



Shut down London Transport, rail, docks!

Get Thatcher!

Break with the Labour traitors—forge a revolutionary party!

It's high time to strike a decisive blow at this arrogant, racist, union-busting government! The government figured they'd continue picking off the unions one by one, starting with the dockers. But now the bosses are facing the biggest industrial upsurge since the miners strike, betrayed by the Labour Party/TUC tops who forced the NUM to fight alone. Now a million workers are threatening to strike: London transport workers, the embattled dockers, 100,000 BR workers, engineers, power workers, BBC staff, university lecturers. What's necessary is a *political offensive*—not simply isolated economic struggles by different sections of the work-



London, 1972: mass march of dockers, printers and other workers protesting the first jailing of strikers by the National Industrial Relations Court.

ing class. *Hard class struggle now can bring down Thatcher!*

Thatcher went after the steelworkers, the miners, printers and seamen. Hundreds of thousands of miners and other industrial workers have been driven out of jobs, and whole sections of the country have been economically devastated. If you have a job, you're under the guns of low pay, long hours, speed-up and deadly unsafe working conditions. The government and City of London financiers have plundered this country. They won't spend the money to put automatic braking systems on trains, to equip underground stations with elementary fire-prevention and fire-fighting devices, you name it. *The Herald of Free Enterprise*, King's Cross, Clapham Junction—workers and passengers take their lives in their hands every time they get on a train, plane or ferry. And what about the lethal North Sea oilfields that

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Life-or-death battle against CIA's cutthroats

Afghanistan: Jalalabad must not fall!

After seven weeks of bitter siege warfare, the Afghan provincial capital of Jalalabad continues to hold fast. Attack after attack by the CIA's counterrevolutionary "holy warriors" (*mujahedin*) has been repulsed by the heroic defenders of this beleaguered city as they are pounded by Pakistani artillery. On 16 April, the Afghan government news agency Bakhtar reported the reopening of the Kabul-Jalalabad highway, which had been blocked by guerrilla-laid mines. A column of 270 trucks carrying food, weapons, ammunition and fresh reinforcements was able to reach the city. And the *New York Times* (19 April) reported that a convoy of 1000 armoured vehicles and 500 supply trucks arrived in Kabul from the Soviet Union.

The defence perimeter around Jalalabad is today the front line in the war against imperialist reaction, a front line in humanity's struggle for social progress. A victory for the *mujahedin* in Jalalabad, opening the

road to a drive on Kabul itself, would not only mean a bloodbath for thousands in the Afghan capital. It could foreshadow the butchery or re-enslavement of all those throughout Afghanistan who have freed themselves from the chains of feudal reaction: women who have taken off the suffocating veil, girls who have learned to read and write, young people who have chosen to step into the 20th century.

Washington and its Pakistani ally in Islamabad thought the taking of Jalalabad would be a walk-over. Their *mujahedin* killers were armed with billions of dollars of high-tech American weaponry and directed by Pakistani military intelligence. Puffed up by their "victories" in massacring and raping defenceless civilians and slaughtering unarmed prisoners of war, the rebels initially predicted Jalalabad would fall within two days of the 5 March attack. Two days became seven, one week turned into five, the

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Afghan government troops defend strategic Salang highway linking Kabul to Soviet Union.

Prashant Panjari

Victory for international working class

Moses Mayekiso wins against apartheid state repression

Moses Mayekiso, the general secretary of the 130,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), is today free from the noose of the apartheid butchers. In a victory for the working masses of South Africa and the world working class, the Alexandra Five - Mayekiso, his brother Mzwanele, Obed Bapela, Richard Mdakane and Paul Tshabalala were cleared in a Johannesburg court on 24 April of charges of sedition and subversion. When the judge announced the acquittal, the packed courtroom greeted the news with thunderous applause, cheers and clenched-fist salutes.

At the end of the trial, the accused were carried shoulder-high from the court as 'activists danced the traditional 'soldiers dance' of the outlawed African National Congress' (*Guardian*, 25 April). At a meeting organised at a nearby church hall in

celebration of the victory, Moses Mayekiso told the packed-out hall: "I thank the comrades here and all the international groups which made this victory possible. With their support we have won a little bit of freedom." He continued: "They supported the working class movement here, and we will carry on the fight against apartheid and capitalism towards socialism and democracy."

Initially, Mayekiso and his comrades faced capital charges. After spending two years in jail, Mayekiso was released on bail last December. Treason charges were dropped at the start of the final argument; sedition and subversion charges were substituted. But in the end, these too were thrown out. Mayekiso and his comrades were directly targeted by the vicious South African state for their role as leaders of the Alexandra Action Committee. In February 1986,



Johannesburg, 24 April: Moses Mayekiso celebrates his acquittal with defiant supporters.

Guardian



TROTSKY

Trotsky on Afghanistan and May Day

On 25 April, 1924 Leon Trotsky spoke at a commemorative plenum of the Moscow Soviet on the 35th anniversary of the May Day holiday. Examining contemporary events, Trotsky denounced the social-democratic reformists for "the treacherous deliverance of the toiling masses into the hands of degenerating capital in its bloody state of imperialism". Taking up the cause of

the working people of backward and colonial countries, he declared, "we hope to assist the peoples of the East once and for ever and finish off the villainous regime of arrogance, violence and colonial bondage".

There is yet another nation in the East which deserves special mention today in connexion with the holiday of international brotherhood. This is Afghanistan. Dramatic events are taking place there and the hand of British imperialism is embroiled in these events. Afghanistan is a backward country. Afghanistan is making its first step to Europeanize itself and guarantee its independence on a more cultured basis. The progressive nationalist elements of Afghanistan are in power and so British diplomacy mobilizes and arms everything which is in any way reactionary both in that country and along its borders with India and throws all this against the progressive elements in Kabul. Starting from the decrees by which not only the bourgeois but also the social-democratic authorities in Germany banned May Day demonstrations, passing through events in China and Afghanistan we can see everywhere the parties of the Second International behind the work of suppression and oppression. For, you know, the onslaught against Kabul organized with British resources, takes place under the government of the pacifist MacDonald.

But we are sure that not only here, in Moscow, but in London too, the voice of proletarian protest against the imperialist policy of Menshevism which has taken power with the blessing of the bourgeoisie will sound out on May Day. - Leon Trotsky, "May Day in the West and the East", 25 April 1924



LENIN

the residents of Alexandra rose up and expelled police and government officials. A recent article in the *New York Times* (25 April) explained: "Justice P. J. van der Walt, at the end of the 18-month trial, ruled that the state had not proved its case. He found that the defendants were only trying to upgrade living conditions in the bleak black township, which abuts Johannesburg's affluent white suburbs, and were not trying to replace the township's council or render Alexandra ungovernable through protests."

For years Mayekiso's effectiveness as a trade-union leader and his standing in the township made him a prime target of the vicious apartheid police state at whose hands he has suffered both imprisonment and torture.

In 1984 Moses Mayekiso was detained following the mass strike by miners in Witwatersrand and released

a month later after action by South African trade unionists. He was arrested and released twice more in 1985. In early 1986, the cops raided and ransacked his home, dragging him off to the notorious John Vorster Square detention centre once again. Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) members went on strike to obtain his release and then elected him general secretary of the union. The vindictive repression of the Pretoria butchers extended to Britain; when Mayekiso visited here in 1986, he was detained at Heathrow for six hours during which he was strip searched. He was arrested in South Africa in June 1986 upon his return from a trip to Europe where he had been building international support for MAWU members engaged in a bitter dispute at the Sarmcol plant of the British Tyre & Rubber Co. But

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WORKERS HAMMER



Monthly newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the international Spartacist tendency.

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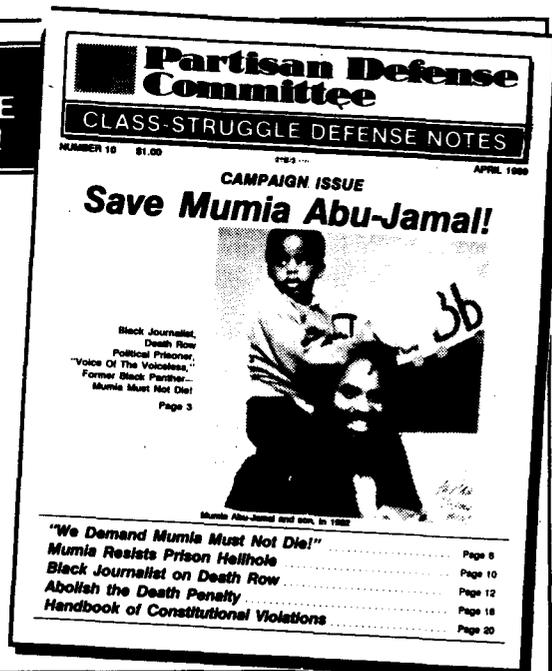
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Hillsborough: bosses, cops to blame

Death on the terraces

Thatcher's Britain, 1989: on Saturday afternoon, 15 April, tens of thousands of football fans set out to enjoy the FA semi-final match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium. Then, fans at the match, along with millions of TV viewers, watched helplessly as the horror unfolded before them: within minutes of the start of the match, 95 men, women and children – all Liverpool fans – lay trampled, dead or dying, suffocated in a horrible crush. Another 170 were injured, many seriously.

This was no Heysel, where rampaging British skinhead scum led an attack on the Italian fans of Juventus at the 1985 European Cup Final, killing 39 and maiming hundreds. In fact, the first phone call of sympathy received by Liverpool chief executive Peter Robinson was from the president of Juventus. Hillsborough was cold-blooded murder – by the state and the football bosses who have turned that stadium and many others into literal death traps.

The over a million who came to Liverpool's Anfield stadium to mourn those who died understood this. What happened in Hillsborough could have happened at almost any football ground in England at any big match. The high perimeter fences and lateral barriers on the terraces are designed to prevent "pitch invasions" and rioting hooligans. Overcrowding on the standing room terraces is policy – squeezing in the largest number of fans possible. Most stadiums were built during the Victorian heyday of the game as football became increasingly the popular sport of the working class. While the football bosses have made millions out of the sport over the past decades, they have criminally neglected reinvesting any money to modernise the terraces where the bulk of the fans stand. The money goes to build executive "hospitality" boxes and the fans get cages.

The slum conditions of the stadium, the policing operation and the almost total lack of medical facilities at an event attended by tens of thousands of people came together to create the Hillsborough disaster. Writing in the *Independent* (18 April) Peter Jenkins describes what have become almost monthly occurrences – Clapham, Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Piper Alpha and now Hillsborough – as "third world disasters". Such a disaster "is something more than the sum of its ingredients. It has about it an air of dreadful inevitability and of human life held cheap. This air of inevitability derives not from being unforeseen but, rather, from being all too foreseeable but happening nonetheless. Our own four recent disasters resulted from known dangers – overcrowded terraces, a fire-trap stand, wooden escalators, obsolescent signalling equipment."

By 2.30 pm, a full half an hour before the match was to begin, up to 4000 people were crammed into the tiny area by gate "B", the entrance to the Leppings Lane end terraces. They were further hemmed in, unable to spread themselves back out on to the street, blocked by police who did



As crush develops, cops push back Liverpool fans (above) attempting to climb to safety. Liverpool supporters joined by Nottingham Forest fans and emergency workers use advertising hoardings as stretchers (below).



Photos by Frank Baron

not want the fans to interfere with the traffic flow on the street outside the stadium entrance. The crowd was so large at that time because there were only seven turnstiles in operation to let them into the ground and many had arrived late due to traffic hold-ups on the M62 and at Stockport; others had downed one last pint before entering the game.

By 2.30 pm, fans were already complaining to police manning the turnstiles about the crush. As A O'Neill wrote in a letter to the *Guardian* (22 April): "I was not alone in angrily pointing out to the two or three police officers on duty at those turnstiles that a problem was developing further back and that action would have to be taken....We might as well have been pigs screaming in an abattoir." Shortly afterwards, police superintendent Marshall, in charge of the crowds outside, radioed up a request to the police control room inside the stadium for the kick-off to be postponed for 15 minutes. His request appeared to have been accepted and then was in a few minutes denied. FA officials at the game deny having received such a request from the police.

At that point the computer which controls the count of people entering the terraces indicated they were not full. But the Leppings Lane terrace itself was divided into four pens separated by 2m high steel lateral bar-

riers, and the centre pens were already jammed full as police on the pitch outside the perimeter fence should have seen. Then the fatal decision was made to open the gate on the left leading to the crammed pens while the gate on the right which would have led fans into the less crowded areas remained closed. Police funnelled fans into the tunnel leading to the already crushed terraces – the tunnel itself became the tomb of many who were trampled to the ground. As the fans entered the terraces from the tunnel, the people already on the terrace were pushed down, increasing the crush at the perimeter fence which completed the cage – ensuring that fans could not escape onto the pitch.

Within the stadium, it has been reported that even by 2.40pm fans were being crushed against the barrier and some may have already been dead. It should have been obvious to police standing on the pitch side of the perimeter fencing that a catastrophe was occurring, but the screams of the dying and the injured were interpreted as noise from rowdy fans. As the *Sunday Times* (23 April) Insight team concludes in their investigation into the police operation:

"Even after the 4,000 fans behind Marshall's gate came sweeping down the tunnel to multiply the death toll and turn a tragedy into unimaginable calamity, police in-

side the grounds seemed oblivious to the fact that people were dying a few feet from where they stood. "Indeed, some officers clearly believed they were dealing with a 'pitch invasion' as late as 3.06 pm, as fans scrambled over the fence to escape the frenzy within."

It was only about this time that one cop had the sense to open the one tiny gate in the perimeter allowing a number of people to escape onto the pitch. For the most part the victims themselves saved untold numbers of people from joining the mounting death toll. Fans in the seats above the terraces pulled many to safety. One man reported that some Liverpool dockers saved fans trapped in the crush in the tunnel. Another young man hoisted two small children over the fence before scrambling over himself. Michael Bradford in a letter published on the front page of the *Independent* (23 April) captures the moment:

"Many supporters from this point behaved, I thought, heroically. From my position, trapped against a crush barrier, I witnessed supporters who had managed to escape on to the pitch begin to rip the wire mesh from the enclosing fence. Two police officers joined them, dozens of others stood and watched. It was through this hole in the fence that I escaped....I joined in parties using makeshift stretchers to ferry the injured to the medics at the far end of the ground. Very few police joined us; most others continued to stand around the pitch. Several times we had to shout at oblivious policemen to get out of our way as the stretcher parties moved up and down the ground."

There was virtually no provision for a medical emergency, as the FA itself has admitted. Indeed, its "minimum requirement is that a doctor should be present at games" (The FA president is none other than the Duke of Kent – rather "distant" from the condition on the terraces.) Dr John Ashton, a senior lecturer in public health at Liverpool University and himself a spectator, had to take control of the medical emergency. He recounted: "At 3.30 pm, there were no medical personnel apart from one or two St John Ambulance men. There was no equipment and there was only one ambulance" (*Times*, 17 April). A full casualty team with resuscitation equipment did not arrive until about 4.15 pm. And there was no oxygen equipment. When Dr Glyn Phillips, another Liverpool supporter who came down from the seats to help, requested an oxygen tank, he found it was empty.

CAPITALIST BRITAIN: DEATHTRAP FOR THE PEOPLE

The slaughter at Hillsborough throws a harsh light on the condition of the working class and lumpenised unemployed, herded like animals and penned in crowded cages in order to see a game of football. As Hugh McIlvanney wrote in the *Observer* (23 April):

"At a deeper level it appears that
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Campaign...

(Continued from page 12)

demonstrations in Southall commemorating anti-fascist militant Blair Peach - beaten to death by the cops ten years ago - the PDC collected close to £300. A subsequent street collection in Southall collected another £38. Collections have also raised money from the Tamil political milieu in London. At shopping areas in Toronto's East Indian community, women put bills into Partisan Defense Committee collection buckets. In France, where the efforts are being organised by the Comité de défense sociale, an Afghan woman supporting a family of five on her welfare cheque donated 100 francs.

Iranians, who from their own experience in Khomeini's "Islamic Republic" know only too bitterly the regime of terror and murder that will come if the Afghan counter-revolutionaries win, have assisted in the campaign. At the University of Hamburg in West Germany a supporter of the Iranian Rahe Kargar group made a placard in Farsi of the central campaign slogan and came to our defence against a supporter of the Afghan *mujahedin*. And two Afghan students, who complained their community was being terrorised by supporters of the CIA's "holy warriors", took bundles of leaflets. At a teachers union meeting in West Berlin called to protest "racism, anti-Semitism and hostility to foreigners", several young Turkish women donated to the campaign, saying, "We know what Islamic terror means". Much of the money raised by the Partisan Defence Committee in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia was from postal workers who encompass a rich ethnic diversity including Turks, Greeks, Italians, Arabs and Slavs.

In the US, at the University of Wisconsin in Madison an older Jewish man put two of the PDC's campaign leaflets up at his draft resistance table. When an incredulous student asked if he supported the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan he shot back that the Soviet Union was virtually the only country that didn't "feed its Jews to the Nazis". A comrade in Hamburg collecting for the Komitee fur soziale Verteidigung (Committee for Social Defence) reported a very positive response "particularly among older women for whom the humanitarian appeal of a city destroyed by war recalls nightmares that never vanish".

For working people, the PDC campaign provides an opportunity to oppose the bloody designs of their "own" rulers. At a meeting of the Scottish Trade Union Congress in Aberdeen, £108 was collected. In Glasgow, at a joint meeting of the NUR/ASLEF unions of about 100 transit workers, £28 was collected for the Jalalabad civilian victims. East Indian workers in New York City transit - which, as in London, management runs with all the concern for safety that Union Carbide showed in Bhopal - organised among themselves to raise money. Two collections at Transport House in London brought in £24 from dock workers headed for a confrontation with the government over abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme. Donations were also made at meetings of the Waterside Workers Federation in Melbourne. And at a Seamen's Union job pick, every single seaman gave money - one saying that if the CIA was behind the *mujahedin* he was "agin 'em".

In France, an organiser in the rail workers union, whose father was a leader of the Algerian FLN, reports he has raised 570 francs among friends

We list here the contributions from 9 April to 24 April to the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund (JCVAF), launched by the Partisan Defense Committee in the US and joined by fraternal legal and social defence organisations in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Italy and West Germany. A separate account has been established in each country for the fund drive. All funds collected are securely forwarded to the "Victims of Jalalabad" account established by the Afghan Embassy in Paris as donations clear the account. All administrative costs and any costs for publicity connected with the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund campaign are being paid by the respective legal and social defence organisations in each country.

Contributors receive numbered receipts, and the financial records of the fund drive are open to inspection by any bona fide workers organisation. Listed are the amounts transmitted to the Afghan Embassy account, the amounts deposited in JCVAF accounts but not yet cleared, and the sum of these amounts which equals the total collected in each country. This is reported in each country's currency and in £ sterling, shown in brackets, at the exchange rate in effect on 24 April 1989.

and relatives. Supporters of the French Communist Party in the Stalinist-led CGT union federation, bitter that their own party is doing nothing, have given to the campaign for Jalalabad. The Soviet intervention into Afghanistan sharply divided the European CPs. Among some of the "hard-line" oppositionists our campaign has intersected bitterness over Gorbachev's withdrawal of the Soviet troops, part of his global programme of appeasing imperialism.

At an abortion rights demonstration in Rome, the Comitato di difesa sociale e proletaria raised the equivalent of \$300 for Jalalabad. A former leader of the Italian Communist Party youth took our megaphone to call on people to come and donate. In Britain, the Communist Party Britain (CPB/*Morning Star* grouping, which slavishly supports Gorbachev's withdrawal) decided on the spot at two meetings on Afghanistan (13 and 17 April) to take up its own collection for the Afghanistan government forces after Spartacist supporters announced the PDC campaign for Jalalabad.

Students in both the London and Glasgow areas have been generous and enthusiastic about the Jalalabad campaign. An intensive week of work covering Glasgow University, Strathclyde University and Glasgow College brought in £75. At the School of Oriental & African Studies in London, with a large concentration of international students, over 1000 leaflets were distributed and over £55 collected.

May Day events in London offered PDC campaigners another opportunity to collect for the Jalalabad fund. At the public meeting held in conjunction with the "Second International Tamil Conference in London", over £40 was raised and over £119 was collected from largely Turkish May Day marchers and attendees at the official South-

Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund

	Donations Transmitted	+ Donations Deposited (Not yet cleared)	= Total Collected
Australia			
Partisan Defence Committee Receipts Nos 1-4	A\$870.91 [£403.57]	A\$0.00	A\$870.91 [£403.57]
Britain			
Partisan Defence Committee Receipts Nos 1-68	£595.67	£636.45	£1,232.12
Canada			
Partisan Defense Committee Receipts Nos 95401-95443	C\$1,506.84 [£741.94]	C\$1,050.00 [£517.01]	C\$2,556.84 [£1,258.95]
France			
Comite de defense sociale Receipts Nos 1/1-1/25	FF6,245.95 [£582.52]	FF3,306.70 [£308.39]	FF9,552.65 [£890.91]
Italy			
Comitato di difesa sociale e proletaria Receipts Nos 1-54	L.1,103,680.00 [£475.22]	L.0.00	L.1,103,680.00 [£475.22]
United States			
Partisan Defense Committee Receipts Nos 5001-5034	US\$1,037.69 [£607.90]	US\$2,189.73 [£1,282.79]	US\$3,227.42 [£1,890.69]
West Germany			
Komitee fur soziale Verteidigung Receipts Nos 1-29	DM2,507.51 [£790.01]	DM0.00	DM2,507.51 [£790.01]
International Totals (in £ sterling)	£4,196.83	£2,744.64	£6,941.47

ASIAN TIMES

- Friday 28 April 1989

Call for aid to Afghan civilian victims

The Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) has launched a campaign to raise funds for the civilian victims of the continued fighting around the Afghan city of Jalalabad. One of the largest cities in the country it has been the scene of heavy fighting for some weeks.

Mujahedin make a desperate attempt to capture and hold a major area in order to try and shore up their sinking credibility. In launching their appeal the PDC state: "What would happen if the 'holy warriors' financed and organised by the Un-

ited States - and en-

defence

social progress to currently centred on

east Regional TUC event at the Barbican centre.

The cause of defending Afghan women and coming to the aid of the victims of the CIA's Afghan cutthroats has united conscious elements across ethnic and national lines: anti-Zionist Jews with North African Arabs, Indian women and Sikh men, trade unionists and immigrant communities. But while our campaigners have found curiosity, sympathy and support among many layers of the working people and minority communities, one sector of society is simply hostile: the anti-Soviet "left". The virulently anti-Soviet Socialist Workers Party is for the victory of Washington's cutthroats in Afghanistan. *Socialist Organiser*, which joined the imperialist chorus demanding Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, is now conducting a debate in the pages of its press over its current position of defending the PDPA against the *mujahedin*. The centrist Stalinophobic Workers Power grouping, which has a nominal position for the PDPA's victory, has refused point blank to contribute to the PDC campaign - claiming that it will be doing its own collection.

Elsewhere, the Russia-hating left

have been despicable as well: in Lyon, France a campus member of *Lutte Ouvriere* sneered, "What difference does it make if a woman can take off her veil?" At San Francisco State University, a member of the International Socialist Organization (co-thinkers of the British SWP) claimed that women in Iran wanted to wear the veil.

The people of Jalalabad are fighting for their lives against a blood-thirsty melange of landlords, money-lenders, mullahs, tribal chiefs and bandits who get billions from Washington and its allies, funnelled through the rapacious Pakistani military. As we go to press, over £2300 has been collected in Britain for the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund. We urge you to give generously to aid the civilian victims of the CIA's "freedom fighters". Every penny, every pound collected (and every dollar, franc, mark, yen and peso) will be sent to Afghanistan. This struggle is in the interests of the whole of the working people!

Please send contributions payable to the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund, to the PDC, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX.

PDC...

(Continued from page 12)

solidarity to those who are prepared to fight to the death against the CIA's cutthroats.

Right now, the battle is being fought at Jalalabad. The US and its anti-Communist allies have been poised for the kill. Their "freedom fighters" rain thousands of American rockets on this strategic city whose fall would open the road to Kabul. Bush has already named an envoy to the rebel "government", while the Pakistani president has called for the federation of Afghanistan into a dominant Pakistani state. But the Afghan army and the people of Jalalabad are heroically fighting back. They have repelled the onslaught; the battle still rages.

The *mujahedin*, heavily armed by the US, organised by Pakistan and bolstered by Saudi Arabian and other foreign forces, are inflicting terrible suffering on the population. On 30 March, rockets struck a Sikh temple in Jalalabad where several hundred Sikhs and Hindus had gathered; 22 people, most of them women and children, were killed.

Recently, the Afghan government issued an appeal:

"In order to aid the victims of these attacks a broad campaign of humanitarian assistance has been launched on a national and international plane by the concerned parties and the authorities of the Republic of Afghanistan."

In response to this appeal, the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) has launched a campaign to raise funds for the civilian victims of Jalalabad. We call on all workers, oppressed minorities and defenders of democratic rights to support this undertaking. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation; this purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League/Britain.

For the last nine years, Washington and its allies have poured billions into supporting the Afghan counterrevolutionaries, and now feudal, imperialist-backed states in the region are throwing their own soldiers into the civil war. (Britain paid its anti-Soviet tithe with its supply of Blowpipe anti-aircraft missiles to the Afghan reactionaries.) The western media glorified the *mujahedin* as they killed Russian soldiers. But now that the

bands with their reactionary social values prefer them to die rather than let them be examined by a male obstetrician. Even Western officials call rebel leader Hekmatyar a "fascist". His thugs used to throw acid in the faces and shoot legs of young women at Kabul University who refused to wear the stifling head-to-toe veil.

At an International Women's Day rally in Kabul this year, Fatima, a 25-year-old second lieutenant in the

wives each."

This war originated after modernising nationalists of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan took power in April 1978 in a country where the working class had no social weight. They sought to carry out basic democratic measures - restricting the bride price, teaching young girls as well as boys to read, land reform. In response Islamic mullahs, tribal chiefs and landlords launched a bloody civil war. In 1979 the Soviet Union was called to intervene in force to prevent Afghanistan, its southern neighbour, from falling to US-backed *mujahedin*. The Spartacist League hailed the Soviet military intervention for opening the possibility of social revolution in this hideously backward country. However, under Gorbachev, the Soviet forces have been withdrawn in order to appease the NATO capitalist rulers.

Despite several and serious differences with the PDPA, we must find ourselves on the same side in opposing the military triumph of reaction, a position which is the basis for our overall revolutionary defence. Two months ago, the PDC in the US wrote to the Afghan government offering "to organize an international brigade to fight to the death" to defend elementary social progress which is in grave danger in Afghanistan. While the Kabul government took this offer as presently unnecessary, it has now asked the Partisan Defence Committee and others to participate in an international campaign of humanitarian aid. We have wholeheartedly undertaken this effort and urge you to generously give your support. Every penny, every pound collected will be sent to Kabul, Afghanistan; all administrative expenses will be paid by the PDC.

Take a stand with the fighters and people of Jalalabad whose lives are on the line. Give direct material aid to the wounded and mutilated citizens there. This struggle is in the interests of the whole of the working people.

Partisan Defence Committee
12 April 1989



TASS from Sovfoto

May 1979 demonstration in Kabul honours Noor Mohammed Taraki, an enlightened intellectual who sought to embrace Marxism and founded the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.



AFP

Soviet troops have pulled out, even *Wall Street Journal* reporters tell of the horror facing Afghan women in Pakistani refugee camps whose hus-

banders declared: "We have nothing but death for these bigots who only want their dollars from the US and the freedom to have half-a-dozen

Mayekiso...

(Continued from page 2)

it was not until the following April that he was charged with treason for his political activities in Alexandra.

The TUC and many individual trade unions participated in the defence of Moses Mayekiso, as well as various left organisations internationally. In the US his case was taken up by the United Auto Workers and the United Steelworkers of America. The Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) actively joined in the fight for his freedom, along with the Spartacist League/Britain, SL/US and other sections of the international Spartacist tendency which participated in demonstrations on his behalf. (The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation; this purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League/US.)

Moses Mayekiso's defence was threatened by the poison of sectarianism. At its 1987 merger conference, Mayekiso's NUMSA stated that while it was adopting the ANC's Freedom Charter, this was only the "first stage" of liberation of the South African masses. Given Mayekiso's and NUMSA's differences with the ANC, the ANC's uncritical support groups outside South Africa have all but ignored (and in Britain for a time opposed) the campaign to free Mayekiso. Fortunately, this did not stop a mass outpouring of support for his case by

the organised workers movement. As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* no 92 (October 1987): "It is the elementary and urgent duty of every enemy of the vicious apartheid regime to rally in defence of Mayekiso, regardless of political, programmatic differences on the course of the anti-apartheid struggle. The stakes in this case are very high."

During the trial of the Alexandra Five, the judge delivered an implied rebuke to the state by referring to its frequent use of treason charges in political cases as a matter of "concern and comment". But despite the acquittal, Judge Van der Walt set an ominous "important precedent" in South African law as the *Guardian* (25 April) points out. Before dropping the treason charges, he found for the first time that "violence" was not a necessary element "for a conviction of treason" - thereby setting the stage for even more vicious state frame-ups.

The freedom of the Alexandra Five is a great victory for the increasingly powerful black trade union movement in South Africa and for all those struggling against the murderous apartheid state. The release of this courageous leader of a strategic section of South Africa's black working class, in whose hands is the power to bury apartheid, should serve as an impetus for struggle. As Moses Mayekiso stated at the end of the trial: "There can never be justice in apartheid, capitalist South Africa." Nelson Mandela remains imprisoned along with thousands of other class-struggle prisoners. Over 60 anti-

apartheid fighters are on death row. Addo Youth Congress members Ndumiso Siphenuka and Makhezwane were hung by the apartheid butchers in April. In the same week that Mayekiso and his comrades went free, three ANC members - Jabu Masina, Ting Ting Masango and Neo

Potsane - were sentenced to death. International solidarity by the workers movement along with hard class struggle in South Africa itself were key to freeing Moses Mayekiso - free all victims of apartheid oppression! *Smash apartheid - for workers revolution!* ■

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Perestroika fuels economic chaos and nationalist upheaval

Soviet elections: a vote for what?

The recent elections to the Congress of People's Deputies have sent shock waves through the Soviet Union and around the world. Prominent Communist officials were defeated, even some who ran unopposed. "Leningrad boss comes last in a one-horse race", quipped one London newspaper. The commander of Soviet forces in East Germany lost to a colonel who campaigned for the abolition of the draft and an all-volunteer army. In Moscow Boris Yeltsin, a former Gorbachev lieutenant turned "populist" demagogue, won a landslide victory - 90 per cent of the vote - over a local *apparatchik*. Rabid nationalists, many demanding outright secession from the USSR, gained a majority of seats in the Baltic republics.

The Soviet Union has become a seething cauldron of political passions fuelled above all by economic discontent and resurgent nationalism. When Gorbachev came to power four years ago, he promised "a significant acceleration in social-economic progress", doubling the output of consumer goods by the year 2000. Now the Soviet leader cannot appear in public without being accosted with bitter complaints about shortages of food and everything else. "Recently, all you hear is perestroika, glasnost", a man wrote from a village in the Urals to the Communist Youth newspaper. "But what has changed? Why is sugar rationed? Why are school uniforms rationed, shoes expensive and wages low?"

The Baltic republics - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - have become hotbeds of anti-Communist and anti-Russian agitation. In the Caucasus, Armenians and Azerbaijanis have been killing one another in a fight to control a remote mountainous region - Nagorno-Karabakh - of around 100,000 inhabitants. Last month, Moscow sent troops into Georgia trying to quell a territorial conflict between Georgians and a small Turkic minority. In Moscow and Leningrad the nativist Russian fascists of Pamyat are terrorising Gorbachevite intellectuals and spewing anti-Semitic filth.

Western anti-Communists think that they're seeing their wildest dreams come true. Gorbachev is waving the white flag in the Cold War, surrendering one position after another - withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, unilaterally cutting military spending on all fronts. Cold War ideologues like Zbigniew Brzezinski are predicting the death of Communism before the 21st century. They foresee the USSR being ripped apart by national conflicts, while Gorbachev



Elections to Congress of People's Deputies unleashed stormy political passions. Members of the Academy of Sciences demonstrating in Moscow.

introduces more and more capitalistic measures into the economy - profit maximisation for enterprises, layoffs of "redundant" workers, increases in the cost of living, the decollectivisation of agriculture, the growth of private entrepreneurs.

Certainly the tendencies and forces for capitalist restoration are growing ominously. But there is a lion in the path of capitalist restoration - the Soviet proletariat. Soviet working people are deeply distrustful of Gorbachev's market-oriented "reforms". American Sovietologist Jan Vanous noted: "One of the most conservative elements may be the workers, who sense that, with any change, things will first get worse. That is in fact

what they are seeing; their worst fears are being confirmed..." (*Soviet Economy*, April-June 1988). Soviet workers want to *conserve the social gains of the Bolshevik Revolution*, most concretely economic security, a low and stable cost of living, and a relatively egalitarian society.

But working-class resistance to perestroika has to date remained passive, unorganised, without a political expression. That is why the political scene has been dominated by Gorbachevite reformers, pro-Western liberals, nationalists of all stripes, Pamyat fascists and populist demagogues like Yeltsin. An authentic Bolshevik party must be built anew in the Soviet Union, to combat not only the

Stalinist betrayers of the revolution but *all* forms of nationalism and chauvinism, liberal and pacifistic illusions, and outright capitalist restorationism. Such a party would raise on its banner, in Trotsky's words: "the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918."

WHO LOST? WHO WON?

When television newsmen asked one woman how she had voted, she replied, "Against what we have now". That pretty well sums up the popular mood. Much of the Western bourgeois media presents the election results as a repudiation of Communist rule. Gorbachev, however, contends the vote was a rousing endorsement of his "new thinking": "In a word, comrades, people have accepted the policy of perestroika with their hearts and minds. That, if you please, is the main political result of the elections ... Those [officials] lost who have been slow to reconstruct themselves, who haven't broadened their ties to the workers" (*Baltimore Sun*, 31 March). There is a certain validity in this last statement.

Leningrad party chief Yuri Solov'yev was a member of the old Grigori Romanov gang which ran the city under Brezhnev. Romanov and his cronies are best remembered for taking Catherine the Great's dinnerware from the Hermitage Museum and smashing it in a drunken party. Solov'yev & Co are openly hostile to the Gorbachevite intellectuals and have been friendly protectors of the Pamyat fascist thugs. The Kiev officials who went down to defeat are part of the despised Vladimir Shcherbitsky regime in the Ukraine, a hold-over from the Brezhnev era. No fan of glasnost (openness), Shcherbitsky locked up some Ukrainian nationalist agitators when Gorbachev visited his bailiwick in February. But while some local party bigwigs were repudiated in the elections, removing them from their bureaucratic posts is another question.

Given the worsening economic conditions, how is it that the conservative opponents of Gorbachev's new course, and not the partisans of perestroika, were singled out for defeat? The answer is twofold. First, Gorbachev and his propagandists have convinced people that the wretched economic conditions were largely inherited from the Brezhnev "era of stagnation".



(Above) Greatest nationalist danger in the Soviet Union is that of Great Russian chauvinism: fascist Pamyat fuhrer Dmitri Vassiliev agitates for anti-Semitic pogroms. (Right) Lithuanians march behind flag of right-wing, bourgeois state of the interwar period.



Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!

There is an important element of truth here. However, as we shall see, perestroika has made things worse.

Secondly, the conservative *apparatchiks* – represented in the Kremlin oligarchy by Yegor Ligachev – want above all to restore *tight bureaucratic control* over Soviet society. The Ligachev people have not claimed, even demagogically, to defend the interests of the working class against the inevitable effects of perestroika in the economic sphere – plant closures, layoffs, price rises. Instead they have concentrated their fire against glasnost in the political sphere. Last year Ligachev sponsored the notorious "Andreyeva letter" praising Stalin and denouncing the relative newfound freedom in the Soviet press and media. The conservative bureaucrats are thus seen as aiming to bring back police-state conditions, if not of Stalin's day, then of Brezhnev's.

While the old-line bureaucrats were the big losers in the elections, the results were not a vote of confidence in Gorbachev. This is especially obvious with regard to the explosive nationalities issue. Perestroika has fuelled a resurgence of nationalism and national antagonisms throughout the USSR. The bureaucratic centralism of Stalin and Brezhnev acted to crudely level the economic differences between the various regions. With decentralisation and "market socialism" now the order of the day,



Ted Thai/Time

Boris Yeltsin, Stalinist apparatchik turned populist demagogue.

the more advanced regions – notably the Baltic republics – see the opportunity to gain at the expense of more backward regions.

In Estonia and Latvia, much of the nationalist agitation is directed at the large population of Russians who emigrated there, drawn by the region's booming economy. Nationalist "popular fronts" in these Baltic republics call for total economic autonomy and restrictive immigration laws as well as language laws which would reduce the Russian inhabitants to second-class citizens. These movements, and even more so the Sajudis movement in neighbouring Lithuania, identify with the right-wing, bourgeois Baltic states of the interwar period.

In the elections Sajudis won a large majority of the delegates allotted to Lithuania. The Estonian and Latvian Popular Fronts won a somewhat smaller majority, in good part because the Russian inhabitants of these republics voted for the established Communist leaderships. In fact, the Russians have formed their own countermovement, the Interfront. The stage is thus set in the Soviet Baltic for the kind of communalist violence we have seen in the Caucasus. Trying to quell the the communalist bloodletting, Mos-



– March 19, 1989

(Left) Soviet press reports strikes as workers resist speedup and layoffs which accompany perestroika. (Right) Gorbachev and his wife Raisa visiting a factory in Estonia.

cow imposed martial law in the Armenian capital of Yerevan last winter and imprisoned the firebrands of the Karabakh Committee. In response, Armenian nationalists called for a boycott of the elections, and many voters heeded their call. Armenia had the lowest voter turnout in the Soviet Union.

But the most potentially dangerous nationalism of all for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is that of the dominant nationality, the Russians. The spearhead of anti-Communist Russian nationalism is Pamyat (Memory), whose fuhrer Dmitri Vassiliev declares: "the Great Russian Revolution was not great, and it was not Russian. It was organised by Jews." Pamyat's programme: a pogrom against Soviet Jews, the purging of all Western influence in Russia, and a strong leader in the Kremlin like Stalin, or Ivan the Terrible. The Soviet workers must crush Pamyat!

These days, Gorbachev seems to be scrambling to keep in front of the tumultuous forces unleashed by his policies and promises: "We must not commit stupidities, attempt great leaps forward, or overreach ourselves because we could put the people's future at risk" (*New York Times*, 27 March). On the one hand, he has postponed for two or three years the explosive issue of raising consumer prices. On the other hand, last month he took a significant step towards de-collectivising agriculture by granting farmers lifetime leases on land, which they can bequeath.

The contradictions exposed by perestroika reflect the contradictory position of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy caught between the unrelenting pressures of world capitalism and the socialised economy created by the 1917 October Revolution. The nationalistic Kremlin oligarchy, from Stalin to Gorbachev, has driven the Soviet Union to such a condition that it cannot simultaneously improve living standards, modernise industry and agriculture, and maintain the military preparedness necessary to counter the growing imperialist threat. To achieve these goals – each necessary to defend the Soviet Union – requires a proletarian political revolution which will sweep away the parasitic bureaucracy, and restore the Bolshevik programme of world socialist revolution.

BORIS YELTSIN AND POPULIST DEMAGOGY

That Boris Yeltsin should emerge as the most prominent oppositional figure in Gorbachev's Russia was certainly unexpected. In late 1985 Yeltsin was brought in from Siberia to

run Moscow precisely because he was a staunch Gorbachev loyalist and ardent advocate of perestroika. He zestfully axed scores of entrenched *apparatchiks* while currying favour with the local citizenry with a "populist" style. He visited hospitals and criticised the poor quality of medical care. He visited butcher shops and criticised the shortage of good meat. Of course, neither hospital care nor the supply of meat improved much. But then, like his protector Gorbachev, Yeltsin could blame all economic ills on the effects of the "era of stagnation".

Suddenly, in November 1987 it was announced that Yeltsin had been removed as chairman of the Moscow Communist Party. It seems he had sharply attacked Ligachev – then officially the number two man in the Kremlin – for obstructing perestroika. To preserve the unity of the ruling group, Gorbachev dumped the stormy petrel. In the old Stalinist manner, Yeltsin abjectly confessed his sins: "I am very guilty personally before Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, whose authority is so high in our organization, in our country and in the entire world" (*New York Times*, 14 November 1987). In the new Stalinist manner, Yeltsin was not shot as an "enemy of the people" but only demoted to a post in the construction ministry.

The fallen Moscow party boss, however, would not accept the role of living political corpse. He began giving interviews to the Western press, denouncing Ligachev as a closet opponent of perestroika. Then Yeltsin grasped the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies as a chance to make his political comeback. Furthermore, he ran against the manager of the Zil automobile plant which produces the handcrafted limousines for the party elite.

On Sunday, 19 March, 2000 pro-Yeltsin demonstrators defied an official ban and gathered in Moscow's Gorky Park. As they marched towards the Kremlin, their number grew spontaneously to 10,000. They chanted "Hands off Yeltsin!" and carried pictures of their new hero with the slogan "candidate of the people". Perhaps even more impressive than the size of this rally was its *broad social composition* – intellectuals, factory workers, grandmothers trying to survive on meagre pensions. Clearly, Yeltsin is a man with something to offer for everyone.

A marine scientist participating in the pro-Yeltsin demonstration stated, "The very fact that he is somebody they [the ruling circles] don't like makes people fight for him". But this purely negative explanation

cannot fully account for the scope of Yeltsin's support. Yeltsin also claims to offer a solution to the economic crisis *without pain and sacrifice* – perestroika on the cheap.

The principal economic architects of perestroika, like Abel Aganbegyan and Leonid Abalkin, advocate increasing the incomes of engineers, technicians and managers at the expense of most workers, and encouraging private capitalist entrepreneurs. Yeltsin instead rails at the privileges of the bureaucratic elite (the *nomenklatura*), such as their special shops: "The ruble of a janitor should be worth the same as the ruble of a party leader."

While the Baltic nationalist demagogues advocate regional autonomy, Yeltsin campaigned for economic protectionism for Muscovites. He demanded that the city's factories *limit* temporary resident permits, now given to tens of thousands of workers, in order to reduce the pressure of demand for housing, food and other consumer goods. Such a reactionary and *inegalitarian* measure would enhance the *already privileged* status of legally established Moscow residents.

The official spokesmen for perestroika insist that the country's economic health can be restored only by closing unprofitable enterprises and by increasing rents and food prices. Yeltsin, however, demands, "we must ... improve living standards and concentrate our resources on this, even if it means reducing investments, financial allocations or expenditures in other areas" (*Time*, 20 March). This would be to repeat the very policies which led to the so-called "era of stagnation".

Ironically, Yeltsin, who still describes himself as a strong supporter of perestroika, is now advocating the same economic policies carried out by the latter-day Brezhnev regime! Beginning in the mid-1970s, Brezhnev cut *back* investment in new plant and equipment in order to match the rapid American military buildup *without* reducing living standards. The planned increase in investment fell from 7.5 per cent in the 1970-75 Five Year Plan to just 2 per cent in the 1980-85 Plan. In this way Brezhnev & Co undermined the economic strength and dynamism of the Soviet Union. But at least they tried to maintain Soviet military power in the face of the Cold War II offensive launched by Carter and carried forward by Reagan.

Yeltsin, however, is also calling for sharp cuts in Soviet military spending. And this over and above the unilateral cuts already made by Gorbachev! It is here that Yeltsin

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Soviet elections...

(Continued from page 7)

stands united with the most right-wing, pro-Western elements in the Gorbachev camp (and outside it). Many partisans of perestroika denounce the present level of Soviet military spending as not only economically wasteful but also provocative towards Western imperialism. Stodgy old Leonid Brezhnev is now depicted in the Gorbachevite press as some ultraleft adventurer who foolishly provoked such peace-loving types as Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan by flaunting Soviet military power. The Yeltsin campaign thus combined populist demagoguery with dangerous pacifistic illusions in the benevolent nature of Western imperialism.

PERESTROIKA MAKES THINGS WORSE

In the late 1970s, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and in much of East Europe (eg, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia), attempted to buy social peace under conditions of declining economic growth. Thus the Brezhnev regime tried to foster the illusion of rapidly rising incomes by increasing money wages and salaries while freezing rents and the prices of food and other consumer goods. A kilo (2.2 pounds) of rye bread has cost about 15p for decades, a kilo of potatoes is half that, and the Moscow subway is still less than six pence. With money incomes rapidly expanding, state shops were quickly sold out, while the waiting lines outside them grew ever longer.

Much of the excess demand flowed into the flourishing black market (the so-called shadow economy). As a spin-off, the late '70s saw the rise of criminal gangs which Russians now call "the mafia". Most of the surplus money was salted away in bank accounts; there was simply nothing else to do with it. The growing gap between money income and real output was thus covered over by a form of forced saving. By the beginning of the '80s the Soviet Union had become an extreme case of suppressed inflation. And this condition has grown far worse under Gorbachev. Soviet savings banks are accumulating 20 billion rubles a year, twice the rate of the early '80s.

One factor causing this is the unforeseen economic effects of the anti-alcoholism campaign. Sales of heavily taxed vodka made up 15 per cent of the state's retail trade. Now, Soviet drinkers are buying cheap moonshine vodka - about two-thirds of the total imbibed - and saving more money. But it is not just vodka that can no longer be found in state shops. Last winter the principal government newspaper *Izvestia* reported: "By turns or in combinations, towels, toothpaste, toilet paper, lotion, sugar and electric bulbs have disappeared from the shelves. Now, you cannot buy detergent and cheap soap. What will it be tomorrow?"

Why the severe and growing shortages? First, in order to maximise profits under the new perestroika rules, enterprise managers have shifted their output from cheaper to more expensive items. Hence no more cheap soap. Secondly, the rise of small-scale private capitalists (they're called "cooperatives" but this fools no one) has diverted both foodstuffs and manufactured consumer goods away from the socialised economy.

Despite a poor harvest this year, total agricultural production has not declined under Gorbachev. However, a March 1986 decree allowed both collective farms (*kolkhozy*) and state

farms (*sovkhozy*) to sell a larger share of their output in the rural free markets or through private traders. You can buy any kind of food in any quantity in Gorbachev's Russia if you're willing to pay the price. But who can afford it? A kilo of tomatoes selling in Moscow's private markets costs more than a day's pay for the average worker!

In early 1987 a new law permitted private entrepreneurs to manufacture consumer goods as well as engage in various services (eg, repairman, hairdresser, taxi driver). The latter had long been common although illegal. But now petty capitalists are absorbing inputs for consumer goods that would previously have gone to supply the state shops. The other side of the shortages is sharply increased accumulation of unspendable money. Soviet citizens now hold about 300 billion rubles in savings accounts. Probably another 100 billion is tied up in old socks or stuffed in mattresses. This amounts to well over half the total annual national income of the USSR! To soak up this vast hoard of monetary purchasing power, prices would have to rise 100, 200, 400 per cent - god knows how much.

No wonder the Gorbachev regime wants to postpone the dread "price reform" as long as possible. Western bourgeois ideologues are disappointed that the Kremlin reformer-in-chief has not yet opted for the "free market" solution. The *Economist* (11 March) lectures the Soviet leader like an English headmaster speaking to an obtuse student: "Now Mr. Gorbachev may have only one weapon left to force Russia's idle classes off their backsides: price reform. Yet he seems reluctant, or unable, to use it." Last autumn a high-powered panel of American Sovietologists assured Gorbachev that doing away with price controls would not lead to massive political unrest: "this is one of the most patient populations in the world," according to Ed Hewitt of the liberal think tank Brookings Institution.

Soviet working people are not so patient when it comes to sharp increases in their cost of living. Practically every Western article on the current Soviet economy mentions that official food prices have been frozen since 1962. Yet almost none indicate why this particular benchmark year. In 1962 Khrushchev raised the price of meat by 30 to 40 per cent in order to finance higher procurement prices for the collective farms. The response was strikes and violent protests in many Soviet cities.

The most serious conflagration took place in the industrial city of Novocherkassk in the Donbass region of the Ukraine. The protest movement was spearheaded by workers from the huge Budenny Electric Locomotive Works and women from the textile mills. After the locomotive factory workers succeeded in driving off local militiamen, units of the army and the KGB political police were brought in to quell the protests. At one point thousands gathered in the city square. John Kolasky, a member of the Canadian Communist Party then studying in Kiev, has given an account of what happened in Novocherkassk based on eyewitness reports:

"The city secretary of the party appeared and began to address the crowd. Some tried to shout him down; others hurled objects at him. Suddenly the KGB detachment opened fire into the crowd. Shooting also began from other directions. In one area, when soldiers were ordered to fire, one officer pulled out his party membership card, tore it up, and then

shot himself. Many soldiers refused to obey the command. "According to reports, at least several hundred were killed. Martial law and a curfew were imposed, troops and tanks patrolled the streets and the area was completely sealed off."

- quoted in M Holubenko, "The Soviet Working Class: Discontent and Opposition", *Critique* no 4, Spring 1975

The protests and repression over the price hikes damaged Khrushchev's popularity and weakened his political authority. This contributed to his ouster from power two years later in a palace coup engineered by Leonid Brezhnev.

The Novocherkassk events are little known in the West. But they are well known to Soviet officials, and doubtless very much on the minds of Gorbachev and his entourage these days. Imagine what would happen today if the KGB shot down Soviet workers protesting price hikes! So the regime desperately wants to buy time. Abel Aganbegyan, one of the main



Burnett/Contact

In Moscow's private markets, two pounds of tomatoes cost more than a day's pay for the average Soviet worker.

architects of perestroika, maintains that "price reform" will be implemented a few years hence when the supply of consumer goods has increased sufficiently to prevent runaway inflation. Fat chance! Perestroika has not led to increased productivity. Quite the contrary.

INDUSTRIAL REFORM PRODUCES BUREAUCRATISED ANARCHY

Announcing the new Law of State Enterprises in June 1987, Gorbachev proclaimed the "transition of many branches of the economy to new methods of management, to full profit-and-loss accounting and self-financing" (*khozraschet*). The idea was that in order to maximise profits (or at least avoid losses) enterprise managers would reduce costs while producing better quality goods geared to consumer demand. But Soviet managers have no desire to compete for customers and have done their best to perpetuate the old system. Thus the bulk of their output goes to fulfill "state orders" negotiated with the industrial ministries which formerly administered the plan. The journal *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* (January 1988) claimed:

"What has happened in reality? The ministries have succeeded, without any difficulty, in putting the old content into the new name, and under the guise of an order have allocated enterprises the former plan for products."

Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya was wrong to maintain that nothing has changed except terminology. Under

the old, centrally administered system, a serious effort was made to match planned inputs to planned outputs. Enterprises received most of the raw materials and goods-in-process from the central supply agency Gosstab. But now there is no mechanism for matching inputs and outputs since the enterprises and ministries do not coordinate their production decisions and orders with one another. Say a shoe factory contracts to supply the ministry of light industry with several thousand pairs of work boots. There is no guarantee it can procure the quantity and quality of leather it needs from various tanneries. And there is no central agency responsible for meeting its supply needs.

Thus the Soviet press reports a marked increase in factory down time, wasting countless man-hours, due to lack of supplies. In short, enterprise "self-financing" has resulted in ministerial empire-building and bureaucratized anarchy. Moscow wits have revived an old joke to describe the effects of the "reform". It seems the Kremlin leaders decided to change

the traffic system so that henceforth driving would be on the left instead of the right. Being cautious, they implemented the reform in stages. To start with, only half the cars would follow the new rule.

The main aim of "full profit-and-loss accounting" is not so much to spur managers to become more efficient. Rather it is to reduce labour costs by laying off "redundant" workers and forcing those remaining to work harder for fear that they, too, may lose their jobs. A leading "reform" economist, Nikolai Shmelyov, stated quite bluntly:

"Today it is, I believe, clear to everyone that we owe disorderliness, drunkenness, and shoddy work largely to excessively full employment. We must discuss fearlessly and in businesslike terms what we could gain from a comparatively small reserve army of labor."

- quoted in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *Gorbachev's Economic Plans* (1987)

As Brookings Institution's Ed Hewitt put it cynically but accurately: "Look, perestroika is a very polite phrase for firing a lot of people, moving people around and closing a lot of bad enterprises" (*Washington Post*, 6 November 1988).

A closely related aspect of perestroika is the hard-sell campaign to draw Western and Japanese multinationals into joint ventures in the USSR. A few months ago the Gorbachev regime announced that foreign investors can now have up to 80 per cent ownership in such joint ventures. But Western capitalists want more

Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 1)

start of Ramadan (the month-long Muslim fast which began in early April) was revised to the end of Ramadan. Jalalabad stands while the "deadlines" fall.

Now a front-page lead article by senior correspondent Henry Kamm in the *New York Times* (23 April) bitterly admits:

"The attack has bogged down into a costly siege and has brought into question the ability of the guerrillas to achieve an early victory, or any victory, over the Soviet-backed Government in Kabul."

Swallowing their own anti-Communist "evil empire" hype, the imperialists had thought that the moment the Soviet "occupation" troops pulled out, millions of Afghans would flock to be "liberated" and the Kabul regime would crumble. What has begun to crumble instead are Washington's hopes that the disparate, disunited bands of fanatically reactionary "freedom fighters" are capable of sustaining the sort of concerted, large-scale military offensive needed to rapidly topple the left-nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) government.

Kamm reveals, in great detail, that the attack on Jalalabad "was ordered by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Government at a meeting of civilian and military leaders in Pakistan, and in the presence of the American Ambassador....No Afghan was present at the meeting." The head of Pakistani military intelligence reportedly opposed the attack on tactical grounds, arguing that the guerrillas were only capable of maintaining a war of attrition based on small-scale ambushes and harassment. Pakistani, Saudi and American involvement in the siege of Jalalabad is an open secret. The Pakistani army's 11th and 18th divisions - over 6500 troops and scores of tanks and artillery units - have been involved in the assault on Jalalabad. So why the "revelations" now? Because the imperialists' expectations are being frustrated.

In the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, the US and its NATO allies pulled their embassies out of Kabul, seeking to sow panic and isolate the PDPA regime internationally. They hoped for the establishment of a "provisional government" in Jalalabad in time to be seated at the Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers in Riyadh last month. But the rebels have suffered such heavy losses recently - up to 5000 by government estimates - that one guerrilla commander, Abdul Haq, lamented, "Sometimes now it becomes difficult to

convince our people why we should go on fighting at such a cost when even the Russians have gone" (*India Today*, 15 April).

For its part, Najibullah's PDPA regime, left in the lurch by Gorbachev's pullout of Soviet troops, is placing the limited social reforms achieved thus far on the bargaining table in exchange for "national reconciliation". But none of the seven feuding parties in the coalition of Islamic fundamentalists and monarchists



Lorch/NY Times

Civilian refugees fleeing mujahedin bombing of Jalalabad (left). Liberated Afghan women armed and ready to defend their social gains (right).



Friends of Afghanistan

based in Peshawar are interested in a deal with the Kabul regime.

While the guerrillas have been strategically unsuccessful on the battlefield, they have shown their real intentions in a number of massacres of defenceless men, women and children. At Samarkhel, just east of Jalalabad, *mujahedin* massacred two dozen government troops in March even as they surrendered. And the *Sddeutsche Zeitung* (18 April) describes an eyewitness account, initially reported by TASS, of one recent atrocity:

"According to the report, a motor column was supposed to bring dozens of women, children and old people from Jalalabad to Kabul. The buses and trucks were stopped by a 'band of Afghan extremists' led by Saudi Arabian advisers. The drivers were lined up on the shoulder of the highway and shot. Small children were held up by their hair, shot in the face and their corpses thrown into Kabul River. Pretty women from the convoy were dragged off into the mountains by the rebels. The rest of the refugees were shot on the spot."

"Country or Coffin!" is the battle cry of the government forces defending Jalalabad. In Kabul, reporter Shekhar Gupta observed (*India Today*, 31 March) that "only the most hopelessly biased can fail to see that a large section of the army will fight

to the finish". But it is not only the realisation that they face a fate worse than death if captured by the *mujahedin* that spurs on the government fighters. From the outset ten years ago, the war in Afghanistan has posed a struggle over elementary social progress - land reform, restricting the bride price, teaching young girls as well as boys to read - pitting the Soviet-backed modernising nationalists of the PDPA against mullahs, tribal chiefs and landlords.

1000 women had joined, "united in their hatred for the Mujahidin" and showing "a willingness to die for their cause".

One woman said: "We know that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (one of the seven main Mujahidin commanders) wants women to be hidden away again behind the *chador*, but we will kill to prevent that happening." (Hekmatyar first became notorious in the early '70s when his thugs threw acid in the faces and shot at the legs of unveiled

The Red Army intervention in 1979 opened the possibility of social revolution in this hideously backward country, while defending the Soviet Union against imperialist provocation on its southern border. Gorbachev's pullout, aimed at appeasing US imperialism, opened the possibility of a counterrevolutionary bloodbath of the Afghan urban population.

But the Kabul regime and the urban population who have had a taste of social emancipation did not simply roll over and play dead. And with the help of Soviet-made MIG-23s, attack helicopters and surface-to-surface Scud-B missiles launched from Kabul, the Afghan army has been drubbing the *mujahedin*. "The guerrilla leaders concede that the Afghans piloting the helicopter gunships and fighter strike aircraft have shown greater determination than the Russians who trained them", writes Gupta.

As an auxiliary to the more than 100,000 troops in the Afghan military and secret police, the government has armed and mobilised a people's militia of some 300,000. And not surprisingly, it is those who have the most to lose if the *mujahedin* win who are among the most enthusiastic and courageous fighters. An article in the *Times* (28 February) headlined, "Kabul women queue to sign up for battle against the rebels". Less than a week after the government announced the formation of a voluntary women's militia, more than

women students at Kabul University.) Another woman, who had already been trained in use of a Kalashnikov, added: "I know that, if I do not take up arms, the enemy will try and kill and rape us, as they have in those parts they have already captured."

Other women militia members, ranging in age from 16 to 50, described how their sons and husbands had been murdered by the reactionaries. "Now at last I have found a way to take my revenge", declared one 36-year-old volunteer named Ramia. At a public ceremony in Kabul on 8 March, International Women's Day, the women's militia, many of them proudly wearing their battle fatigues, were presented with their arms, which included rockets, mortars, machine guns and automatic Kalashnikov assault rifles.

The fighting at Jalalabad remains fierce. The Afghan people have already suffered incalculable sacrifices, and they will suffer more. But they must not fight alone. The Partisan Defence Committee in Britain has joined the urgent international campaign of material aid to the civilian victims of the CIA's cutthroats in Jalalabad (see page 12). The battle for Afghanistan is a battle for toilers and oppressed around the world. Every fighter for social progress, every defender of women's rights has a stake in its outcome.

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than a bigger share of the expected profits. They want to run Russian enterprises like they run their own corporations.

Leading Soviet labour economist Vladimir Kostakov recounts that an American businessman told him a year or so ago: "You want Americans to participate in joint ventures. Would I be able to dismiss your workers?" (*Soviet Economy*, January-March 1988). Talk about capitalist arrogance! Here's a man who has invested not one dime in the Soviet economy, but he is yearning to throw Russian workers into the streets.

But Soviet workers do not intend to let themselves be dismissed by their own homegrown bureaucrats, not to speak of American, German and Japanese capitalists. For Soviet workers, a job means a lot more than just

a paycheck. The workplace is the center of economic and, to a large extent, social life. Large enterprises provide free health clinics and nurseries, low-cost housing, cheap vacations and countless other benefits.

Even more so than stability in the cost of living, the Soviet proletariat considers job security as their *fundamental right*, as a basic attribute of the Soviet system. Hence the Gorbachev regime is moving very cautiously on "price reform", layoffs and closing unprofitable enterprises. Nonetheless, the worsening economic situation, especially food shortages, could easily spark an explosion from below given the inflammatory conditions of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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Get Thatcher...

(Continued from page 1)

have claimed the lives of hundreds of workers, whose sweat and toil paid for tax cuts to the rich and the anti-Soviet military budget. Now Thatcher/Lawson's economy is in big trouble, facing surging inflation, double-digit interest rates and a massive trade deficit, because they don't manufacture anything much here anymore. And the bosses want to turn the screws even more to make the workers bail them out.

A head-on confrontation between the trade unions and the government and its cops and courts is inevitable. Thatcher & Co "negotiate" like the czars did with Russian peasants - with the whip and club. But there is an enormous, jagged disparity between the developing militancy of the working masses and the cowardice and treachery of the labour bureaucracy. Ron Todd and Jimmy Knapp were among the Labourite architects of the betrayal of the miners strike - they will not fight to win! The labour fakers preach obedience to the laws and dictates of the government. If you play by the bosses' rules, you lose! The precondition for any effective struggle is the complete independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state.

What's needed is a class-struggle leadership ready and willing to wield the power of the organised workers movement. That means a break with the Labour traitors who will doom even militant struggles to defeat, demobilising or dissipating them into pressure tactics to put scab Neil Kinnock into No 10 Downing Street. Up against a calculating, ideological anti-union offensive by the government, the working class needs its own revolutionary party - the general staff of a fight for state power.

PROGRAMME TO WIN

London underground workers are poised on the verge of the first all-out tube strike since the 1926 general strike. Angry bus workers are pushing for strike action, while some British Rail workers have initiated job actions at London stations. A solid, city-wide strike of all transport workers will grind the financial centre of British capitalism to a halt. Bus, tube, BR workers: all out May 8! Defy all no-strike injunctions!

Management's latest "offers" are an insult to the intelligence of transport workers! "Pay increases" that come out of your own pocket, jacked-up work loads, seniority abolished. The proposed "Action Stations" and the implementation of so-called "psychological" and "aptitude" tests for promotion purposes is a death warrant for any kind of trade union. Black, Asian and other minority workers, who regularly risk their lives at the hands of racist assaults on the tubes and buses, are clearly being targeted. If you're a militant, or an active socialist, you'll be singled out as well. If the heavily integrated workforce doesn't stick together, there'll be no union at all! The bosses want to soften up and split apart workers for more of Thatcher's privatisation schemes -

you'd better believe it's No 10 Downing Street that's orchestrating these attacks. Already London bus routes let out to competitive tender - often the same management under a different name - are paying half the old wage scale.

The bosses want war - give it to them! What they didn't bargain on was a militant, determined response from London rail and transport workers. The unions have the power to win. All the government's threats of "unspecified" legal action, sequestering union funds or even putting a few union officials in jail will fall flat in the face of a solid strike. If all transport workers stay out, then London is shut down - and without London this country won't run. Millions of people will love watching the City fatcats crawl for a change. *You can't run the buses, tubes and rail lines with court injunctions or cops!*

For years the pressure has been

prohibiting secondary picketing! Tube workers must send out *mass militant flying pickets* to shut down every bus garage, tube and rail depot. Such determined action can stop any would-be scabs and ensure there is a solid citywide strike. The only illegal strike is one that loses.

For a fighting programme to link the rail, tube and bus workers into one hard union fist: For a big pay boost! No widening of pay differentials! For full cost-of-living increases to match inflation point by point. Reverse the manning cuts, scrap the OPOs! No discrimination! Promotion to be based on seniority with full union control of hiring, upgrading and skills training! Scrap the government's privatisation schemes! For union control of safety conditions with full power to shut down unsafe operations! Free public transport - rip out the ticket barriers, turn the ticket booths into information stands.

driven out of the ports and onto the dole so management can hire a different workforce, working harder for less pay. Already at the non-registered Scottish port of Peterhead fish "lumpers" work on a casual basis. Tilbury lighterman Bob Cook warned, "I see the docks industry going like the building industry" (*New Statesman and Society*, 21 April). The largely non-union building trades have a notorious safety record and high death rate. Irish and "migrant" Northern and Scottish men are discarded as broken and often alcoholic wrecks into the swelling ranks of the homeless.

Because of their enormous social power in this island economy, the dockers have been targeted by Tory and Labour governments alike. In the immediate postwar period, the government of Attlee and former TGWU general secretary Ernest Bevin sent in troops repeatedly to break dockers



Workers Hammer



Workers Hammer

Dagenham workers march in support of miners strike (left). Orgreave (right): Labour "lefts" knifed the strike.

building in transport - long gruelling hours, including split shifts, disciplinary crackdowns, slashing of staff, implementation of deadly one-person operations (OPOs), with nothing to show for it, as mortgage rates go through the ceiling and the cost-of-living soars in London. Then drivers and guards convened a mass meeting. As one driver put it: "The official union representatives were there but they were asked to leave. They put the union point of view, but the rank and file weren't prepared to listen. I wasn't prepared to listen to rubbish either. We have been waiting years for a pay review promised by the management, and we aren't going to wait any longer" (*Observer*, 23 April). And when they took action, two 24-hour work stoppages, it rocked management - no-one was disciplined.

NUR members on the tubes voted for strike action by an overwhelming 7 to 1 margin; they have been joined by white-collar staff organised by the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association. TGWU London bus workers have already turned down a pay offer. One TGWU official confessed that during the recent tube walkouts, "We were under a lot of pressure from some of the garages to come out then" (*Evening Standard*, 28 April). Union officials are talking about rolling 24-hour strikes on the buses - but to begin a week after the tube strike. This is simply sabotage of the necessary joint action. Screw selective strikes! Don't let the bosses pit the unions against each other. Fight together - or hang separately! NUR and ASLEF drivers showed the way when they overcame union/craft divisions and struck together. That action pointed the way forward to building *one industrial union* throughout London metropolitan transport.

Stuff Thatcher's anti-union laws

No victimisation of any strikers! Abolish the late and absence procedure - scrap the Disciplinary Board of London Underground!

Underground workers have already thrown up a new layer of militants who have organised strike actions. For elected strike committees, elected in all depots and linked together through a *joint strike committee*. All full-time union officials to be subordinate to the elected strike committees. No sellouts to please Labour Party politicians who fear a mass militant confrontation with the bosses and the Thatcher government.

DOCKERS UNDER THE GUN

On 6 April, Tory "employment" minister Norman Fowler announced the government's intention to abolish the 1947 dock labour scheme. Before then the dockers were among the most exploited workers in Britain, forced to compete for daily casual work. The scheme established some safety and training provisions and gave the union a 50 per cent say in hiring and firing. The job of unions is to defend their members, not to collaborate with management in firing workers. Militants would demand complete union control of hiring - no collaboration with the bosses on disciplining the workforce. A registered docker gets a measly £27 a day if he reports and there's no work. Nonetheless, the dockers have had to fight time and again to preserve even these modest gains.

The registered dockers rightly fear that the abolition of the scheme will open the way to the return of casualisation. In 1947 there were 73,000 dockers under the scheme. Now there are only 9400 with an average age of 47. No-one has been hired on the Liverpool docks since 1973. If the scheme is abolished older workers will be

strikes. Today, the Tory attack on the dockers is primarily motivated by the desire to humiliate a historically trade union conscious workforce in order to intimidate all the unions. In addition, the government wants to shore up its increasing *unpopularity* by appealing to the anti-union sentiments of the English middle classes. Even the capitalist press has been compelled to note that the attack on the dockers may be "a glorious diversion" (*Financial Times*, 10 April), providing "convenient and credible scapegoats" (*The Scotsman*, 7 April) for rising inflation, balance of payments deficits, diminished growth, and widespread opposition to the poll tax and the further gutting of the already crumbling NHS. Thus, while 10,000 dockers can't stand the government down alone, they are in a position to forge a powerful alliance with other unions and the oppressed.

In the black and Asian communities, Thatcher is widely hated for the escalating cop violence, stepped up deportations, vastly tightened immigration and asylum provisions. BBC employees striking for higher pay are also, like much of the intelligentsia, alienated by the government's police state measures, the raid on the Scottish BBC offices over the Zircon film, the media ban on Sinn Fein, the ludicrous *Spycatcher* affair. Last autumn thousands of students protesting educational cutbacks were assaulted by mounted police near Parliament in London. The LSE student union recently elected Winston Silcott honorary president. Silcott is a black man framed up when the racist cops invaded the Broadwater Farm estate a few years ago; the cops, for a change, came up one short. At the time, Kinnock obscenely showed his "solidarity" with the police by laying

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Hillsborough...

(Continued from page 3)

the battering suffered in Thatcher's Britain by our industrial strongholds of the past, like Liverpool, to name the week's most relevant example, has left tens of thousands needing football as much as their forebears ever did. They need it as an escape from the drabness imposed by unemployment and poverty, and they need it for the defiant sense of unity they can find in the crowd, a rough camaraderie that was more of an everyday experience when factories were big and busy."

But the fascist street gangs that terrorise the terraces and led the murderous riot at Heysel in which Liverpool "fans" were the spearhead - have also been spawned in the conditions of decaying capitalism. The National Front and other fascist outfits have for years targeted football clubs. Pollyanna gibberish that "hooligans" are figments of Tory imaginations like that found in the pages of *Socialist Worker* criminally disarms the working class. (The SWP's 22 April issue describes the murder of 39 Juventus fans at Heysel as "deaths caused by collapse of wall!") Despite the SWP's nonsense, not all football fans are salt-of-the-earth workers. Those Millwall "fans" (skinheads and other slime) who chanted and jeered during the minute of silence held at matches on Saturday, 22 April certainly don't conform to that picture. The fact is that football has been the traditional working class, plebeian sport of England and Scotland and at the same time it has also become a recruitment ground for violently chauvinist, racist thugs and outright fascists. The organised workers movement in alliance with all the oppressed must stamp out the fascist scum!

Playing on the justifiable loathing much of the population has for skinhead punks and soccer hooligans,

South Yorkshire Chief Constable Peter Wright accused the fans of being "pickpockets", looters and of assaulting the police at Hillsborough. Wright headed up the police riot in Toxteth and the cop battle against miners at Orgreave in 1984. His current accusations have been hotly denied by both Dr Phillips and Dr Ashton who has forthrightly condemned the police operations to nearly every newspaper in the country. Wright's main ally, the garbage *Sun* tabloid, has been burned on the streets of Liverpool. But the inevitable post-disaster cover-up is underway; the South Yorkshire police are now refusing to release the victims' clothing and possessions to their relatives.



Dobney/Independent

Capitalism kills: King's Cross tube station the day after bosses' cuts murdered 31 commuters in deathtrap fire.

Margaret Thatcher, the indefatigable ghoul, rushed to Sheffield to visit the wounded. Her stay was not long and her reception was not warm; "get her out of here" was the overwhelming response from the bed-ridden. She has also used the disaster to try to

push through her widely opposed Football Supporter ID scheme, a recipe for further disasters as well as another assault on basic civil liberties. As we wrote earlier:

"Thatcher responded to Brussels by introducing a whole range of measures, including yet stronger police powers, identity cards and a ban on alcohol anywhere in the vicinity of football matches....It will do nothing to quell the massive and aimless disaffection which festers in an epidemic of chronic unemployment, much less to stem the fascist gangs who are the openly terrorist vanguard of Thatcher's own viciously racist, anti-

communist, strikebreaking drive for 'Victorian values'. But it will have the punitive effect of depriving tens of thousands of working people of one of their few pleasures in life." ("Carnage on the terraces", *Workers Hammer* no 70, June 1985).

Squalor, criminal neglect, draconian "law-and-order" measures add up to murderous non-accidents. Even after the King's Cross inferno, London Transport installed new "automatic" ticket barriers in every station - in the all-too-likely event of fire, these barriers would hopelessly trap passengers trying to escape. For the bosses of this decaying society, catching a few fare dodgers takes priority over the safety of the millions who use the tube every day. In response to the cries for improved safety conditions at the stadiums, Thatcher has said no government money will be forthcoming. One of the lessons of the Ibrox disaster at the Glasgow Rangers stadium in which 66 people died was the need for all-seater stadiums to avoid the crush. While a number of clubs in Scotland have done much to implement this policy, English grounds remain as ever with half the fans being given no choice but to stand. The 1985 Bradford disaster in which 56 people died brought forth almost no improvement in grounds; at the Bradford inquiry the Green Code point that the pitch was still the safest place to evacuate people to in case of emergencies was reinforced. But the perimeter fences remained. Moreover, structural engineers had strongly opposed the steel length-wise guards that divided the Leppings Lane terrace into four parts as extremely dangerous, but the police overrode these objections.

In "disaster Britain", they privatise the profits, "socialise" the losses and bury the victims of this inhuman system. The Labour Party will bemoan the loss of human life and wag their fingers during question time in Parliament. But these fakers prop up the capitalist system which is to blame for Hillsborough, King's Cross, Zeebrugge, Piper Alpha, Clapham Junction. This place is long beyond reform. It will take nothing less than victorious socialist revolution to sweep away the rotting edifice of British capitalism and avenge the manifold crimes of the butcher Thatcher and her whole criminal class. ■

a wreath at the dead cop's memorial. LSE students have chosen to solidarise with the victims of state violence, despite the hysteria whipped up by the bourgeois press and the Police Federation. Free the Broadwater Farm Three!

Disillusionment with Thatcher even extends to doctors, barristers and the Home Counties strata that were promised a green and pleasant land by the government. "Even the better-off families in the south of England are realising that slightly higher disposable incomes aren't much comfort if the roads are jam-packed, the local railway station has closed, and when it rains, something unpleasant seeps onto the streets from the collapsing sewers" (*The Scotsman*, 15 April). A recent public opinion poll revealed 60 per cent of the populace wants Thatcher to resign before the next election. The *Economist* (29 April-5 May) admitted: "One other item on the debit side of the ledger; by a significant segment of the country, she is hated. Not resented, or disliked - hated."

Right now some hard class struggle could tap the deep bitterness and anger of the working masses at a time when the Tories have antagonised and disappointed their supposed beneficiaries. Although British capitalism has decimated much of the industrial workforce, the economy can't function without transport, electricity and gas, foreign commerce. It's main-

ly trade unionists in those sectors who are in the forefront of struggle today. If dockers, transport and rail workers linked up in joint strike action, they could grind this country to a halt, enlisting the active support of millions who want to give Thatcher a fitting "goodbye party" on the 10th anniversary of her reign. Many in the coal fields and inner cities would relish this taste of revenge.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

The objective elements are there, but what is urgently needed is a revolutionary leadership determined to mobilise this social power. While extremely militant at the base, the recent tube walkouts - undertaken without picket lines - are partially encouraged by the bureaucracy in preference to a concerted display of union power. Likewise, after much legalistic manoeuvring, the dockers leadership is conducting a strike ballot that excludes the non-registered T&G-organised ports, which handle 30 per cent of foreign trade by tonnage and 50 per cent by value. This is suicidal - bring out the dockers in Felixstowe, Dover, all ports and fight to extend the gains of the registered docks to the non-registered ports! Bollocks to the ballot! For joint strike action now with rail and transport workers! The militancy of the dockers is being undercut because the misleaders push the line that you can take on the bosses alone without mo-

bilising a powerful class-wide fight against the government, its laws prohibiting secondary picketing, etc. The hard won gain of the closed shop is now on the chopping-block in the dockers struggle. But Ron Todd is integrally linked to the Labour Party leadership, which acts as the political policeman in the workers movement for the capitalist state.

If dockers had listened to the likes of Ron Todd in 1972, Heath's Industrial Relations Act might never have been defeated and the Pentonville Five might still be in jail. Or take the battle of Saltley Gates in the same period, where tens of thousands of Birmingham engineering workers joined miners on the picket line to face down the police. This kind of militant solidarity which challenges the authority of the capitalist state is deeply feared by the Labour Party tops, because the reformists rely on this same apparatus to repress workers struggles when they are in office.

One of the pernicious falsehoods labour fakers want workers to believe is that the miners strike lost because the NUM took on the government. The miners lost because they were forced to fight alone. Twice the dockers struck briefly alongside the the miners, while militant railworkers demanded strike action to reinstate union members sacked for blacking scab coal. But these struggles were quashed by the likes of Ron Todd and Jimmy Knapp, the trade union "lefts".

The unions could have shut down the country, but this would have deeply destabilised the capitalist order, posing the question "which class shall rule".

BRITAIN NEEDS A BOLSHEVIK PARTY

The bourgeois propaganda machine has been raising a hue and cry against the registered dockers because they have "jobs for life". What's the matter with that - anyone who wants to work should be able to get a decent job. It's a brutal "logic" of capitalism that millions are condemned to the dole queues, while millions of others work long, gruelling hours and still live in poverty. The Labour Party leaders refused to pledge to restore the dock labour scheme - not because of its class-collaborationist aspects, but because they too are against the very notion of "jobs for life". They are pledged to administer this poverty-stricken, rotting capitalist system. Full employment, a decent standard of living, safe public transport, free quality medical care - these essentials cannot be won this side of a proletarian revolution which will lay the basis for a planned reconstruction of this economy. What's necessary is to split the base of the Labour Party from its pro-capitalist tops, right and "left", forging a revolutionary Bolshevik party that will lead the fight for "jobs for life" and everything else we need. ■

No to the veil—defend Afghan women!

Support Jalalabad victims of CIA's cutthroats!

The following call was issued by the Partisan Defence Committee on 12 April. Similar calls were issued by fraternal legal and social defence organisations in Australia, Canada, France, Italy, the United States and West Germany. As we go to press, over 20,000 copies have been distributed in Britain.

What would happen if the "holy warriors", financed and organised by the US—and enthusiastically backed by Thatcher—won the war

over Afghanistan? Women enslaved to the veil. Schoolteachers shot. "Adulterers" stoned. "Blasphemers" executed. Foreign political refugees murdered. Minor government officials condemned. Just look at Khomeini's Iran! We call urgently on all defenders of women's rights, all partisans of social progress to materially aid the victims of Washington's bloody crusade. Your Washington will send a message of internationalist *continued on page 5*

Afghan militiawoman proudly displays her Soviet-supplied AK-47



Guardian

Urgent campaign for victims of Jalalabad siege

Around the world—in immigrant communities, at factories, workrooms and union halls, among students—a campaign of international solidarity with the embattled working people

and emancipated women of Afghanistan is under way. Under the slogan "No to the veil! Defend Afghan women! Support Jalalabad victims of CIA's cutthroats!" this effort had evoked

sympathy among sections of the working people against the imperialist rulers who are arming and bankrolling the Afghan *mujahedin*. As of 24 April over 100,000 leaflets had been distributed by the Partisan Defence Committee in Britain and Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the US and West Germany. As of 24 April, £6941.47 had been deposited in special accounts, of which £4196.83 had already been wired to the government of Afghanistan for material aid to civilian victims of the bloody battle at Jalalabad (see box, p 4).

The Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund was launched by the PDC in the United States in response to an appeal issued by the Afghan government for a broad campaign of humanitarian assistance. The PDC in the US has been active for more than a decade. The Jalalabad campaign provided the impetus for initiating legal and social defence organisations similar to the PDC in the US in conjunction with the sections of the international Spartacist tendency. In Britain the Partisan Defence Committee has been formed. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and

social defence organisation; this purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League/Britain.

The women students, mothers and grandmothers in Kabul who have enlisted in the battle against Washington's murderous Afghan rebels should know that the cause of Afghan women has struck a chord. The campaign was kicked off at the massive abortion rights march in Washington 9 April, where PDC supporters distributed more than 25,000 leaflets. The issue of women's rights has continued to be on the cutting edge of our efforts.

As a PDC supporter in London reported her work on the campaign throughout the city: "From older Indian women in saris, to young Sikh men, kids of 14, in fact most youth, black, white, Asian, middle-aged white women, older black couples from the West Indies, white working class couples ... what they mostly respond to is the defence of women against the *mujahedin* armed and financed by Thatcher and the CIA." Two collections at the Lesbian and Gay Centre in London (£41.00 and £34.91 respectively) brought forth support from the homosexual community who can well imagine what would happen if the *mujahedin* "holy warriors" won the war over Afghanistan.

The Asian community, particularly in London's Indian Southall community, has responded enthusiastically to the Jalalabad campaign. The *Asian Times* (28 April) covered the Partisan Defence Committee campaign on its front page, quoting extensively from the PDC's appeal, printed above. On 23 April, at two

continued on page 4



Workers Vanguard

Partisan Defence Committee launched aid campaign at massive 9 April abortion rights demonstration in Washington, DC.