

It is unquestionable that, even under bureaucratic leadership, the Soviet planned economy made tremendous progress and a modern country was forged in formerly backward Russia. Nonetheless, even after 50 years Trotsky's brilliant analysis of the Soviet economy and society in his *Revolution Betrayed* (1937) remains the touchstone for understanding Russia today. Only the Trotskyist perspective of proletarian political revolution to reverse the political dispossession of the working class by the privileged bureaucratic caste can unleash the creativity and productivity of the Soviet working people and regulate the problems (eg heavy industrial investment v consumer goods, egalitarianism v "material incentives", centralised planning v local control, and the problem of quality) which have bedevilled the Soviet economy recurrently and have re-emerged in sharpened form today.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The International Left Opposition, constituted in 1930, after Trotsky had been exiled from the USSR, considered itself a forcibly externalised faction fighting to return the Third International to a revolutionary course. But when Hitler's Nazis were coming to power in Germany in 1933 – based on the bourgeoisie's fear of revolution by the powerful, pro-socialist German working class – the Stalinists refused to fight. Nor did this disaster precipitate any fundamental struggle within the Communist Parties internationally. The Trotskyists declared that the Third International could not be reformed. Especially with the promulgation in 1935 of the "People's Front" policy –

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(Continued from page 7)

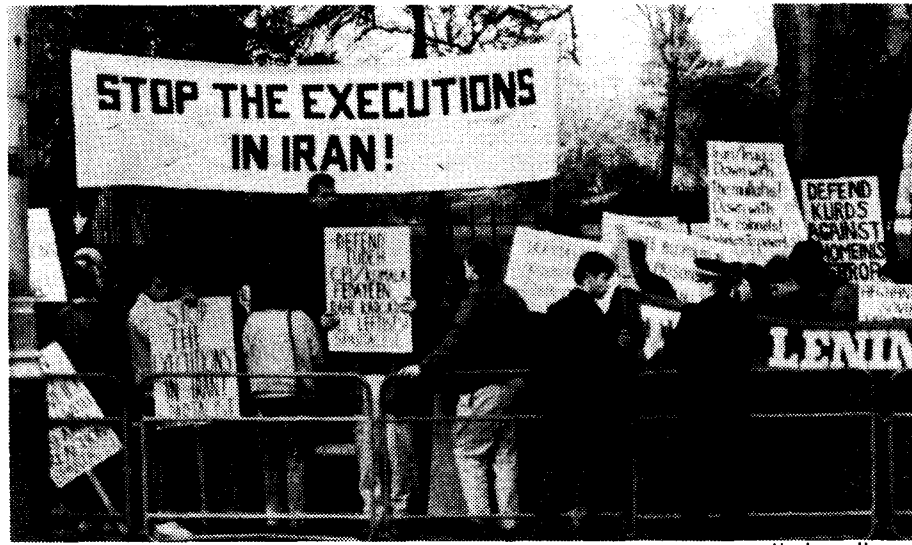
the systematic perspective of an alliance with the parties of so-called "democratic" imperialism – the conclusion was inescapable: there was no place for revolutionists in the Stalinist Communist Parties.

In 1933, the Trotskyists constituted themselves as the International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninist) in recognition of the imperative need for an authentically communist new International, the Fourth International. Trotsky rightly foresaw that the menace of German fascism would lead in a straight line to war against the Soviet Union. As the inter-imperialist rivalries and alignments of the upcoming war took shape, the Trotskyists struggled against time to break the Stalinists' hold over the advanced workers. The Fourth International was founded in 1938 on the basis of the document, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (the "Transitional Programme"), and the perspective put forward in "War and the Fourth International" (1934) of uncompromising revolutionary defeatism towards all imperialist combatants, including those aligned with the USSR, combined with revolutionary defensism of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

The victory of the Anglo-American imperialist bloc was conditional. It was the Red Army which had smashed Hitler's Wehrmacht; moreover, Hitler's East European puppets had all made a mad dash for the nearest American headquarters, leaving behind a power vacuum which the occupying Soviet army quickly filled. The victorious imperialists had to divide Europe with Stalin.

The war devastated the small forces of the Fourth International – having geared up for battle against fascism and war, they were in effect militarily defeated. The physical obliteration of the Left Opposition in the USSR was completed by the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico by a Stalinist agent in 1940. Large numbers of Trotskyist cadre in Europe and Asia were wiped out by war and repression. The decimation of the most promising young Trotskyist leaders was a factor in the emergence of a revisionist current within the FI in the early 1950s. So was the passivity of the American Socialist Workers Party, a relatively strong party nourished by close collaboration with Trotsky, and located in a country insulated from the real carnage of the world war.

The revisionist current, led by impressionist Michel Pablo, abandoned the perspective of workers revolutions in order to become for a time entrists into and political tails of the CPs. Worshipping the accomplished fact of Stalinism's continued existence, they had decided it would endure perhaps for "centuries" and they therefore decided that a "new world reality" would compel it to play a "roughly revolutionary" role, obviating the need for Trotskyist parties. Within a couple of years, Russian tanks were crushing the incipient political revolution in Hungary. Today it is very clear that the CPs play no such revolutionary role in the world, while the bureaucratic caste of Stalin and his heirs has brought the Soviet Union itself to the threat of civil war, and a political revolution has begun in China. Trotsky's expectation of terminal crisis of Stalinism is as alive as today's headlines. The bourgeoisie is celebrating in antic-



Workers Hammer

14 January 1989: Spartacist-initiated united-front protest against executions in Iran.

pation of the "end of Communism". The Stalinist bureaucracies have indeed reached the point of terminal crisis. But their crisis is because they are opposed to everything communism stands for.

AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME MANDATES INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

From the time of our tendency's inception, as a left opposition within the American SWP in the early 1960s, we have recognised that national isolation must in short order destroy any subjectively revolutionary formation, not least one subjected to the pressures of operating in the heartland of world imperialism, the United States. We stand proudly on our record of 25 years of struggle for authentic Trotskyism and are working on documenting it archivally and historically. In January 1974 an interim Conference centred on European work and perspectives, with participation of comrades from seven countries, was held in Germany. The document which formed the programmatic basis for the Conference accepted the "responsibility to struggle actively for the constitution as soon as possible of a democratic-centralist international Spartacist tendency".

In July 1974 the "Declaration for the Organizing of an international Trotskyist Tendency" announced the constitution of a nucleus for the early crystallisation of the international Spartacist tendency, to be governed under the principle of international democratic centralism. The first delegated international conference of the iSt was held in Britain in 1979. Over the following decade, the development of sections, particularly in Europe, and their cohering leadership has become an increasingly important component in shaping the international tendency.

The SL/B was just over a year old when it attended the first international delegated conference as a section of the iSt. In 1974, as we wrote in *Spartacist Britain* no 1 (April 1978), "Workers Vanguard sent a reporter to cover the British miners strike. At that time the Spartacist tendency had just made its first isolated recruits in Europe. Only at the end of 1975 were we able to establish a Spartacist group in London, and it took two years of dogged propagandistic activity to achieve the breakthrough represented by the fusion with the Trotskyist Faction." The TF and the London Spartacist Group fused on the weekend of 4-5 March 1978 to form the SL/B. Before the fusion, the TF walked out of the Workers Socialist League (whose leadership in the main had been expelled from the Healyites), declaring their opposition to

the WSL's leadership's "Pabloite attachment to the Labour Party, their capitulationist attitude to nationalism, and in particular Irish nationalism, their all-pervading economism and minimalism and their parochialism". Today our programme for Ireland and on the Labour Party as well as our intransigent defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism are hallmarks of Spartacism in Britain. Opposing pro-imperialist Labourism and Green nationalism we say: Not Orange against Green, but class against class; For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops; No forcible reunification; For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles! Against English chauvinism we demand the right to self-determination for the people of Scotland and Wales, while struggling for a unitary class fight against the bloody Westminster rulers. Against the pervasive Labourite liquidationism which has rendered much of British "Trotskyism" a "left" tail of social democracy, we insist on the need to forge a Bolshevik party as a communist alternative. We are recognised as "the Trotskyists who defend the Soviet Union". Recently the offer of an international brigade to fight the CIA's *mujahedin* "holy warriors" after Gorbachev's cowardly withdrawal and, when that offer was declined, our publicity and fund-raising campaign for the civilian victims of Jalalabad met with enthusiastic support from women and Muslim immigrants as well as other minorities and the fractured Stalinist milieu.

Today, our small forces confront high stakes. The achievements of the iSt, now ICL, are modest: our militant trade union/black mobilisations against fascist provocations in the US – an expression of our consistent understanding that the fight against racial oppression is the key to the American workers revolution – have been warmly greeted. The consistent internationalism of the iSt was expressed through the successful fund-raising campaign initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee which raised \$23,000 to aid the embattled miners during the 1984-85 strike. Our defence of the programme of "permanent revolution" for those vast areas of the world deformed by imperialist domination (not least that of the former British empire) – ie that the proletariat, independent of the weak and cowardly bourgeoisie and counterposing a vision of social emancipation to the ideologies of nationalism (particularly the nationalism of the majority), must take power to achieve even those democratic tasks formerly associated with bourgeois revolutions – has won us a hearing among oppressed national minorities.

Revolutionary regroupments on the programme of Leninist internationalism are the means to resolve the disproportion between our small forces and our task. The heirs of Stalin manifestly lack the capacity to defend the Soviet power, of which they have been simultaneously the parasitic defender and the counter-revolutionary disorganiser for 65 years. Yet to the same measure that they have brought "communism" into disrepute thanks to the crimes they have committed in its name, they have also reduced their ability to manipulate the allegiance of dedicated pro-Communist workers throughout the world. No longer can a Stalin and his half-dozen conscious accomplices wield "monolithic" parties as instruments of class-collaborationist treason in the name of "building socialism".

We take our stand on the authentic communist tradition of the Bolsheviks who made the Russian Revolution. We choose the communism that had Lenin as its greatest teacher in the imperialist epoch. We choose the communism of Lenin's comrade Trotsky, who beginning as early as 1923 understood the main lines of what needed to be done. We choose the communism that Stalin utterly betrayed as he deliberately destroyed the Third International. We choose the communism of a new Fourth International that will do away once and for all with the exploitation of man by man and establish a socialist society based on a new vision of the continual expansion of human freedom in all spheres: in politics, economics, culture and in every aspect of personal life.

We must believe that, failing sudden working-class upsurge against the condition of capitalist decay, the re-forging of a communist Fourth International, built of authentic communist parties on every continent, will be arduous and often dangerous. But this is the only road forward for all of humanity. Yet as we seek to bring this programme to bear among the world's workers and oppressed, we must recognise that the possession of the technology of nuclear holocaust by an irrational



The Bulletin of the Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist).

imperialist ruling class foreshortens the possibilities: we probably do not have much time.

But experience, not least bitter negative experience, can also be a powerful teacher. We had better follow the precepts and practices of such comrades as Lenin and Trotsky. Thus we could cut short by months or years the time required for the necessary rearmament of the communist movement. ■

Strike to win...

(Continued from page 1)

Labourism and the forging of a revolutionary party.

Rail and London Transport workers have not won - and cannot win - any substantial victory with weekly 24-hour work stoppages. These are designed as a substitute for shutting down British Rail, as well as the London tube and buses, which would have an immediate and dramatic effect on the economy. In order not to embarrass Kinnock, Knapp resorts to pressure tactics. He talks vaguely about a little over 10 per cent wage rise for "some" workers, but that barely even catches up with what's been lost through inflation; meanwhile, the cost-of-living is increasing at an annual rate of 16 per cent in London! But the bosses are not even offering crumbs, insisting on scrapping nationwide bargaining and demanding that any additional pay rise come out of the workers' pockets through more "flexible" working hours, productivity swindles, racist attacks on union seniority, and widening pay gaps through introducing "performance-related" pay. In the first instance, what is necessary is all-out joint strike action of BR and London Transport workers linked to the struggles of dockers and other workers.

While much of the press has focused on tactical differences between Kinnock and Todd over secondary questions like unilateralism, the TGWU conference has been the occasion for a shift to mainstream Labourism on public ownership policy, welcoming the single European market and accommodating to anti-union laws. In particular the bureaucrats defeated a resolution in favour of abolishing all of Thatcher's employment legislation, and rammed through a measure to accept government money for union ballots. Significantly, delegates made repeated calls for strike action alongside the registered dockers, pointing correctly to the fact that if these workers are isolated the employers will attack road transport workers and non-scheme dockers next. But Todd reiterated

that he would not support secondary action or mass picketing because it is "illegal". Striking only the registered ports - and exempting 30 per cent of the trade by volume and even more as measured by value - is a conscious policy of defeatism and sabotage. The gains of registered dockers should be extended to all dockers. Shut down *all* the ports through mass, flying pickets. As well, dock workers should appeal to maritime workers internationally to black cargo destined for Britain.

In addition to the existing anti-union laws, Norman Fowler, Thatcher's "Employment" Secretary, has announced that the government is likely to introduce legislation to curtail unofficial strikes. One version under consideration would force unions to discipline or even expel unofficial strikers. As well, there are rumblings about banning public sector strikes. But it is one thing to sign parliamentary legislation or court decrees against strikes; it is another thing to make them stick. The recent refusal to grant anti-strike injunctions against dockers and railwaymen was done not because the courts are "neutral" or fair but because the bosses feared they couldn't enforce a ban on strikes. The *Financial Times* (16 June) editorialised that "the obstacles in the way of unions calling official action can create an incentive for wildcat strikes". The right to strike, like other union gains, is something won through class struggle, not legal decree. Had the miners strike not been defeated through Labourite treachery, the laws against secondary action, mass picketing and "political" strikes wouldn't exist. And if today the bureaucrats' legalistic and defeatist strategy prevails, it will only pave the way for major new anti-union shackles.

The reformist Labour Party, organically linked to the trade union bureaucracy, preaches submission to the government and its laws. After being rapped on the knuckles by Kinnock, shadow employment spokesman Michael Meacher made clear that a Labour government would demand ballots before striking, is not committed to the closed shop, would limit secondary picketing, and was "totally opposed" to mass pickets of

fascists and provide "justice" to the working people. Edinburgh Labour councillor Mark Lazarowicz is concerned that the council be "seen" to be "responding to the concerns over minority groups", while prattling on about the city's record of "racial tolerance". Tell that to the bereaved friends and family of Ahmed Shekh! This is what can be expected from the party which introduced virginity tests for Asian women entering the country and whose scab "leader" laid a wreath at the memorial for PC Blakelock, who had gone into Tottenham looking for black blood and failed to emerge alive.

The Labourites also support demands for tougher gun control. But if Ahmed Shekh and his companion had been armed for self-defence, they might be alive today. We say: No to gun control! For the right of armed self-defence! Down with British "justice"! For trade union/minority mobilisations to smash the fascist threat! Avenge the racist murder of Ahmed Shekh! For workers rule in the British Isles!

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the kind that conjure "images of Orgreave" (*Independent*, 11 May).

Above all, the memory of the miners strike remains anathema to the LP leaders, who hate and fear militant struggle that shakes the foundations of capitalist stability. The social power is there to defy the bosses' laws and beat back the capitalist attacks. Putting a few union leaders in jail and slapping fines on the unions won't make the trains run or get the ships unloaded, if the workers stick together. The obstacle is the labour bureaucracy, which fears that such actions will provoke a class-wide confrontation, again posing the question of which class shall rule society.

BRITAIN NEEDS WORKERS REVOLUTION

The Labour reformists fashion their programme from what the capitalist system can afford, not what the working masses need. In that sense, Kinnock's programme of soft-core Thatcherism is perfectly "realistic". It merely signifies that in the context of the desperate material and social poverty of decaying British capitalism, no lasting reforms are possible.

Workers now are fighting to catch up with what they've lost through inflation, while the pay increases top company chiefs are awarding themselves are running at, not the government's 7 per cent unofficial guidelines, but 27 per cent (*Guardian*, 3 July). The miserable earnings of working people often involve 50 and 60-hour working weeks at speed-up conditions, while 10 per cent of the population is unemployed. Social spending has been slashed - the elderly die of the cold and there has been a steady rise in homelessness. Brought here in large numbers three decades ago to do the dirtiest and lowest paid jobs, today large sections of the black and Asian communities are simply considered expendable. Successive Labour and Tory governments whip up racist chauvinism and anti-immigrant hysteria. In "Fortress Britain" Kurdish and Tamil refugees do not even have their applications for asylum considered; they are simply sent back on planes to be tortured.

The decrepit NHS could well crack altogether under the strain of routine health care, let alone a major epidemic or emergency. As it is, up to 30 per cent of the seriously injured die needlessly because casualty units in hospitals are understaffed and poorly equipped. The current waiting lists for specialist appointments and care is pushing a million. Thatcher's piecemeal privatisation schemes are designed to create a two-tier system of medical care, with private hospitals for the better off and squalid US-style public health hospitals for

everyone else. And all the Labourites offer is a few patchwork reforms to the status quo. To even begin to realise what is necessary - big pay boosts with full cost-of-living indexation; jobs for all through worksharing with no cut in pay; safe, modern, cheap transport systems; free quality health care for all - requires transcending even the most militant kind of reformism.

The decomposition of British industry, the direct product of loss of empire, and devastating victory in two world wars, poses point blank the need for a workers state, part of a Socialist United States of Europe. The postwar Labour nationalisations, maintained by saddling the working masses with low wages and high taxes, simply perpetuated the obsolescence of the British economy. Thatcher has plundered what's left of the productive infrastructure and cut hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs, replacing them with ET and YTS indentured slave programmes. Simply to undertake a renewal of British economic life and to increase the presently pathetic quality of life for working people requires the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of a planned economy and the initiation of a couple of ambitious five-year plans.

If you don't start with the perspective of fighting for workers rule, you end up, like the Labourites and their fake left apologists, betraying the interests of the proletariat. To win anything, even in passing, the workers must strike fear and respect into the class enemy. In reality, there are only two alternatives posed: either revolutionary class struggle or Labourite reformism, which accommodates to the interests of capital. British social democracy, in turn, operates through a gentlemanly division of labour: the trade union bureaucrats paralyse and disorganise class struggle, with the expectation that frustrated and dissatisfied workers will see no alternative than to elect an anti-working class Labour government.

REVIVAL OF PARLIAMENTARY LABOURISM

The miners strike, defeated by the treachery of all wings of the Labour Party, pointed again to the crucial need for a revolutionary leadership. But even the most militant trade unionists like Scargill continued to support arch scabherder Kinnock. Thus, as the workers regain their fighting morale, they remain saddled with the Labourites. The Kinnockites, in turn, have largely succeeded in convincing the bourgeoisie of their reliability. Some pundits have even taken to pointing out that Hugh Gaitskell was a flaming radical compared to Kinnock. In an amusing episode at

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Ahmed Shekh...

(Continued from page 3)

ment", including arson, physical attacks, vandalism, verbal abuse, racist graffiti and other forms of terror. Recently the door on the Scottish Asian Action Committee's office in Glasgow was sprayed with swastikas and NF symbols. Hate stickers are being circulated bearing messages like "Keep Glasgow White" and "King Coon is coming to town". Skinheads wear T-shirts warning "Speak English or die!" (A fascist echo of the Tories' heckling when Scottish MPs address the Commons: "Speak English!") Fascists are openly organising outside football matches, especially at the Rangers' stadium in Ibrox, and at Glasgow colleges.

To sweep the fascist filth off the streets, it is necessary for the working class and oppressed to mobilise in effective action on the streets. The social power of the trade unions must be the backbone of such mobilisations, galvanising all the intended victims of the fascists' terror in concerted action. This will be accomplished against the Labour misleaders and others who preach reliance on the state - its cops, its courts, its local councils - to "ban"

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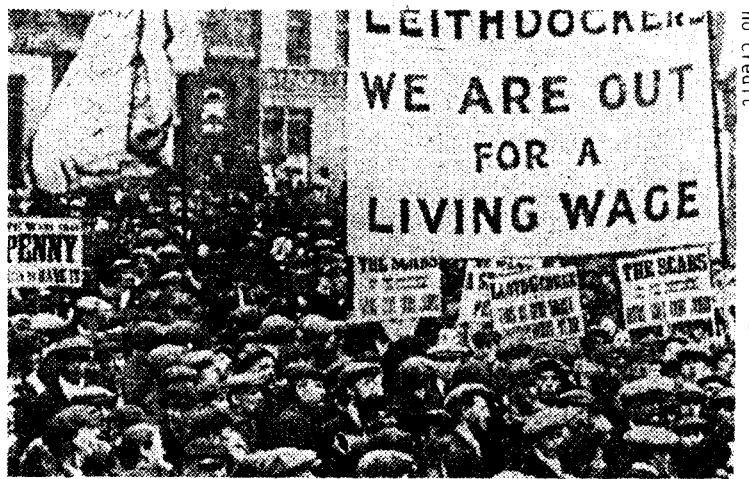
Strike to win...

(Continued from page 9)

a BBC radio interview, the Labour Party leader went hysterical when asked his alternatives to Thatcher's policies. "I am not going to sit here and be bloody quizzed on the alternatives" (*Times*, 27 May), he railed. Indeed, Labour offers only rehashed Thatcherism. Nor is it a coincidence that David Owen, one of the Gang of Four who left the LP a decade ago over differences on NATO and unilateralism, has announced his readiness to support a Labour government. Owen has no reason to doubt that Kinnock "will push the nuclear buttons" targeting the Soviet Union.

The Bennite left wing of the Labour Party, while greatly reduced in standing, serves to entrap more militant workers within the folds of Labourism by purveying illusions that the LP can be "pressured" to the left. Benn's support to unilateralism boils down to the assertion that a weakened British imperialism would defend its interests more efficiently without the expense of nuclear weapons. Thus, in a recent interview with the Iranian leftist organisation Rahe Kargar, Benn obscenely equated Vietnam and Afghanistan, claiming that "the Vietnamese got rid of the Americans without nuclear weapons, the Afghanistans got rid of the Russians without nuclear weapons". The heroic Vietnamese also got rid of the Americans with no thanks to the Labour government who were "all the way with LBJ" and in whose cabinet Tony Benn served. The Bennites stand for disbanding the Warsaw Pact as well as NATO, and a recent speech in Parliament by Benn included the demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's dangerous appeasement of imperialism has whetted the appetites of the revanchists to reconquer the deformed workers states. Benn may think that the "cold war is really over", but revolutionaries unflinchingly defend the gains of the October Revolution from both imperialism and internal counterrevolution. We fight for proletarian political revolution in the deformed workers states, and social revolution in capitalist countries.

At home, Benn shares the same goals as Kinnock - to bring in a La-



Leith dockers, 1913: strikers took battle for better pay to the streets.

bour government - but prefers slightly different methods. Kinnock opposes strikes, while Benn is willing to support the "existing struggles" of the workers, that is, the half-baked actions of the Todds and Knapps, in the hope that stirring up a little popular dissatisfaction might force elections earlier. But Benn draws a hard line against "overthrow[ing] the state by revolutionary strike action", claiming: "The difficulty about that view is that there is not popular consent for it. That if it succeeded it would be a coup by a minority over a majority" (*International Rahe Kargar Special Supplement*, March-April 1989). The Westminster Parliament that Benn is beholden to presides over state terror which dictatorially enforces capitalist rule in the interests of a small minority. This was amply evident during the miners strike, where Benn, Todd and the "lefts", preferring "unity" with arch scabherd Kinnock, paved the way for defeat.

The fake left has responded to the current situation either by mindless enthusing over union militancy, or Labourite cretinism, or both. The hapless *Morning Star* tries to support both "left" trade union sellout Ron Todd and the wildcatting dockers. The SWP predictably enthuses over rank-and-file fightback. The small formerly Healyite Workers International League (WIL), writing of the tasks of a "Trotskyist leadership", says: "Building on the spontaneous attempts to link up different disputes which are constantly frustrated by the present leaders, it must fight for the unity of the working class in action to drive the Tories out and place Labour in office" (*Workers News*, June-July 1989). This is simply a not very militant version of Bennism, exploiting workers strikes as a pressure tactic to elect an anti-working class Labour government. This scenario happened in fact in 1974, when a miners strike forced Heath out of office. At that time, revolutionaries called for a general strike. But the labour misleaders channelled workers outrage into voting Labour. The results were the Wilson-Callaghan government, double-digit inflation and the "social contract", thereby paving the way for Margaret Thatcher.

In its March issue, in an article on the poll tax, Workers Power argued for a general strike. We don't, in fact, believe that a general strike is at this point indicated, although it's certainly not excluded that a sharpening of struggle could provoke point-blank a classwide confrontation. Nonetheless, in its earlier article Workers Power addressed itself to serious questions, not simply "fight-back" against the Tories, but which class shall rule society. It sought to transcend the parliamentary framework by putting "revolution on the agenda". At the same time, it argued: "Precisely when the 'normal channels' are blocked, when peaceful protest, sectional trade union action or elec-

ting a Labour government are not immediate or viable answers to a burning question, workers begin to look to the most radical answers." But this is at best ambiguous: what happens when Labour's electoral prospects improve, or when Labour is in office? Is revolution then "taken off the agenda", in deference to the Labour traitors? Indeed, Workers Power pointedly refused to call for a general strike when it was appropriate during the "winter of discontent", because a Labour government was in office.

As Kinnock's popularity has increased in the polls over the past few months, Workers Power has accordingly "trimmed its sails". Its June lead article was wretchedly economist, raising as its main demand wage rises over 7 per cent - a demand already achieved by the right wing-led electricians. Its current (July) issue, headlined "Don't wait for Labour - Fight the Tories now", omits any call for revolution or a revolutionary party. The article calls for more trade union militancy and even warns that a Kinnock government would be committed to "a toned

down version of Thatcher's policies". But this doesn't transcend a left Labourite framework. Benn too is "impatient" with Kinnock, favours some extra-parliamentary pressure and has even announced recently that Labour is not really a socialist party at all. While sometimes critical of the "lefts" Workers Power buys their line of preserving Labour Party "unity". Thus recently WP called for a vote to Kate Hoey, Kinnock's hand-picked candidate rammed down the throats of the Vauxhall constituency in defiance of their expressed wishes. How can you "put revolution on the agenda" while supporting the Labour Party, which carried out a counterrevolutionary policy in the biggest class battle in decades, the miners strike. In reality Workers Power gives only "critical support" to revolution - when the pressure of Labourism manifests itself sufficiently, then revolution goes out the window.

The long, steady decline of British imperialism has provoked periodic social crises. But no matter how sharp the conflict, capitalism has survived because of the absence of a revolutionary party to lead the working masses. During the General Strike of 1926 the workers began to forge councils of action, embryonic soviets, as weapons of proletarian democracy. But even general strikes and soviets, in the absence of a Bolshevik party, cannot produce victory. The militant miners strike of 1984-85 was similarly betrayed by the Labourites, the "lefts" as well as the rights.

Beyond a doubt Britain today is over-ripe for revolution. But the fundamental and indispensable condition for this remains the same: the forging of a revolutionary party, built by splitting the working class base of the Labour Party from its pro-capitalist leadership. ■

Poll tax...

(Continued from page 5)

Wales, the Midlands and North of England and will enhance the geographic divide of wealth and poverty is an index of the anti-democratic as well as anti-working class character of Parliament's rule. In the English Revolution - incomplete and differentiated in its impact on the nations of the British Isles - it was the towns of the south and east that provided the key bourgeois revolutionary element. In cruel parody, the Tory party today reflects the parasitic rentier preoccupations of moribund imperialism, concentrating its power in the South-east of England. The demise of industry and manufacturing is mirrored in the wreckage of the once great and vibrant centres of production, like Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast. The large Tory majority in parliament and Thatcher's arrogant authoritarianism has prompted various proposals for constitutional reform. Tony Benn & Co for their part advocate that England, Scotland and Wales be "enabled to combine to form a free and highly devolved Co-operative Commonwealth which could (if it so wished) recognise the Queen as its titular head - but with all Crown powers safely transferred to the Parliament(s)" (*Radical Scotland*, Oct/Nov 1988). These Labour "lefts" do not even call for the abolition of the monarchy, let alone challenge the sanctity of the Palace of Westminster.

Parliament represents the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and on the increasingly narrow base of the

South-east of England. The monarchy, House of Lords and established churches are also integral props to the maintenance of capitalist class rule in Britain; they will be swept away by proletarian revolution. Parliament cannot be made to be representative of the working class and the disenfranchised sections of the British Isles by voting out the Tories because Labour is no better.

To unchain the organised workers movement from the trade union sell-outs and Labour traitors of yesterday and tomorrow, to bring the power of the trade unions to bear against the poll tax and all the attacks on the working people of these isles means the forging of a revolutionary party dedicated to nothing less than the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of workers rule. Such a Bolshevik vanguard will be built on the traditions of the revolutionary Chartists, John Maclean of the Red Clydeside and above all on the Russian party of VI Lenin which led the first and only proletarian socialist revolution in history. There is now a crying need for a genuine tribune of the people, an internationalist party to deliver them from the clutches of their enemies from without and within. ■

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China...

(Continued from page 12)

for grain, pigs and other produce with worthless scrip rather than cash. The formation of workers', soldiers' and poor peasants' soviets would polarise the students as well, attracting those activists motivated by genuine social idealism. But the indispensable condition for workers' victory is the construction of a Trotskyist party, raising the banner of Bolshevik internationalism against the Stalinist fraud of building "socialism in one country" or "with capitalist methods".

NEITHER "PURE DEMOCRACY" NOR MAOISM - FOR LENIN'S COMMUNISM

In protest marches before the massacre, a number of workers carried portraits of Mao, who was no sympathiser of democracy and freedom. But the founder of "People's China" was held up as a symbol of Spartan virtue and Communist ideals against the corrupt and cynical Deng clique. The *Independent* (24 May) observed that "while few would relish any return to dogmatic Maoism, the past does offer an appealing if highly romanticised vision for many Chinese: prices were stable, crime was low and unemployment was unheard of".

While idealisation of the Mao era by some young workers is certainly understandable, it indicates a woeful ignorance of their own history. Mao's Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s was an insane economic adventure - backyard steel furnaces - and ended in total collapse and widespread starvation. The destructive frenzy of the Cultural Revolution - a decade-long, convulsive factional struggle within the bureaucracy - took a horrible toll in human lives. When Deng ousted the Maoist "Gang of Four" in 1976, Chinese society, especially the intellectuals, welcomed him. In both China and the West, Mao and Deng are viewed as polar political opposites. But they represent only *different wings* of Chinese Stalinism, two sides of the same coin, as it were. The crimes



Independent

Thousands of students massed in Tiananmen Square, singing the *Internationale*, demanding democratic rights and an end to bureaucratic corruption.

cliques. Furthermore, Deng's market-oriented economic policies have produced enormous regional as well as social inequalities. The provinces on the eastern seaboard have benefited from the concentration of industrial investment and foreign capital, while the peasant hinterland has fallen further and further behind.

Only the working class, under the leadership of a genuine communist vanguard party, can unify China through developing a just, egalitarian and prosperous society. The restoration of centralised economic planning, under a workers and peasants government, is necessary to begin to even out the now enormous regional differences. At the same time, a Chinese soviet government would scrupulously respect the national rights of the non-Han minorities, granting autonomy for Inner Mongolia, Tibet and the Turkic-speaking peoples of Sinkiang.

To secure the internal unity and prosperity of China requires a revolutionary *internationalist* perspective. Deng is now hated in China almost exclusively for his crimes against the Chinese people. But one of his greatest crimes was to ally China with US imperialism against the Soviet Union, an alliance sealed in blood. It was right after Deng's

is conducting a Big Lie campaign, the scope of which is outdone only by its cynicism. The Tiananmen Square massacre "never happened", claims Li Peng. At the same time, the Deng regime is trying to appeal to Chinese nationalism and xenophobia by blaming the "riots" on "bourgeois liberal" ideas imported from the West, while denouncing the US in particular for "interfering" in China's affairs.

To be sure, many of the students displayed illusions in Western-style "democracy". At the same time, they repeatedly sang the *Internationale*, the international socialist workers anthem. But it is the Deng regime itself which has fostered illusions by its military alliance with American imperialism against the Soviet Union and its glorification of Western capitalism, while unleashing powerful internal forces toward capitalist restoration. A few years ago the president of the New York Stock Exchange visited Beijing to advise the government on setting up a stock and bond market. The head of the Bank of China greeted this personification of Wall Street with the honorific title of "elder brother". Is it any wonder, then, that many students - who for the most part are children of the ruling bureaucracy - idealise capitalist America?



Xinhua



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Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping with his top generals. Troops originally called out to enforce martial law balked at suppressing the mass protests.

of both Mao and Deng have the same root cause: the *bureaucratically deformed* nature of the social revolution which triumphed in China in 1949.

Today in China there are powerful forces which could lead to military bonapartism, warlordism and the disintegration of a unified state. After the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1912, rival militarists divided China into their own fiefdoms. In a certain sense the Mao-Stalinist regime perpetuated this pattern with different units in the PLA linked to rival factions and

triumphant tour of the US in 1978 that he launched the Chinese army against heroic Vietnam. Beijing has for the past decade been a major arms supplier to the genocidal madman Pol Pot in Kampuchea and the CIA's *mujahedin* cutthroats in Afghanistan. Yet the "pro-democracy" movement did not denounce these crimes.

FOR BOLSHEVIK INTERNATIONALISM!

Parallel with the death sentences meted out to workers, Deng's regime

For its part, US imperialism certainly did not incite the protest movement but rather was deeply embarrassed by it. The Bush White House is torn between maintaining its military alliance with the Chinese Stalinists against the USSR and exploiting the Beijing massacre for anti-Communist purposes. Thus the US embassy in Beijing has harboured the pro-Western dissident Fang Lizhi while Bush merely "deplored" the 4 June massacre and temporarily restricted military cooperation with the People's Republic. And US financiers are not about to cut back their

lucrative business dealings with Deng's China.

Nonetheless, the events of 4 June have to some degree changed the attitude of American imperialism toward the People's Republic of China. The US ruling class believes, with some justification, that the massacre and ensuing repression will greatly increase anti-Communist sentiment in China. They dream of counterrevolution in the not-so-distant future. Thus, the *New York Times* (19 June) quotes, with evident approval, a senior Communist Party leader who predicts that "it will be the reaction to Deng in his later years that ends the system of socialism in China". Of course, the bourgeois media *always* equates Stalinism with communism and the overthrow of Stalinist rule with capitalist restoration. The *Sunday Times*, mouthpiece of the British bourgeoisie, editorialised on 11 June "Communism ... RIP", declaring in their special supplement that "Communism in one sense is truly dead: as a proselytising faith with any credibility." But Chinese workers want to *preserve and defend* the social achievements of the Chinese Revolution - guaranteed employment ("the iron rice bowl"), a stable cost of living and a relatively egalitarian society.

While the working masses of China enthusiastically supported the 1949 revolution, they have become ever more alienated from the Maoist-Stalinist bureaucracy. The bond between the people and the Communist Party was broken during the Cultural Revolution. Then as well, while unleashing massive demonstrations of student youth, the bureaucrats feared the spectre of workers in revolt. When Shanghai workers organised a "Workers Headquarters" at a mass rally in 1966, and 2500 of them commandeered a train to take their demands directly to Mao in Beijing, the head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, Ch'en Po-ta, insisted:

"As workers, their main job is to work. Joining in the Revolution is only secondary. They must therefore go back to work. They can take part in the Revolution outside working hours."

- quoted in Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal* (1969)

Yet there remained a deep loyalty to the People's Republic, indicated by the universal belief that the People's Liberation Army would never fire on the people. Thus the Tiananmen Square massacre is a truly traumatic experience for China. The present repression may restore a certain surface stability for a while. The working class has been forced back but has by no means been crushed. The unemployment, inflation and gross inequality spawned by Deng's "reforms" will continue to fuel popular discontent. As Beijing tries to pay peasants for the fall harvest with worthless IOUs, famine looms. And with an estimated 100 million excess rural labourers, many of whom wander from place to place, it could provoke a mammoth peasant revolt.

The Deng regime is doddering, brittle and now widely hated. The only road forward remains the proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy, combined with socialist revolution against capitalist rule - not least in Hong Kong, Taiwan and strategic Japan. British imperialism out of Hong Kong now! For Lenin's Communism! For a Chinese Trotskyist Party, section of a reformed Fourth International!

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 480, 23 June 1989

Stop the executions!

Defend Chinese workers!



Shanghai worker condemned to death for protesting 4 June slaughter in Tiananmen Square (left); he was later executed. Enraged Beijing populace torched armoured personnel carriers (right).

The 4 June massacre at Beijing's Tiananmen Square brought China to the brink of civil war. The mass outpouring of defiance heralded the Chinese proletarian political revolution against the corrupt and despised Stalinist bureaucracy. For the moment the Deng regime has weathered the storm and is now cracking down, striking first and hardest at the working class. But the decrepit bureaucratic caste, which has opened the doors of China to massive capitalist encroachment and shamelessly allied itself with US imperialism, can be shattered. *The central lesson of the Beijing spring and the urgent task which stands before the Chinese workers is the forging of an authentic communist party, an internationalist vanguard.*

On 15 June in Shanghai, the commercial centre of China and an industrial powerhouse with four million workers, the first death sentences were handed down. The victims are three workers: Xu Guoming, Bian Hanwu and Yan Xuerong, accused of stopping and burning a train which on 6 June ploughed through a Shanghai crowd protesting the Beijing massacre, killing six demonstrators. They were executed on 21 June. On 16 June, in Beijing eight more workers accused of taking part in "riots" against government troops were sentenced to die. Since then death sentences have been pronounced on dozens more throughout the country. In China judicial appeals are quickly dispatched with, and it is expected that the sentences will

soon be carried out, with a bullet to the back of the neck. Families of those executed are charged for the cost of the bullet! Racist New York cops would be green with envy.

To date there have been over 1000 arrests, including leaders of the Beijing Autonomous Student Union and the Autonomous Workers Union and their counterparts in China's other major cities. Premier Li Peng vowed that there would be many more arrests, and called for punishment "without mercy". Students are paraded on television wearing manacles. Arrested workers are marched through the streets with signs describing their "crimes" of "instigating social unrest" and "spreading rumours". Commenting on the executions, the *New York Times* (16 June) noted: "It may be significant that they were workers, rather than students, because the Government has been particularly alarmed about the prospect of workers joining the unrest and going on strike."

The Western media usually describes the oppositional forces in China as "the student movement for democracy". But it was the beginnings of a working-class revolt against Deng's programme of "building socialism with capitalist methods" which gave the protests their mass and potentially revolutionary nature. Organised workers' contingents started to participate in the marches, and it was the threat of a general strike which led Li Peng to order martial law in mid-May. Moreover, the outpouring of hundreds of

thousands of working people into the streets stymied the regime's attempted crackdown then. When the troops attacked unarmed people in Beijing on 4 June, thousands of workers battled them with whatever came to hand.

Justifying the massacre to his colleagues and military commanders, Deng reportedly stated: "If we had not suppressed them, they would have brought about our collapse. I myself, and all of you commanding officers present, would have been shoved under the guillotine" (*New York Times*, 17 June). This bureaucracy, which grotesquely calls itself Communist, knows well that it rules in place of the proletariat. The Deng regime has more or less tolerated a "pro-democracy" student movement for the past decade. Indeed, many of the student leaders were sons and daughters of the top bureaucrats.

So why the savage repression at the very first signs of working-class protests? Is it because these old Stalinists want to maintain "totalitarian" control over everything that happens in China? Hardly. After all, Deng & Co have opened up the Chinese economy to foreign investors and local capitalist entrepreneurs, for which they have been lavishly praised by the Western bourgeois media.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, in both China and the Soviet bloc, is a parasitic caste resting upon a collectivised (ie proletarian) economy. Because the bureaucrats do not own the means of production, because they do not have the myriad threads

of social control of a ruling capitalist class, their power stems from monopolising political control of the governing apparatus. Since they claim to rule in the interests of the workers, they cannot tolerate any independent workers organisation. Any real workers movement necessarily challenges the legitimacy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Hence, the historic instability of China, the Soviet Union and other bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states.

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (22 June) quotes one observer: "This leadership is politically unstable and will remain unstable. Whatever arrangements are made now - once Deng dies it will come unglued. Everybody in China knows this. And everybody knows that everybody knows."

The bureaucracy is rent, with those favouring a crackdown in the ascendancy over those who sought to co-opt the student protests. The army is divided as well. Despite the provocative repression, which pales in comparison to the blood-letting of the Cultural Revolution, not to mention the 1927 Shanghai massacre under Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, attempts to organise independent student and labour groups will no doubt continue. In the countryside the poorer peasants resent their wealthy neighbours, the new class of Chinese kulaks spawned by Deng's "free market" economic reforms. And now, to cut down on inflation, the government is paying peasants

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For Lenin's communism - forge a Trotskyist party!