



## Voting Labour will not stop the BNP rampage

# Trade unions and minorities: mobilise now to crush the fascists!

There is a sinister rise of murderous racist and fascist attacks in this country. Every week brings a similar story. In early March, in Poplar, 15 white thugs surrounded an Asian woman and her child on the way to visit their family. Only the aid of people in a passing car allowed them to escape a murderous attack. Muktar Ahmed and Quaddus Ali have been put in hospital by fascist-inspired terror gangs, beaten to within an inch of their lives. On campuses in London, a vicious, racist hate campaign has been launched against Asian, Jewish, homosexual and leftist students. The police admit that racial attacks in Tower Hamlets have trebled since BNP councillor Derek Beackon was elected last September. Over 20 racist attacks are reported each day in Britain.

There is an urgent and felt need for the workers movement to *act!* The organised trade union movement has the power to crush the fascists. *What's needed are massive, well-defended mobilisations of the trade unions, jointly with the Asian and black communities, drawing on the support of socialists, gays, Jews, all the intended victims of fascism, to drive the BNP rats off the streets and out of the minority areas.* A victory like Cable Street in 1936, where the police were powerless to protect Mosley against hundreds of thousands of enraged workers, Jews and Communists would open up the possibility of forming *workers defence guards*, to actively suppress the BNP.

Thousands upon thousands of trade unionists and youth from all over Britain, outraged by the racist atrocities, will march on the TUC's "Unite against Racism" demonstration on 19 March. Every militant and anti-fascist should join this march—the BNPers should see the working class' hatred for them. But we must also be clear: the TUC demo is only a *protest*; it is not the *action* the situation screams out for.

The TUC leadership won't harm a hair on the head of a single fascist. Like the German social democrats, who allowed Hitler to come to power without a shot being fired, the union officials place their faith in the ballot box and the capitalist state. Their answer to the BNP is a call for a vote to the servile, pro-capitalist Labour Party!

*The race-hate murder gangs of the BNP don't care how many slips of paper bear an "X" for Labour! They have a pro-*



Workers Hammer

Welling, October 1993: 50,000-strong anti-fascist march attacked by cops. What's urgently needed is the power of the organised workers movement mobilised to crush the fascist scum.

- For workers/minority defence guards to stop fascist and cop attacks!
- Full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!
- For class struggle against capitalist austerity!
- No vote to Labour!
- Build a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government!

*gramme of genocide. They plan to come to power by physical violence against Jews, blacks, Asians, the left and the trade union movement. The fascists will only be stopped on the streets, by the overwhelming force of mass union/minority mobilisations. It is time the fascists went in fear! They must be crushed in the egg!*

What the TUC and Labour Party bureaucrats call for instead is "legislation against racial attacks and harassment". But the capitalist state, including its hired thugs in blue, are the defenders of the bosses' system. Its job is to coerce and crush working-class struggles. Under Labour or Tory, the bosses' state will always tolerate or defend the fascists. In Welling last year, thousands of cops were

mobilised to protect the BNP HQ and attack anti-fascist demonstrators.

Labour in power would be like Labour in power the last time: racist, anti-working class, anti-Irish; driving down living standards and sitting atop the "living death" of mass unemployment. Labour in power will rule for the City and Wall Street. Workers have no interest in voting for the party which stabbed the miners, enforced the hated poll tax, and supported bloody imperialist murder in the Gulf War. (Let's not forget Tony Benn's "left wing", who "only" wanted sanctions against semi-colonial Iraq: the same kind of economic torture which has killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis since the shooting war ended.)

Preaching reliance on the government to stop the fascists dovetails with subordinating the unions to the capitalist state. Instead of leading class struggle, the union leaders meekly kow-tow to the government's anti-union laws. TUC general secretary John Monks' latest "initiative" is to invite Tory ministers and Liberals to TUC meetings as part of a "cross-party thrust". The TUC message to working people is to buckle under to the bosses in the hope that they may receive some paltry crumbs from the bosses' table. Meanwhile economic misery deepens and the fascists grow.

Fighting the fascists means a fight against capitalism. The most urgent tasks

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## YRE/ANL Labourites take a dive

# PDC united-front protest against witch hunt of Welling anti-fascists

On Saturday 5 March, about 45 people — socialists, anti-fascist activists, trade unionists — demonstrated outside New Scotland Yard demanding “Drop the charges against all anti-fascist protesters!” and “Down with the police/media witch hunt of the Welling anti-fascist demonstrators!” The protest was initiated by the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC), a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and

social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League.

In early February the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun*, *Star*, *Daily Express*, *Today*, *Times* and *London Evening Standard* all published photos of protesters from the 50,000-strong Welling anti-fascist march on 16 October last year, which was attacked by police in the line of their “duty” — defending the murderous BNP.



TROTSKY

### The Bolsheviks abolished laws against homosexuality

*Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet-bloc deformed workers states has meant wholesale attacks on women's gains, from childcare to free abortion. But the 1917 October Revolution, which gave rise to the Soviet Union, for the first time laid the basis for real equality for women, and eliminated all laws against homosexuality. As laid out by Dr Grigori Batkis, the director of the*

*Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, the early Soviet republic held that the state should stay out of sexual matters as long as there was effective consent. These emancipatory principles were later reversed as the conservative Stalinist bureaucracy sought to reinforce the family and traditional social values. Commemorating International Womens Day, 8 March, we base ourselves on the pioneering principles established by the Bolsheviks. These measures were far in advance of even the most “liberal” bourgeois-democratic regimes. Recently the British parliament, assisted by the vote of 39 Labour MPs, rejected a proposal to lower the age of consent for male homosexuals to 16 — the same as for heterosexuals.*

The present sexual legislation in the Soviet Union is the work of the October Revolution. This revolution is important not only as a political phenomenon, which secures the political rule of the working class. But also for the revolutions which emanating from it reach out into all areas of life....

The social legislation of the Russian communist revolution does not intend to be a product of pure theoretical knowledge, but rather represents the outcome of experience. After the successful revolution, after the triumph of practice over theory, people first strove for new, firm regulations along economic lines. Along with this were created models governing family life and forms of sexual relations responding to the needs and natural demands of the people....

The revolution let nothing remain of the old despotic and infinitely unscientific laws; it did not tread the path of reformist bourgeois legislation which, with juristic subtlety, still hangs on to the concept of property in the sexual sphere, and ultimately demands that the double standard hold sway over sexual life....

Now by taking into account all these aspects of the transition period, Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle:

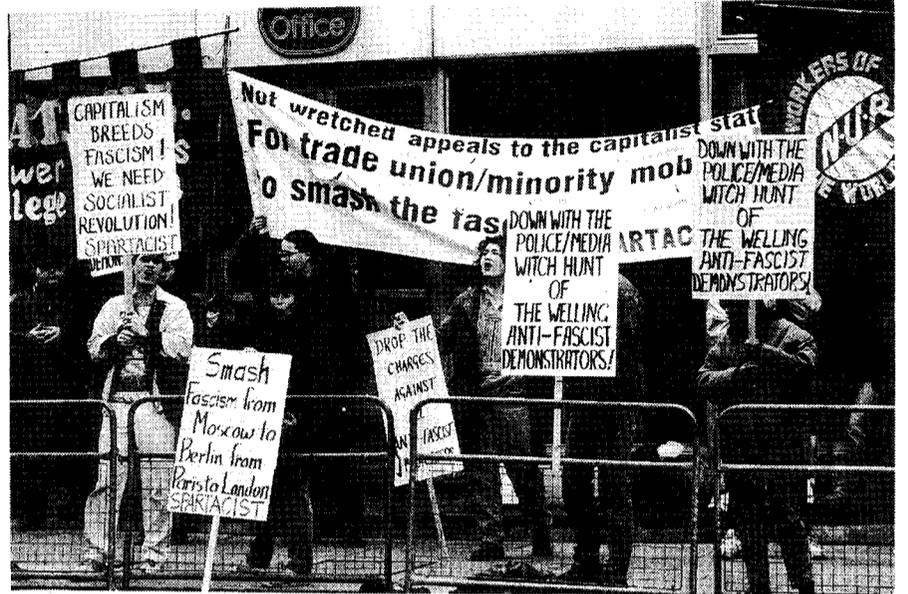
*“It declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon.”* (Emphasis in original.)...

Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality — Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called ‘natural’ intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. Only when there's use of force or duress, as in general when there's an injury or encroachment upon the rights of another person, is there a question of criminal prosecution.

—Grigori Batkis, *Die Sexualrevolution in Russland* (1925), excerpts translated in John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (1974)



LENIN



Workers Hammer

5 March: PDC-initiated united-front protest at New Scotland Yard defends Welling anti-fascists.

The 27 photos, carried as well by BBC and ITN in “news” reports, were supplied by the Metropolitan Police, who distributed them to police stations across the country. Accompanied by articles such as the *Mail's* screeching “Faces of hatred from the race riot front line”, this was the launching of a sinister witch hunt to track down and prosecute some 80 victims of the carefully orchestrated, brutal police assault on the anti-BNP demonstration.

The 5 March protest was called by the PDC in urgent response to this state/media dragnet, whose purpose was crystal clear: to intimidate anti-fascists into silence and passivity. As the PDC's leaflet for the 5 March demonstration urged, “It is the elementary duty of the workers movement and all anti-fascists to join in intransigent defence of those victimised.”

Anti-fascists targeted by the witch hunt could face prison terms of up to ten years if convicted on “riot” charges. As of 5 March, the cops said they had made eight arrests and have numerous “leads”. In addition to the protesters featured in the freeze-frame photos circulated by the cops and media, 34 other protesters from the 16 October demo were arrested on the day or soon after; some of the Tower Hamlets 9 still face heavy charges from the vigil for Quaddus Ali that was attacked by police on 10 September.

The united-front protest came in the context of an ominous increase in fascist attacks in London's East End: the hideous beating of 19-year-old Muktar Ahmed on 8 February by two dozen racists in Tower Hamlets echoes the near-fatal assault last September on Quaddus Ali. The scarcely reported epidemic of fascist attacks on Asians in the East End is an almost daily occurrence.

As Cat Wiener, speaking for the Revolutionary Communist Group — which endorsed and helped build the demo — noted in her speech to the 5 March demonstration: “...what the state fears is not the BNP, is not the rise of the fascists, but is in fact the mobilisation against that threat.... That is why they are targeting and attacking anti-fascist and anti-racist activists.”

Particularly despicable was the colla-

boration of some of the media in handing over film of the Welling demonstration to the police. The *Sun* did it voluntarily, while others followed suit after the cops obtained a court order. Andrew Puddephatt of Liberty commented that “using material taken from the press will undermine the independence of journalists seeking to cover future demonstrations”. The PDC called on media unions to defend journalists who refuse to comply with employer/court orders to fink on demonstrators. As well, all unions must “repudiate any collaboration with the

police witch hunt and defend those members threatened with victimisation for their courageous struggle against fascists” (PDC leaflet, 21 February).

In his speech at the protest, black trade unionist Glenroy Watson of the Finsbury Park RMT, which early on endorsed the demo, underlined the racism of the state and media: “The problem is that there are people being killed in this country by racists, and you don't see the suspects' faces being plastered over the media. You don't see any police efforts to arrest those that are committing these crimes, and they know where they are....” Michael Hickey, speaking for the Tower Hamlets College lecturers union NATFHE, stressed that: “The state is not neutral. The state protects the fascists and the state persecutes anti-fascists.”

Other endorsers of the action included the Tower Hamlets Trades Council, the National Union of Journalists London Magazine Branch, CPSA DSS HQ Branch 25/343, the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Students Union of London Guildhall University, the Workers International League, the Spartacist League, Feminists Against Censorship, William Paul Cockshott of the Workers Party of Scotland, Sheffield Students' Anti Racist/Anti Fascist Society, and Resistance (Dublin).

In calling for “unequivocal united-front defence of all the current and potential victims of police persecution”, the PDC leaflet for the 5 March protest stressed: “Groups participating will be able to express their own particular views, strategies and opinions in leaflets, banners, placards and from the speakers' platform.” It should have been an automatic impulse for anti-fascist and left organisations to bring all their forces to bear in beating back this attack. Instead, most of the left, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)/Anti Nazi League (ANL) and Militant Labour/Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), who were the principal initiators of the 16 October march, grotesquely boycotted this demonstration — the only public protest that has been organised in defence of the Welling anti-fascists.

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## WORKERS HAMMER



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**In the Name of the Father tells the truth:**

# British imperialism guilty as hell!

## Review

by Eileen McLaughlin

1974: A nightmare for Gerry Conlon, Paul Hill, Paddy Armstrong and Carole Richardson—the Guildford Four—began. Framed up for the October 1974 IRA bombings of two pubs in Guildford, the Four got life imprisonment for a crime the police and prosecution knew they could not have committed.

1976: The Maguire Seven, mainly relatives of Gerry Conlon, including his chronically sick father Guiseppe, were sentenced to between four and fourteen years for running a “bomb making factory” on totally fabricated “scientific evidence”. For Guiseppe Conlon it was a life sentence—in January 1980 he died in prison of ill health and ill treatment. The other members of the Maguire Seven served full sentences.

1989: Fully twelve years after having accepted the IRA’s admission that others bombed Guildford and Woolwich, the Court of Appeal quashed the convictions of the Guildford Four and released them. The Birmingham Six, similarly framed for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings were also released amid a dramatic wave of scandals from which the British ruling class are still smarting, and thirsting for revenge.

The releases were part of a major damage limitation exercise for the state. Yet they were cynically presented as a triumph of “British justice”. Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke declared recently, “I am always glad to see innocent people acquitted.... The British system in that kind of case is impeccable. I hope we can put this whole unhappy episode behind us” (*Independent on Sunday*, 23 May 1993). He is referring not to the Guildford Four, but to the three former Surrey cops brought to trial, who were indeed acquitted of fabricating evidence against the Guildford Four! Their so-called trial in May last year was in fact a grotesque retrial of the Four, as one cop after another insisted they were guilty. Three West Midlands cops were acquitted six months later of perjury and conspiracy against the Birmingham Six, on the grounds that adverse publicity had jeopardised their case. Naturally this problem has never bothered the judiciary when it comes to Irish people. All the official “enquiries” in these cases have put the victims back in the dock. The torture and death threats against the victims and their families have been overlooked. A section of this vile ruling class deeply regrets that the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four weren’t hanged.

Jim Sheridan’s powerful film *In the Name of the Father* relives some of the horror experienced by the Guildford Four and the Maguires. Based on the experiences of Guiseppe and Gerry Conlon, brilliantly played by Peter Postlethwaite and Daniel Day-Lewis, it presents a damning indictment of British injustice and as such is extremely popular with audiences in Ireland, North and South, and in Britain. Vivid scenes of British army terror in Catholic Belfast in the 1970s, combined with British police brutality and the sheer contempt for the Irish prisoners emanating from the judiciary and the screws are a sharp contrast to the image of Major/Reynolds pushing the lie that imperialism will bring “peace” or



Jonathan Hession - Universal

**Jim Sheridan’s *In the Name of the Father*. A damning indictment of British “justice”.**

“justice” to Northern Ireland. Gerry Conlon noted that while in prison “the government of the Republic of Ireland was a great disappointment to us”, since they basically told him and his father to do their time and shut up.

Despite Sheridan’s claim that “this is a father-son story, not an injustice story”, the film is in fact a major public declaration of what everybody knows to be true, that the Guildford Four are innocent. A furious campaign in the bourgeois press and in Labour reformist circles, enraged by its *essential political truth*, howls that Sheridan’s film is a lie. Instances where characters and events are sometimes altered, eg the Maguires and the Guildford Four being tried together rather than separately, Guiseppe and Gerry Conlon sharing the same cell, are seized upon, denounced as “inaccurate” and obscenely equated with the lies of the state which incarcerated the victims and destroyed their lives. A snotty reviewer in the *Financial Times* (10 February) “scarcely believed a single moment of it. Yes of course it ‘happened’, give or take some dollops of cinematic licence”. Speaking for all of this vile bunch, the Labourite *New Statesman and Society* (11 February) complained that the film “doesn’t ask the questions it could have asked” and bends the facts. Its final judgement is that the film is a mirror image of the state’s frame-up: “*In the Name of the Father* is no less an open and shut case than the one concocted against the Four.” The one scene *New Statesman* described as a “stab at subtlety” is where an IRA leader is seen trying to immolate a prison screw, which never happened, but the image of the IRA as having “total controlled intent, total uncontrollable savagery” appeals to them. There was uncontrolled savagery in prison all right, like when screws rioted in Wormwood Scrubs and Gerry Conlon saw Billy Power of the Birmingham Six being “just picked up and kicked like a football”.

The film’s Belfast-born scriptwriter Terry George has been vilified as a “terrorist”, because he was jailed by Northern Ireland’s Diplock courts in 1975 for a firearms offence which he strenuously denied. “Surprise, surprise—some British lawmakers don’t like the film”, George says. The attempt to paint the film as a lie implies that maybe the Four were not innocent after all. But there is

no getting away from the fact that the imperialist state and its Labour henchmen are as guilty as hell.

If anything the film plays down the level of brutality and the weight of conspiracy against these innocent people, focusing on suppression of alibis and reducing the blame to some corrupt cops when in fact it went all the way to the top. The film’s final courtroom scene and the release as a “happy ending” support the liberal view that “miscarriages of justice” are an aberration, which can be redressed through the legal system after all. This view of the state as “neutral” is false to the core—the capitalist state, its cops, courts and prisons are instruments of class oppression. The cases of Winston Silcott, the M25 Three, clear cut cases of racist frame-ups of black people, are proof that judicial frame-ups, torture and murder are endemic under capitalist rule.

The real-life story of the Guildford Four and the Maguires is much more savage than the film portrays. Paul Hill is currently on trial in Belfast, framed up for the murder of a British soldier in 1974 on the basis of statements invented by the cops when they tortured him to “confess” to the Guildford and Woolwich bombings. He has been on bail since he got out of jail four years ago, most of his compensation money has been withheld, he now has to relive the accusations all over again, and face the prospect of going back to jail for another crime he did not commit! The Maguires, who have public-

ly distanced themselves from Gerry Conlon, are also hounded. The night before the trial of the three Surrey cops last September, Patrick Maguire was set upon by a vanload of cops near his London home, beaten up and charged with assault. In court the cops’ “evidence” was thrown out—it was a pack of lies.

The 1974 IRA bombing campaign in Britain, including the Guildford, Woolwich and Birmingham pub bombings were indiscriminate acts of terror against civilians which Marxists condemn. But they were followed by an orgy of anti-Irish chauvinism and draconian round-ups of leftists and Irish people. The 1974 Labour government, true to its record as the party who sent the British Army killers into Northern Ireland in 1969, played its dirty part in overseeing these frame-ups, not least through the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In opposition Labour has voted against the PTA, but recently the obsequious John Smith tried to do a secret deal with Major so his party could vote for it this year. The “law and order” Labour Party’s objection that the exclusion of “terrorists” could be done by “increased surveillance” has the support of prominent Unionists like John Taylor. Conlon captures the PTA’s impact on the Guildford Four:

“The British parliament had helped [the police] a lot by rushing through the Prevention of Terrorism Act three days before I was pulled in. It was a panic measure after Birmingham, which lengthened the time they could hold a suspect without charge or access to a lawyer or magistrate. [Paul] Hill had been the first prisoner taken under it.... If the old two-day maximum had still applied they would have been forced to put me before a court on the previous Monday, after which my story might have been very different. Instead the police had plenty of time to terrorize me into submission and shape the case against me well enough to convince a magistrate.”

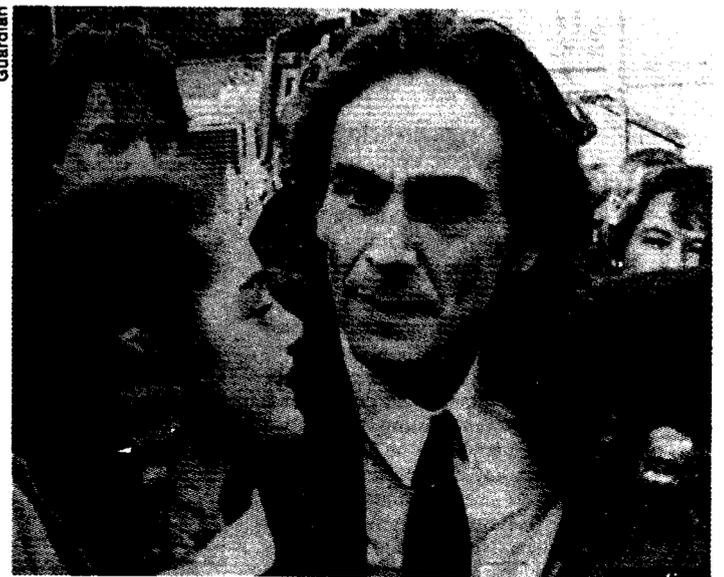
— Gerry Conlon, *Proved Innocent*

The fundamental truth about Labourism is carefully hidden by groups like the Socialist Workers Party who try to claim that it is only the Tories who are discredited in these cases.

Guiseppe Conlon’s life is well documented in the film. He was a working-class Catholic from Belfast who in the 1950s worked in one of the few jobs available to Catholics in shipbuilding—spraying red lead on the hulls of ships, without a mask. Work and chronically damp housing ruined his lungs. Arrested

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**Paul Hill celebrates his release with his daughter after 15 years in British prisons for a crime he did not commit.**



## Bosnia...

(Continued from page 12)

dispatch of Bundeswehr medical personnel and construction troops, technicians and administrative advisers, and even German police. The Fourth Reich of German imperialism wants to obtain through economic and political means what Hitler's Third Reich failed to achieve: a protectorate over the south Slavs as part of its neocolonial encroachment on East Europe. "If it goes the way Chancellor Kohl and Russian president Yeltsin want", the article states, "a summit should seal the peace—and simultaneously Germany's new role in foreign policy." *Spiegel* asks pointedly, "A new axis?"

But the latest imperialist proposal amounts to a German-protected Greater Croatian federation in which there are large Serb enclaves which will not willingly accept incorporation into a state dominated by the Croats. The Croatian regime would then be beefed up militarily and economically by Western imperialism, in the first instance against the Serb minorities. This plan is an incredible provocation, which would lay the basis for massacres and massive forced population transfers. It was precisely the prospect of forcible incorporation of the Serbs into Croatia which fuelled the counterrevolutionary breakup of Yugoslavia beginning in mid-1991, leading to the Serb minorities consolidating enclaves in both Croatia and Bosnia. Washington's scheme would never be accepted peacefully. If the US/UN attempts to impose such a plan by force, it would require an imperialist onslaught, laying the basis for years of bloody irredentist fighting.

Two weeks ago, Clinton thought he had everything down pat. The US and its NATO "allies" would launch UN-authorized air strikes in order to teach recalcitrant Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic a bloody lesson in obedience. Then they would lean on the Muslim-led Bosnian forces to accept an earlier plan, which had been on the table for months, dividing Bosnia into three entities (Muslim, Croatian and Serb). Clinton dusted off the "War Powers Act" to formally notify Congress of his readiness to order an attack, while in speech after speech he vowed to "exact a heavy price" from the Serbs. "The blood lust is up in Washington", commented one NATO diplomat.

But then Yeltsin made his dramatic move to defend Russian interests. Opposition to direct Western military intervention in its Balkan backyard has united all wings of Russia's fractious capitalist ruling circles, from the ultranationalist fascist Zhirinovskiy to Western bankers'

toady Yegor Gaidar. Yeltsin aide Vitaly Churkin warned that NATO bombing would mean "all-out war". Even as he grudgingly acquiesced to Washington's *diktat*, Yeltsin himself intoned: "Some people are trying to resolve the Bosnian question without the participation of Russia."

So days before NATO's 21 February deadline for air strikes if Serb forces did not withdraw their artillery from around the Bosnian capital, Churkin held a joint press conference with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to announce that



Russian troops welcomed by Bosnian Serbs with three-finger Orthodox Christian salute.

Russia would send in 400 "peacekeeping" troops to police a Serb withdrawal. Now any Western military action against the Serbs would also be an attack on Russian forces. As Russian soldiers drove through Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo last week, they were enthusiastically greeted by crowds giving the Orthodox Christian three-finger salute, offering bottles of plum brandy, while Serbian demonstrators shouted, "Hooray Mother Russia! Hooray Yeltsin! Hooray Zhirinovskiy!"

A miffed White House mumbled a few words of "gratitude" that the Russian deal had averted the need for air strikes, while complaining that the first they heard of it was on CNN. A *Wall Street Journal* (22 February) commentary acerbically noted that the interplay between Russia and the West over Bosnia "looked more like confrontation" than "cooperation". Meanwhile Yeltsin press secretary Kostikov crowed that Russia had "won an important battle for its world status". Foreign minister Kozyrev declared, "In the future, our foreign policy will continue to defend Russia's vital interests, even in those cases where it is contrary to the interests of the West." In case there was any ambiguity, he added: "Russia will not listen to the West's lessons and lectures" (*Economist*, 26 February). The subsequent meeting outside Bonn served to underline differences between Russia

and NATO and among the Western imperialists.

As we noted last issue: "Despite the current veneer of imperialist consensus, war-torn ex-Yugoslavia is a cauldron for imperialist intrigue and conflict." Liberals and reformists hailed the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War as opening up a new vista for international peace. In fact, the demise of the Soviet degenerated workers state as a military counterweight to US imperialism has made the world a far more dangerous place, sharply exacer-

bating the threat of trade wars and armed conflicts among the major imperialist powers and their regional allies. The clash of conflicting nationalist and imperialist interests in the Balkans is a prime example.

While the Clinton White House wants to pose as a "peacekeeper", Yugoslav journalist Misha Glenny finds "much evidence to support" the view of "one of the highest-ranking officers of the Bosnian Army" who says: "We have no illusions about American intentions in this region. The U.S. wishes to establish a military presence in the Balkans." In mid-February, the US decided to grant recognition to the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, where it already has 300 American soldiers under UN auspices. Greece, which is in a nationalist uproar over Macedonia's independence, effectively levied an embargo against the landlocked country, cutting off its access to the port of Salonika, where much of its imports and two-thirds of its oil supply come in.

At the same time, Russian foreign minister Kozyrev stopped off for discussions with Greece (where he met with his German counterpart Kinkel) before embarking on a tour of Prague, Budapest and Warsaw, where he warned the former East European client states to toe the line on Russia's intervention in

Bosnia. Prime Minister John Major of Britain, a traditional imperialist patron of pre-Titoist Yugoslavia, announced that he had known of—indeed encouraged—Yeltsin's plan to intervene but had withheld this "confidence" from his NATO "allies". And President François Mitterrand of France, another historic patron of Serbia, proposed putting Sarajevo under United Nations administration in order to piece off the Serbs as part of a settlement. The reaction of the Clinton administration was "less than enthusiastic".

Asserting its claim to be world gendarme, Washington now wants to host meetings between the warring factions in the former Yugoslavia as well as between the Israeli Zionist butchers and their Palestinian victims. But dreams of a Pax Americana are increasingly turning into nightmares of ever-widening wars. Clinton's support for a shotgun marriage between Bosnian Croats and Muslims under the roof of the fascist Tudjman regime in Zagreb is a provocation to Serbia and an aid to Germany, which engineered the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia by pushing "independence" for its Croatian and Slovenian client states three years ago.

Serbs well remember the atrocities carried out during World War II by Croatian and Bosnian Muslim nationalists fighting under the swastika of the Third Reich. Even the *New York Times* (22 February) confessed that "there seems to be little reason for the Serbs to accept such an agreement". Indeed, there is every reason to see this as an invitation to foment another round of fratricidal bloodletting.

Today, "heroic Sarajevo" has become a battle cry for those who seek "humanitarian" imperialist intervention on behalf of the Bosnian Muslim regime which, wherever it has the military wherewithal to do so, has pursued "ethnic cleansing" with no less a vengeance than its Croatian and Serb opponents. But under Tito's deformed workers state, multi-ethnic Sarajevo symbolised the possibility of harmonious relations among the south Slavs. Under capitalism Yugoslavia can only be a cauldron of nationalist feuding, as it was between the world wars. What is needed is workers revolution throughout the region, creating a genuine socialist federation of the Balkans.

The Balkans once before served as a cockpit for inter-imperialist slaughter, as the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 set the stage for the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Today, the trip wires are being put in place for imperialist world war, only this time all sides will be armed with nuclear weapons. We say: *Down with the UN starvation blockade! Defend Serbia against imperialist attack! US/NATO out of the Balkans, now!*

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## Guildford 4...

(Continued from page 3)

and imprisoned for trying to help his son, Guiseppe refused to give up fighting. He asked the screws from his deathbed "how does it feel to be murdering an innocent man?" The cruelty to this family continued even after his death, as Gerry describes:

"British Airways, the only airline which flew direct to Belfast, refused outright to carry his coffin. So it had to go by Aer Lingus to Dublin and then on by road. But in transit it went missing, and for two or three days it could not be found. Frantic with worry my mother was trying to find it and was given a number to ring in Hereford. She was told a post-mortem had been done. No one could explain why it was Hereford, why there had been a post-mortem, who had ordered it, what its

conclusions had been. Then she was told the coffin was at the RAF base at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. It finally got to Aer Lingus and came to rest where it belonged, home in Belfast. My mother received the bill of almost a thousand pounds, which she had to pay before the body was released. I was refused permission to travel over for the burial."

— *Proved Innocent*

Four years ago we wrote:

"The case of the Guildford Four, like that of the Birmingham Six and the Broadwater Farm Three, demonstrates the determination of the British state to bludgeon into submission Irish, blacks and anyone who defends themselves against racist, imperialist terror."

— *Workers Hammer* no 105, March 1989

A statement by Paul Hill to a Partisan Defence Committee rally in support of Mumia Abu Jamal, a black American journalist on death row, noted:

"As an Irish person in Britain I know only too well what racism means. Nearly sixteen years ago I underwent a trial which was more concerned with where I came from than what I had or had not done...."

"I cannot forget that the judge at my trial said that he regretted that he could not sentence me to death. If he had then last October's admission of my innocence by the British Home Secretary would have meant nothing. Nothing could be a greater indictment of the barbaric death penalty."

Murderous state repression in Britain, like imperialist domination and communalist bloodletting in Northern Ireland, will only end when the victorious working class seizes power through socialist revolution. Attempts by Sinn Fein/IRA to pressurise the British state to broker "peace" and to act on behalf of the oppressed Catholics in Northern Ireland are a dangerous fraud. We are against the

forcible reunification of Ireland which will only reverse the terms of oppression. The situation cries out for a proletarian solution. For the vast majority of the population, there is no justice under capitalism! ■

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# Trade unions...

(Continued from page 1)

today, from mounting concerted working-class action to crush the fascists, to opposing the capitalist anti-immigrant campaign, to organising strike battles to victory, require above all an uncompromising political struggle against the reformist Labour and trade union bureaucracy. This means forging a revolutionary party committed to the struggle for workers power and the establishment of a workers state.

Such a party will be guided by its commitment to unremitting class struggle against the capitalist bloodsuckers. It means a fight for jobs at decent pay for all through dividing up the available work with no loss in pay, and full cost-of-living indexing. Smash the public sector pay freeze and the government's union-busting and job-slashing privatisation moves! Such a struggle points the way to the need to expropriate the means of production and establish an internationally planned economy within the framework of a Socialist United States of Europe.

Capitalist economic decay is the breeding ground of fascism. The capitalist counterrevolution in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, which the Labour Party and their fake-left hangers on cheered for, has opened the road to the likes of Zhirinovskiy in Russia, and given a big ideological boost to the fascists in Western Europe. Ultimately, the threat of fascism will only be removed by international socialism.

The fascists across Europe take their cue from top politicians, who are whipping up anti-immigrant hysteria, using "foreigners" as scapegoats for the mass unemployment caused by capitalism. The murder last year by the police of Jamaican-born Joy Gardner, arrested under the immigration laws, exemplified the deeply racist character of the capitalists' "Fortress Europe". *Full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers and their families!*

The real reason the TUC has called the "Unite against Racism" march is because they're scared anti-fascist sentiment may run out of their control. Last 16 October some 50,000 mobilised for the ANL/YRE demo against the BNP HQ in Welling. The TUC sought to sabotage this by backing a deliberate diversion: the Anti-Racist Alliance rally at Trafalgar Square, which drew a derisory 3000. More astute bureaucrats like Bill Morris, feeling like generals without troops, are seeking to channel anti-fascist sentiment back into the Labourite fold.

The fascists are not yet a mass movement, but a lesson of Hitler's rise to power in Germany is that it is necessary to crush them in the egg. The fact that the fascists are garnering white working-class votes in the former docklands of East London (one of the two areas where Communist MPs were elected in 1945), is a bitter sign of the decay and desolation visited upon working people by "the magic of the market"—and of the utter bankruptcy of the Labour Party and the official union leadership. During the last council election, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party pandered to vicious anti-Asian racism, which only served to pave the way for the BNP. And what does the TUC offer us? John Smith—the man who looks and thinks like a bank manager. They enlist the established Church of England, to spout sanctimonious drivel about "turning the other cheek".

## Lessons of the miners strike

Ten years ago this month the miners came out on strike against pit closures. The lessons of the heroic miners struggle

remain razor sharp to this day. This was an example of how real class struggle can change the consciousness of workers and in the process forge a common class identity and purpose against the class enemy. The miners strike galvanised broad working-class support, from Asians, blacks and all the oppressed, who saw the miners' struggle as their own. Moreover the strike exposed the weak-kneed Labourite leaders for what they are: a treacherous fifth column within the workers' ranks. From the beginning we said that the miners would lose unless the strike was spread to other sections of the working class,



Searchlight

Muktar Ahmed: victim of murderous racist assault.

especially the railway workers and the T&G, whose leaders mouthed support for the NUM, but never mobilised the rank and file in action against the government. Right and "left", the TUC and Labour leaders knifed the miners in the back. They all knew that a general strike in support of the miners would pose the question of power: which class rules? For the Labour Party the answer is always: the bosses.

The pits closure protests of late 1992 again showed the folly of class collaboration and the futility of relying upon the TUC, that General Staff of defeat. Instead of calling strike action by key unions, which would have been massively popular, the Labour/TUC leaders linked hands with Tory MPs, like the disgusting racist Winston Churchill, organised impotent protest marches, and let the sentiment to fight dribble away.

The Labourite sabotage of the 1984-85 miners strike emboldened the government, and led to a wave of union-busting and redundancies. Strikes are banned with the waving of a court order, as happened recently with NATFHE. And the weaker the unions, the easier it is for the fascists to grow. It is no accident that the BNP is active in Nottinghamshire, where the UDM scabbed on the miners strike.

The union leaders gutlessly take everything the bosses dish out, claiming you have to obey the laws that strangle secondary action, mass pickets, etc. They claim that you can't strike against the capitalist government and win. This lie was disproved by Air France strikers who seized the airports and beat back a job-slashing scheme last autumn, putting the French government on the defensive.

## Fake left grovels to Labour

Today Labour competes with the Tories for recognition as the "party of

law and order". It promises that the police, prison and immigration cops will be beefed up and given expanded powers under a Labour government.

Since they share the political premises of the Labour/TUC tops, it is no surprise that groups like the SWP and Militant Labour uncritically enthuse over the TUC march. They are wedded to the reformist perspective of another capitalist Labour government, albeit with a more leftist sounding programme. The SWP and Militant call on local councils like Bexley to ban the BNP, and both groups support trade union rights for the racist, strike-

trade unions—in class struggle. Thus, the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky emphasised:

"The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street.... Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers' groups for self-defence."  
— *The Transitional Program* (1938)

Any serious mobilisation of the unions against the fascists will be preceded and accompanied by a tremendous political battle *inside* the unions, against the treacherous bureaucrats who fear to unleash the power of the working class. At bottom, WP and RIL despair of mobilising the unions because they don't want to fight against the Labourite stranglehold exercised by the union misleaders. Indeed these hucksters, no less than the SWP and Militant, will be plumping for votes for Labour in the upcoming elections.

Take any question, and Labour policy is at best a blurred copy of the Tory government's. There is not even a pretence of socialism. To talk about tactics of "critical support" in order to "expose the real face of Labour" in such conditions is to make a farce out of Leninism. What contradiction between words and deeds is there in John Smith's Labour Party? They say what they will do—administer capitalism, as per the prescriptions of Adam Smith, the Bundesbank and the Federal Reserve—and they will do what they say. The Labour Party leadership today is so right wing that even Bryan Gould (a notorious "moderniser" under Kinnock) has quit in despair, having failed to convince Smith to make a pretence of being for "Full Employment".

The slogan of the SWP and Militant Labour, echoed by other fake leftists, is "vote against the Nazis". In most instances, this is intended to mean "vote Labour", while leaving the door open to support the candidates of openly bourgeois parties. This is the British version of the deadly popular-front policy, which means a cross-class coalition, where the workers movement is subordinated to the class enemy. In Italy today, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and Communist Refoundation (RC)—parties that emerged from the old Communist Party—are exploiting the fear of fascism to corral the working class into supporting an electoral alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie. Olivetti workers, for example, are being lined up to support the electoral alliance that includes the very bosses who are cutting their pay and sacking them!

This has *nothing* to do with opposing fascism, and everything to do with providing a more credible government to impose capitalist austerity. The popular-front strategy to "fight fascism" led to the strangling of proletarian revolution and paved the way to Franco's victory in Spain in the late 1930s. As Trotsky pointed out:

"People's Fronts' on the one hand—fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution."  
— *The Transitional Program* (1938)

The resurgence of fascism in Britain and across Europe amidst the dangerous "New World Disorder" of economic hardship and trade rivalries, threatening inter-imperialist war, poses sharply the alternatives of socialism or barbarism. We of the Spartacist League fight for a revolutionary internationalist workers party, built by splitting the working-class base from the pro-capitalist tops of the Labour Party and committed to the struggle for international socialist revolution. ■

# Administering capitalism 1974 – 79

# The last time Labour was in power

[This is an abridged and edited version of a talk by comrade Alec Gilchrist at a Spartacist League day school on 28 July 1990.]

Arthur Balfour, the imperialist politician, once said that whichever party is in office, the Conservative Party is in power. That is very true because whenever the Labour Party has been the governing party, it has acted as the guardian of capitalist rule. Historically the Labour Party has been a more-than-adequate instrument for implementing austerity. There is a graph in Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein's *The Labour Party – a Marxist History* which shows that the three Labour governments were the periods of the greatest cuts in real wages in the post-war period. That is the role of the British Labour Party.

Gramsci once said: "The old is dying and the new cannot be born, in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." What a contrast there is between the requirements of the working class and the venality, the dimwittedness, the infinite capacity to betray, the boundless lackeydom of the British Labour Party. Of course in its formation the Labour Party represented a faltering step towards the idea that the working class needs its own party counterposed to the party of the bourgeoisie. But in terms of its ruling figures, programme and overall role, it certainly comes into Gramsci's category of the morbid symptoms of decay of imperialism.

It has always been a party which supports the monarchy. The Civil List is passed annually in Parliament to say how much money the queen and the rest of those hangers-on are going to get. The Labour Party *always* votes for the Civil List. Trotsky made a comment that the leaders of the Labour Party have an invisible barrier in their mind. A party which cannot refuse pocket money to the Prince of Wales is never going to touch a hair on the head of capitalism.

The struggle of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and the victory of the working class in the 1917 October Revolution proved the necessity of building a revolutionary vanguard party. In *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, which Lenin wrote in preparation for the Third Congress of the Communist International, he took up a number of tactical questions involved in building revolutionary parties in Europe at the time, including the question of dealing with the British Labour Party. What Lenin was saying was, look, stop just praising us and understand all the struggles and difficulties that we went through to be able to lead the workers' victorious revolution in 1917. Not a few British leftists have quoted *Left-Wing Communism* and certain of Trotsky's writings, gutting them of their revolutionary intent, to justify their own abject kow-towing to the British Labour Party. We want to use the lessons and experience of the Bolsheviks and the Trotskyist Left Opposition to build a party of the Bolshevik type – the essential instrument to lead the workers to overthrow capitalism.

The Labour Party is a strategic obstacle to socialist revolution, an instrument of the bourgeoisie within the workers movement. It is an obstacle which has to be surmounted and destroyed by winning away its working-class base to the banner of communism. That is very simple to say, but it's the problem which no party in the history of the British workers movement has thus far succeeded in solving in practice.



Birmingham Post & Mail

**British Leyland workers picket Longbridge, February 1979. Class-struggle "Winter of Discontent" broke Labour government's anti-working-class Social Contract.**

For a long time, socialist revolution has both been necessary and possible in this country; the conditions have been rotten-ripe for the overthrow of the British ruling class. Since the end of the nineteenth century when the hegemony of British imperialism on a world scale began to be eroded, British capitalism has been in decline. It has been overtaken by major imperialist competitors like Germany and America and Japan, and in terms of standard of living and national income Britain is now one of the poorest countries in capitalist Western Europe. Particularly since the end of the 1950s, the British bourgeoisie has tried and tripped again to find a way to crush what has been a rather strong and well-organised working class. Nearly seventy years ago Trotsky wrote:

"The British bourgeoisie has been brought up on ruthlessness. Leading it along this path were the circumstances of an island existence, the moral philosophy of Calvinism, the practice of colonialism and national arrogance. Britain is being forced increasingly into the background. This irreversible process also creates a revolutionary situation. The British bourgeoisie, compelled as it is to make its peace with America, to retreat, to tuck and to wait, is filling itself with the greatest bitterness which will reveal itself in terrible forms in a civil war...."

"All the cold cruelty that ruling-class Britain displayed towards the Indians, Egyptians and Irish and which has the appearance of racial arrogance, in the event of a civil war will reveal its class nature and prove to be directed against the proletariat."

In today's Britain, where former colonial slaves – West Indian blacks, Asians and

others – have been brought into this country as wage labourers, that racial arrogance has also been turned inwards, and shows itself superadded to the class hostility of the capitalists. Trotsky continued:

"On the other hand the revolution will inevitably awaken in the British working class the deepest passions which have been so skilfully restrained and suppressed by social conventions, the church and the

opposed to those people who actually own the means of production, the capitalist class. It's religious, though less overtly so than when Trotsky was writing. But the moralism that comes out of non-conformist Protestant religion remains a component of the ideology of the Labour Party to this day. It's the Labour Party that doesn't want you to be able to drink in a pub after eleven o'clock at night and thinks you shouldn't be able to shop on

press, and diverted along artificial channels with the aid of boxing, football, racing and other forms of sport."

– "Where is Britain Going?" (1925)

Because of the history of Britain, its imperial position, and the consequent ability to bribe, to offer crumbs to the more privileged sectors of the working class, Britain has been a country characterised by extraordinary social stability and permanence in terms of its ruling institutions. But the material basis for that stability has long been rotting from within. They do not even have the fat that they had after the Second World War, in terms of the remnants of the empire.

## Labour Party: the inner policeman

Trotsky observed that it was not necessary to have an outward policeman over Labour Party leader Ramsay MacDonald when there was an inward one within his soul. It's the inward policeman that the British ruling class has principally relied on, not the outward policeman. Comparatively, naked state force has been rarely employed in Britain. It is, of course, a very different story when you come to Ireland and the former colonies. And as the bourgeoisie becomes more desperate, it also becomes harsher – as the miners strike showed. Nevertheless, the reformist Labour and trade union bureaucracy was a key weapon to isolate, and so defeat the miners in 1984-85.

What are the components of the inward policeman's mentality? The Labour Party is deeply parliamentarist. It believes the fiction that Parliament actually determines and governs what happens as

Sunday.

The pacifism of the British Labour Party is exclusively directed against the working class. The British Labour Party believes, like Neil Kinnock did in the miners strike, that no worker must ever raise his fist in anger, must never take up weapons, under any circumstances. Yet this is exactly the same party which believes that the British bourgeoisie must be furnished with every possible armament that they require.

You have the constant class collaborationism, the way in which the Labour Party endlessly operates together with the ruling class. Particularly Parliament is a focal point for the incorporation of the leading elements of the workers movement into the system of capitalism.

We characterise the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers party. By that we mean that it is a political organisation of the working class. It is based upon the trade unions and arose historically as a political expression of the trade union movement, although always representing the political positions of the trade union bureaucracy. It has a leadership which espouses a bourgeois programme, a programme for the maintenance of capitalism. Trotsky wrote:

"The contemptible mercenary and servile bureaucrats of the trade unions and the Labour Party give expression to all that is rotten, humiliating, serf-like and feudal in the British working class. Against this, the tasks of the Communist Party consist in giving expression to the potential revolutionary qualities of the British working class, which is very great and capable of developing immense explosive powers."

– "Letter to Groves" (1931),  
*Trotsky's Writings on Britain*

The Labour Party is *not* simply a political equivalent of the trade unions. The trade unions are basic mass, economic organisations of the working class. The Labour Party is a distinct political formation, which carries a particular programme and it has to be treated as such. For revolutionaries, it is an opponent organisation. That's very fundamental. At the same time, it is a different kind of opponent organisation from an organisation like the Socialist Workers Party, or Workers Power, because it has the mass allegiance of the working class. Because of the failure of particularly the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Labour Party has been undifferentiated. It has remained in a real sense the party of the whole of the working class. The whole basis of the formation of the Communist International was the understanding and the fight by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party to split the international workers movement between communists and social democrats and the necessity to have a separate vanguard party that confronted the party of the opportunists, social chauvinists and social imperialists.

The Labour Party has had a great capacity to incorporate young militants. The Labour Party has acted as a machine for the destruction of reds. One dimension of that is the chumminess that exists on the British left; the back and forth and social intercourse between the far left and the left Labour MPs and the trade union bureaucrats and their operatives at different levels. That helps to obscure the necessary task of constructing a party that is absolutely counterposed to the Labour Party. Organisations like the trades councils often serve as a sort of playground for the left groups. Constituency Labour Parties can play a similar role. The trade union bureaucracy retains a whip hand over the Labour Party, and the constituency parties are effectively very marginal in terms of who calls the shots. They're useful to supply the foot soldiers. Left groups that enter into the Labour Party are very fond of the constituency Labour Parties because there they can gain the illusion that they're actually gaining influence. If a situation were to arise where it was necessary for the revolutionary vanguard to enter into the Labour Party in order to intersect a leftward development within that party, the impact of such a tactic would be very much reduced, to say the least, if you did not have what is really fundamental, which Trotsky emphasised again and again in talking about the Labour Party—fractions in the trade unions, a communist opposition inside the trade unions.

### Set the base against the top

There are tactics that revolutionaries have used historically to try to set the base against the top, to win over workers from the leadership of the Labour Party. In general, revolutionary Leninists seek to utilise tactics of the united front, to achieve limited practical agreements for united action over particular questions with political forces, including the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party, whose politics are very much counterposed to us overall. The united front is characterised by a formula: "march separately, strike together". In other words, you never abandon your own banner, your own independent propaganda in the course of united-front action. Secondly, you have to understand not only when it is necessary to make a united front, but when it is necessary to *break* a united front.

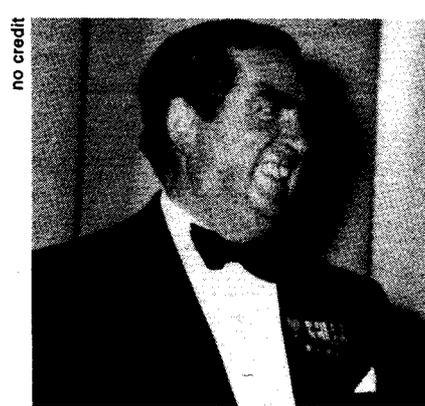
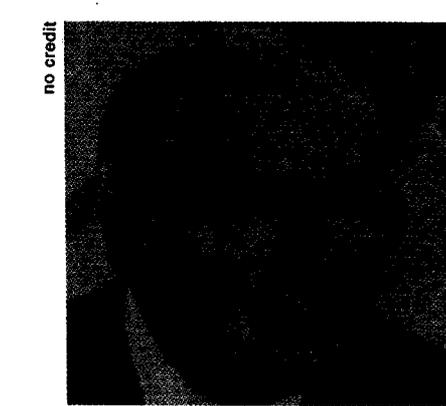
The Anglo-Russian Committee coordinated the Soviet trade unions and the British TUC General Council in the middle 1920s. One of the fights of the Left Opposition against Stalin was precisely to recognise when the TUC General Council had stopped talking out of

the left side of its mouth, and was betraying the General Strike in 1926. At that point it was absolutely imperative to break this alliance, because otherwise the Soviet trade unions, which carried the political authority of the Communist International, would be lending their political credibility to people who had proven themselves in practice to be strike-breakers. If Trotsky didn't want to be associated with the strike-breakers of the General Strike in 1926, we don't see any reason why revolutionaries at this point should want to be associated in the eyes of the working masses of this country with the strike-breakers of the 1984-85 miners strike, by calling for a vote for the Labour Party.

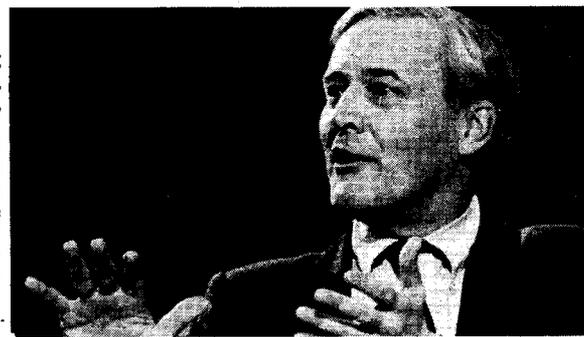
The tactic of critical electoral support has often been advocated. Sometimes we have also advocated it. This tactic means proposing a vote to the Labour Party in a general election, for example, in order to put them into power because that's the position where they're best able to be exposed. At the same time, you must warn from the beginning that they will not satisfy the interests of the working class, whatever promises they make. And when betrayals have happened, you don't ignore them and pretend that it's all like it was when you started. That, in a nutshell, was the situation of the last Labour government. In 1974, the British Labour Party put itself forward and was widely seen as being in some sense the defender of the miners. There was talk of the most left-wing programme since 1945 and of an "irreversible shift of wealth and power". But by 1979, you had had the Social Contract, the corridor coalition and the strike-breaking. Callaghan ran against Thatcher in the 1979 elections, telling the bosses "I'm the best strike-breaker you've got".

Those are two different situations, requiring different tactical approaches. For most of the British left, this is not a question, they don't even think in these terms. For them critical support is not a tactic, but a strategy. The way they see it is that the Labour Party is the mass party of the British working class, and that one must *always* vote for the mass party of the British working class.

In 1978 we had a fine article in *Spartacist Britain* no 4, entitled "No vote to Labour!", which compared the attitude of the so-called far left on this question to Alice's exchange with the Queen, "The rule is jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam today." "It *must* come



**Labour the last time: "Left-winger" Tony Benn (right) joined Callaghan and Healey in five years of strike-breaking, anti-working-class austerity, anti-immigrant racism.**



Laurie Sparham (IFL)

sometimes to 'jam today,'" Alice objected. "No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day. Today isn't any *other* day, you know."

Another possible tactic is entry into the Labour Party. There are circumstances where it can be useful for a small revolutionary vanguard to enter another organisation, a larger organisation of a non-revolutionary character, centrist or reformist. There are examples of that—both successful and unsuccessful—in the history of the Trotskyist movement. Lenin also advocated the affiliation of the Communist Party to the British Labour Party. There have been people who say you must never go into another organisation, which is to equate political independence with organisational independence at every stage of development of the vanguard. The other deviation, which has been far more common in Britain, and Militant is a good example, is the willingness to enter on a long-term basis, semi-permanently if not permanently, ceasing to actually represent any independent challenge. Once you go into an organisation like the Labour Party, a mass reformist party, you are subject to enormous immediate pressures from the bureaucracy. The entry tactic can very easily be trans-

formed into conciliation and compromise with your own bourgeoisie via the social-democratic bureaucracy. Such dangers are hugely magnified if your organisation is not part of a democratic-centralist international revolutionary tendency, capable of assisting in resisting the pressure of the reformist bureaucracy.

### Miners scupper Heath

It is impossible to understand the last Labour government unless you understand what happened in the early 1970s under Heath's Tory government. You had the biggest strike wave since 1910-14. The Wilson government of 1964-70 operated a policy of state wage control and attempted to bring in anti-trade union legislation, which was in kind, if not in degree, no different from the anti-trade union legislation of the Tories, both Heath then and Thatcher later. The Wilson government was very successful in lowering real wages. A real head of steam had built up inside the working class because you had very strong, well organised trade union organisations. The economic situation in the 1960s had turned pretty radically for the worse. In the middle 60s there was a big Sterling crisis—devaluation of the pound and public expenditure cuts. There was also an international context. May 1968 in France was a very profound demonstration of the revolutionary capacity of the working class. And the Americans were getting creamed in Vietnam, while the Wilson government supported US President Johnson. Then came Heath. Nowadays, Ted Heath looks like some amiable old gent, a Tory Mr Nice Guy. But he used to be *hated*, hated the way Thatcher is. He was seen to be trying to cripple the trade union movement.

The first national miners strike since 1926 took place in 1972. It was a very big deal. The miners union leadership had been very right-wing for decades, and had basically just let it go for years after the post-war nationalisation, conceding closures and job losses. By 1972 they had managed to get the miners (who certainly did have some industrial muscle) to the point where they were some of the worst paid workers in the country. Eventually they couldn't control the membership any longer. The left wing, people like Scargill, made a lot of the running and you got some very militant tactics. The flying pickets were developed on an extensive scale, leading to the battle of Saltley Gates. Saltley Gates was a power station right in the middle of Birmingham, with

continued on page 8



1972: Threat of general strike secured release of "Pentonville Five" dockers, imprisoned by Tory government's Industrial Relations Court.

# Labour...

(Continued from page 7)

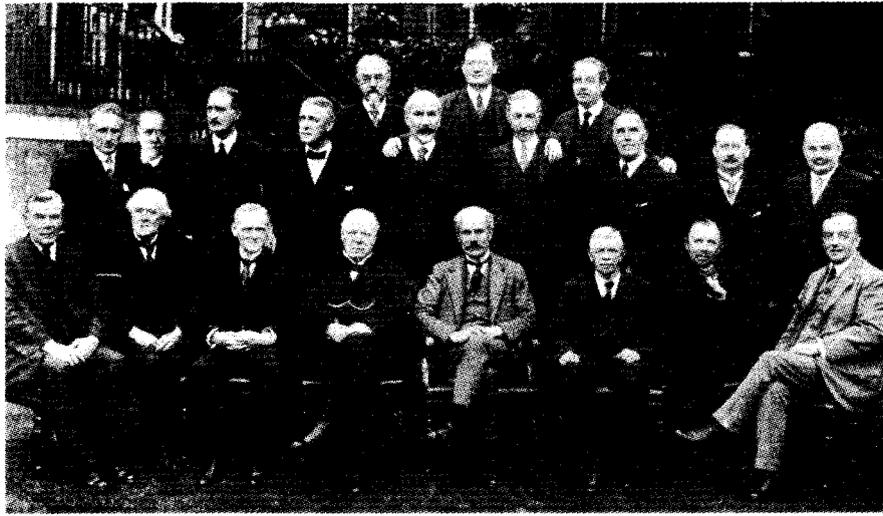
an enormous coke depot. It was one of the last places where coke was being sold on to distributors, because the miners had picketed all over the place, every port, every coal yard, stopping coal moving. The Yorkshire NUM sent pickets down there, but they weren't making any impact against a huge police presence. Scargill and some Yorkshire miners went to the shop-stewards organisations. They went to the district committee of the engineering union in East Birmingham and Scargill gave a 40-minute speech in which he said, I'm not asking you to go on strike alongside us and shut this place down, I demand that you do that in the name of the working class. And they did. They came out on strike and somewhere between 10 and 20 thousand workers marched out of the engineering factories and the car plants, marched down the road to Saltley Gates and shut the place down dead. And basically there was just nothing the government could do about it. The government just caved in.

This was very militant but not outside the framework of the Labour Party. That really came home with a crunch in the 1974 miners strike. The same militancy and willingness to fight was shown in July 1972 when five London dockers were imprisoned by the Industrial Relations Court. The moment they put them in prison the whole of the docks came out on unofficial strike, Fleet Street came out on unofficial strike and it started to spread to engineering and car factories. There was a massive demonstration outside Pentonville Prison. The TUC was forced to announce a one-day general strike, the first officially called since 1926. Before it could happen, the government quickly released the Pentonville Five.

The Labour Party was compelled to put on more of a left face, summarised by the talk about an irreversible shift of wealth and power. Then in 1974 came the second miners strike, which provoked a very deep-seated sense of social crisis. The bourgeoisie were really panicked by the 1974 miners strike because they had seen a wave of struggles building up and they'd had to give in over two very critical questions, the previous miners strike and the dockers. It was a situation when a general strike was posed. That was a demand that we put forward at the time in *Workers Vanguard*. A general strike poses the question of power. We called for a limited, defensive general strike, with particular aims and goals. Heath declared a state of emergency. There were power cuts, which went on for a long time in the middle of winter. And not really for economic reasons but to try and intimidate the working class into submission, Heath declared the three-day week. But in factory after factory, the workers' representatives went in to the management and said: you want us to work three days, fine, but you're going to pay us five days—and virtually across industry they ended up paying a five-day week and working a three-day week.

## Labour's Social Con-trick

There were some extreme elements in the British bourgeoisie who started playing around with notions of a military coup. The government ordered military manoeuvres at Heathrow Airport, which were undoubtedly aimed at intimidating the working class. But in the end the bourgeoisie plumped for the Labour Party. Ted Heath was a busted flush. The bourgeoisie knew that when push came to shove the Labour Party would have a better crack at quelling the enormous wave of trade union militancy. So Heath was compelled to call a general election in February 1974. He posed the question



The first Labour government under J. Ramsay MacDonaid (seated centre right). Labour leaders were termed by Trotsky "contemptible, mercenary and servile bureaucrats".

explicitly: "Who is going to run the country? The unions or the elected government in Parliament?"

The Labour Party was elected, although it was a minority government. There was some talk about a Tory-Liberal coalition, and everybody just said forget it, we don't want any more of Ted Heath, we want the guys who can do the job. We raised the call for a Labour Party/TUC government pledged to expropriate the bourgeoisie, and resting on the powerful shop-stewards committees. This was not a plea for a Labour government in Parliament to carry out socialist measures. We wanted a government which would not be oriented towards Parliament but instead would be based on the mass organisations of the working class. The TUC leadership in those days was very authoritative and left-talking. In this context, our call was a concretisation of the necessity for the working class to take power on the basis of its mass trade union organisations and to expropriate the capitalist class. Our answer to Heath's question was, if you like: "The unions should run the country!" This is called a workers government. For us, the workers government is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rule of the proletariat. No more than Lenin expected that the Mensheviks would take power when he raised the demand of all power to the Soviets in 1917, no more did we expect that the Labour Party and TUC bureaucrats would turn around and say "sure we're going to take power and forget about Parliament, we're going to go ahead and expropriate the bourgeoisie". But our call concretised what we meant by a workers government, the necessity of the working class to rule. And an organisation with some real roots in the working class would have been able to make some headway with that.

We also called for a vote to the Labour Party in 1974, both in the February and the October elections. In a certain sense the February election was a referendum on the miners strike. The Labour Party was presenting itself, even under the leadership of Wilson (which was pretty amazing) as some kind of radical alternative to the Tories. That was a situation in which you say: "OK, if worker militants have illusions in what the Labour Party will actually do in power, then let's test it in practice."

The Labour Party gave some concessions to begin with. They pulled back on the trade union legislation, they paid the miners and they gave some other sections of workers not insignificant pay increases so as to buy time. Then they moved into the Social Contract, a compact between the trade union leaders and the Labour government to suppress wages. And it was very effective, especially as inflation raced ahead. In this period the IMF was called in and openly dictated the economic policies of the Labour government from 1975-76 onwards. The IMF policies

supervised by Chancellor Denis Healey were very much a precursor of Thatcher's policies. There was a trebling of unemployment over a period of two years from the beginning of the Labour government. At the time this was a level of unemployment (1.5 million) which it was said no Tory government could have got away with. That turned out to be not true under Thatcher precisely because Labour had already paved the way for chronic mass unemployment.

What about the left wing of the Labour Party? Tony Benn was the energy minister. Tony Benn presided over installation of the National Incentive Scheme. This was one of the mechanisms that was used to divide the National Union of Mineworkers. It helped lay the basis for the scabbery that took place in Nottinghamshire during the last mining strike. If you were in a productive pit, you got much more money. It was deliberately intended to divide the union, and it was



Grunwick strike 1977: Asian women in forefront of battle for union rights.

very useful when the miners strike came along. Tony Benn implemented that scheme—it was his policy. This is the man who is supposed to be the great friend of the miners.

The Labour Party sent the troops into Northern Ireland in 1969. One of the first actions of the 1974-79 Labour government was the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Under this government the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six were framed up. The minister responsible for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees, also took away the political status which had been won by Republican prisoners in Northern Ireland.

## The fascist threat and the myths of the ANL

The question of racism was a very key question in this period. There was the

beginning of the development of a menacing fascist movement. It wasn't an accident that it happened under the Labour government. When a reformist government comes to power, it promises a little bit, it gives virtually nothing and then carries out a whole series of attacks. In harsh economic conditions it tends to create some of the most favourable circumstances for the fascists to begin to entice backward workers and lumpen elements. The fascists began to win significant votes and also began to organise significant street marches. The National Front, which was the main fascist organisation at that time, was a growing force.

There was a lot of anti-fascist activity. In 1977 there was a fascist demonstration in London in Lewisham, and the SWP was instrumental, along with other left groups, in organising a counterdemonstration. This was one of the less substitutionist, adventurist affairs that the SWP organised. It was quite a sizable demonstration. It did draw quite a lot of support, broadly from within the workers movement. And the fascists got a real hiding, especially their much-vaunted "honour guard".

The SWP was subjected to a big anti-red witch hunt, whereupon Tony Cliff showed the rigidity of his backbone, and organised the Anti Nazi League. The Anti Nazi League had, as one of its sponsors, Neil Kinnock. The main action of the Anti Nazi League in 1978 was to keep 80,000 people at a rock concert in Brixton, 13 miles away from where the fascists were demonstrating in the East End of London.

To this day the SWP will tell you that the reason why the National Front lost the votes that it used to get was because of the Anti Nazi League. But the National Front vote collapsed in 1979 because Margaret Thatcher put herself forward on

a very strenuous anti-immigration, racist policy.

The Labour government pursued its own anti-immigrant policies. The expulsion of Asians from Malawi led to a whole series of racist statements by cabinet ministers in Parliament. One cabinet minister said "enough is enough", whereupon Enoch Powell sprung up and said: "I completely agree, enough is enough." The same Labour government conducted the barbarity of so-called virginity tests on South Asian women attempting to come into this country.

## The Lib-Lab Pact and the Winter of Discontent

By 1978 Labour couldn't hold the working class in check any longer, but by then they had especially done the job that they had been brought in for. The Winter

**Southall, April 1979: Martyred anti-fascist fighter Blair Peach and victim of racist murder Gurdip Singh Chaggar defiantly honoured by Asian workers.**



John Sturrock (Report)

of Discontent was the last period of the Callaghan government. There were strikes which broke open the Social Contract pay limits. We called for a general strike at that time. Workers Power, which has called for general strikes in all kinds of circumstances under *Tory* rule, did not call for a general strike—because it was a Labour government. The Social Contract was broken, but you didn't get the massive offensive that could have taken place. Things quietened down after a lot of big strikes, particularly in the public sector in the beginning of 1979. The Callaghan government was very discredited in the eyes of the ruling class, and eventually a parliamentary defeat over Scottish devolution led to the fall of the government.

Earlier in 1976 there had been parliamentary by-elections. The Labour Party lost big in two out of three of these. The reason was the Social Contract. And we said that it's precisely in circumstances like this, where workers are beginning to oppose what the Labour government is doing, now is the time—not to try and corral people back into the fold of the Labour Party—but to use a tactic of conditional opposition, to say: "Only if you—a Labour candidate—actually stand out clearly, unambiguously, in words and deeds against the Social Contract, would it be possible to consider giving a vote to you. If you are not prepared to do that, why should any workers give their votes to you?" We were trying to exacerbate, to exploit the hostility that was building up towards the Labour government.

In 1977 through to 1978 there was a formal coalition agreement between the Labour Party and the Liberals, an out-right capitalist party. The Lib-Lab pact didn't represent a change of policy as

such, but it did represent a very clear, standing affirmation that the government existed for no other reason than to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie. It would have been not just tactically ill-advised, but completely unprincipled for revolutionaries to have given a vote to the Labour Party, standing as part of a bourgeois bloc, a popular front, class-collaborationist bloc.

In 1979, the elections in which Thatcher came into power, we continued to oppose a policy of critical support for the Labour Party. Most people on the left said: "Oh, but Thatcher is going to break strikes." We said: "What do you think Callaghan's been doing?" We sought to intersect the working-class hostility towards the government that had built up. In 1978 there were NUPE branches who wanted to disaffiliate from the Labour Party, and the shop-stewards committee at the Dunlop plant in Speke, Liverpool had actually said, "Don't vote Labour". There was talk of unions standing their own candidates against the Labour Party. The minimum basis on which you could have given electoral support to such candidates was clear opposition to the Social Contract, and support for the strikes. We argued that such candidates should stand on a full revolutionary programme. We said: No votes for the traitors, for class-struggle union candidates against Labour. That was a *revolutionary* tactic. When everyone else was trying to figure out how to bring people *back* to the Labour Party, we were trying to exploit the fact that workers were beginning to move *away* from the Labour Party, were wanting to find some organised political expression for their class-struggle hostility to the Labour Party traitors.

We made the point then, that the programme of the forerunners of *Socialist Organiser*—the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory—was the political equivalent of St Ignatius Loyola's prayer for generosity: "Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deserveth: To give and not to count the cost... To labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Thy will." But for *Socialist Organiser* you could substitute almost every other group on the "far left". As we said then: "The Spartacist League will no more prostitute itself before Labour than before the God of the Jesuits." We reject the role allotted by Labour to its reformist and centrist critics. The lesson of Labour in power the last time around—the need for an independent, *Marxist* workers party—must not be lost if a new generation of revolutionaries is to be won to the Spartacist League's fight. ■

## PDC...

(Continued from page 2)

Capitulating to the witch hunt, the SWP and Militant Labour criticise the cop violence on 16 October in their press, but don't call for—let alone organise actions to demand—dropping the charges against the anti-fascist protesters. Just after the Welling demonstration, ANL spokesman Paul Holborow stated: "Those involved in skirmishes were not representative of the 98 per cent of the demonstrators that went along with the publicly stated aim of a peaceful demonstration" (*Guardian*, 18 October 1993).

Nonetheless, many individual members of the SWP and Militant Labour welcomed the idea of the defence action, while others found it difficult to justify opposing a rally on behalf of those victimised for participating in an anti-fascist protest organised by their own party. At the Students Union meeting at London Guildhall University, the leadership of the Socialist Worker Student Society (SWSS) saw to it that its membership was absent when the vote was taken to endorse the PDC demonstration, after having objected to the issue being brought up in the first place. The motion was passed unanimously. When asked for their branch's endorsement, some SWPers said: "We're doing our own defence campaign"; when asked, given the absence of coverage of this "defence" in the pages of *Socialist Worker*, whether this is a secret campaign, they elaborated: "We have lawyers" defending those arrested. The perverse sectarianism of centrists like Workers Power (WP) and the Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) was captured in the statement of a WP spokesman, who said that their refusal to endorse was their "usual position" for all PDC-initiated

demonstrations.

What unites the reformist "socialists" who turned a blind eye to this necessary action is their grovelling before the traitors of the TUC and Labour Party. The SWP and Militant Labour make suicidal appeals to the capitalist state to shut down the BNP headquarters, while they and their centrist tails preach that voting in the chauvinist Labour Party in the May local elections can stop the murderous fascist scum.

There is only one way the rising fascist threat can be smashed—through the organised mobilisation of trade unions and minorities in disciplined mass demonstrations and in union-based workers defence guards to occupy and reclaim the streets for all the working people. The power of the working class *can* and *must* be mobilised against the fascists. This requires organising determined, militant mobilisations like the 16 January anti-Ku Klux Klan demonstration initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee in the US, which brought together blacks, trade unionists, socialists and youth in Springfield, Illinois to counter a KKK rally. That mobilisation, which defied every move on the part of the state and its lackeys in the union bureaucracy to derail it, brought out the core of the black trade union movement of the Chicago and Springfield regions. For them it was correctly seen as a life-and-death struggle to smash the Ku Klux Klan, a struggle in which the trade unions are *central* if it is to win.

Spartacist spokesman Alastair Green stressed that what was missing on 16 October were the battalions of workers from key industries like Ford Dagenham, Heathrow Airport and London Transport: "We want to have demonstrations against the fascists that are not just protests but that *win*... and to do that means fighting against the pro-capitalist leadership of the working class—the leaders of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress." Noting the negative example of the German social democracy, which impotently relied on the state to stop Hitler's Nazis, Green counterposed the revolutionary perspective of the Bolsheviks: "In 1917 the Russian working class under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky seized state power, took power from the hands of the capitalist and feudal rulers and blocked in the process the Black Hundreds, the Russian fascists. That is the way to stop fascism."

The 5 March demonstration was a modest example of what remains to be done. It should be, as the PDC speaker called for: "the first of many protests, however many it takes to defeat this sinister witch hunt". Not one anti-fascist fighter should pay one penny in fines or spend one minute in jail! Drop all the charges against anti-fascist protesters! ■

## Spartacist League Forum

Voting Labour will not stop the BNP rampage

**Trade unions and minorities:  
mobilise now to crush the fascists!**

**7:30, Tuesday 29 March 1994**

Davenant Centre, 179 Whitechapel Road, London E1  
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For further information:  
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# Russia...

(Continued from page 12)

a favourite CIA-sponsored think tank—projects that “Russia, striving to be a great power, could become a serious rival to the United States. Its nuclear arsenal is still aimed at us” (*New York Times*, 20 December 1993).

## Russian “Reformers” in disarray, Washington in quandary

Russia’s pro-Western “democrats” and their imperialist controllers are engaged in bitter recriminations over who is responsible for the rise of Zhirinovskiy and the more assertively nationalist stance of the Yeltsin regime. Gaidar blames Yeltsin for not actively campaigning for him in the December elections and instead adopting an above-the-battle posture. Ex-finance minister Fyodorov charged that Strobe Talbott, the main US envoy to the former Soviet Union, stabbed “reformers” in the back by calling for “less shock and more therapy” in the immediate aftermath of the elections.

Harvard’s man in Moscow, economist Jeffrey Sachs—who had previously designed the electrodes for “shock treatments” in Bolivia and Poland—resigned from his position as economic adviser to Yeltsin and denounced the IMF for withholding money from the Russian government promised by Western capitals. In turn, haughty IMF head Michel Camdessus (who normally speaks only to god) contended his agency was being made a scapegoat and condemned the Yeltsin regime for not carrying out the policies to which it had committed itself.

There is doubtless an element of diplomatic calculation in Yeltsin’s new Russia-first posture: since trying to accommodate the IMF gained nothing but the growing hostility of the masses, perhaps the spectre of a more nationalist Russia, with Zhirinovskiy waiting in the wings, might pressure Western capitals to cough up more money. And so it might. A 15 January editorial in the *New York Times*—that influential mouthpiece of the American ruling class—argued that if the US wants to call the tune in Russia it has to pay the piper, and pay something before the tune is played:

“America has pledged its share of aid to Russia, but it has yet to deliver many dollars. It cannot let the opportunity slip away once more. The aid must be delivered even before Russia tightens its budget by shrinking subsidies to unproductive factories....

“Russia needs a new social safety net not tied to the factory. To get one started, it needs outside help.”

All this talk about providing Russia with a “social safety net” is bunk: the cost of unemployment insurance and job retraining for the millions of workers being thrown out of work is far greater than any conceivable amount of Western aid. The real purpose of the few billions being doled out to Moscow is to buy off the elite of post-Soviet Russia: industrial managers, government officials, military commanders.

The IMF honcho in Moscow justified his agency’s stinginess by arguing that money given to the Russian government would largely be spent on luxury imports (Mercedes, BMWs) or be siphoned abroad. But that is just the point of such “aid”: to pay for pliant agents in a Russian client state. As it is, Russia’s new rich have already smuggled abroad more than the \$22 billion promised (but not delivered) by the West and Japan. Last year alone, one-third of Russia’s export revenues, some \$15.5 billion out of a total of \$48 billion, was kept overseas.

Chernomyrdin now blames the economic collapse in post-Soviet Russia on “market romanticism”. Gaidar & Co con-

tend it’s the continuing heavy state subsidies to the industrial-military complex. But the real and fundamental reason is the capitalist counterrevolution. Whatever faction of the restorationists comes out on top in Moscow, whatever the policies and ideological posture of the government, the destruction of the planned, collectivised economy of the Soviet Union means the impoverishment and degrada-

tion, capital flight, managerial looting and sheer economic chaos have already caused industrial production to fall by 60 per cent in the past three years. Ruthless IMF-dictated monetarism would have the (intended) effect of permanently shutting down the vast majority of Russia’s industrial enterprises. Chernomyrdin and the layer of industrial managers are seeking to keep a significant percentage of industry going. But even if they keep the upper hand, there will still be massive unemployment and economic misery for millions of workers.

In the Soviet era, industrial enterprises provided their workers not only with a wage but also basic social benefits: free medical and childcare facilities, often low-rent housing. Thus for a worker in Russia to be laid off or have his enterprise go bankrupt means not only the loss of income but immediate and total pauperisation. Hence the sense of desperation which expressed itself in the vote for Zhirinovskiy.

Liberal British journalist Jonathan Steele observed that this fascist demagogue’s main source of popular appeal did not lie in “Russian expansionism” but rather that “the Zhirinovskiy factor was a protest over economic pain, the emergence of a flamboyant class of new rich, and the rise in crime” (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 2 January).

However, the increasing influence of Russian nationalism among the masses—even if presented in the guise of economic populism—will prevent working people from struggling against the economic pain wrought by the counterrevolution and its greedy new rich. The working class in Russia—shaped by the integrated, collectivised economy of the Soviet Union—is still heavily multinational. Even defensive economic struggles against plant closures and wage cuts can be organised only on a multinational basis.

The 19th-century German workers leader August Bebel called anti-Semitism “the socialism of fools”. Today, we are seeing in Russia “the socialism of fools” on a massive scale. All the Russian nationalist forces—the Yeltsinites, Zhirinovskiy’s fascists, the Stalinist “patriots”—are seeking to divert the desperate anger over economic immiseration into hatred of Jews, Caucasians, Central Asians and other non-Russian peoples.

Thus the Yeltsinite city government in Moscow launched a brutal campaign driving thousands of Caucasians—called “blacks” by Russian racists because of their dark complexions—out of the Russian capital. The Caucasians are an easy target for popular hostility because many are small tradesmen blamed for charging extortionate prices. However, the money made by Georgian and Chechen vegetable or clothing vendors is peanuts compared to the sums looted by industrial managers who claim to stand for “the interests of Russia”.

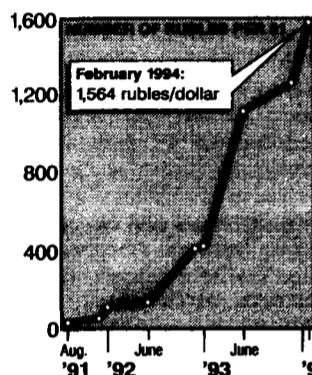
One need only look at the fratricidal slaughterhouse of ex-Yugoslavia to see where the drive of Russia’s counterrevolutionary nationalists—whether grouped around the Yeltsin regime or the “red-brown” (Stalinist/fascist) coalition—to dominate the former USSR will lead. There are over 100 nationalities in Russia. Seven million Ukrainians live in Russia, over 10 million ethnic Russians live in the Ukraine. Or take the case of the Crimea, which is territorially part of the Ukraine, but whose population is heavily ethnically Russian. When a Russian nationalist won the presidential election there last month, the Ukrainian government threatened to take “decisive action” to defend “Ukraine’s territorial integrity”. A territorial war between Russia and the Ukraine would produce unspeakable horrors and destroy any possibility of effective working-class struggle against the capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union for years.

Without massive infusions of capital from the West, neither monetarism nor corporatism has a hope of pulling Russia out of its morass in the next period. The Ukraine, which has been run by Volsky types since 1991, is today an economic basket case, aggravated by its extreme reliance on Russian energy and industrial parts. Meanwhile, in Russia runaway infla-

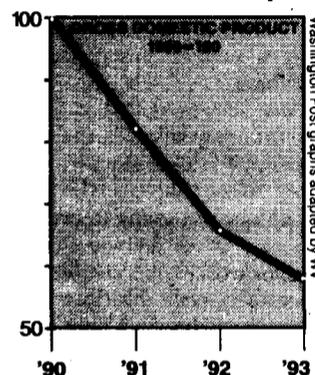


Reisinger/Black Star

### Ruble Devalues



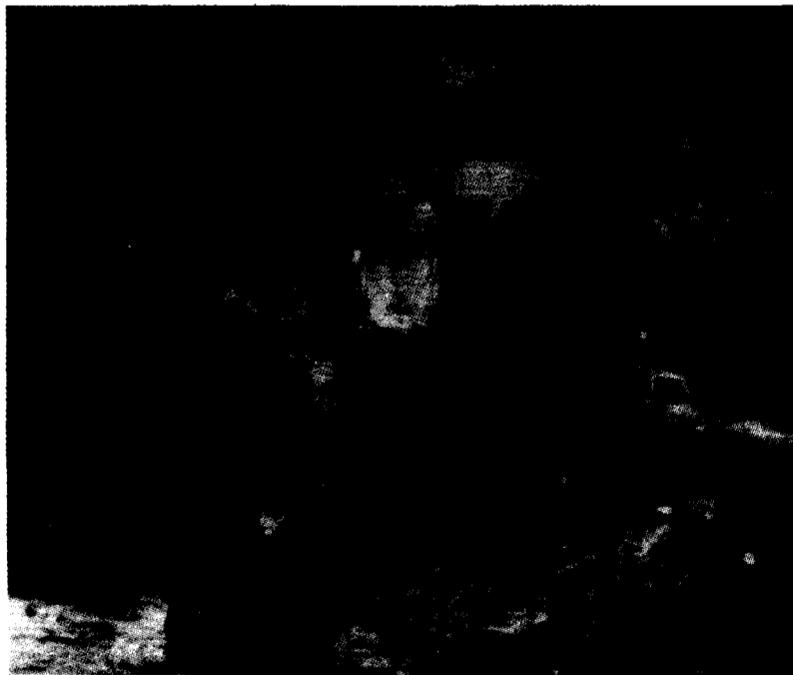
### Production Drops



Washington Post graphs adapted by WV

From Siberian coal mines to metal foundries of European Russia, capitalist counterrevolution means devastation for working class of former Soviet Union.

Der Spiegel



tion of workers and collective farmers in Russia, the Ukraine, Central Asia and the other former Soviet republics.

Over the past two years, Russia’s would-be capitalist exploiters have been bitterly divided between pro-IMF monetarists like Gaidar and a nationalist-corporatist wing centred on the old factory managers and represented by industrialist spokesman Arkady Volsky. Where Gaidar & Co propose a wholesale shutdown of “bankrupt” enterprises and turning Russia into a neocolonial supplier of raw materials to the West, the corporatists argue for maintaining a core of the country’s heavy industrial complex by continuing to pump subsidies in and ceding ownership to the managerial bureaucracy.

To do this, a corporatist regime would have to reimpose effective state control over exports and capital outflow, moving not only to discipline the working class

It is no accident that last autumn, facing a solid front of imperialist hostility to Yeltsin’s parliamentary opponents, Volsky & Co in the end supported the bloody crackdown on parliament. A proletarian vanguard would have sought to mobilise the working masses against Yeltsin’s bonapartist moves, including a military bloc with the forces around Rutskoi/Khasbulatov during the fighting. In this confrontation the workers, seeing neither side as fighting for their interests, remained passive.

Without massive infusions of capital from the West, neither monetarism nor corporatism has a hope of pulling Russia out of its morass in the next period. The Ukraine, which has been run by Volsky types since 1991, is today an economic basket case, aggravated by its extreme reliance on Russian energy and industrial parts.

Meanwhile, in Russia runaway infla-

The older generation of working people in Russia, the Ukraine and other former Soviet republics look back on the Brezhnev era of the 1960s and '70s as a golden age. Even with the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state, workers and collective farmers retained real and valuable social gains of the 1917 October Revolution.

The Bolshevik Revolution, led by Lenin and Trotsky, was made in the name of proletarian internationalism through implacable political struggle against all forms of Great Russian chauvinism. Today, a new Bolshevik party must be forged in struggle against all the forces of the counterrevolution, both the pro-Western "democrats" and the Russian nationalist demagogues.

### Capitalist counterrevolution = economic devastation

Russian nationalists of all stripes, and also Western liberals and social democrats, blame the immiseration in the former Soviet bloc solely on monetarist "shock treatments" prescribed by the IMF. As if it were possible to replace a planned, collectivised economy with capitalism while maintaining full employment, living standards and industrial production! Every country in East Europe and the ex-USSR has experienced economic collapse and mass unemployment, whether the restorationist regimes were run by right-wing anti-Communists (Poland, Hungary) or by former Stalinist leaders (the Ukraine, Romania) or both successively (Lithuania).

The employment of labour clearly demonstrates the fundamental difference between the capitalist system and a collectivised economy, even one subject to pervasive bureaucratic mismanagement and parasitism as was the former Soviet bloc. The aim of a capitalist firm is to maximise the return on the money invested in that particular company. Managers therefore seek to maximise output (if it can be sold) while minimising the cost and employment of labour. Hence, you can see in North America and West Europe mass unemployment coexisting with brutal speedup for those workers fortunate enough to have jobs. Some people are forced to beg in the streets while others are forced to work 10-12 hours a day.

The aim of a collectivised economy is to maximise the output of society as a whole by utilising *all* available resources, both labour and the means of production. Moreover, Soviet-bloc governments prevented unemployment by not laying off workers even if their additional contribution to production was less than the wage paid them. That was far better than having them live on welfare or beg in the streets, risking unrest. As a result, industrial enterprises in East Europe and the ex-USSR were grossly overmanned by the standards of capitalist profitability.

For example, the Wartburg auto plant in Eisenach, East Germany employed 14,000 workers. After capitalist reunification, it was taken over and rebuilt by the GM subsidiary Opel, which now operates the plant with 2,000 workers—*one-seventh* of its original labour force. While this is an extreme case, there are few major industrial enterprises in the former Soviet bloc, from East Berlin to Vladivostok, which could operate profitably in the world capitalist market without sharply slashing their labour force.

The Western media is now touting the Czech Republic as the "success story" of capitalist restoration in East Europe. Yet in the past two years the labour force in the Pilzen Skoda works—a core element of Czech heavy industry—has been cut from 32,000 to 20,000. At the same time, the real wage of the country's industrial workers has fallen by 25 per cent! And the Czechs still have it better than the rest of East Europe.

In addition to the costs of preserving full employment, productivity in Soviet industrial plants suffered due to the imperialist pressures of the Cold War. In order to maintain military parity with the NATO powers *without reducing living standards*, during the 1970s the Brezhnev regime sharply cut back industrial investment. As a consequence, many branches of manufacturing in the USSR became increasingly obsolete by world market standards. However, the monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the Soviet state—an essential element of a collectivised economy—protected the home market from the world market, preventing industrial enterprises from being bankrupted by a flood of cheap imports from the West and Japan. But now with the capitalist counterrevolution, production costs in post-Soviet Russia are being driven into line with those on the world market through a massive contraction of industrial capacity and an even greater slashing of the industrial labour force.

Defending themselves against the charge that their economic policies ruined Russia, Gaidar, Fyodorov & Co contend there has been no "shock therapy". Unemployment, they claim, is a mere one per cent and no major enterprises have gone bankrupt. The unemployment figures are phoney and bankruptcy status meaningless. The Russian State Committee on Statistics estimates that, including concealed unemployment, up to 13 million workers are jobless, on unpaid or little-paid leave, or working a short week. Moreover, many plants whose gates are open and through which workers enter every morning are not producing anything for lack of supplies, and many which are producing goods cannot sell them. The *Washington Post* (18 February) summed it up in a headline: "Russia's Industrial Collapse Has Begun".

Today Russia is in a state of counterrevolutionary chaos. At the base, real power in the economy has passed into the hands of what is popularly called "the mafia"—a mélange of corrupt managers or officials, fly-by-night businessmen and criminal gangs. The thousands of new private businesses which have sprung up in the past few years routinely turn over 10 to 20 per cent of their revenue as "protection money" to criminal gangs. At the same time, enterprise managers and petty entrepreneurs pay little if any taxes to the government, and much of the tax money that is collected never makes it into the central government coffers.

The fascist Zhirinovskiy skilfully exploited popular hatred and contempt for the newly rich wheeler-dealers, fear of criminal violence, and more generally a longing for the restoration of social order. The Yeltsin regime, too, is using anti-mafia demagoguery in an effort to rebuild a strong state apparatus. In his address to parliament, Yeltsin played on the rise in crime to argue that "a strong and powerful Russian state is the most reliable and real guarantor of stability" (*New York Times*, 25 February).

Claiming that the old police organisations are irremediably corrupt, the government is proposing to set up an elite paramilitary formation, answerable only to the president, with special powers such as the right to make preventive arrests. Members of this new super police force would be paid \$250-\$300 a month—several times the average wage in today's impoverished Russia. These would be the pampered shock troops of the counterrevolution, whose main target will not be the mafia but the workers movement, trade-union militants and leftist activists.

The working class *must oppose and resist* all moves to strengthen the repressive power of the state, whether made in the name of fighting crime and corruption or

defending "the interests of Russia".

The restoration of social order in Russia can benefit the working people only if it is based on *their own, multinational class organisations*—trade unions, factory councils, committees of state and collective farmers, soviets. A reborn workers movement must organise its own military formations in the first place to defend strikes and protests against the cops, fascist thugs and criminal gangs. Workers defence guards must



Robert Wallis - SABA

### Capitalist counterrevolution means desperate poverty for millions.

also protect Jews, Caucasians and other ethnic and national minorities against attacks by Russian chauvinists.

### For proletarian struggle against Great Russian chauvinism!

Russia's nascent bourgeoisie has inherited imperial ambitions from the tsarist autocracy. They want to rule a great power recognised and allied with one or another of the major imperialist powers. Zhirinovskiy's call for an "eternal alliance" between Russia and Germany to dominate the Eurasian continent only expresses this vision in a particularly extreme form. More "moderately", Adranik Migranyan, a member of Yeltsin's presidential advisory council, declared that "all geo-political space in the former USSR is Russia's sphere of interest" (*Independent*, 13 January).

However, aspirations for a modern capitalist version of the tsarist empire confront the economic devastation of Russia wrought by the counterrevolution. Pre-1917 Russia combined a vast, backward, peasant-based agriculture—retaining strong elements of feudalism—with a large, relatively modern industry financed, directly or indirectly, by Western capital. Today, however, US imperialism is bent on tearing down, not building up, Russian industry. Whereas Tsar Nicholas II could easily float large loans in European financial markets, the IMF treats Yeltsin like a naughty boy whose allowance is withheld for bad behaviour.

Immediately after the December elections, Washington voiced a somewhat softer line on Russian economic "reform". Talbott made his widely publicised "less shock and more therapy" speech. And Vice President Al Gore while in Moscow sharply criticised the IMF for giving the Yeltsin regime less than \$2 billion of the \$14 billion which the Group of Seven imperialist powers had pledged to Russia.

But talk is cheap. US Treasury secretary Lloyd Bentsen intervened hard to ensure that soft talk on Russia was not backed up by soft loans and aid. A senior White House official told the *Washington Post* (23 December 1993): "We've not gotten into the business of setting up social safety nets, and we won't now." By the time Clinton made his first state visit to Russia in mid-January, he was back to preaching the IMF line of "reforms" first, money later. Since US aid to Russia last

year was a piddling \$1.5 billion—less than that given to either Israel or Egypt—Yeltsin was little inclined to heed the American president.

Zhirinovskiy's electoral success and the more nationalist stance of the Yeltsin regime has brought to the surface divisions among the Western imperialists over how to deal with the conflicting nationalisms unleashed by the destruction of the Soviet Union. The main current of the American ruling class is willing to support the restoration of a strong Russian state dominating the territory of the former USSR *if*—a very big *if*—Washington can retain ultimate control over the Kremlin. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations have put great pressure on the Ukraine to scrap the nuclear weapons inherited from the Soviet Union, which would thereby give Yeltsin's Russia a monopoly on nuclear war-fighting capacity in the region. And Washington has turned a blind eye toward Moscow's military interventions in the communalist civil wars in Moldova and Georgia.

Right before the December elections, the *Economist* (4 December 1993) observed:

"America might even think its interests were being served if Russia acted as a neighbourhood cop, preventing disorder spilling out from Central Asia into the Middle East or south Asia. To European countries, however, a Russian intervention in Ukraine, Azerbaijan or the Baltic states would look much more threatening."

Substantial elements in American ruling circles, too, believe that Russia cannot be manoeuvred into acting as a pliant instrument of US policy. Like the West Europeans, they advocate playing off anti-Russian nationalism in Poland, the Ukraine, the Baltic states, etc against Moscow. These policy differences underlie the recent dispute in NATO over expanding the military alliance to East Europe. Clinton vetoed this move for the time being, piecing off the East European regimes with a meaningless "Partnership for Peace".

However, such diplomatic formulas and manoeuvres cannot disguise the reality that the counterrevolutionary breakup of the Soviet Union threatens ever more extensive nationalist/communist wars, such as the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave which exploded in 1988, unleashing a bloody and continuing war in the Caucasus and signalling the beginning of the disintegration of the USSR.

Zhirinovskiy's electoral success and the more nationalist stance of the Yeltsin regime indicates that the forces of counterrevolution are driving to set up a strong Russian state, appealing to popular support on the basis of chauvinist demagoguery. Unless that drive is derailed through class struggle against the new capitalist rulers, the workers and collective farmers of the former Soviet Union will face—in addition to the current economic immiseration—murderous repression and fratricidal bloodletting. As we wrote in "How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled" (*Workers Hammer* no 133, January/February 1993):

"To free itself of its would-be exploiters and oppressors, the working class must also assert itself as a 'tribune of the people', opposing every manifestation of anti-Semitism and anti-woman and anti-homosexual bigotry, rising to the defence of all those—including African and Asian students, and the Central Asian peoples in Russia—who are increasingly exposed to violent racist terror. What is required above all is a revolutionary leadership capable of overcoming the divisions inspired by chauvinism and nationalism, clearing away the decades of false consciousness fostered by Stalinism, and linking the struggles in the ex-USSR to that of the world proletariat."

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## Defend Serbia against US/NATO attack!

# Bosnia: powder keg of Europe

28 FEBRUARY—This morning, US F-16 fighter jets under NATO command shot down over central Bosnia what the Pentagon claims were four Bosnian Serb planes. The imperialist alliance has gone beyond its starvation blockade against Belgrade under United Nations auspices and the fig leaf of “peacekeeping”, and is now directly carrying out acts of war against Serbia. While the Western media are filled with propaganda supporting “poor little Bosnia” and denouncing Serbian “ethnic cleansing” — conveniently

ignoring the same murderous tactics carried out by Croats and Bosnian Muslims in the three-sided nationalist civil war in the former Yugoslavia — class-conscious workers the world over must come to the defence of the Serbs against the attack by the imperialists who are the blood-drenched enemy of all mankind.

The “New World Order” is quickly getting a lot more *disorderly*. Moscow’s dispatch of troops last week to the environs of Sarajevo foiled Washington’s

plans to bomb Serb positions in the surrounding mountains and then “negotiate”. Clinton’s claims to the contrary, today’s jet strikes were undoubtedly a “payback” against Russia’s intervention in Bosnia. Now the US is trying to cobble together a deal that will make the Balkan wars even bloodier than they already are. The latest proposal is for a “united” Croatian-Muslim state in Bosnia confederated to a “Greater Croatia” dominated by Germany. While the State Department is pretending to be the godfather, summon-

ing the parties to Washington, the plan was hammered out in a meeting near Bonn which was arranged by German foreign minister Kinkel and Russian foreign minister Kozyrev.

The Hamburg news magazine *Der Spiegel* (28 February) asks if reunited Germany will return to the Balkans as a “Patron for Peace?” It declares that there are “detailed blueprints in Bonn drawers” for the Croatian/Bosnian Muslim “economic union”...which include massive *continued on page 4*

## Yeltsin regime in disarray, Rutskoi/Khasbulatov freed

# Post-Soviet Russia: immiseration and chaos

Just a few months ago, as army tanks shelled the Russian parliament, the American ruling class thought they finally had Russia in the bag. At Washington’s prodding, Boris Yeltsin had spiked the nationalist opposition grouped around the parliamentary leaders. A new constitution, designed to legitimise the capitalist counterrevolution, had set up a virtual presidential dictatorship. Would-be czar Boris looked to be in a strong position to push through the economic “shock treatment” — wholesale closure of industrial plants, mass unemployment — demanded by the world bankers’ cartel, the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Elections in December were supposed to produce a new, tame parliament dominated by pro-Western “democrats” like the IMF’s main man Yegor Gaidar. Instead there was a huge protest vote whose main beneficiary was the fascist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Zhirinovskiy, who called for a purge of American influence in Russia, did especially well in the military — a third of officers and enlisted men reportedly voted for him. He also did well among workers in heavy industry, who would be the main immediate victims of a monetarist “shock treatment”.

The Stalinist “patriots” in the Communist and Agrarian parties also made a good showing in the elections, polling over 20 per cent of the vote. With the support of Zhirinovskiy’s party, an old Stalinist apparatchik, now with the Agrarians, was elected speaker of the lower house of parliament, the Duma, named after the last tsar’s advisory body. Now this recalcitrant Duma has voted to amnesty Aleksandr Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, the imprisoned leaders of the parliament Yeltsin dissolved by tank gunfire, as well as the “gang of eight”



Der Spiegel



Reuters



Time

**Fat cats and capitalist bureaucrats starve Russian masses: (from left) former deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar; former finance minister Boris Fyodorov; Arkady Volsky, head of the “party of managers”.**

leaders of the botched August 1991 putsch, whose failure led to Yeltsin’s counterrevolutionary ascendancy. And on 26 February almost two dozen of Yeltsin’s jailed opponents were freed.

The “democrats” are humiliated, their Western imperialist sponsors distressed. Yeltsin, seeing which way the wind was blowing, changed tack and has adopted a more nationalist posture in both economic and foreign policy. His prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who ran the natural gas industry under Gorbachev, declared: “The mechanical transfer of Western economic methods to Russian soil has done more harm than good.” In response, the two leading “free-market reformers” in the Yeltsin regime — Gaidar and Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov — resigned from the government, which they contend is now firmly in the hands of Soviet-era apparatchiks from the industrial-military complex.

Meanwhile, the continuing cataclysmic decline of the Russian economy has provoked a wave of strikes and strike threats in the aftermath of the elections. The business daily *Commerzant* warned that the country is on the verge of “one huge strike”. On 10 February TV screens across the country went blank as communications workers walked off the job to demand billions of rubles in back pay. The government caved in within hours. Vorkuta miners also went on strike, occupying pits over unpaid back wages. No sooner had Prime Minister Chernomyrdin agreed to meet their demands than miners at two pits in the Kuzbass began a hunger strike. Now the head of the Independent Miners Union threatens nationwide action beginning 1 March if the government fails to meet its promises again.

Yeltsin’s foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev — known as a fawning “friend of the West” — now proclaims that Moscow will “toughly uphold the interests of the Rus-

sian-speaking population” in the other former Soviet republics and stand up “for the interests of Russia”. Venturing beyond the “near abroad”, the Kremlin has also recently emphatically reasserted Russia’s traditional role as a patron of its Serb “little brothers” in the Balkans, unilaterally negotiating a deal to circumvent threatened NATO air strikes and deploying 400 “peacekeeping” troops in the Bosnian Serb headquarters of Pale. Amid acute discomfort over the Russian move in Bosnia, Washington staged a table-thumping flap over the discovery of a Russian “mole” in the CIA.

In place of triumphalism in American ruling circles over the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, there are beginning to be dark warnings of a revanchist and nationalist Russia as a new threat to the West. Cold War academic Angela Stent of Georgetown University — *continued on page 10*