



They all knifed the miners strike

Kinnock, Benn: no choice

Build a revolutionary party!

In the Tony Benn/Eric Heffer contest against Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley for leadership of the Labour Party, we revolutionary communists advocate no support for either side. Benn's campaign has been portrayed by the bourgeois press and most of the ostensibly socialist left as a David and Goliath battle for the "socialist soul" of the party against Kinnock/Hattersley's overt scabbing and "new realism". But the Labour "lefts" indulgence in the time worn reformist rhetoric of the parliamentary road to democratic socialism, "unilateralism", non-alignment, disarmament and nationalist "Little England" protectionism is no alternative to Kinnock's more reactionary agenda for class peace in Thatcher's Britain. Indeed, this contest reflects the classic and historic symbiotic relation between the Labour "left" and right that has maintained the party for decades as the primary obstacle to proletarian revolution on these isles.

The seminal test of the Labour "left" occurred during the 1984-85 miners strike. In that bitter class battle, the miners confronted British Coal and the full complement of

the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state: its cops, its courts, its Houses of Parliament. The miners strike posed the question of state power - which class shall rule. British society polarised deeply: the capitalist press churned out red-baiting and violence-baiting propaganda against the NUM, Thatcher warned against the "enemy within" and unleashed armies of her boot boys in blue to break the strike. Judas Kinnock and the TUC tops did everything in their power to knife the strike, from supporting Thatcher's scab ballot to adding their own voices against "violence" when miners defended their picket lines. Also crucial was the role of the "lefts": when strike action by the transport and dockers unions was urgently demanded, they refused to call their unions out in joint action. Twice the dockers struck but were ordered back to work. And despite massive hatred of Kinnock and Willis throughout the coalfields, Benn & Co were accessories to the Labour/TUC tops who ensured Thatcher's vindictive victory against the miners.

In the general election, the Labour "lefts" did their bit to promote Kinnock - on the strike they were silent, as the grave. When Kinnock enthused over cop rampages against the minority community and printworkers, they barely winced. When Labour produced its rabidly pro-NATO "The Power to Defend Our Country", which tried to out-Thatcher Thatcher on the need for strengthened conventional forces, the "lefts" went along. (Now Benn whines that when this



Andrew Wiard (Report)

document was published, "it never went before the National Executive at all. We never saw it!") Their refusal to openly oppose Kinnock on anything was the logical conclusion of their work to get out the vote for the arch scab. NUM leader Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn delivered the vote from those - not least the miners themselves - who had no reason to support Kinnock, but followed the entreaties of their "left" misleaders.



Roger Hutchings

In order to promote Kinnock's candidacy, the "lefts" consciously demobilised social struggle, channelling class anger into the electoral contest (which Kinnock lost spectacularly). In the aftermath of Thatcher's third term victory, cracks in the artificially-imposed quiescence have begun to appear, notably with the mini strike wave earlier this year. Not surprisingly, the Kinnockites who

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French Trotskyists run against Mitterrand's lieutenant

Following Mitterrand's reelection in the French presidential campaign, general elections to the National Assembly were called for 5 June. Our comrades in the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), section of the international Spartacist tendency, are standing in these elections under the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism. (For more on the French elections, see "Behind French Elections: Fascist Threat Mounts", in this issue).

"Vote Bolshevik!" "For a workers government!" Under these slogans, the Ligue Trotskyste de France

(LTF) launched its electoral campaign in the Fourth district of Normandy's Seine-Maritime department. The LTF's candidate is Gilles Cazin, who has worked in the Renault-Cleon auto plant since 1972. A member of the CGT trade union federation, Cazin has been active in numerous strike struggles at Cleon, including the occupation of the plant in 1978. In 1984 he organised a delegation of Cleon workers in support of the largely immigrant strike at the Talbot auto plant outside Paris.

In this district, essentially a

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Le Bolchevik

Paris, 27 January: LTF/Tribune Communiste contingent march in PCF-called protest against the fascist Le Pen.

Banda in Notts

For sale: one very shop-soiled bandit

We're living in strange times. On 6 May a conference on current events in the Soviet Union took place in Nottingham, sponsored by a Maoist anti-Soviet group, the Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent, the eclectic third-worldist Stalinoid Revolutionary Communist Group and Mike Banda's "The Communist".

Also in attendance was a lone supporter of the dubious Northite International Communist Party, peddling their lugubrious wares that go under the heading of "Security and the Fourth International" as well as a couple of rather spent members of the Slaughterite WRP. A few individuals, including Stalinists of the second generation like Patrick Newman, were there as well.

Spartacist comrades intervened in the meeting on several occasions to defend the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism against Banda, who has

replaced Healy with Stalin, and against the other assorted renegades. While our reporter is not an art critic, he believes that Banda's performance was worthy of an Academy Award, or at least thirty pieces of silver. There he was, Mike Banda, former "General Secretary" of Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party, speaking with the zeal of the neophyte. Banda's a lot of things, but a neophyte he isn't. He is, for instance, a leading architect of the WRP's embrace of oil-rich Near Eastern despots and complicit in its filthy role in fingering Communist militants for the murderous Iraqi Ba'athist regime. Banda did not speak on this.

Instead, he rose to explain how bad Trotskyism was ("I know, I was a Trotskyite for 35 years"), and proceeded to a historical rendition of the past 60 years in the Soviet Union

with excursions into the British and French bourgeois revolutions. The sum total of his speech was that the Levellers, the Jacobins and the Trotskyist Left Opposition were all wrong in trying to fight against the historical developments as they took place. According to Banda, opposition to Stalin was futile because what happened in the Soviet Union is what had to happen. Ditto regarding Napoleon Bonaparte and the institution of the Empire. Never have we heard such worshipping of the accomplished fact masquerading as Marxism.

The peculiarity of Banda's utterances was not so much in the fact that he obviously identifies Trotskyism with Gerry Healy's brand of political gangsterism, but rather that today Mike Banda (born-again Stalinist) and Gerry Healy find themselves with roughly the same political evaluation of Gorbachev's Soviet Union (the best thing since sliced bread). Since his mendacious discourse on the Fourth International, the "Twenty Seven Reasons" document written post-Healy and pre-Stalin, Banda's methodology has been that of the

"god that failed". While Gerry and Vanessa are busily trying to ingratiate themselves with the Soviet glitterati, Banda peddles his wares to any anti-Trotskyist gathering that suits, trading on his "history", such as it is. One of our comrades suggested from the floor that a more appropriate title for Banda's public appearances would be "confessions of a renegade".

Knowing the high moral level of such "revolutionists", it's not hard to figure out what attracts them both to the Soviet bureaucracy — after all, the Middle East tap has run dry, hasn't it? A recent item in *Private Eye* (13 May) illustrated the problem: the PLO refused to appear as originally scheduled on the platform of a Healyite meeting in London because they would have to share it with Healy himself. Politically, of course, the WRP of Banda/Healy backed all the enemies of the Soviet Union on the perimeter of the Soviet Union — from the Cultural Revolution to the ayatollah Khomeini. But nothing is sacred to political bandits. As we've said before regarding these people: *caveat emptor*. ■

letter

We reprint here an extract from a letter (29 February) by comrade S in Germany commenting on the article "Workers say: Enough!", *Workers Hammer* no 95, February 1988.

I thought the article was good in terms of the state of the country, the social services and the poverty there, and the role of the Labour misleaders in shoring up British capitalism and their role in sabotaging workers' struggles. What is interesting for us, and provides us with opportunities, is that these strikes broke out against the wishes of the trade union bureaucracy, ie parts of the working class are pretty pissed off with them already (although on what level of class consciousness is another question). So, we say: yes, be pissed off with them because they are little Englandist class collaborators, whereas we need a party of class fighters.

Fair enough. Yet the point of little Englandism is not just to dupe the working class in Britain so that the British ruling class can continue exploiting them. It is also a device to line them up behind their "own" bourgeoisie for war. And of course, this war-drive is directed against the Soviet Union. Except, this anti-Soviet war-drive warrants only two, off-handed mentions in the whole article. It's not that I think we should regurgitate the points lead article after lead article, but there are certain developments going on. The *Spiegel* ran an article about Kohl's visit to the States and said the following (my own, rough translation, so apologies):

"As long as the Alliance have still not decided on a concept for the next steps in disarmament, the Germans want to prevent an advance decision on the short-range missiles. But, while Kohl was still on the plane to the USA, the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was pleading for exactly this decision. ...the Iron Lady demanded in connection with her visit to the

NATO HQ in Brussels that which Kohl under no circumstances wants at the moment: a quick vote in favour of the modernisation of the Western alliance's short-range nuclear missiles...."

So, I would say the point is, while Reagan is on the ropes, Thatcher is taking up the position of the hard-liner in the anti-Soviet war drive. Germany, on the other hand, seems a bit miffed that some old cripple like Britain has the cheek to do such a thing. They want to go about getting the Soviet Union in their more "peace-loving" (for the moment) way. And Kinnock was mouthing off in front of the Berlin Wall during his election campaign.

Given the state of Britain those potential markets in the USSR probably look particularly lucrative, and there's no way they're going to give up their nuclear arsenal, which, on the other hand contributes even more to the mess the NHS is in etc.

I found it interesting that the Tories stressed that they wanted to stay out of this Ford strike. Why? Maybe it's because of this role she (Thatcher) is playing internationally and although it was about 30,000 workers, given what else was going on at the same time she therefore didn't want to get mixed up in what could have turned into something on the level of the miners strike. Meanwhile, the LP were presumably preaching social peace, so that Thatcher could be the Iron Lady in terms of the Soviet Union. In the face of all this, the fact that the strikes took place against the wishes of the bureaucracy objectively gives them another, particularly important dimension.

So, while the article took up some aspects of little Englandism well, ie the anti-Japanese racism, I thought it failed to integrate the Russian question, the aspect which is common to Neil Kinnock and the "left" outside the Labour Party.

Anyway, that's what I thought about the article, I hope the comments are of some use.



Leon Trotsky on the Labour "lefts"

For his treacherous backstabbing of the working class during the 1984-85 miners strike and since, Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock has become known by militants in the coalfields and elsewhere as Ramsey MacKinnock — a codename for betrayal. On the eve of the 1926 General Strike, Leon Trotsky

TROTSKY

alone sounded the warning, "if you wish for victory over MacDonaldism, over organized betrayal and over treachery elevated into a system then you must operate not in the spirit of the 'lefts' but in the spirit of the Bolsheviks". Trotsky counterposed the building of a revolutionary vanguard party in this country through intransigent exposure of the role the so-called lefts play in propping up the right.

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, "Problems of the British Labour Movement" (6 January 1926)



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The working class will not forget!

Blair Peach: anti-fascist martyr

Nine years ago on 23 April 1979 Blair Peach, an anti-fascist activist and socialist, was killed by police on Orchard Avenue in Southall. The rioting cops, over 3000-strong and including members of the Special Patrol Group, invaded the predominantly Asian Southall community that day to ensure the fascist National Front would be able to stage its provocation in the heart of the area. Hundreds of anti-fascist militants were arrested, dozens were injured and Blair Peach died from from a severe blow to the head resulting in a massive extradural haemorrhage. His death was mourned and his memory honoured by a march of 10,000 in Southall on 28 April 1979. Blair Peach's martyrdom will not and must not be forgotten by the working class and oppressed to whose just cause his life was devoted.

A member of both the Anti Nazi League and the Socialist Workers Party, Blair Peach was 33 years old when he was murdered. He had come to Britain from New Zealand, taught at the Phoenix School in East London and, as the report of the unofficial committee of enquiry published by the National Council for Civil Liberties put it, "He seems to have been widely admired as a dedicated teacher and committed anti-racist". Blair Peach lived with fellow anti-fascist militant Celia Stubbs and her children in Hackney and participated in anti-racist activity in East London, particularly against the National Front in Brick Lane. On the evening of 23 April, Blair Peach was among the thousands who turned out in Southall to oppose the race-hate NF rally at the Town Hall. He and several other Anti Nazi League members found the way to the NF rally site blocked by police cordons and ended up on the Broadway where

Eye-witnesses to the cop riot reported seeing the SPG pour out of two vans and wade into the fleeing demonstrators. No fewer than ten of these witnesses reported seeing Blair Peach attacked by one of these SPG thugs outside 62 Orchard Avenue. Parminder Atwal gave this statement to the *Evening Standard*, quoted on 24 April:

"This boy was standing on the corner next to the wall, when everybody came running past. He got tangled up in it and was knocked over. Then, when he was lying on the ground, the police came rushing past him as they chased these other blokes down the road.

"As the police rushed past him, one of them hit him on the head with the stick. I was in my garden and saw this quite clearly. When they all rushed past, he was left sitting against the wall. He tried to get up, but he was shivering and looked very strange. He could not stand. Then the police came back and told him like this: 'Move! Come on, move!' They were very rough with him and I was shocked because it was clear that he was seriously hurt.

"His tongue seemed to have stuck in the top of his mouth and his eyes were rolled up to the top of his head. But they started pushing him and told him to move; and he managed to get to his feet. He staggered across the road and came to where I was in the garden.... He was in a very bad state and could not speak.... I got a glass of water for him, but he could not hold it and it dropped out of his hand."

When he was taken to hospital, Blair Peach was examined by Dr Richard Bentall, the surgical registrar at the hospital. He was unconscious

the brain through the bottom of the skull. The skull was fractured above the left ear, with the line of the fracture going along the side and back over the top of his head. Blair Peach's condition deteriorated during the operation, and he died at 12.10 am" (NCCL report, *Southall 23 April 1979*, p 77).

The doctor who carried out the second post-mortem on behalf of the Peach family suggested that the weapon used had been "a lead weighted rubber 'cosh' or hosepipe filled with lead shot". A normal police truncheon could not have inflicted the sort of blow that killed Blair Peach. Six weeks after his murder, an internal police "investigation" found in the lockers of the SPG cops deployed in Southall on 23 April a number of illegal weapons including knives, crowbars, a pickaxe handle, a "Rhino whip", a sledge hammer and a number of leather encased truncheons at least one of which had a lead weight in the end. One of the lockers contained Nazi regalia. Even the cops' own investigation narrowed the suspects down to the six in the van from the no 1 unit of the SPG. Yet no one was ever charged with Blair Peach's murder. Instead the Hammersmith Coroner's Inquest announced in 1980 that Blair Peach was "an unfortunate victim" of a "reasonable" police action. Death was declared to be by "misadventure".

The grisly, violent police murder of Blair Peach was no accident, no example of "excess" that day. The cops were out for blood. Southall had become a symbol of resistance - from the youth revolt three years earlier against the racist murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, a revolt which took up the Sikh battle cry "We shall fight like lions", to the long list of workers strikes and organising drives, heavily



the Town Hall, there was mass public outrage. On 22 April over 5000 protested, fifteen were arrested and the stage was set for the next day. By the early afternoon of 23 April 1979 most town centre shops were closed and boarded up and many local trade unionists had walked off the job, particularly at the nearby Ford Langley factory and Heathrow.

By 6.30 that evening Southall was the scene of a fully-fledged cop riot. Some of the most brutal attacks took place around 6 Park View Road, the headquarters of the Peoples Unite and a prominent West Indian community centre. During the demonstration, this building was designated as a first aid station. Mounted and riot-gear clad cops stormed the building in what was clearly a preplanned revenge action. According to the NCCL report, a member of Peoples Unite had been told by a cop before that "We know what you are doing round at No. 6 and we are going to get you" (p 55). Those inside, including a woman doctor, an ambulanceman and a solicitor were beaten and forced to run the gauntlet of truncheon-wielding cops. The injured later reported widespread attempts by the police to beat them about the head. All of those in the first aid room were hit. A black man, Clarence Baker, was subjected to heavy blows and developed a blood clot on his brain. He was hospitalised for 15 days and still suffered headaches six months later. Women in the building were not only beaten but had racist, sexist verbal abuse hurled at them by the cops. The headquarters was systematically ransacked, floor boards were torn up and thousands of pounds worth of sound equipment was wrecked.

Some of the older Sikhs present likened the bloody police riot that night to the infamous massacre by the British imperial troops at Amritsar almost 60 years earlier to the day. The countless reports of head injuries show how intentionally murderous this rampage was. When the thousands of mourners took to the streets to honour the memory of Blair Peach, they knew that it could easily have been them or their family members lying dead. Marching past the spot where he was struck down, demonstrators raised clenched fists in grim defiance. Again in June,

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G M Cookson (Socialist Challenge)

Southall's Asian community turned out en masse for 28 April 1979 Blair Peach memorial march (above). Asian women (right) pay last respects.

they remained until about 7.45 pm. The report of the unofficial enquiry notes that "Confusion, frustration and fear was caused within the crowd by the fact that for much of the time they were hemmed in by two police cordons" and as demonstrators attempted to leave the area, they were followed by the SPG units carrying riot shields and truncheons.

when Dr Bentall saw him and was becoming more deeply unconscious. Blair Peach's condition was summarised by Bentall: "he was bleeding from a number of veins and arteries inside his skull. Because the skull cannot expand, the bleeding had the effect of compressing the brain. If the bleeding had been allowed to continue, it would eventually have forced



John Sturrock (Network)

supported by the community at large, at Woolf's, Perivale Gutterman, Heathrow airport and Wyuna Corset Co - to name a few. The fascist rally was a provocation in the most literal sense. When word spread of the Ealing Council's decision to allow the NF scum to "celebrate" St George's day (a celebration of English chauvinism as well as genocidal racism) in

Leninist and the myth of the "Afghan Revolution"

Left Stalinists duck defence of the USSR

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, begun on 15 May, opens up the possibility of a horrible bloodbath – for all the supporters of the pro-Moscow nationalist-democratic government of the PDPA and for the Afghan peoples. Particularly women who have shed the veil and fought for their freedom against the reactionary Islamic fanatics face slaughter and re-enslavement. And should the opium-growing CIA-backed mullahs take over, the Soviet Union will be menaced by another imperialist base on its Southern border, something which the military intervention of December 1979 was meant to prevent.

Afghanistan posed the Russian Question point-blank: the Red Army's intervention was not only progressive, but posed the possibility of a social revolution in that wretchedly backward country. US imperialism and its allies made Afghanistan the cutting edge of their drive for war against the Soviet Union. "Leftists" of all description took up the howl for "poor little democratic Afghanistan", siding with the imperialist camp. Splits within the reformist Communist parties took place between those who defended the Soviet action and the anti-Soviet "Euros".

With the withdrawal, the Euros find themselves in harmony with the Kremlin. The "Tankies" of *Morning Star* and its newly-launched Communist Party of Britain (CPB) now likewise slavishly support and apologise

Afghan women armed with Soviet AK-47s march on tenth anniversary of "April Revolution" in Kabul.



is a very self-revealing polemic, centred on *Leninist's* wrong-headed insistence that the key question of Afghanistan is one of defence of the April 1978 "revolution". This has already led *Leninist* to blather about "great power bullying" by the Soviet Union and to the invention of a "proletarian dictatorship" "established through local daring and initiative" (*Leninist*, 10 February). In its 25 April issue *Leninist* writes:

"The other favourite, which is argued by the Trotskyist Spartacist

the proletariat played no direct role in the revolution? The existence of a world proletariat enables any country to embark on the road of socialist construction, so long as it can integrate into the world socialist system. This was precisely the intent of *Khalq*. Inability to recognise this is to renounce the world revolution in practice. But, then, that's the Sparts for you, isn't it?"

Leaving aside for the moment the simple fact that the "world socialist system" doesn't yet exist, *Leninist's* position on Afghanistan is riddled with fundamental errors. Firstly, quite unlike China (where there was a rich history of proletarian struggle), Afghanistan is not a nation. It is an area, very backward, with a collection of peoples and cultures. For decades the country has been a Soviet client state and much of the intelligentsia regarded the Soviet Union as a source of social progress, easily understood if you compare Afghanistan to Soviet Central Asia. The PDPA, a pro-Moscow, petty-bourgeois radical party was composed upon its founding in 1965 of teachers, students, government officials and army officers. Some of these officers played a major role in overthrowing the monarchy in 1973 and the PDPA participated in the first bourgeois-nationalist Daud government. In early 1978, Daud moved against the PDPA and lost. The April 1978 "Revolution" was essentially a left-wing military coup with a certain popular support among the intellectuals. And in mullah-ridden, desperately impoverished Afghanistan, the social base for reactionary resistance to even moderate reforms (including reduction of the bride price and compulsory education for both sexes) remained considerable.

Far from becoming any sort of deformed workers state, Afghanistan after April had an unstable petty-bourgeois nationalist regime ruling through a shaky remnant of the old

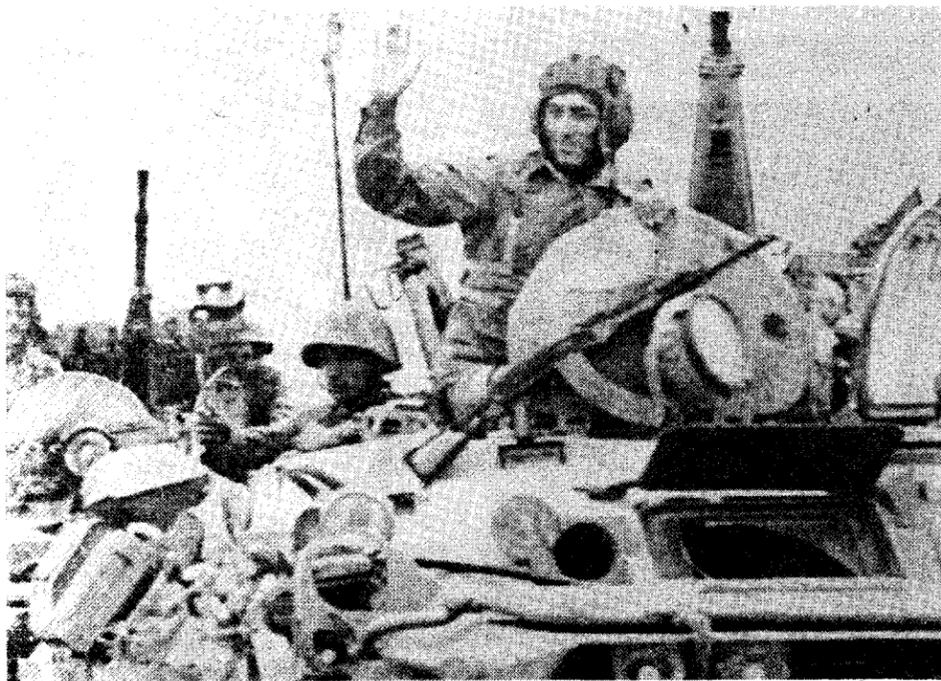
army. Against the rightist insurgency backed by the imperialists, the Soviet armed forces intervened massively in 1979 and became the dominant power in Afghanistan. And the *Leninist's* fantasy that Hafizullah Amin was the Lenin of Afghanistan cruelly overthrown by the Soviets is nonsense. He ruled through a section of the old bourgeois officer corps. The expansion of Soviet presence in the spring of 1979 coincided with his accession as premier, as he opted for a purely military solution to the rightist insurgency. And as we wrote in *Spartacist* (Summer 1980):

"Facing a seemingly unwinnable civil war, a section of the PDPA might have tried to extricate itself by turning sharply to the right, expelling the Russians and making a deal with the Western imperialists for their backing against the rebels. From what we know of the ruthless, power-mad Amin, he was capable of emulating Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 or Anwar Sadat in 1972."

Moreover, the example of Mongolia thrown out in its "answer" to us only supports our own position against *Leninist*. While wrong as a strategy in almost every instance, Red Army Marshal Tukhachevsky's "revolution from without" applies almost uniquely today in Afghanistan and did in Mongolia over six decades ago. The Civil War following the Bolshevik Revolution pitted the young workers state against the armies of 15 imperialist states, the counterrevolutionary whites and their local allies. From the Ukraine to the Pacific Ocean the Red Army led by Leon Trotsky, aided by revolutionary mobilisations throughout Western Europe, fought and crushed these enemies. In Mongolia, a huge barren land with a tiny population of under a million, the Japanese supported the attempted takeover by white guard Baron von Ungern-Sternberg (and various Chinese generals meddled in as well). The revolutionary-minded intellectual elements grouped in the Mongolian People's Party called on the help of the Red Army in 1921, and the Whites were defeated. The Mongolian government requested that Soviet troops remain in the country. They have been there ever since. While not formally incorporated into the USSR, Mongolia has been *de facto* treated as a Soviet province, its social transformation introduced from without, through the agency of the Red Army. The Bolsheviks' debates over the complex questions of military intervention and indigenous proletarian revolution were carried out under conditions of war. Lenin's party rejected both revolutionary military bonapartism and social-democratic obeisance before national sovereignty. But the latter would be used by Stalin in his pursuit of "peaceful coexistence".

Along the road to renouncing the world revolution in practice, Stalin proclaimed the total victory of socialism within a single, encircled, economically backward workers state. That meant tailing the ("progressive", "anti-imperialist", "democratic") bourgeoisie everywhere else – and exposing the Soviet workers state to mortal danger by these alliances.

In China, the beheading of the proletariat in 1927 was a direct result of Stalin's criminal subordination of the Chinese CP to the nationalist Kuo-mintang of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang
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Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan as Gorbachev seeks "peaceful coexistence".

for Gorbachev's betrayal. The *Leninist*, in contrast, has denounced the sellout of Afghanistan by the Russian Stalinists as well as *Morning Star's* attempt "to put as brave a face as possible" on it. But *Leninist* has failed to maintain a clear line of defence of the Soviet Union over Afghanistan. It has thus ducked the main point.

Apparently stung by our criticism, *Leninist* has included us in its recent polemical article on Afghanistan. It

League in their US *Workers Vanguard* (March 25), goes along the lines of: 'a social revolution in this profoundly backward country could only be introduced from without, through the agency of the Red Army... *The Leninist* is forced to conjure up a dictatorship of the proletariat in a country where there is no proletariat to speak of.' "Like in Mongolia in 1920, for instance. Or maybe in China, where

Turkey: bloody repression of workers, Kurds, leftists

Free Kutlu and Sargin!

On 16 November Dr Nihat Sargin and Haydar Kutlu were seized as they came off the plane at Istanbul airport. Handcuffed and blindfolded they were taken to the notorious "Deep Investigation Laboratory" of the Directorate of Security. At the time Sargin was the general secretary of the Turkish Workers Party (TIP) and Kutlu, general secretary of the "official" pro-Moscow Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). The two leaders made their trip after much advance publicity, and were accompanied by a thirty strong delegation of lawyers, journalists and Members of the European parliament. Their declared aim was to join in the "democratisation" process in Turkey and establish their newly merged party, the United Communist Party of Turkey (TBKP) as a legal organisation. Now they face charges that between them could bring 1000 years in jail. We demand the immediate release of Kutlu and Sargin!

When they appeared in court after 19 days in solitary confinement, Kutlu and Sargin said that they had been tortured. They spoke of being interrogated blindfolded, deprived of sleep, forced to stand for hours on end naked, given electric shocks and injected with drugs. The sixty-year-old Sargin was kicked, hosed with freezing water and hung by

Imprisoned leaders of the United Communist Party of Turkey, Nihat Sargin (left) and Haydar Kutlu (right).



Committee for the Freedom of Kutlu and Sargin

federation DISK was banned and many of its leaders imprisoned. Torture is systematic and pervasive. Over the last year or so the regime of General Evren and prime minister Ozal has sought to promote an image of stability and a return to democracy, linked to its attempt to gain Turkish admission to the European Economic Community. In 1987 the formerly banned bourgeois politicians like Ecevit, Demirel and Erbakan were allowed to take up political activity again. And Alparslan Turkes, leader of the fascist Grey Wolves is again free to organise his murder squads. At the same time half a million people face restrictions on travel, censorship is enforced and many

and Izmir there were dozens of arrests. In Trabzon President Evren threatened that if clashes continued the military would step in again. Meanwhile the genocidal repression of the Kurds in Eastern Turkey continues, fuelled by Turkish bourgeois appetites to seize the oil-field areas of Iraq around Mosul and Kirkuk. Conditions in the prisons in the south and east of Turkey, like the notorious Diyarbakir Military Prison, are even worse than in the rest of the country. It is a criminal offence for Kurds to even write or speak their own language.

The TBKP calls on the Turkish government to cooperate to revise Articles 141 and 142 (*Morning Star*, 13 May). And in Britain the Committee for the Freedom of Kutlu and Sargin demand "that the British government makes a protest". This is despite the fact that Thatcher is one of the staunchest allies of the Evren regime. During her recent visit to Turkey, Thatcher made a point of visiting the Istanbul army headquarters. At one point in her trip she declared, "Whether it is described as Ozalite or Thatcherite, the goal is the same" (*Sunday Times*, 10 April). Evren, Turkey's Pinochet, has been invited to make a state visit to Britain in the near future.

In order to make "A Historic Step for Democracy in Turkey" and their contribution to "democratisation of our country", the TBKP has been bending over backwards to assure the Turkish bourgeoisie of their loyal and legal intentions. The TBKP draft programme insists that their "democratic alternative policy" is "within the framework of capitalism". Calling for a "democratic" and "peaceful" solution to the Kurdish question but not for self-determination and explaining that any opinion should be allowed as long as it is "not translated into violence", the TBKP disassociates itself from any defence of the Kurdish resistance to Turkish oppression, and the thousands of leftists accused of violence by the Turkish state. And having repudiated the dictatorship of the proletariat the TBKP goes on to accept the framework of NATO. This is completely consistent with Gorbachev's drive for peaceful coexistence with imperialism. In fact the day that Kutlu and Sargin returned to Turkey the two TBKP controlled radio stations broadcasting from Eastern Europe were closed down "in the interests of democracy".

In their quest for a "peaceful", "democratic" and "legal" existence, the TBKP leaders, Kutlu and Sargin, delivered themselves into the hands of the brutal Turkish military authorities. The rival, left Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) led by R Yurukoglu and centred on the paper *Iscinin Sesi*, responded to the return and arrest of the "official" CP leaders by publishing an article headlined "Kutlu and Sargin are traitors" (*Ileri*, 15 December 1987), which does not utter one word calling for their defence. Whatever the indisputable reformism and treachery of the TBKP, today Kutlu and Sargin are in the hands of the Turkish security police, facing torture and even death. The TKP/*Iscinin Sesi*'s refusal to defend them is an act of criminal sectarianism.

The flip side of this sectarianism is softness towards the bourgeois state. Thus, the TKP argues that if the bourgeoisie abolishes legal provisions against banned political organisations, then "not only the false communists but the genuine fascist movement which will organise on the basis of religious fanaticism will be unleashed". The clear implication is that laws banning fascists are in the interest of the working class. Such a view is consistent with the false strategy of building a class-collaborationist "popular front against fascism" with a section of the "democratic" bourgeoisie. In 1984, under the pretext of "defending democracy", *Iscinin Sesi* advocated that workers vote for the bourgeois SODEP organisation in local elections.

To end the incessant oppression of the Kurds and the endless cycle of bloody military coups interspersed with fragmentary bourgeois democracy, a Leninist/Trotskyist party must be constructed to lead the toiling masses of Turkey in the struggle for workers revolution to overthrow capitalism. Free Kutlu and Sargin! Release all class war prisoners! Defend the Soviet Union - Smash NATO! For the Kurdish right of self-determination - For a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan! Smash the NATO military bonapartist regime - For workers revolution! ■



Turkey Information Bulletin

Brutal Turkish army terrorises Kurdish minority.

his arms from the ceiling. The two leaders are charged under the infamous Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code, modelled on Mussolini's Italian fascist Code of 1936. The charges include "making Communist propaganda", "insulting the president" and "forming an illegal organisation aiming to overthrow the constitutional order". Two of the defence lawyers are also charged, along with twelve others who the prosecution allege were arrested in connection with statements made by Kutlu and Sargin. The trial is scheduled to begin on 8 June.

Since the NATO military coup of September 1980, half a million people have been detained. The trade union

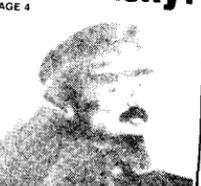
trade unions banned. There are still thousands of political prisoners and 400 face the death penalty. At the beginning of May the military prosecutor in a mass trial of alleged supporters of the Guevarist Dev Yol group demanded the death sentence for 74 defendants, and up to 20 years jail for another 450 of the 732 defendants.

Over the last 18 months, there has been a new wave of workers strikes and student struggles against the brutal austerity rule of the Evren regime. On May Day hundreds of trade unionists clashed with police in Istanbul's Taksim Square. A demonstration by students later in the day resulted in 70 arrests. And in Ankara

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Workers, minorities must crush Le Pen in the streets!

Behind French elections: fascist threat mounts

The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard no 452, 6 May 1988.

As the results came in from the first round of the French presidential elections on 24 April, millions in France and throughout Europe reacted in shock. Jean-Marie Le Pen—candidate of the fascist National Front, paratrooper-torturer from the dirty colonial war in Algeria, the man who reaped international infamy with his declaration that Hitler's gas chambers were only an historical "detail", the sinister inciter of anti-immigrant terror—had won over 14 per cent of the vote. From Amiens in the north to Marseille in the south, in many cities, including the Paris region, Le Pen beat the candidates of the "respectable" bourgeois parties and more than doubled the Communists' total, finishing second only to "socialist" Francois Mitterrand.

The second round, on 8 May, pitted President Mitterrand against Prime

On 1 May, Le Pen held a sinister anti-working-class provocation in Paris. Mixing May Day and Joan of Arc, the fascist leader wanted to review his troops under the watchwords of "fatherland" and "labour". Nearly 25,000 people marched, shouting "France for the French"—code words for attacks on immigrants. This fascist demonstration wasn't the massive outpouring that the National Front hoped for after its spectacular electoral breakthrough. Aside from a hard core of some 2000 fascist thugs sporting military haircuts, former paratroopers and lumpen elements, the mass of the ranks was made up of provincial shopkeepers. Yet the fact that it could take place on the international proletarian holiday is an outrage only possible due to the treachery of the PCF/PS misleaders who dissipated the anti-fascist anger instead of sweeping away Le Pen's provocation.

The traditional May Day march of trade unionists and immigrants—

thousands of workers are needed, solidly organised to occupy the terrain where the fascists plan to parade. But there's not a moment to lose. Already on 27 January, united-front demonstrations took place at the call of the PCF (which, however, buried this initiative soon after) in which the Ligue Trotskyste participated; tens of thousands of workers and anti-fascists rallied across France to cry out 'Le Pen: Enough!' Today we must go to a higher level. Working-class and democratic organisations, both political and trade-union, have the duty to organise, starting now, a determined and massive united-front action, rallying youth, women, immigrants, Jews, homosexuals etc in the streets on this day around the workers battalions, mainly organised by the CGT, to stop the fascists."

What's needed is "an agreement for combat, not a so-called 'action' of parliamentary pressure in order to re-elect Mitterrand 'against the right and far right' ". The felt need for united anti-fascist action must not be prostituted in the service of a new popular front!

CRUSH THE FASCIST THREAT!

Unfortunately, the impunity Le Pen enjoyed on May 1st can only embolden this leader of reactionary petty-bourgeois layers to forge ahead in his strategic plan of organising his heterogeneous voters into assault troops against the workers organisations and immigrants. His voters, Le Pen told the May Day crowd, are "a vanguard that must now be organised". This is an open call for brown-shirts. Le Pen's election meeting in Marseille before the first round featured a precision jump by five paratroopers into the middle of the stadium to kick off the meeting. French paratrooper units have long been noted as the shock troops of the extreme right wing, ever since the abortive generals' coup against de Gaulle in 1961 which aimed at preventing the "loss" of Algeria.

which took place in two contingents, one under the banner of the Communist-led CGT labour federation and the other called by the social-democratic CFDT and FEN (teachers union)—was considerably more important, both numerically and socially. But the reformist bureaucrats deliberately held a passive protest march. If a solidly organised united-front mobilisation of the same 70,000 or 100,000 workers had been called for the same place as the National Front demonstration, the fascist parade would not have come off. A massive and disciplined squad of marshals (and the CGT knows how to organise one) would have stopped the fascists cold. The pro-Le Pen shopkeeper getting off his bus would have decided to go to see the Eiffel Tower or to the Folies Bergeres instead!

In the face of Le Pen's May Day provocation, our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France issued an urgent appeal for a united-front worker/immigrant mobilisation to stop the fascists. The 27 April LTF leaflet declared:

"The working class has the social power to prevent the fascists from demonstrating on May 1st and to crush them. Hundreds of



Gerard Rancnan-Sygm
Fascist National Front leader Le Pen

With the exception of Le Pen's campaign, it had been one of the most vacuous presidential campaigns in French historical memory. There was nothing to debate: Mitterrand's campaign had not a trace of "socialism", and Mitterrand/Chirac/Barre are united around an anti-Soviet, anti-working-class, anti-immigrant consensus. Mitterrand's record of savage capitalist austerity and his role as Reagan's Cold War European lieutenant during the 1981-86 popular front, and the ensuing two years of "cohabitation" with Chirac, disarmed his rightist opponents. The Communist Party, meanwhile, has abdicated any pretence of organising working-class opposition to the massive unemployment and anti-union offensive that has increased under governments of both the right and "left". So the fascists moved in.

Bourgeois commentators have concluded that the National Front has replaced the PCF as the party of the disgruntled elements in French society. It is true that the poison of racism has seeped into backward sections of the working class, rendered desperate by massive unemployment—Le Pen's score in Lorraine, where the coal and steel industries have been gutted by the capitalist crisis, and his victory over the PCF in many of the "red belt" workers suburbs around Paris, attest to that. But the electoral house of mirrors is no true gauge of the potential for class struggle. In the winter of 1986-87 student protests, more than a million strong, with a heavy anti-racist component, turned back the government's attempt at accentuating the class bias of the university system. This victory was followed by a hard-fought wildcat strike of railway workers, which posed the necessity of a general strike.



Peter Turnley (Newsweek)

December, 1986: Mass demonstration protests cop murder of immigrant youth.

Minister Jacques Chirac, former disciple of de Gaulle. Although in the first round he came in ahead of Raymond Barre, the other main bourgeois candidate, the Gaullist Chirac received less than 20 per cent. The score of the Communist Party (PCF), historically the party of the militant French proletariat, was catastrophic: 6.8 per cent, its lowest since the 1920s, down by two-thirds from the last presidential elections. Mitterrand himself received only 34 per cent in the first round, then won the election with a comfortable 54 per cent. It was above all the occasion for the sinister Le Pen to offer up his fascist National Front as the spearhead of reactionary opposition to Mitterrand. While Chirac bid for Le Pen's racist electorate, Mitterrand tried to undercut the National Front by promising public spending to improve housing conditions in areas with high unemployment and immigrant population. Mitterrand named Socialist Michel Rocard as Prime Minister and a snap general election has been called for 5 June. And our comrades in France, the Ligue Trotskyste are standing in these elections under the communist banner. (See our front page article in this issue.)



Der Spiegel

Winter 1986-87: Striking French railway workers occupy tracks.

But without revolutionary leadership, the militant French workers' will to fight was criminally frittered away. The history of the past two decades – from 1968 on – has been one of derailing, sabotaging and suppressing class struggle in the service of class collaboration. In contrast to the reformists and their fake-Trotskyist tails, the Ligue Trotskyste de France has stood out for its proletarian opposition to popular-frontism. In a long article on the Le Pen campaign, the Munich *Sddeutsche Zeitung* (20 April) noted the LTF's stand: "Left-wing extremists distributed their newspaper, *Le Bolchevik*. You can't fight unemployment, racism and fascism with Mitterrand and [PCF candidate] Lajoinie, the headline read, 'they're the ones that got us into this shit.' And in passing *Le Bolchevik* accuses Gorbachev of squandering Afghanistan." The article referred to from the LTF newspaper declared:

"It is the governments of class collaboration, the anti-worker, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet popular front in which they participated and which they supported since 1981, which paved the way for the right bent on revenge and for the fascists.... And if today these same leaders are blocking the mass workers mobilisations urgently needed to drive Le Pen's



LTF demonstrates in 1982 against anti-Soviet Cold Warriors Reagan and Mitterrand.

RETURN TO THE ROAD OF LENIN AND TROTSKY!

Le Pen's results inspire a real fear, but for a number of left and labour organisations this fear is trans-

while an anti-immigrant consensus unites the social democrats and bourgeois politicians and the fascists draw strength from the instability of the regime – is criminally to lead the workers to a much more serious defeat than the electoral victory of the right in March 1986. In contrast to the LO/LCR pseudo-Trotskyists, the Ligue Trotskyste proclaimed: "We didn't call for a vote to Mitterrand in '81, and we won't do it in '88 either".

Authentic Trotskyism may get a hearing from Communist militants fed up with their party's criminal passivity. The PCF says it "harbours no illusions" (*L'Humanite*, 28 April) that a Mitterrand victory will benefit the working class ("on the contrary", Marchais adds cynically), while it called for voting Mitterrand to stop the right. But many of its ranks may not follow this road to defeat. On May Day, as they marched past a local PS headquarters, CGT militants chanted, "Mitterrand, betrayal". PCF supporters who seek to break from the infernal cycle of popular fronts alternating with open reaction should study the example of Tribune Communiste, a group which came out of the pro-Soviet "anti-opportunist" milieu in and around the PCF, and fused with the Ligue Trotskyste this February.

An important step in Tribune Communiste's evolution toward genuine Leninism was taken when they refused to vote for the PCF in the leg-

islative elections of June 1981, opposing the Communist Party's entry into the Mitterrand popular front. And in their resolution this year which served as a basis for the fusion with the Ligue Trotskyste, Tribune Communiste wrote:

"In 1988 it is not possible to back Lajoinie's candidacy with a vote, since he is running, all by himself, as the candidate of a popular front that the PS is in no hurry to form – waiting for the PCF leadership to come over once more."

– "From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky", *Le Bolchevik* no 81, March 1988

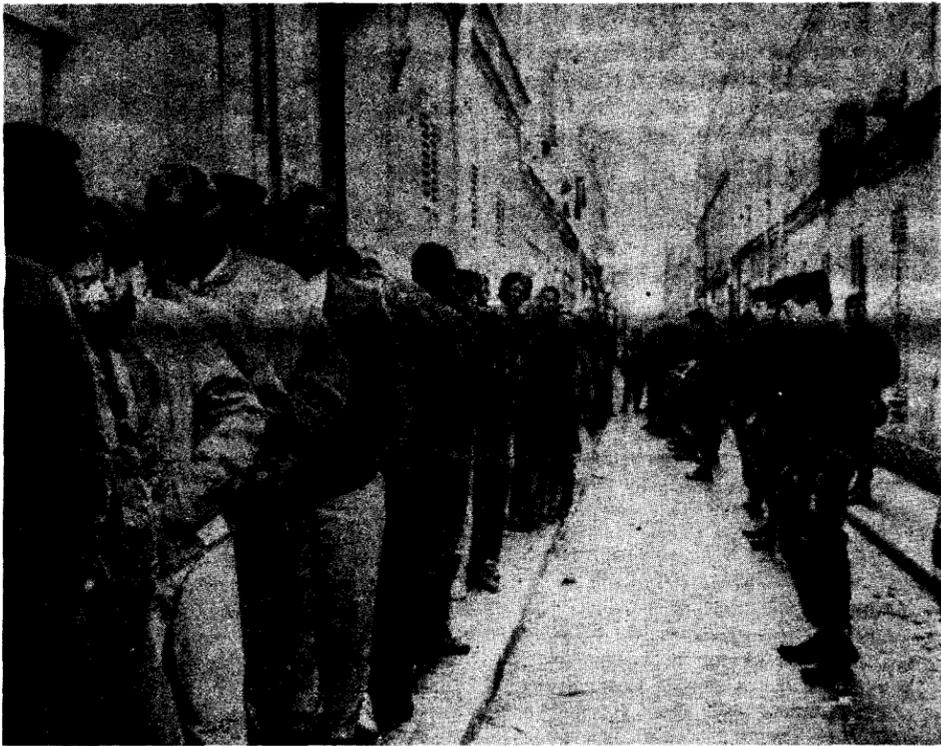
On the eve of the fusion, Tribune Communiste participated together with the LTF in the anti-fascist demonstration called by the PCF on 27 January. The joint contingent marched under the slogans of "Worker/Immigrant Mobilisations to Smash the Fascists" and "Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants".

As Leon Trotsky underlined in his famous pamphlet *Whither France?* written after the fascist-bonapartist-royalist march in February 1934, the key to crushing the fascists is "Not a Program of Passivity But a Program of Revolution":

"...if opposition to further aggravation of the situation of the masses under capitalism is still possible, no real improvement of their situation is conceivable without a revolutionary invasion of the right of capitalist property....

"The social crisis in its political expression is the crisis of power. The old master of society is bankrupt. A new master is needed. "If the revolutionary proletariat does not take power, Fascism will inevitably take it!"

Only by accomplishing its historic mission, by taking state power with a workers government which will expropriate the bourgeoisie and undertake the socialist reconstruction of society, can the proletariat crush the fascist scum once and for all. And for that, as in all working-class struggles, the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party is indispensable. Such a party must be a tribune of the people, championing the cause of all the oppressed. It must also squarely oppose the anti-Soviet war drive and uphold the banner of unconditional military defence of the deformed and degenerated workers states. This party will be the section of a reformed Fourth International, regrouping genuine communists behind the Leninist-Trotskyist programme of world socialist revolution. ■



Sygm

Paris, 1984: Racist anti-immigrant dragnet by hated CRS riot police.

scum back into their rat holes, if they display such shameful prostration and passivity in the face of fascist provocations, it's because their one and only objective is to replay '81."

– *Le Bolchevik* no 82, April 1988

As a result of the Mitterrand popular front, which put the cost of the capitalist crisis onto the backs of the workers, France has become the European country with a mass fascist movement. And the fight to crush the National Front has an importance extending beyond the borders of France. Le Pen's success emboldens fascist rats to crawl out of their holes elsewhere. In West Germany, for example, the neo-Nazi FAP announced plans to hold a May Day rally outside Rheinhausen, where the threatened closure of the Krupp steel plant has sparked massive workers' protests throughout the Ruhr region. Yet while the fascists mount provocations from West Berlin to Bremen to the Ruhr, the reformist Social Democracy does its best to turn May Day rallies into apolitical beer festivals.

formed into panic. And this panic was used to "justify" their call for workers to vote for Mitterrand on the second round. The Communist Party leadership exhorts all those who are "anti-Chirac and anti-Le Pen to block their path on May 8". Former PCF leader and pro-Mitterrand "renovator" Pierre Juquin, supported by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), said "don't do the work of ChiPen-LeRac". Arlette Laguiller, perennial candidate of Lutte Ouvriere (LO), competed with the fascists for votes on a programme of populist anti-Sovietism. Le Pen & Co are trying to "push politics in a reactionary direction", so "we need another vote, a vote which is a counterweight" (*Lutte Ouvriere*, 26 March).

All these reformists who urged workers to fall in behind Mitterrand "forget" rather conveniently that after the 1936 Popular Front came the bonapartist dictator Petain; after Allende, Pinochet. So too the anti-working-class, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet policy of the 1981 popular front paved the way for the fascists. To want to repeat 1981 –



Le Bolchevik

Paris, 27 January: Trotskyists march in CP-initiated anti-Le Pen protest.

Kinnock, Benn...

(Continued from page 1)

knifed the miners refused even token support to a one-day action by the NHS nurses. Meanwhile, dissident Tories have provided a more robust parliamentary opposition to Thatcher's gang than Kinnock dares. (Edward Heath sounds unbridled in his attacks on Thatcher compared to the leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.) Now with Thatcher having problems in her own camp over the poll tax, budget and monetary policy, Kinnock and his braintrust push ever more obscene accolades to the market place, trade union "realism", and standard social-democratic loyalty oaths to the "free world" against the Soviet bloc. The Labour "left" is in for heavy-handed treatment as well. After being slapped with a three-month removal from the party whip, Ron Brown (Labour MP for Leith) – who damaged the mediaeval mace in an angry outburst during a debate on social security benefits – observed that "If that bauble or ornament is more important than all the struggle there is something wrong with this party" (*Guardian*, 20 May). Ron Brown, who to his credit has defended the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed mullah reaction, has perhaps inadvertently hit the nail on the head: that mace is more important than "all the struggle" for the gentlemen of the Labour Party.

Sections of the Labour "left", concerned that the party's credibility is lacking in certain disgruntled quarters, have set out to refurbish Labour's credentials as a party of the working class and oppressed, Benn's "broad church" with a place for everyone. Benn has decided it's time to dust off the Sunday socialist speechifying for peace, a "fair society", strong trade unions and above all, a "prospect of defeating this government and replacing it with a Labour government". In this shell game, the working masses of these isles have no interest.

meat of the matter is the electability of Labour in the next elections. For the "left", Kinnock is a liability in this enterprise. The man is deeply and purposefully offensive to militant workers, blacks, Asians, homosexuals, youth, women, defenders of civil liberties, opponents of Cold War militarism, and Irish people. He is also a political incompetent and a witchhunting windbag. But Kinnock/Hattersley's position today is owed in large part to the slavish loyalty extended to him by the Labour "lefts" since the miners strike and general election – and before that the capitulation by Benn in particular to the Cold War right wing following his close contest for deputy party leader in 1981.

LABOUR, THE BENNITE LEFT AND THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

Britain's role as junior partner in the US war drive against the Soviet Union is a key element in Thatcherite austerity and appetites toward bonapartist rule. Cold War militarism abroad means repression in the name of "national unity" at home. The Iron Lady makes no secret of her plans to "tame" and ultimately emasculate the trade unions. Trouble from any quarter – poverty stricken inner-city youth, striking workers, or even the BBC Scotland during the Zircon affair – is met with brutal police measures. Let them eat batons. The prisons are overflowing, the hospitals crumbling, the ferries and underground deathtraps. The City profiteers rake it in, aided all the more by Lawson's budget, while mines shut, factories rot and millions are jobless. Outrages by British imperialism in Northern Ireland have escalated, finding a bloody crescendo in the Gibraltar SAS murder of three unarmed IRA members.

Labour, in and out of government, has been a main agency for imperialist rule from the wars of intervention against the Bolshevik Revolution to the sending of troops to Ireland, from Korea to counterrevolutionary plotting in the Eastern

an American colony") is a bourgeois pacifist dead-end, though not one much tolerated by either the British or American bourgeoisie. (As Gough Whitlam, former Australian Prime Minister, discovered). Benn's anti-Soviet credentials are certainly in

gramme should have extended critical support to Tony Benn – in order to exacerbate and follow through the split begun with the formation of the SDP, *drive out the blatantly pro-imperialist CIA-connected right wing* and place



no credit
Labour traitors who sold out 1926 General Strike: Ramsay MacDonald, JH Thomas, Arthur Henderson.

order: Benn and Heffer both supported Solidarnosc's counterrevolutionary bid to restore capitalism in Poland, Labour's NEC was unanimous in condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. But the *Economist* (5 December 1981) caught the bourgeoisie's attitude during Benn's close contest with Healey for the deputy leadership in 1981 when it wrote that "the Bennites favour precisely the foreign policy that Russia would like Britain to have".

In the 1981 contest, unlike today, the Cold War divide caused such a depth of crisis in the Labour Party that it became a major showdown on the key issues, threatening to tear the Labour Party apart. A distorted and uneven class line was then being cleaved under the impact of the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War. The

Benn in a position where his left-reformist politics could be more effectively exposed and combatted." – "Labour's Cold War",

Spartacist Britain no 41, April 1982
Kinnock/Hattersley came to power hoping to re-establish Labour's credentials in the eyes of their ruling-class masters as being capable of stewarding a government of Cold War austerity. When Benn ran in the 1984 Chesterfield by-election, the first after the installation of Kinnock, we offered him critical support if he would not stand simply as the dupe of the NATO-lovers in the right wing. He refused it outright; his acquiescence to Labour's Cold Warriors meant rejection of any taint of association with Soviet-defencist communists. Declining our offer of support, Benn's written response explained: "he is not prepared to accept support from organisations which do not support the Labour Party and is hoping that those who come to help in the campaign will be fully committed to the success of the Labour Party, its policy and leadership". In the Chesterfield election, Benn acted as "socialist" front man for the Cold War "realists" – committed to putting Kinnock into 10 Downing Street, Roy Hattersley into Number 11 and Denis Healey into the Foreign Office.

Shortly afterwards, Benn's "unity" with Kinnock et al would lead to his guilty complicity as the most important class battle in decades was knifed by the Labour Party, paving the way for Thatcher's victory. Critical support for Benn today will not serve as a tactic to expose the Labour "lefts"; it only refurbishes illusions in a Labour Party rightly despised by a section of militants. However, we are among the very few on the British left to make this simple statement.

The usual fake-Trotskyist suspects – *Socialist Organiser*, the Cliffite Socialist Workers Party, the Militant tendency, *Socialist Action*, the centrist Workers Power group and some of the decomposition products of the WRP (eg *Workers Press*, the ICP) – all support Benn. Sean Matgamna's *Socialist Organiser* (31 March) nearly weeps with joy: Benn's campaign "is the best news for the Left in years", Benn and Heffer "can win back the soul of the Party", they can "rebuild ramparts and bulwarks from which further advance can be attempted –



Workers Hammer

Orgreave, 29 May 1984: Riot police charge into picketing miners. Tories were out for blood; Labour/TUC traitors sat on their hands.

No one, least of all Benn himself, believes that he can oust Kinnock come the Labour elections this autumn, but that makes his efforts to maintain Labour's slipping grip on the working class no less pernicious. Unless one is completely blinded by the electoral wrangling and disputes over "policy" statements on the National Executive (eg the inclusion versus the appending of Clause 4 mentioning "equitable distribution" and "common ownership of the means of production") – the real

bloc. The Kinnock/Hattersley wing take their inspiration on such matters from Denis Healey, veteran agent of "CIA socialism" in the post-World War II period. And this is necessarily reflected in and inseparable from domestic class questions. Today a Labour government can only serve as the administrators of union-busting, wage-slashing, racist and protectionist austerity.

For its part, Benn's "Little England" unilateralism ("I was born in an Empire, the British Empire, and I live in

contradictions of the Labour Party were brought sharply to the fore. At that time, we offered no support to Benn, a tactical error in the context. As we wrote after the elections: "Who would doubt that mass defections by the right wing would have ensued had Benn won, leaving behind an unstable, left-dominated party? The situation dictated that a Trotskyist propaganda group which seeks to split Labour's working-class base from its pro-capitalist misleaders to a revolutionary pro-

win or lose....", *ad nauseam*. For this group – which is buried deeply inside the Labour Party, refuses to call for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and last year formally changed its line to denounce the Soviet Union as "an imperialist system, and one which today holds far more people in direct subjugation than any other imperialist power" – hailing Tony Benn may represent a slight left bulge. *Militant* – the object of renewed witchhunting – predictably offers up its supporters as "the firmest and most active campaigners" for Benn/Heffer despite unspecified disagreements. The SWP offers a list of tasks for Benn, including that he take on the "soft left" union bureaucrats, unintentionally giving the game away with their pronouncement "If they do so they will be providing the kind of leadership that has never been seen in the Labour Party" (*Socialist Worker*, 2 April). Quite right. But the SWP seems to have been indulging in a little too much demon rum when it suggests that Benn and Heffer may even "be forced to conclude that the Labour Party is not the vehicle" for the fight for socialism. For a dose of "real politik", we recommend the May issue of *Socialist Action*. Its position: vote for Benn and Heffer for the first round and "argue for a vote for Prescott in the second round" (emphasis ours). *Socialist Action* – one of three USec groups in Britain – admits that "no-one knows where John Prescott stands. He has declared that he supports Neil Kinnock for party leader" (emphasis in original). But no matter, while advocating a vote to the "electable" Prescott, his supporters "must be challenged to ask where he stands"!

Need we add that all the above groups also blared from the front pages of their newspapers: VOTE LABOUR (ie Kinnock) during the general election? *Workers Power's* arti-



Workers Hammer

Embattled nurses protest in London, 5 March. Kinnock told them to drop dead.

the "left" is evident in its call to "bring the class war into the Labour Party"! Extending this "fight the right" method across the channel, Workers Power's French co-thinkers, the Pouvoir Ouvrier group called for a vote to Mitterrand in the second round (PO leaflet, "How to crush Le Pen", 1 May). This shameless capitulation to the anti-Soviet, anti-worker Mitterrand popular front – responsible for fuelling the growth of Le Pen's fascist movement – is also a criminal position for avowed "revolutionaries".

The Northite *International Worker* (23 April) denounces the left groups who merely enthuse over the Benn campaign. But they demand that Benn/Heffer "use the electoral contest as a platform for a political offensive to drive the right wing fifth columnists out of the labour movement". At the same time, the ICP admits of Benn "that in all essentials he is in full agreement with the right-wing" and their position is essentially a version of the call to "make the lefts fight". The

relationship between the right and left is symbiotic. *Leninist* never says, however, what its line is on the election: does it advocate critical support to Benn/Heffer or not? Previously, *Leninist* joined virtually the entire British left in supporting Arthur Scargill in the NUM elections which, given Scargill's role in binding the miners to Kinnock after the strike, simply represented a capitulation to left Labourism. And before that, during the last general elections, their call for "No vote for Labour"

Labour and union 'lefts' are equally formulas for sterility. A Leninist-Trotskyist party can be forged only through splitting the Labour Party, bringing key sectors of the working class under the revolutionary banner while exposing and politically defeating the pro-capitalist misleaders, both 'left' and right. Today the opportunities for a regroupment, through splits and fusions of would-be revolutionary forces, are more favorable than at any time in years.

"The organisations of the so-called 'far left' for the most part have either liquidated into the Labour Party or blindly tail it. And in the face of massive, turbulent social struggle the Labour tops lined up against the miners. Today, not surprisingly, Kinnock & Co are even more hostile to the black, Asian and white poor in the ghettos exploding in just outrage against the murdering cops. For pseudo-socialists who think that the Labour Party is an instrument for progressive change, that poses a big problem."

– "Thatcher Burns Britain",
Workers Vanguard no 390,
1 November 1985

The miners strike showed once again that the Labour Party is dedicated to the defence of the rotting capitalist status quo against the class struggle and the most immediate needs and demands of the prolet-



Workers Hammer

1984 Chesterfield by-election: Benn goes along with Healey's Cold War tune.

cle polemicalises against David Blunkett, who has refused to support Benn, declaring "A socialist who is tired of choices is tired of political life!" But WP's "choice" is always the same: vote Labour no matter what and always support the "left" against the right. Thus in 1977 WP dismissed the Lib-Lab pact as a "parliamentary arrangement" of little significance and called for a vote to the strike-breaking Callaghan/Healey government. Ten years later, it called for a vote to Kinnock – an act of class treason. Its illusions in the reform of the Labour Party through support to

dubious ICP was in the WRP when it launched the red-baiting attack picked up by Fleet Street against Scargill on the eve of the miners strike for his correct statement that Solidarnosc was anti-socialist. These political bandits have never renounced this or other anti-working class crimes committed by the Healyite WRP from which it emerged.

The left Stalinist *Leninist* ran an article which in parts is very much to the point on the "lefts". They note that the Benn/Heffer campaign "is an attempt to forestall any major potential hemorrhage [sic] to the left



Workers Hammer
Spartacist contingent at CND demonstration outside 1983 Brighton Labour Party conference.

was coupled to a call for a vote to the Eurocommunist CPGB as it busily projected an alliance with the SDP.

FORGE A LENINIST-TROTSKYIST PARTY

In late 1985, after the miners strike and at the time when Thatcher had provoked explosions of anger in the inner cities we wrote:

"A revolutionary vanguard party in Britain can only be forged through breaking the stranglehold of Labourism on the working class. But that will take effective Leninist tactics. Simple sectarian dismissal of the divisions within British social democracy no less than opportunist tailing of the

ariat. It also showed the willingness of the Labour "left" to betray in the name of "unity" with Kinnock and his ilk. They deserve not support – but ruthless exposure for their treachery. Only the smashing of the capitalist system and its state apparatus will solve the social, economic and political crisis of Britain. The Bolshevik party needed to lead workers revolution will be built in irreconcilable struggle against the Labour misleaders, splitting the oppressed working masses from these class traitors and rallying them for the seizure of state power, not for the "privilege" of sending their false leaders to betray them in Westminster. ■

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Leninist...

(Continued from page 4)

was made an honorary member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International just a year before he massacred the Chinese Communists. Stalin's policy was resolutely opposed by Trotsky and by leaders of the CCP like Chen Tu-hsiu who later founded the Chinese Left Opposition. The "proletariat played no direct role" in the third Chinese Revolution in 1949 due to its demoralisation and decimation in 1927 and the CCP's subsequent policy of discouraging proletarian action. The Chinese Revolution of 1949 con-

firmed the Trotskyist thesis of *permanent revolution*: Mao's "bloc of four classes" notwithstanding, the solution of urgent democratic tasks like the land question and the obliteration of feudal oppression required and were accomplished by the smashing of the bourgeois state. (Look for the "first stage" at your peril.) But the Chinese workers state emerged deformed at birth—owing much to the disaster and tragedy of 1927. The obscene spectacle of the Chinese Stalinists working as US imperialism's allies against the Vietnamese over Kampuchea or with South African apartheid in Angola testifies to the price paid by the international working class for these nationalist, bureaucratic deformations. The fight



1979: Spartacists hail Soviet intervention in Afghanistan; Red Army head Leon Trotsky rouses troops against Polish tyrant Pilsudski in 1920 (left).



David King

for world socialism requires workers revolution in the capitalist countries and proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies from Moscow to Peking, Hanoi to Havana led by a Communist International that is not a pretence but a reality.

Leninist, despite its correct opposition to Gorbachev's withdrawal, is still itself trapped in the Stalinist/nationalist maze. It is unable to distinguish between the October Revolution, in which the armed forces of the Bolshevik-led *proletariat* played

the central role in smashing capitalist rule, and petty-bourgeois guerrillaist or nationalist movements of all stripes (whether it be the PDPA, the South African CP and ANC or the IRSP in Ireland). Thus its enthusiasm over the "Afghan revolution" and its failure to acknowledge and undertake the key question posed by the Soviet intervention: defence of the USSR against imperialism. That is the heart of their argument with us, the Trotskyists who fight for international proletarian revolution and said "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" ■

As Soviets pull out, Islamic fanatics threaten bloodbath

Afghan women fight for their lives

After the announcement of the Soviet withdrawal, the fanatical Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* wasted no time in giving a taste of the bloodbath they intend to unleash upon the Afghan population once the Red Army is no longer there to defend elementary social progress. On 27 April, a truck loaded with explosives blew up in a crowded street in Kabul, killing a 12-year-old girl and five other people. The bomb was situated to strike people returning from a youth festival in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the "April revolution" which installed the Afghan reform regime. On 10 April, several days before the signing of the withdrawal agreement, a passenger plane was shot down by a US-supplied missile, killing all 29 aboard, including eight women and two children. Rebel leader Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, described even by his American sponsors as a "scary fascist", seized this moment to announce they would "show the world that without the consent of the *mujaheddin*, no agreement can be consummated".

These CIA-backed "freedom fighters" will not be satisfied until they have extinguished the last remnants of the short-lived freedoms the Afghan peoples have enjoyed. And their prime target will certainly be the hundreds of thousands of women who under the protection of the Red Army liberated themselves to some extent from fundamentalist slavery. A recent article by Marc Kaufman in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (26 Ap-

ril), piercing the American bourgeoisie's veil of lies over what an anti-Communist victory will mean, described how "the specter of a *mujaheddin* reign of terror against women" is widely perceived in Kabul.

From the start this war has posed not only defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state against US imperialism but the defence of the most basic rights of women. As Kaufman noted:

"When asked why they had left Afghanistan for the refugee camps, many Afghans in Pakistan don't talk about the bombing or land reform, or even the suppression of Islam.

"What they did not like, those Afghans said recently, was that the communists in Kabul wanted to send their daughters to school."

And those young women who did seize the opportunity for an education are now, in the most literal sense, faced with a fight for their lives. One such woman interviewed explained:

"Without the revolution, what would I be?" said the handsome young woman, who has a college degree from Bulgaria, a good job with the Red Crescent, and the freedom to wear lipstick, a skirt and even high heels.

"I would be staying at home, and maybe only going out with the veil—like my mother did," she said. "And for marriage, I could be bought like so much property."

"This is why so many Afghan

women are with this revolution, and why we will fight so hard to defend it'....

"They will try to put us back in *chaderie* [the head-to-toe veil]—we know this," Mina Fahim said of the *mujaheddin*.

"Like in Iran with Khomeini but maybe worse, because we would resist. For us, *chaderie* is impossible," she said with a shudder.

Afghan women will resist, arms in hand. Among the contingents in the 27 April demonstrations was one of determined-looking women armed

with AK-47s. Now they are about to be abandoned by the Red Army, in which they saw their salvation. Gorbachev's vain attempt to conciliate US imperialism consigns Afghan women to a horrible bloodbath, and it will only embolden the murderous *mujahedin* to launch attacks across the Soviet border. Defence of the Soviet Union and elementary human decency require that the Red Army mop up the mullah-led reactionaries.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 452, 6 May 1988

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Shut down P&O...

(Continued from page 12)

McCluskie has urged other unions not to break the law; instead he appeals for an impotent consumer boycott (like the one that sunk the Wapping strike) and relies on the hope that Sealink will take away business from P&O. This strike can be won – but that means *shutting down P&O solid in conjunction with maritime unions here and abroad.*

McCluskie is a Kinnockite and in fact is the Labour Party treasurer. The Labour Party has been posturing in Parliament about supporting the strike. But in reality all this has meant is collecting some funds, while various MPs like Tony Benn have made token appearances on the picket line. Some Labour MPs have justified their support for the NUS by citing the seamen's "loyalty" during the Falklands/Malvinas war. But Labour's support for this tawdry war strengthened Thatcher's position and facilitated her subsequent union-busting. "British jobs for British ships" has been an informal slogan of the strike, and much has been made of the supposed scabbing of low paid "foreign seamen". But for the most part the scabs have been more highly paid Norwegian, Dutch and *British* seamen! Over the last decade membership of the NUS has fallen by half, because the NUS has failed to organise foreign seamen up to union standard pay and conditions on the reflagged ships.

It's hardly a secret that McCluskie is an arch class-collaborationist, so much so that he's been nicknamed "teddy bear" by Sealink boss James Sherwood. But the trade union "lefts" have done little better. Arthur Scargill has made his token appearance on the picket line and called for more trade union leaders to do the same. But he has done nothing to mobilise the NUM or even defend sacked Kent miners "violence" baited for trying to stand by their NUS brothers on the picket line. And while the NUR and TGWU compete to merge with the NUS, Jimmy Knapp and Ron Todd undermine the strike. NUR leaders at Heysham told local members to cross NUS picket lines, but they refused. Todd has sat on his hands throughout. TGWU organises the dockers who have the power to stop P&O. Moreover, the dockers themselves are next in line: the Thatcher government is out to smash the dock labour scheme which put an end to the notorious practice of lump labour. Todd and the T&G leadership have even scuttled dockers' ballots to come out in support of the NUS, discouraging secondary action at every turn so as not to embarrass fellow scabherder Neil Kinnock.

Explicitly letting the Labour and trade union "lefts" off the hook, groups like *Militant* and *Morning Star* urge workers to pressure the TUC into taking action, while *Workers Power* similarly calls for a one-day general strike. In the meantime Norman Willis is holed up in Police Federation conferences plotting how to reduce "picket line violence" (*Times*, 17 May).

What is needed to win this strike is for P&O to be shut down tight. The appetite for concrete blacking actions and solidarity strikes has already been demonstrated. Ever since the miners strike the labour tops have been arguing that you can't take on the government and win. This strike poses the possibility of avenging in some partial fashion the union-busting onslaught mounted against the miners, printers and

other workers by Thatcher and the capitalists. But that requires mobilising for real class struggle, not – as the Labourite misleaders advise – playing by the rules of the bosses and their courts.

Blair Peach...

(Continued from page 3)

more than 8000 paid their respects to Blair Peach at the Dominion Cinema, where his body lay in state.

This is the truth about Blair Peach: a young man who hated the NF fascist filth and everyday racist brutality of this society was murdered by the armed fist of the capitalist state. His widow Celia Stubbs was eventually forced from her home by fascist terrorism. Not only have the cops been shielded from any punitive action, but when the Friends of Blair Peach Committee distributed posters containing the names of the six SPG suspects they were warned of possible libel action and more by the chairman of the Police Federation who stated: "People who attempt to undermine the morale of the police by making wild accusations must realise we will not sit back and do nothing". It was not simply court action that was being threatened. As if to underline the point, on 1 August 1979 – barely three months after Blair Peach's killing – Sarn Singh Crewel died after having been beaten in the Southall police station.

Labour was in power when the cops killed Blair Peach. Its racist austerity policies had aided and abetted the growth of fascist gangs on the street and fascist "credibility" at the polling booths. Anti-racist fighters like Blair Peach were drawn to the SWP in a period when that organisation proclaimed its opposition to Labourite treachery and at least postured as militant organisers against the NF and its ilk. But the SWP's attempts at coalitions with the likes of Neil Kinnock (a supporter of the Anti Nazi League) both belied its leftist posturing and tied thousands of would-be anti-fascist fighters to the strategy of impotent carnivals designed to pressure the powers that be. (The seminal example was the 1978 ANL carnival: while the fascists marched virtually unimpeded through the heavily immigrant East End of London, some 100,000 anti-fascists were diverted to a festival held at the opposite end of town.) In the last general election, the SWP gave its unswerving support to the racist, cop-loving scab Kinnock. It is on record today for advocating an "ignore the fascists" stance.

We fight for a proletarian strategy to sweep the fascists off the streets – the independent mobilisation of the working class and oppressed, the building of workers defence guards to smash the fascist scum. This can only be realised by waging a sharp struggle inside the unions against the bureaucrats and the splitting of the Labour Party base from its wretched pro-capitalist tops as part of the fight for British Bolshevism.

The cruel murder of Blair Peach has taken its place in the collective history of working-class struggle in this country and internationally, alongside the many who have fallen fighting for our rights. Vengeance for his death will only come with victorious socialist revolution. Along the road to that revolution, the workers movement will honour its martyrs and its heroes. And Blair Peach was certainly both of these. ■

French Trotskyists...

(Continued from page 1)

working class suburb of the city of Rouen, Cazin confronts "socialist" Laurent Fabius, Mitterrand's Prime Minister from 1984 to 1986. Fabius is notorious for his frank avowal that Mitterrand's popular front had taken on, as Fabius put it, the "dirty job" of imposing capitalist austerity on the working class. And during Fabius' sway as Prime Minister, French state terrorists bombed the *Rainbow Warrior* in New Zealand, killing a member of the ecologist Greenpeace organisation.

Key to the LTF campaign is the need to draw the lessons of seven years of class collaboration by the Mitterrand popular front, encapsulated in the slogan "It's Mitterrand, Marchais (leader of the French Communist Party – PCF) and Juquin (anti-Soviet leader of a split from the PCF) who got us into this shit". The anti-working class, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet popular front indeed paved the way for the return of the right in 1986–88 and the spectacular growth of Le Pen's fascist National Front. Any working class struggle will confront head-on Mitterrand's new popular front including the Socialist Party and bourgeois politic-

of a rational planned economy – the establishment of a workers government based on organs of workers power – and the socialist reconstruction of France in the framework of a Socialist United States of Europe.

The LTF campaign calls for worker/immigrant mobilisations to crush the fascists, drawing on the example of the united front demonstration organised by the LTF on 11 December 1981 in Rouen, which mobilised, with the support of several trade unions, 400 anti-fascist demonstrators. And behind the LTF's slogan of "Full citizenship rights for immigrants" is the experience of its participation in protests against the torture of immigrant youth by racist Rouen police in 1985, and its 1987 campaign against racist discrimination by the "Flunch" restaurant in Rouen.

This is a campaign which aims at playing the Leninist role of tribune of the people, condemning the anti-homosexual witchhunt stirred up by reaction around AIDS and offering a programme for the liberation of women through socialist revolution, addressing itself in particular to women workers, who make up half of the active labour force in the district. It also opposes the anti-Soviet war drive, in which Mitterrand has played a central role for Europe, defending the gains of October against imperialism and internal counter-revolution (like Solidarnosc, the darling of French fake-Trotskyists). It warns against illusions in the possi-



Rouen, June 1987: Anti-racist picket initiated by LTF.

ians of the "centre".

The popular front's "dirty job" has included the ravaging of whole sectors of the productive apparatus. The national unemployment rate stands at ten per cent, but in the Seine-Maritime it is 13 per cent. The LTF campaign advances the slogan of a sliding scale of wages and hours – the reduction of the work week at no loss of pay in order to create new jobs. It advances the perspective of the expropriation of capitalist industry and finance to lay the basis

bility of "detente" between the USSR and imperialism, which threatens the abandonment of Afghanistan to bloodthirsty Islamic reaction.

Gilles Cazin's election statement concludes: "This future won't be decided in the voting booths, but on the front of the class struggle, in the plants and in the streets. This fight is the fight of the Ligue Trotskyiste whose aim is the forging of a revolutionary vanguard party armed with the programme of Lenin and Trotsky". ■

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Seamen take on butcher of Zeebrugge

Shut down P&O!

The National Union of Seamen (NUS) strike against the introduction of the ferry bosses' draconian new manning levels has now entered its fifth month. The primary target of the strike is the notorious and widely hated P&O European Ferries and its head Sir Jeffrey Sterling. P&O achieved infamy when on 6 March 1987 the murderous, rapacious bosses of this company sent 193 passengers and crew to a grisly watery grave outside the Belgium harbour of Zeebrugge; in their hunger for profits their ferry the *Herald of Free Enterprise* sailed with its bow doors open. Now the ferry bosses want to introduce even more inherently unsafe practices by slashing manning scales and having seamen work new rotas of 24 hours on, 24 hours off instead of the previous 48 hours off, with crews working from 14 to 18 hours without any break whatsoever.

Over the past few months, 6000 of the NUS' 24,000 membership have taken strike action against ferry companies all over the UK. Strike action began last December when NUS members at the Isle of Man Steam Packet ferry company went out over the new pay and conditions offer. It re-escalated in mid-February when P&O seamen at Dover voted to continue striking over the company's cost-cutting plans as the Isle of Man Steam Packet dispute came to an end. On 15 March, Sterling & Co started issuing dismissal notices to all Dover seamen and by 25 April P&O withdrew recognition from the NUS, actively seeking scabs from union and non-union workers. The past few weeks have seen thousands take secondary strike action in support of their embattled comrades at Dover. Seamen struck other P&O subsidiaries and the Sealink ferries, as well as other ferry companies including North Sea Oil supply boats. Dockers in Liverpool and elsewhere have at times blacked ships in support of the seamen.

The horror of Zeebrugge is still in the public mind when Sir Jeffrey Sterling and P&O are even mentioned. P&O got off completely free of criminal charges after the Zeebrugge butchery, while three seamen were scapegoated. Of the nearly 800 NUS members who have now received sacking notices, the latest to be added to the list is Tom Wilson, who was awarded the queen's gallantry medal for his part in rescuing many from sure death at Zeebrugge. But Sterling is Thatcher's model boss and a model partner for the butcher of the *Belgrano*. Obscenely, he is adviser to Lord Young in the Department of Trade and Industry, which is supposed to regulate safety conditions in the transportation industry, among other things! Sterling is also on the government's broadcasting council, where he played a vociferous



Socialist Worker

At April mass meeting P&O strikers vow to continue struggle against union-busting Thatcher crony Sterling (left). NUS picket boat (right) in Folkstone harbour keeps watch during secondary strike action against Sealink.



Guardian

role in attempting to censor media coverage of the cold-blooded murder of three IRA members in Gibraltar. P&O contributed £100,000 to the Tories in the last election. And now faced with the prospect of the Channel Tunnel and the prospective loss of duty free markets under the European market, union-buster Sterling is out to chop ferry crews by at least 20 per cent, and introduce 18-hour straight work shifts.

This is nothing less than a hideous ongoing recipe for more Zeebrugge atrocities. In fact, practically all that P&O has done in the name of safety since the disaster last March is change the names of its ships! In past months, at least one ferry has sailed within the Zeebrugge harbour with its bow doors open. The BBC's *Brass Tacks* programme reported that on the *Pride of Bruges* (formerly the *Pride of Free Enterprise*), the indicator mechanism to ensure that the main doors are closed, which P&O has described as "notoriously unreliable", was not replaced when the ship had a refit last December. Of course, nothing has been done about the fact that the ferries, structurally modelled on the *Titanic*, are inherently unsafe. *Private Eye* (13 May) reports that in a study forced on the Department of Transport as a result of the enquiry into Zeebrugge:

"...the results of the tests were absolutely disastrous. Nine of the ten ships showed a list after the damage of more than the maximum fifteen degrees permitted by the IMO [International Maritime Organisation]. There were nine other 'criteria' or IMO rules that were tried out. The report baldly (if rather skimpily) sums up: 'In the case of most of the ships there is a deficiency in some of the other criteria.'

"Moreover, all ships were tested at what is called 'level trim' when

they had been evenly loaded and were not sloping....

"This means that in cases where the trim is not level, as it wasn't when the *Herald of Free Enterprise* left Zeebrugge for the last time, the slightest holing of the hull would lead to such a list that the car deck would be exposed to water, with devastating and deadly consequences."

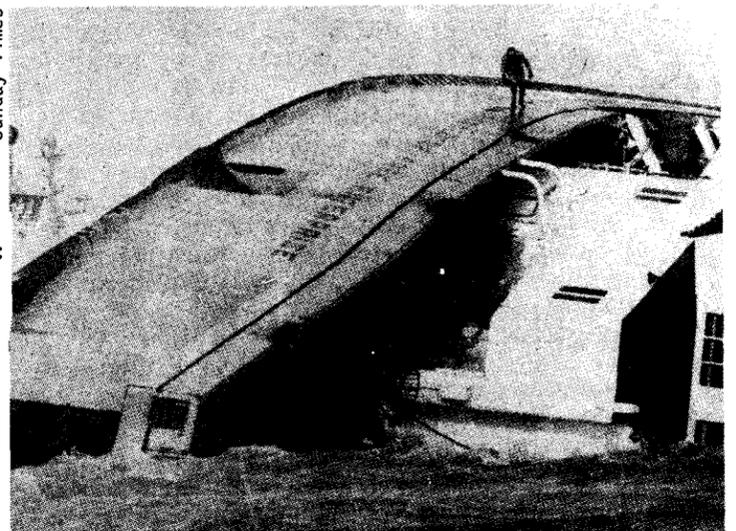
At stake in the strike is the survival of the union. The core strength of the NUS has been reduced to the ferries; as seamen realise, if P&O is successful in its union-busting attacks, the same conditions will be spread to Sealink and other operators. Yet P&O has had considerable difficulty with its scabherding operation. Scores of seamen initially recruited to scab have changed their minds and returned to the picket lines. Indeed, the bosses were so hard up that the name of a dead seaman was reportedly included on one crew list. French maritime unions, facing attacks also from cross channel ferry operators, have taken some action to black P&O vessels. Inspired by the example of the miners strike, seamen's wives have organised strike support com-

mittees. And even large sections of the bourgeois press, not known for their sympathies for trade unions, can scarcely disguise their revulsion for Sterling and P&O.

But what really drove the bosses wild was the effective secondary strike action organised over the past few weeks by the seamen. These actions gave the lie to the Labourite claim that you have to abide by the bosses' law. The actions should have been a signal to the dockers and railwaymen to take their own secondary actions to shut down P&O tight. Particularly given the widespread dislike for Sterling, it would not be easy for the government to mount strikebreaking operations against a number of powerful unions. But NUS general secretary Sam McCluskie retreated, calling off the secondary strikes when union funds were sequestered. This outraged seamen: the Hull and Liverpool delegations to the NUS conference called for a full investigation, and Liverpool called for the resignation of those supporting the "deplorable recommendation". In the meantime, three P&O scab ferries are back in operation at Dover.

continued on page 11

Sunday Times



Thatcher's Britain: 193 crew and passengers aboard P&O's *Herald of Free Enterprise* sent to their deaths.