

Revolutionary Perspectives 6

Quarterly Magazine of the Communist Workers Organisation



Is International Class Struggle Rising?

Capitalism in the Mire

Vote Labour? 50% of Bosses Can't be Wrong!

Parliamentarism and Communism

The German Communist Left

China After Deng

The Struggle for Central Africa

Racism and Communism

Revolutionary Perspectives
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Capitalism in the Mire

Growth is accelerating, unemployment is plummeting and earnings are rising faster.

So says Robert Chote in the *Financial Times* (26.3.97). His difficulty is explaining why no-one believes the Tories that "Britain is Booming" in the build-up to the Election. The answer is that these supposedly good statistics don't actually add up to much in real terms. In the first place unemployment is no longer calculated on the numbers who would like to work full-time but simply on those who can beat the benefits system (now less than 2 millions since the JSA was introduced). It is probably higher in real terms than the 4.7 millions in the German dole queues. Of those in work 4 millions are working part-time because they cannot get full-time work. There are today 1.1 million less full-time workers than there were in 1990. This still means impoverishment and insecurity for millions.

Similarly with growth. The British economy (and the world economy) have experienced little **real** growth since the 1970s when the post-war boom finally came to an end. What we have had is stagnation ever since. Economic growth figures only represent the increased capital values due to the financial manipulations of the money markets. Management buy-outs and privatisations lead to paper asset growth but in real terms they represent nothing. In the case of newly privatised BR which now gets £2bn of taxpayers (i.e. mainly workers' money) instead of £1bn the situation is obvious. We must remember too that for two years after 1990 the British economy actually shrank even according to Government figures.

Mr Clark's booming Britain is according to the OECD (the organisation of the richest economies of the world) the place where;

the inequality of income is increasing more rapidly than the majority of the OECD countries

Études économiques de l'OCDE Royaume-Uni, OECD, Paris 1996

In the last twenty years

- the number of homeless has doubled
- the number of children who live where the only income is social security has risen from 7% in 1979 to 26% in 1994
- the number of Britons living officially in poverty has gone from 5 millions to 13.7 millions

- the poorest 10% have lost 13% of their income whilst the richest 10% have increased theirs by 65%

Even the boast that Britain is the "most competitive economy in Europe" is not true. German growth rates, although massively lower than a few years ago, still outstrip British ones. In crisis-ridden France, growth figures since 1990 are higher (even at a measly 1.35%) and both countries have about the same trade deficit (\$22 billions) whilst the UK is near the bottom of the league for the whole of Europe for the level of training of its school-leavers.

And Labour?

But what does Her Majesty's Opposition have to offer? The Liberals call for a 1p rise in income tax which really will be a fantastic redistribution of income! Labour don't even call for that. All the Tory policies will continue. The truth is that none of these parties either would or could help the poorest in society. Capitalism all over the world is in crisis and the only solution for capitalists is to make the working class pay more. Today the 358 richest individuals dispose of more wealth than the 2.6 billion poorest inhabitants of the planet (i.e 45% of the world's people). Which-ever party is in power in whatever state increasing exploitation to "make the country competitive" will be the result.

The Solution

There is no quick fix. Basically the working class has to reorganise itself and to fight. There is no halfway house between capitalism and socialism. The whole history of this century has shown that. The failure of the Russian Revolution to spread after 1917 resulted in hideous exploitation and oppression everywhere (and especially in Stalin's USSR). Workers cannot reform capitalism out of existence. It has to be destroyed in a consistent and continuous manner. To do this we must, for the first time in history create a global centralised, internationalist party which unites the struggles of workers everywhere. By founding such a party workers would show that they have the conscious will to make the revolution in social and political life which can prevent the further genocide, famine and impoverishment which is all capitalism has to offer today.

Is International Class Struggle on the Increase?

After years of retreat in the face of “privatisation”, “the free market”, “de-regulation” or whatever the ruling class wants to call the attacks on workers’ jobs and living standards of the last two decades there are some small signs in the last eighteen months of a revival in working class resistance.

Starting with the French strikes at the end of 1995 (which we analysed in *Revolutionary Perspectives 3* and *Internationalist Communist 14*) there have been a series of strikes against further austerity measures in a large number of countries in every continent around the world. The second most significant wave of struggle in terms of numbers of workers involved was in Korea last winter. 150,000 workers went on all-out strike (with half a million on strike at the peak of the struggle) resulting in the loss of \$3.6 billions to the Korean capitalist class (see *Internationalist Communist 15*). Since then we have had a spate of strikes which not even the normal international news blackout has managed to hide.

Globally Strikes are On the Increase

In Iran in January workers in the oil refineries went on strike over the low level of wages. They eventually organised a demonstration outside the oil ministry. Despite the fact that this was a peaceful demonstration the regime attacked it with riot police and hundreds of workers were arrested. They were taken away in buses and their fate is still unknown.

In Honduras, in Central America, social conflict is also growing. In February 7000 workers demonstrated in three cities whilst another 14,000 health workers went on strike (with emergency health cover only). Naturally the Government called them “inhuman” without addressing the problem of their inhuman low wages. But then they also had to deal with 70,000 public sector workers on strike against low wages and the increasing costs of transport, fuel, electricity and water. The main union federation has belatedly threatened a general strike to gain some credibility with the workers and the Government has said

that they cannot give in to demands for more money since it would undermine the state budget. It is the same story the whole world over.

In Colombia, also in February, there were demonstrations by tens of thousands of public service workers against inflation. About 300,000 went on strike when the Government offered wage increases of about 13% against a rate of inflation in 1996 of 22%.

In Europe there have been massive strikes in Bulgaria, Russia and Germany. The economic crisis truly is desperate. In Bulgaria thousands of miners went on strike in the town of Pernik — one of the most depressed industrial centres in the country — as part of a desperate strike wave which is engulfing the country. Until then the anti-government protests were still dominated by student demonstrations and demands for a national coalition government. Long queues have formed outside banks as Bulgarians change their rapidly devaluing currency into dollars. Government offers to double pensions and state sector wages don’t mean much in a hyper-inflationary crisis. However, unlike Albania, where popular protest did not even bring down the Bereisha regime, the workers have now begun to move on their own terms in defence of living standards. There is likely to be still more class activity in the next few months.

In Russia the saga of unpaid wages goes on. At the beginning of this year unpaid wages amounted to 25% of the entire GDP. Teachers, for example who get £32 a month have not been paid for three months (and miners have had to resort to strike action twice recently to get their back pay). If many Russians did not have small plots of land they would starve to death. The International Labour Organisation (an arm of the United Nations) stated last year

There should be no pretence. The Russian economy and the living standards of the Russian population have suffered the worst peacetime setbacks of any industrialised nation in history.

In response the unions called a demonstration and strikes on March 22nd but the 20 millions

who they claimed would strike did not come out - partly because the ex-Stalinist unions are still not trusted because they are seen as arms of the state. More concretely, just before the 22nd the state miraculously found the money to pay many workers. Even so hundreds of thousands did take part in demonstrations across Russia. Struggle — what the capitalist politicians call “holding the country to ransom” — is obviously the only way workers will screw the slightest concession out of the bosses (this was after all just to get back pay!). The same might be said in Germany.

In **Germany** the same pressures to reduce debt and balance budgets for the sake of international competition in a global market (in this case fuelled by the aim of monetary union in Europe) led the German state to announce the withdrawal of subsidies to the country's remaining 20 or so pits. The occupation of the main streets in Bonn and the sealing-off of a party HQ of the Free Democrats (a government coalition partner) brought about ruling class hesitation. The German state with its previously booming economy has been slow to bite the restructuring bullet and German workers have the experience of their British comrades in the 1980s from which to learn.

The Limitations of Trades Unionism

All these battles show — along with the Liverpool dockers' (now 18 months old), and Peugeot and Ford carworkers 'disputes' in Britain, that capitalism cannot erase the class struggle. However at the same time capitalism can limit class actions so that they do not threaten the system as a whole. Individual strikes in this or that area are what Marx called mere “guerrilla actions” against the worst effects of capitalism.

As long as they remain trades union struggles — run by organisations whose job it is to reach a compromise with the bosses — they will never stop the continuous drive for more exploitation of the working class. This is because there is a fundamental clash of interest between capital and labour. This can never be overcome, especially today when there is no let-up in the economic crisis and whatever sacrifices workers accept the bosses always come back for more. The more “reasonable” (to bosses) workers are the more easy they are to kick in the teeth.

Even the German miners “victory” is only a slower, more humane loss of jobs than that originally planned. In Europe in the last few months there have been struggles in car plants in Britain, Belgium, Spain and France but they have not united. One union official (Tony

Woodley of Ford Halewood) stated in the *Guardian* (appropriately on All Fools' Day) that he would love to have a concerted all-European strike against the globalisation of the car manufacturers but ‘the law wouldn't allow it’. This is just an illustration of the limits of trades unionism. Struggle cannot be confined to what the government deems legal (if it did we would still have the 1799 Combination Acts). Furthermore it was the same Tony Woodley who came on the TV and announced that the Ford jobs at Halewood were “British” and not Spanish or whatever. This is an essential part of trades unionism. Although it is prepared to talk about globalisation it only does so from a narrow nationalist standpoint by criticising the multinational for their “lack of patriotism”. But the interests of the working class extend beyond national boundaries. Whether we are in Korea, Russia, France or Britain everyone who works for a wage is having their labour power exploited and the greater part of what they produce taken from them. Unlike the capitalist, for the working class, “globalisation” doesn't mean increased competition between us but only shows more clearly that the class struggle is the same the whole world over. In the face of a globalised capitalism it is becoming easier for workers to see that they truly are an international working class. When Korean investment arrives in South Wales because of cheaper labour costs this is a sign there is an immediate identity of interest between workers in the “advanced” countries can no longer expect to automatically be better off. That the era of an international working class is arriving. In a real sense, the struggles of the Korean workers are also our struggles. The global reduction of all our living standards is what capitalism has to offer a divided working class.

A Global Class Holds the Solution

The only real solution is to abolish the system which brings poverty and unemployment. Before we can have a sane society we must first abolish capitalist economics. The workers have shown time and again that they are the only force which can resist the insanity of capitalism but to go beyond resistance they need something more. They need to have a political programme which recognises that the faults of the world are not to be solved by expelling immigrants (as building workers in Berlin recently demanded) or accepting new work practices to help the firm (as Blue Circle cement workers in Britain did last year) or demanding special subsidies so that jobs went in Belgium or Spain but not in Britain as the Ford shop stewards at Halewood did recently. This is precisely how the capitalists want to divide us.

Continued on page 7

The General Election

Vote Labour? 50% of Bosses Can't Be Wrong!

On the day that *The Sun* announced it would be backing Tony Blair, the *Financial Times* published the result of a survey showing that half of Britain's leading industrialists favour a Labour government. Leaving aside the bigtime sleaze of Labour's endorsement for a further growth in Murdoch's media monopoly, should we really be surprised at the mainstream bourgeoisie's support for Labour?

New Labour - Old Bollocks

The Labour party is now more honest than it was in the days when it claimed to be a socialist party. New Labour's Toryism with a smiling face has expunged the last vestiges of socialist rhetoric from the Labour body politic. Tony Blair can only utter the "S" word with an embarrassed stammer in deference to those few who still believe in the old Labour myths. For the idea that Labour is or ever was socialist is one that belongs to the realm of mythology rather than historical fact. There is more evidence to suggest that Elvis Presley is still alive than there is to invest Labour with socialist credentials.

At face value it can appear that compared to New Labour, the old Labour Party of Attlee, Bevan and even Harold Wilson was at least a bit socialist. After all did they not stand for and actually deliver nationalisation of the major industries and public utilities, and the welfare state. When we actually look at these policies we see that they corresponded to the needs of British capital at the end of the Second World War. A glance at Labour's record reveals that the interests it has loyally served have been those of British capitalism rather than the workers.

From its earliest days the Labour Party could never be described as socialist. The party was set up to advance the narrow economic interests of the trades unions in parliament. Even

by the standards of the pre-First World War European social democratic parties the Labour party could not be regarded as anything but a defensive movement **within** capitalism. The Social Democratic parties of Europe, whilst hopelessly corrupted with reformism, at least had the perspective of a socialist future, "the maximum programme" even if it was confused about how this was to be achieved. The belief of the Social Democratic right was that capitalism could be reformed out of existence. But the Social Democratic parties also contained revolutionary elements such as Lenin and Luxemburg. It was possible (up to the outbreak of the First World War when the reformists abandoned proletarian internationalism by supporting their national bourgeoisies) for reformists and revolutionaries to co-exist within the same party as they both had socialism as their ultimate goal. By contrast the British Labour Party never aspired to a socialist transformation of society even by reformist means. The Labour vision encompassed nothing more than a narrow trades unionist perspective of getting a better deal for the workers within capitalism. Even the much-vaunted "Clause IV", was only adopted in 1918 after the Russian Revolution to divert militants from support for Bolshevism. Clause IV, with its call for the British (capitalist) state to take over the "commanding heights" of the economy, was, at best, a sort of philanthropic state capitalism. The ethos of the Labour Party has always owed more to British liberalism and non-conformist religion than to Marx and Engels.

Labour in Power Against the Working Class

For eighty years the Labour Party in opposition promised us "socialism" only to bring in measures which benefited the capitalist class and attacked workers. The second Labour Government of 1929-31 was faced with a capitalist crisis unlike any

before. The Wall St Crash and the subsequent mass unemployment had already shown that the capitalist system was finished. So what did Labour do? First, it applied a strict monetarist policy of government spending restrictions. Then Ramsey Macdonald formed a "National Government" with Tories and Liberals (splitting the Party in the process - a fact that was to become useful at the end of the Second World War). Under Ramsey Macdonald the means test was brought in so that millions of workers on the dole had their benefits cut. Macdonald was however dismissed by the Labour Party as a "traitor" and thus the Party maintained a radical image. Labour enthusiastically supported the British Empire in the Second World War but the useful fig-leaf that it was an "anti fascist" struggle helped to disguise their pro-imperialist stance as they entered into coalition with Churchill in 1940.

The immediate post-war Labour government of 1945-51 is revered by the left as the epitome of "democratic socialism". The creation of the welfare state and the National Health Service are heralded as Labour's great "socialist" legacy for subsequent generations. But the architect of the welfare state was the Liberal, Lord Beveridge whose report recommended an extension of the basic welfare provisions implemented by Lloyd George's Liberal Party in 1909. The idea of deficit spending to pay for public services and generate full employment was that of another Liberal, John Maynard Keynes whose theory influenced governments both of the left and the right in the post war period. Then there was the nationalisation programme where working class tax payers coughed up millions to compensate the old private industry bosses. These bosses now had the capital to invest in more profitable areas than the clapped out coalmines and railways. The workers would pay taxes for the next forty years so that they could be rationalised (i.e. so that millions of workers would be sacked) and then re-privatised in the 1980s at knockdown prices to those who had already been compensated by Labour in 1947-8.

The fact is that these much vaunted "socialist" measures had nothing to do with socialism and everything to do with the needs of capital in the period of post-war reconstruction. Only a massive injection of public money (via taxes paid by workers) through nationalisation could bail out Britain's undercapitalised old industries. For its part the welfare state bought the social peace necessary for the continued exploitation of the workers. The "red flag" of socialism (by which they meant more than the Labour Party's vacuities) had already been run up by many soldiers in their barracks around the world at the end of the war. There were

also strikes in Lancashire and Clydeside whilst some RAF conscripts mutinied rather than defend the British Empire by attacking Indian and other Asian workers after the war as the Attlee Government demanded.

If the Tories had won the 1945 election it is likely that many of the same measures would have been implemented. The fact that subsequent Conservative governments between 1951 and 1964 did not seek to dismantle the welfare state, or implement any significant denationalisation, clearly indicates that the measures introduced by Labour were the best policies for British capitalism at that time. And Labour as the so-called "workers' party" was in the best position to deliver these policies as well as attack workers who demanded more than a return to the old system.

The other great socialist measures of the 1945-51 Labour Government included using troops to break strikes by dockers, transport and power workers (Labour has used troops 14 times against strikes since 1945 whilst the Tories only dared use them twice), arresting strikers under wartime emergency laws and endorsement of the nuking of Hiroshima. So much for the great Clem Attlee's declaration that the Labour government would operate on

principles....based on the brotherhood of man.

The last Labour government of 1974-79 was the precursor to the Thatcher administration in more ways than one. This period witnessed the definite end of the post-war boom and the onset of the current crisis. Under these conditions the old Keynesian policies were no longer valid. With the slowdown in growth due to the fall in the rate of profit government spending without a corresponding increase in production could now only lead to massive inflation. Massive inflation (which Keynes warned against) wiped out profit gains still faster and the result was a further collapse in investment leading to mass unemployment. In 1977 the Labour Government of Jim Callaghan began the monetarist policies later taken up with so much zeal by the Tories. In 1979 spending cuts were implemented in housing, health and education and during this period unemployment tripled to 1.5 million.

Labour Once Again to the Rescue of Democracy

Previously (as in 1929 and 1945) Labour has tended to come to power in order to head off potential outbreaks of class struggle. With its historically cosy relationship with the trades unions Labour is in a better position to defuse working class mili-

tancy. All Labour's talk of not being in the pocket of the unions does not alter this fact.

The famous "winter of discontent" of 1978-9 may have cost Labour the next election but the Callaghan Government and the unions were able to restore class calm without too much difficulty, preparing the ground for the Tories later onslaughts. At the present time there are no signs of class struggle erupting on any significant scale in the UK so why is the ruling class so keen for Labour to win the election?

From a capitalist point of view the Tories are regarded as divided, incompetent and corrupt (although the minor peccadillos of Hamilton, Smith, Brown etc. pale in comparison with the real sleaze - the system's daily robbery of the fruits of our labour). As we pointed out earlier, the capitalist forces that matter long ago decided that Labour represented much the same as the Tories. Not only is New Labour seen as no threat to capitalist profits they are actually seen as being more likely to defend the conditions under which those profits can grow.

But this is not the only reason why Labour has been heavily supported by the likes of the *Financial Times* as the next party of government. The most significant poll statistic of the forthcoming election will be the number of people who will not vote at all, such is the level of correctly gauged cynicism about the system. The ruling class talk of and fear a "crisis of democracy" where not only workers but even sections of the middle classes have no faith in the system. "Democracy" is the big lie that kept the West going throughout the Cold War and is the smokescreen for the ruthless exploitation of capital across the globe. The illusion that we have choice of who is to misgovern us is an important weapon in capitalism's arsenal. If we "consented" to a government we have to obey it, so the argument runs and any direct action against the state is met with the full weight of capitalist media propaganda. Disillusionment with democracy therefore poses a serious threat to bourgeois ideology.

In this context the ruling class desperately need a party which can generate some enthusiasm for its bankrupt system. Enter New Labour, smiley Mr Blair, tailor made by the spin doctors, largely untainted with sleaze and of course policies indistinguishable from the Tories. When Thatcher announced in the early 1980s that there was "no alternative" as British manufacturing was restructured and millions of jobs were lost one of her closet admirers was Blair. New Labour is the proof that capitalism has no alternative. Whichever

party wins the General Election it will have the same programme to raise profits (known as making Britain competitive) and lowering wages. No capitalist party has an answer to the crisis of the system. With the old state capitalist Labour left now largely decimated, the mainstream bourgeoisie have not the slightest fear about New Labour. A change of government is the minimum necessary to restore some faith in the system.

The Real Alternative is Struggle

New Labour's appalling programme (or rather lack of one) has caused a bit of confusion for the left groupings and party that have been accustomed to hanging on to its coat-tails. Militant Labour has now changed its name to the Socialist Party. Its dishonest entryism into the Labour Party having been gleefully exposed by the capitalist press years ago, it now tries to muscle in on the territory that Scargill had hoped to carve out for himself and his Socialist Labour Party (SLP) (see *Revolutionary Perspectives 2* for a critique of this non-socialist organisation). Along with the Social Equality Party (another name changer - it was the International Communist Party, a splinter from the old Trotskyist Workers' Revolutionary Party of Gerry Healy) they will put up candidates at the election. This is playing the capitalists' game. When they receive a derisory vote workers will conclude that no-one wants "socialism". Precisely what the democratic game is all about. Other groups like Workers Power and Socialist Organiser (which are still semi-detached entryists) will claim to be "realists" and support Labour. They will thus line up with the bosses. These so called "revolutionary" parties all support the democratic system and many are the activists of the Labour Party. All their talk of revolutionary tactics is simply nonsense. The premise of all revolutionary tactics is to have a revolutionary strategy and this must begin from opposing the democratic lie. By giving the electoral lie a justification these groups simply display their own fundamental attachment to the present system.

Most confused of all is like to be the neo-Trotskyist SWP. They have always found a formula which allows them to call for a Labour vote. They are not too concerned with consistency. In the 1974 elections they called on workers to "Vote Labour for the last time" and ever since they have carried on calling for a Labour vote. Today, like the bosses, the SWP know that Labour will offer nothing for the working class. However the SWP (and some of the others already mentioned) argue that workers have to experience a Labour government to find out that the Labour Party is not

really socialist. Workers will then understand the need for "a socialist alternative"! The formula now is "Get the Tories Out". This obviously means voting Labour (but they also advise their members to vote for the SLP where there is an SLP candidate). The SWP will tell us that workers' confidence will rise under a Labour government. Traditionally this has meant that the trade union bureaucrats are able to gain more of a hearing from a Labour government whilst ordinary workers continue to be kicked in the teeth. Its failure to recognise the reactionary nature of Labour (not just its "betrayals") is no accident. The SWP, like the degenerate Trotskyist Left see themselves as part of the very "Labour Movement" which the Labour Party still dominates. This is the movement of the **capitalist** left and in no way represents the real interests of the working class.

The CWO is in rare agreement with Tony Blair in saying that the Labour Party is not socialist. But unlike Mr Blair our perspective is that workers should not waste their time in voting for a party which has always represented the interests of capital. Today, more than ever when the conditions of workers everywhere are getting worse, electoral participation is a non-starter for revolutionaries. The Labour Party no longer even serves as a convincing "lesser evil" to vote for. Already at least 12 million workers, mostly the poorest 20% of the country, will not vote in this election (out of a total estimated electorate of 42 millions). This

is because they recognise that the system has nothing to offer them whoever is in power. But this is a negative response. The only way workers can positively advance their interests is through class struggle and not by electing a bunch of self serving sleaze merchants (of any party) into parliament.

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Is International Class Struggle Increasing?

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response is international class struggle. This cannot be delivered by nationalist organisations like unions. What is more, for workers to really stop the bosses in their tracks they will have to make their struggle a political one — not for greater control of the multinationals or some such demand to modify exploitation — but for the world-wide **abolition** of exploitation, that is an end to capitalism. This requires an international party of the working class. Not such a far-fetched idea in the era of globalisation! Once this exists on any scale then workers throughout the world will have a real weapon in their hands and communism (as Marx and Engels originally meant the word) will once again be more than a spectre.

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Parliamentarism and Communism

Part 1: The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx and Engels

The British General Election campaign of 1997 has at last officially begun. For months we have been bombarded with the opening shots in the "battle" between the bourgeois democratic parties. Whilst the whole charade is a great deception it gives us the opportunity to examine in greater depth a question which is fundamental to internationalist communists.

Millions of workers will once more vote Labour in the (ever fainter) belief that they might be a lesser evil than the Tories, but some (a very few) will also vote for the many other leftist parties who falsely claim the title of "socialist". The latter all claim to retain an adherence to marxism. Some even still claim to be "revolutionary". The Socialist Party (Militant Labour), the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Socialist Party (SPGB) and the newly renamed Socialist Equality Party will join Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 2) in vainly trying to gain credibility through the ballot box. But what is the revolutionary position on parliament and elections?

The present abstentionist position of internationalist communists is the principal basis for the creation of the class organisation of the proletariat.

*"This is the abstentionism of the internationalist communists" in Battaglia Comunista 4, 1996 (translated in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 3)*

Parliamentary democracy, far from expressing "the will of the people", is a front for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Parliament is not the real locus of power of the state. It is merely the democratic figleaf which hides the real domination of the capitalist class. As such it is an institution of class power, an instrument of the domination of the capitalist class over the working class. The real power of the state does not lie in parliament but in the permanent institutions which are controlled

by the propertied classes such as the Army and the Civil Service – the so-called "Establishment".

Although the bourgeois class was suspicious of democracy in their own struggles for power at the beginning of the last century (after all only property owners should have the right to vote since they really represent the country – they own it!) they gradually came to recognise its advantages. As their experience of new techniques such as political parties with electoral machines gave them greater control over the elections they began to fear democracy less. The secret ballot hailed in 1872 as a defence of the workers from bullying by employers became a weapon to atomise workers and have them vote on an individual and not a class basis. Finally in this century control of the mass media meant that the bourgeoisie could largely manipulate the electoral process in their own interests. Thus the result of elections rarely comes as a surprise to the ruling class. The "open society" is only open to those with the wealth to influence its direction. The great value of elections is that they are a superb mystification giving the working class the illusion of choice. None of what we are saying is new but goes back to the very beginnings of scientific socialist thought. This series of articles will examine that thought and show how all those who claim to be at the same time revolutionary and participants in bourgeois elections are not only divorced from marxism but have also nothing to offer the working class.

Marx, Engels and Bourgeois Democracy

Marx and Engels have often been summoned as witnesses to justify the current reformist prejudices of self-styled "revolutionaries". Social Democrats and their latter-day friends, the Stalinists in the Communist Party of Great Britain, would have us believe that Marx and

Engels were enthusiastically democratic, hence the 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism' the latest of the endless efforts of social democrats, beginning with the German Social Democratic Party, to win power through parliamentary institutions. But for Marx and Engels the question was not one of parliamentarism or not but about how power was wielded as well as how the working class could overthrow that power relationship.

Marx and Engels recognised the usefulness of using parliament in particular countries (and even here they may have been generous) **in their own times** but recognised bourgeois democracy for what it was. Thus, on the one hand Marx and Engels could sing the praises of the Chartists seeing them as a necessary stage in the development of the working class as a class. They provided a focus for the hopes and aspirations of workers **at that time**, but did not fetishise the programme of the Chartists as a goal in itself.

The Chartists based themselves around a charter outlining a series of essentially democratic demands, six points in all - universal male suffrage, the ballot as against voting by a show of hands, payment for MPs and more. The Chartists may have encapsulated within their charter a whole series of democratic aspirations but what was important was not these formulae but the very fact of organisation, **political organisation**, that the working class had an independent organisation within the most advanced capitalist country of the time, and that their 'revolutionary' wing looked to go further than that. But Chartism had no wider political programme and the bourgeoisie, despite some fright as in 1839 and 1848 were able to face it down by the middle of the century. Eventually the parties of government and the classes they represented realised that allowing universal male suffrage would not mean passing on the reins to workers' representatives. This was soon proved in practice when the workers, lacking their own class party, were drawn into voting for such parties as the Whigs and Tories and the bourgeois inheritors of the mantle of Cobden and Bright's Free Traders. Hence,

the possessing class rules directly through the medium of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class, in our case, therefore, the proletariat, is not yet ripe to emancipate itself, it will in its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible and, politically, will form the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme left wing. To the extent, however, that this class matures for its own self-emancipation and elects its own representatives, and not those of the capitalists. Thus, universal suffrage

is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state.

Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Within the time frame of Marx and Engels the vote (or first of all gaining the right to vote) of workers for explicitly workers' candidates would be a measure of the maturity of the consciousness of the working class. Thus parliament had a use to which workers and their parties could put it. But in the passage quoted above Engels also sees that bourgeois democracy is only the rule of the capitalist class via the ballot box. It has a limited As Marx put it the vote allows workers to decide

once in every three or six years which member of the ruling class is to misrepresent them in Parliament

Marx, *The Civil War in France*.

Reformism and Parliamentary Cretinism

Marx and Engels had no illusions about parliament, indeed, in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) Marx clearly saw where reformism would lead. His comments foreshadow later events.

The peculiar character of the social democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into a harmony.

This was a clear warning to the working class against the future politics of Bernstein and the other revisionists in the 1890s. At about the same time as Marx wrote the above Engels, in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany in 1848*, coined the phrase "parliamentary cretinism", a disorder

which penetrates its unfortunate victims with

Now Out Internationalist Communist 15

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the solemn conviction that the whole world, its history and future, are governed and determined by a majority of votes in that particular body which has the honour to count them among its members.



"for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of human beings on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution..."
Marx

This comment about parliamentary cretinism was originally a criticism of the behaviour of the Frankfurt Parliament during the revolution of 1848 in Germany. At this point Marx and Engels were not arguing for a proletarian revolution but urging the working class to support a bourgeois revolution against the feudal monarchies of Germany. However the weakness of capitalist development in Germany at that time had allowed only a weak bourgeois liberal movement to appear. The Frankfurt Parliament spent all its time debating the boundaries of the future German state and did not tackle the basic issue of who held power in Germany. As a result the Parliament, after call-

ing on the Prussian monarchy and Army to put down workers demonstrations was swept aside by the very forces it had asked to help it. This "parliamentary cretinism" was also displayed by the Lassalleans who united with the "Marxists" in 1875 to form the German Social Democratic Party. Marx thoroughly distrusted the compromise made with the followers of Lassalle to make this party and denounced it in his attack on the Gotha Programme which set it up.

In contrast to the SDP the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1876) did not support the (bourgeois) democratic republic. Marx stated that;

it is precisely in this last form of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion,

in opposition to the Lassalleans' mealy-mouthed pursuit of democratic means and democratic aims. The SDP however did not publish Marx's critique and, despite numerous threats by Marx that he intended to break off all relations with these "marxists", the secret was kept. Today the faithful heirs of the Lassalleans are also present on the British political scene - the Socialist Party (both ex-Militant and SPGB) and the Socialist Labour Party, who will be faithful parliamentarians if ever elected, equally exhibiting a "servile belief in the state... a democratic belief in miracles...or, rather...a compromise...both equally remote from socialism."

Social Democracy not only ignored what Marx argued against them but even more dishonestly later twisted Engels ideas to make them look as though he too was a "parliamentary cretin". When Engels wrote a new introduction to *The Class Struggles in France* in 1895, the Social Democratic leadership deliberately edited out the passages in which Engels calls for the violent overthrow of the capitalist system. He wrote a bitter letter of protest to Kautsky, the editor of *Neue Zeit*, the SPD newspaper.

To my astonishment I see in Vorwärts an extract from my Introduction, printed without my knowledge and trimmed in such a way as to make me appear a peace-loving worshipper of legality at any price. So much the better that the whole thing is to appear now in Neue Zeit so that this disgraceful impression will be wiped out.

[For more on Engels see *The Indispensable Engels in Revolutionary Perspectives* 11]

This accent on revolution is critical to an understanding of Marx and Engels position on how socialist transformation will come about. *The Communist Manifesto* argues from the start that class struggle is the motive force of history. Earlier, in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels had confronted the question of how a revolutionary consciousness could come about. At first the situation appears bleak.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has at the same time control over the means of mental production, so that thereby generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

The German Ideology p.64

Today, looking at the power of the capitalist press, this seems all too true. So how can revolutionaries ever change people's attitudes and ideas to challenge the system? The answer given by Marx and Engels is given some pages later;

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of human beings on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in

the revolution succeed in ridding itself of the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.

loc. cit. pp.94-5

Such a consciousness² also had to be encapsulated in a party and one of the problems for Marx and Engels was the very electoral success of the SDP. Despite repression their support within the working class grew. By the end of the first decade of this century it was the largest party in the world with about a tenth of the German working class in its membership and about half of that class voting for it in elections. For many Social Democrats this meant that the old emphasis on revolution was obsolete. The transformation of society would be achieved gradually by capitalism being reformed out of existence. This was the main plank of the revisionists led by Eduard Bernstein. He argued that "the movement is everything, the goal nothing" which is just about as stupid a saying as you can find. Social Democracy was legalised in Germany in 1890 and this robbed it of its one radical edge. From now on it became obsessed with integrating itself into German bourgeois society. Its trades unions soon disposed of enormous wealth and the leaders of the unions like Legien and David had views similar to the German imperialists. Thus in the years leading up to the First World War revolutionaries, reformists and outright reactionaries battled it out to define what Social Democracy would become. It is to this struggle that we will turn in the second part of this series in our next issue. CDE

Notes

1. There are enough instances where seemingly contradictory views were expressed by Marx and Engels, as in:

We have never asserted that the roads to our goal are everywhere the same. We know that there must be taken into account the institutions, customs and traditions of the different countries, and we don't deny that there are countries - such as England, America and perhaps Holland - where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means.

Marx, speech in Amsterdam September 1872, after which he argued that "force will be the lever of our revolution" in most countries. Also we must mention Engels comments on a draft of the Erfurt programme in 1891:

One can envisage that the old society could peacefully grow into the new one in countries where the representatives of the people concentrate all power in themselves, where one can do, constitutionally, whatever one pleases, so long as the majority of the people give their support - in democratic republics such as France and America, or in monarchies like England where the dynasty is powerless against the will of the people. But in Germany, where the Government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and other representative bodies for all practical purposes powerless, to proclaim anything like this in Germany would be to remove the figleaf from absolutism and use it to conceal one's own nakedness.

In each case these are statements particular to the time and specific situations, and not general statements, although all manner of "parliamentary cretins" would like to think them that. The question of how the working class would achieve the global overthrow of capitalism was not yet posed in Marx's time. "Marxism" today doesn't lie in repeating verbatim what Marx and Engels said for a different epoch. Marx and Engels both thought that the working class in many countries should fight alongside "their" capitalist class against the reactionary feudal order **for their day**. The revolutionary Marxist method is to recognise how the working class can emancipate itself today.

2. For more on our views on the issue of party and class consciousness see the article on the ICC in the current edition of our central publication *Internationalist Communist (No.15)*. Our complete views are to be found in the article *Class Consciousness in the Marxist Perspective* first published in RP22 (second series). This is available in photocopy format for £1.50, including postage, from our Sheffield address.

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The German Communist Left

Part One: German Social Democracy - from Working Class to Capitalist Party

The fall of the USSR and the ideological crisis of the traditional Left from Tribunites and Trotskyists through to Stalinists and Maoists means that the critique of the Communist Left which has been made against these degenerate forms of so-called "Marxism" for seventy years has now got greater force than ever. The critique of the Communist Left is not something made up by this or that would-be genius but the product of the class struggle itself. However to do this we have to rescue these lessons of the past from the obscurity which capitalists of all political persuasions have tried to condemn them. One of the earliest oppositions to the degeneration of the October Revolution was the German Left. Originally it was a healthy reaction to the reactionary nature of Social Democracy in Germany but, failing to understand that basic question of organisation it soon disintegrated. Revolutionaries need to understand what happened to the German Left as a preparation for the restoration of a world party of the working class so it is the purpose of this series of articles to look at the tragic story of the struggle for communism in Germany in the last revolutionary wave. We have to begin though with a look at the German Social Democratic Movement from which the revolutionaries themselves sprang.

In May 1875 the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany - SAPD) was founded at Gotha from the union of the Allgemeine Deutscher Arbeiterverein (the General German Workers' Union - ADAV), composed of the followers of Ferdinand Lassalle, and the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiter-Partei (the Social Democratic Workers' Party - SDAP), consisting of people who were, roughly speaking, Marxists. (At any rate, Marx and Engels referred to them as "our people" in their correspondence). The new party had 25,000 members and was unambiguously proletarian in politics (although not unambiguously Marxist). By 1914 the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (the Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, which was the new name of the SAPD, adopted in 1890), had over a million members. Unfortunately, quantity is very far from being quality, and by 1914 the party had gone over to capitalism, as the events at the outbreak of the First Imperialist Slaughter made completely clear. Tragically, proletarian elements remained trapped within it. The aim of this article is to trace these quantitative, and, more importantly, qualitative developments.

Precursors: 1) Lassalleans

The ADAV was formed within the environment provided by the educational and vocational workers' asso-

ciations which multiplied in the 1860's. Originally the result of the philanthropic efforts of bourgeois like the Progressives (Fortschritt), who tried to tie them to liberalism or make them "non-political", a number of these were politicised by the efforts of Lassalle, and, directly rejecting bourgeois political influence, they founded the ADAV in May 1863. By December 1864 (four months after Lassalle's death in a duel), the ADAV had 4,600 members. In the spirit of their founder, the ADAV tried to utilise Marx's economic works to propagate a version of Malthus's population law, the "iron law of wages". This stated that;

the average wage never rises above the necessary subsistence that a people normally requires in order to eke out a living and to procreate.

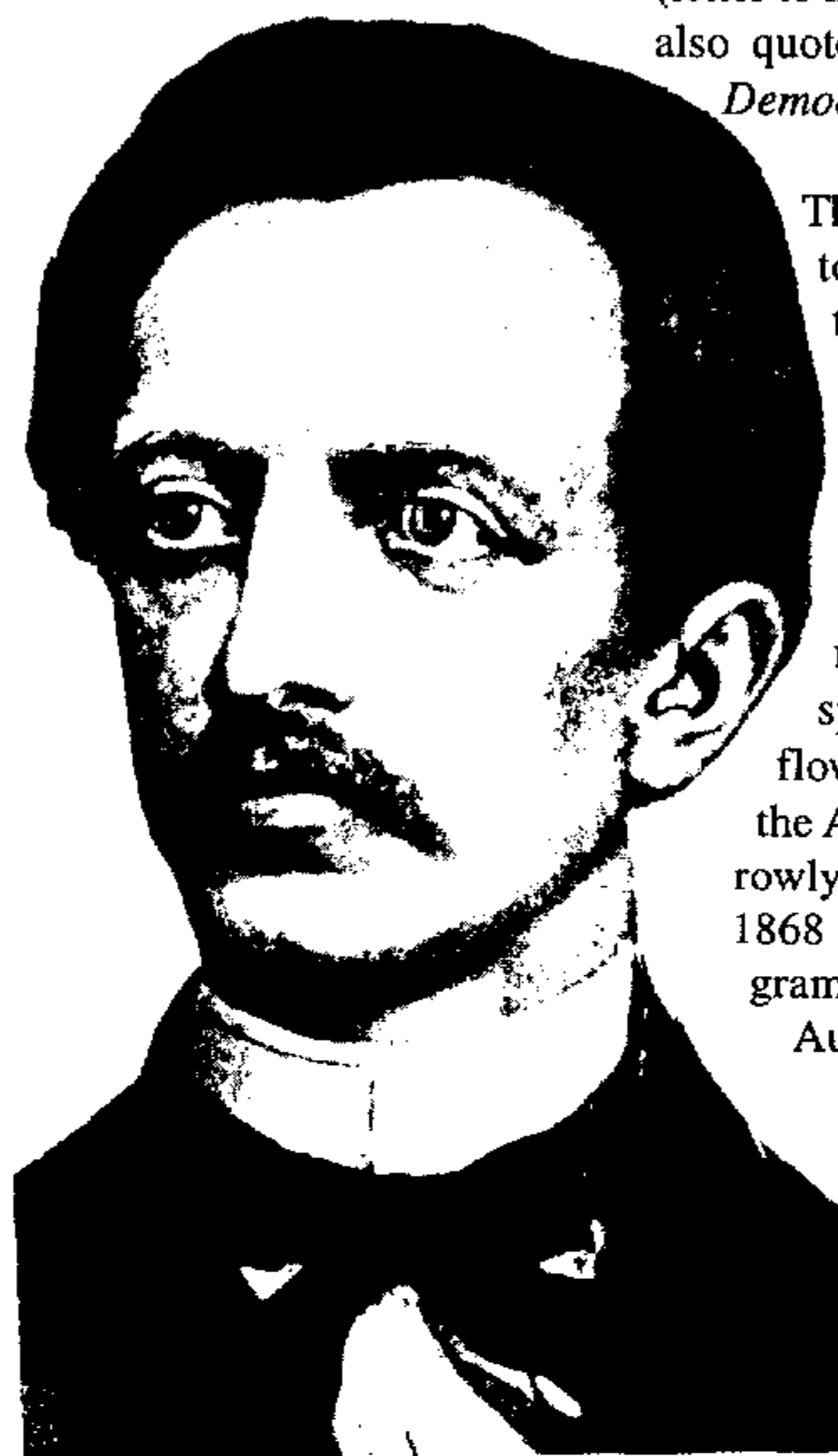
(F.Lassalle, quoted in *A History of German Social Democracy*, Miller and Pothoff)

Moreover, their hostility to the bourgeoisie spilled over into appealing to Bismarckian absolutism against it. Wilhelm Liebknecht recalled in his memoirs that Lassalle said in an ADAV party dinner in April 1864 that;

... the bourgeoisie is the only enemy, and we should swear to fight the enemy to death, and not even recoil from an alliance with the monarchy.

(quoted in *Wilhelm Liebknecht*, R.H.Dominick).

In return, although Bismarck analysed Liebknecht's SDAP as being inspired by inter-



Ferdinand Lassalle
The pro-aristocracy
opponent of the capitalist
class did enormous damage
to early German Socialism

national socialism, he felt that with the ADAV;
not only is a material understanding still possible, but a timely intervention will also succeed in reconciling the majority of workers with the existing order ...

(letter to his Minister of Commerce, Itzenplitz, also quoted in *A History of German Social Democracy*, Miller and Pothoff).

This faith in the state, without regard to its class content, was also shown in the Lassalleans' trade-mark idea of solving working class problems through state-funded co-operatives.

The Verband Deutschen Arbeitervereine (the League of German Workers' Unions - VDAV) sprang up on the basis of the same flowering of workers' associations as the ADAV, but it rejected the latter's narrowly German outlook. At its September 1868 conference it subscribed to the programme of the First International, and in August 1869 it merged with other elements, including W. Liebknecht and August Bebel, contacts of Marx and Engels, to form the German branch of the International, the SDAP. As its founding congress was held in Eisenach, they were also known as the

Eisenachers.

The Union

Despite the many backward features of the ADAV, the Eisenachers felt a union with the Lassalleans would avoid the problems of competing workers' organisations. Marx and Engels disagreed, not because they entirely wrote off the ADAV, but because they thought that the union was premature and could only lead to a future split. Nevertheless, the 15,000-strong ADAV and the 9,000-strong SDAP held a unification congress in May 1875, and formed the SAPD. If Marx and Engels were uneasy about the unification, they were outraged at the basis on which the unification proceeded - the Gotha programme (named after the congress venue). The draft of this programme was the concrete expression of the Eisenachers' overhasty desire to unite with the Lassalleans, in that it was, according to Engels, a

bending of the knee to Lassalleism on the part of the whole German proletariat.
(Letter to Bebel, 18-28th March 1875).

In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which was intended for circulation among the leaders of the SDAP, Marx attacks the simpli-

fied and erroneous economics of the programme, its conception of the bourgeoisie as the only class enemy of the proletariat, its reduction of proletarian internationalism to bourgeois vacuities about the international brotherhood of peoples, and its conception of the state as being an independent entity rather than a tool of the ruling class, all of which can be traced back to the reactionary influence of Lassalle. And, of course, the programme put forward Lassalle's panacea, state-aided co-operatives,

in order to pave the way to the solution of the social question,

as if the solution (i.e., eventual proletarian revolution) was unknown. In particular, the position of Marx and Engels was that all non-proletarian classes did not "form a single reactionary bloc"; rather, the proletariat had to maintain its independence within the democratic revolution as the only really revolutionary class:

... Lassalle's high-sounding but historically false phrase is accepted: in contrast to the working class all other classes are only one reactionary mass. ...

However, this rejection is made contingent on the development of society:

... This statement is only true in a few exceptional cases: for instance, in a proletarian revolution like the Commune, or in a country where not only have state and society been moulded by the bourgeoisie in its own image but where in its wake the democratic petty bourgeoisie too has already carried out this recasting down to its final consequences.

(Letter to Bebel, 18-28th March 1875)

Marx put his finger on why Lassalle used this "reactionary bloc" formula:

Lassalle knew The Communist Manifesto by heart, as his faithful followers know the gospels written by him. If, therefore, he has falsified it so grossly [by replacing its class analysis with his 'reactionary bloc' formula], this has occurred only to put a good colour on his alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents against the bourgeoisie.

(*Critique of the Gotha Programme*).

Despite all this, the draft programme was adopted with only minor concessions to Marx's *Critique*, and the unification went ahead. Marx and Engels had threatened to make their disagreement with the programme public if it was adopted, but, in the event, did not do so. This was because

... the asses of the bourgeois papers have taken this programme quite seriously, have read into

it what is not there and interpreted it in a communist sense. The workers appear to do the same. It is this circumstance alone which has made it possible for Marx and myself not to dissociate ourselves publicly from such a programme."

(Letter to Bebel, 12th October 1875).

The Anti-Socialist Law

Engels spoke the truth. Subsequent events soon showed the truth of his remarks. In May 1878 Bismarck, who had justified the need for his alliance with Austria and Russia, the League of the Three Emperors (DreiKaiserBund) in 1873 by talking of the threat posed by the First International now proposed a law against the "criminal endeavours of Social Democracy". In the election of July 1878, the SAPD obtained 437,158 votes and won 9 seats. Faced with this evidence of support for "criminal endeavour", the Reichstag passed Bismarck's Exceptional Law in October, using as an excuse two attempts on the Kaiser's life, in fact carried out by anarchists unconnected with the party. This law made socialist political activity illegal, although socialists were still permitted to stand for the Reichstag as individuals. The law, as interpreted by the police, also made any centralisation of the unions impossible. Both before the Anti-Socialist Law (as the Exceptional Law came more accurately to be known) and after it, the SAPD was subject to state harassment, but in the period of illegality this was obviously much intensified. In these circumstances, Lassalleanism, with its ideas of collaborating with a state which was now repressing the party itself, was massively weakened. A further result of the anti-socialist law, and the partial immunity from it enjoyed by the Reichstag deputies, was that the deputies had their influence on the Party leadership reinforced. Party congresses had to be held abroad, and the part of the organisation was also "exported". Local organisation was provided by Vertrauensleute, "trusted people".

When repressive measures against Social Democracy only seemed to strengthen it in elections, Bismarck turned to social measures to try and cut the ground from under its feet: health insurance (1883) was followed by accident insurance (1884) and old age and disability pensions (1889). In a speech (26th November 1884) to the Reichstag he betrayed what lay behind his thinking:

If there were no Social Democracy and if there were not a great many people who are afraid of it, neither should we have the moderate advances that we have made in social

reform up to now.

(quoted in *A History of German Social Democracy*, Miller and Pothoff).

These were the first social reforms by any capitalist state in the world to buy off the working class. Bismarck's policies failed in their short-term objective. The net effect of the repression, the organisation of the SAPD to overcome it, and the credit the party gave to reforms like those just mentioned, strengthened socialism in the eyes of the working class. The enormous development of capitalism in Germany increased the working class population and this began to turn on the ruling class. In 1890 Bismarck was deposed by the new Kaiser Wilhelm II (who wanted more paternalist policies toward the workers) and the Anti-Socialist Law was not renewed. The Party vote at the election of February 1890 was nearly one and a half million resulting in 35 seats, and the socialist trades unions grew from having 50,000 members¹ in 1877 to 91,000 in 1886² and 237,000 in 1890³.

The Erfurt Programme

After the lifting of the Anti-Socialist Law and the weakening of Lassalleanism, it was recognised by the Party that the Gotha Programme was inadequate. Wilhelm Liebknecht (a follower of Marx and Engels, and the father of Karl) was mandated to produce a draft for the 1890 Halle Party Congress (where the SAPD became the SPD), but his draft was not ready until the Erfurt Congress of 1891. The draft was divided into two parts, a theoretical section and a practical one. Referring to the theoretical part, Engels wrote

We have the satisfaction of seeing the Marxist critique win all along the line. Even the last trace of Lassalleanism has been removed.

(Letter to F.K.Sorge, 24th October 1891, quoted in W.O.Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels*).

However, with regard to the practical part, Engels was concerned about the lack of coherent political demands. Although the Lassallean rubbish about a free state had been dropped, it was necessary to call for a democratic republic, or, if this was impossible in the immediate aftermath of the Anti-Socialist Law, to demand

concentration of all political power in the hands of popular representatives

(*Zur Kritik des sozialdemokratischen Programmentwurfs* in *Die Neue Zeit*, No. 20, vol. 1, 1890-1, quoted in R.H.Dominick, *Wilhelm Liebknecht*).

Karl Kautsky produced a revision of the draft which conceived of communism

as a necessity resulting directly from the historical trend of capitalist production methods, whereas the draft saw communism following

not from the character of current production, but rather from the character of our party ... The train of thought in the proposal of the Party Executive [i.e., of Liebknecht] is as follows: the current method of production creates unbearable conditions; therefore we must eliminate them ... In our opinion, the correct train of thought is this: the current method of production creates unbearable conditions; it also creates, however, the possibility and necessity of communism...

(Die Neue Zeit, No. 9, vol. 2, 1890-1, quoted in R.H.Dominick, Wilhelm Liebknecht).

Engels' suggestion for the improvement of the draft was not acted on, but Kautsky's was adopted at the congress, with Bebel's (and therefore, probably, Engels') backing. Although Kautsky's amendment had the virtue of replacing an idealist conception with a materialist one, it did not capture the relationship between communist ideas (and, by extension, communist action) and the necessity for communism. Here we can detect the passivity that was later to lead Kautsky down the road to centrism and ultimately, in Lenin's words to become "a renegade". However that is to anticipate history. From 1891 Kautsky seemed to many in Social Democracy, including those who were later to become revolutionaries, as "the Pope" of Marxism. Partially this was due to the comparison with the more dubious characters who found a home there like Georg von Vollmar.

Von Vollmar and the Jungen

At the Erfurt Congress, an oppositional group known as the Jungen (the "Young") left in recognition of their imminent expulsion from the Party. They had accused the Reichstag deputies of "corruption", meaning a surrender to reformist politics and a petty-bourgeois (shop-keeper) mentality, and the Party Executive interpreted this as being an accusation of pecu-

niary corruption, and asked for proof. The Jungen were a reaction to the downgrading of the preparation of the membership for the revolutionary struggles ahead in relation to those of electoral politics. In particular, they were repelled by people like Georg von Vollmar, who called on the SPD to renounce revolution and become a fully reformist party. But Vollmar did not share the fate of the Jungen, as his large following in Southern Germany made him immune to such treatment. The Jungen went on to form a new party, the "Independents" which then succumbed to anarchism and collapsed within two years.



Karl Kautsky: The "Pope of Marxism" under Social Democracy he helped destroy Lassalleanism but only to replace it with a fatalistic approach which ultimately became anti-revolutionary and anti-Marxist

Engels regarded the Vollmars of the party as petty-bourgeois and predicted that they would "fall away" (letter to Bebel, 23rd July 1892, quoted in S.Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Working Class Mentality in Germany, 1887-1912*) as the revolution approached and the healthy instincts of the workers came into play. In this, Engels was mistaken. As Paul Kampffmeyer (who left the Jungen when they left the party and became a revisionist later) pointed out;

It is a curious thing that the present schism between radicals and possibilists runs right through the middle of the Erfurt Programme as it runs you almost feel you can touch it through the minds of our most gifted theoreticians and party leaders. On the one hand they heap anathema after anathema on bourgeois society; on the other, they labour with burning zeal to patch up and improve it.

(*Schrittweise Sozialisierung oder gewaltsame Sprengung der kapitalistischen Wirtschaftsordnung in Sozialistische Monatshefte*, No. 10,

1899, quoted in *A History of German Social Democracy*, Miller and Pothoff).

In fact, the schism in ideas contained in the Erfurt Programme would only become real to the extent that communism became a material possibility. Before this happened, there was no explicit contradiction between the revolutionaries' tactic of pursuing reforms to improve the lot of the working class in order to make themselves the head of the working class movement and propagandise the need for an eventual revolution, and those who were not revolutionary who saw the pursuit of reforms as an end in themselves.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century,

however, the political, and with it, the economic environment began to change. Germany's peculiar history also had an effect on the development of the SPD. Bismarck's "revolution from above" of 1866-71 satisfied the national aspirations of the bourgeois revolutionaries of 1848 but not their liberal demands. To buy off the bourgeoisie, and forge a national coalition of the military, the more enlightened of the Junker aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie, Bismarck promoted free trade in the German empire. However under the impetus of growing imperialist competition Bismarck abandoned free trade in the late 1870s with the support of many of the same bourgeois who had called for it. Henceforth militarism and the growing industrial might of Germany were inseparable. In this way, the bourgeoisie became the real "national class", without having to formally overthrow the power of the monarchy and aristocracy. Rather, they merged with these classes. This was an incomplete revolution, but many bourgeois revolutions are. Thus the German bourgeoisie had "outgrown" the need for a bourgeois democratic revolution. For the bourgeoisie as a whole, democratic demands like the strengthening of the Reichstag (which was still largely a consultative body for the Kaiser) and a Republic more and more had the status of sopas to the outmoded democratic opinions of the masses. For this reason many bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements (like the so-called Katheder Socialists and Herr Duhring) drifted into the SPD as the only vehicle of democracy in German society.

In the same period, the trades unions grew massively, and, as has been noted in these pages many times, they are the natural home of reformism. Attempting to base themselves on all workers, and thereby excluding any politics which might obstruct this, they naturally reject revolution. They arose to obtain the best conditions for workers within capitalism, and this eventually led them to support "their" capitalists against all others. As negotiators of the cost of labour power, they ultimately have a material interest in the perpetuation of capitalism. Moreover, the link which existed between those unions which were originally socialist-inspired and the SPD acted to import the unions' reformism into the Party.

Several factors helped to intensify the effect of these material circumstances on the Party. In the decision-making structure of the Party, small branches were over-represented. For example, from 1891 to 1909, every electoral district organisation sent three delegates to the Party Congresses, no matter what its size. Af-

ter 1909, small districts were still over-represented: every organisation with less than 1,500 members had one delegate, those with up to 3,000 had two; 6,000, three; 12,000, four; 18,000, five; over 18,000, six⁴. Initially, the smaller districts were given more power to stimulate their growth, but these over-represented districts tended to be where the proletariat was more subject to the influence of nonproletarian strata. Another factor was the bureaucratisation of the Party. Although the size of the bureaucracy is often overestimated (e.g., around 1912, roughly 94% of Berlin-Neukoelln's members were "ordinary" members and very few of the rest were paid including people responsible for paper deliveries, etc.⁵), Friedrich Ebert's reorganisation of the Party after 1906 replaced the informal Vertrauensleute of the past with paid district secretaries who were less likely to be influenced by the possibly radical membership and transmitted the conservative views of the higher bureaucracy downwards. Finally, there was the electoral appeal to non-proletarian strata. In a dynamic, revolutionary situation where the peasantry and petty bourgeois face transformation into proletarians, or ruin without even that possibility, they will be faced with the choice of accepting proletarian or bourgeois leadership, and may choose the former, but, in normal times, they will either be hostile to proletarian parties, or worse, try to lead them towards the bourgeoisie.

After the adoption of the Erfurt Programme, the Social Democrats in the Reichstag used a policy they called "pure opposition", which consisted of refusing any ceremonial contact with the Kaiser, and, more importantly, refusing to vote for national budgets. However, in the Landtags ("regional"⁶ parliaments) of Southern Germany, an early manifestation of the effect of appealing to the peasants was the voting for state budgets which favoured the peasantry. As this was against Party policy, it was condemned time and time again at Congresses, but to no avail.

Revisionism and the Mass Strike Debate

As a theoretical manifestation of reformism, Bernstein's 1899 book, *The Requirements of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* called for the jettisoning of Marxism and the rejection of revolution. The opposition to the conclusions Bernstein drew from the practice of some parts of Social Democracy galvanised the Party and his ideas were comprehensively condemned by the Party's 1903 Congress. However, the future was to show that the battle lines regarding

the Party's practice and those regarding its theory were rather different.

The Russian revolution of 1905 inspired the Left of the Party. One of the outcomes was the debate on the uses of the mass strike. Traditional Social Democratic opinion relegated strike action to economic questions, and the SPD unions were determined to maintain that tradition. In May 1905, the triennial Congress of the Trade Unions at Cologne rejected the political mass strike as not even worthy of discussion in an attempt to pre-empt the Jena Party Congress in September. Although this attempt failed and a resolution in favour of the political mass strike was passed, this resolution firmly subordinated the strike tactic to parliamentary action: it was to be used in the last resort if parliament was threatened. Almost immediately, the opportunity to use the mass strike as a political tactic presented itself. In November, attempts were made in various parts of Germany to restrict the voting rights of the working class. Protest demonstrations were held, including some in Prussia where, although no further restrictions were being proposed, the vote was already restricted enough. The reaction of the SPD leadership (who had been against the revisionists, but now showed that the real dividing line in the Party was not between revisionist reformism and the rest) was to make a secret agreement with the Trades' Unions to prevent a mass strike over the suffrage and to dampen down the movement! Following this, the leadership forced a "parity" agreement through the 1906

without permission! This obviously meant the death of the political mass strike as a tactic for official Social Democracy. Luxemburg's pamphlet, *Mass Strike, Party and Trade-Unions*, went much further than the Jena resolution and made the mass strike a weapon in the revolutionary situation. Although it overemphasised the role of the mass strike at the expense of the need to smash the bourgeois state, it is significant in that it reasserts the need for a revolution involving the masses rather than simply their parliamentary representatives.

Surrendering to Nationalism

The election of 1907 saw a patriotic hue and cry raised against the SPD. For the first time since its foundation, the Party had fewer seats after an election than before it. In the military budget debate following the election, it fell to Bebel and Gustav Noske to defend the SPD's "honour". Bebel stated that the Party's opposition to the budget was based on the fact that it relied on indirect rather than direct taxation. But Noske turned in the real performance. He claimed that the Party's position on militarism was "conditioned by its acceptance of the principle of nationality", saying that the SPD wanted Germany to be;

as well armed as possible... the whole people have an interest in the military establishment which is necessary to the defence of our fatherland.

Count von Einem, the Prussian War Minister, welcomed the SPD into the national camp, by accepting Noske's assurance;

that his party is determined to defend the German Empire against an aggressive war in the same manner and with the same devotion as the other parties,

but asked the SPD deputies what they were going to do against the Karl Liebknechts of the world, who were carrying out antimilitarist propaganda on behalf of that party!⁷ Although Noske was widely condemned in the Party, he was left to conduct a long and patriotic career as an SPD member and in 1919 became the butcher of the proletariat.

A further after-effect of the 1907 election was the Party leadership's reaction to the second Morocco crisis, which occurred when the German warship, the *Pan-*

The Social Democrats are the most enlightened, most class conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait in a fatalist fashion, with folded arms for the advent of the "revolutionary situation", to wait for that which in every spontaneous peoples' movement, falls from the clouds. On the contrary, they must now, as always, hasten the development of things and endeavour to accelerate events. This they cannot do, however, by suddenly issuing the "slogan" for a mass strike at random at any odd moment, but first and foremost, by making clear to the widest layers of the proletariat the inevitable advent of this revolutionary period, the inner social factors making for it and the political consequences of it. If the widest proletarian layer should be won for a political mass action of the Social Democrats, and if vice-versa, the Social Democrats should seize and maintain the leadership of a mass movement should they become in a political sense, the rulers of the whole movement then they must, with the utmost clearness, consistency and resoluteness inform the German proletariat of their tactics and aims in the coming struggle.

Rosa Luxemburg *The Mass Strike* 1906

Luxemburg, representing the revolutionary wing of the SDP tried to win over Kautsky et al. to a really revolutionary stance with arguments like these. However beyond Kautsky stood the pro-imperialist trade union wing and Luxemburg's struggle turned out to be fruitless as we shall see in our next edition.

Mannheim Congress which accepted the Party and Unions as "equal" partners and meant that the Party could not appeal to Union members

without permission! This obviously meant the death of the political mass strike as a tactic for official Social Democracy. Luxemburg's pamphlet, *Mass Strike, Party and Trade-Unions*, went much further than the Jena resolution and made the mass strike a weapon in the revolutionary situation. Although it overemphasised the role of the mass strike at the expense of the need to smash the bourgeois state, it is significant in that it reasserts the need for a revolution involving the masses rather than simply their parliamentary representatives.

ther entered Agadir harbour in 1911 to protect German interests in Morocco. The secretary of the International Socialist Bureau, Camille Huysmans, asked the member parties if they thought their delegates should meet. Hermann Molkenbuhr replied for the SPD, playing down the incident and saying:

I see in the whole coup something with which our government wishes to divert public attention from internal conditions and to create an atmosphere for the Reichstag elections... If we should prematurely engage ourselves so strongly and even given precedence to the Morocco question over questions of internal policy, so that an effective electoral slogan could be developed against us [!], then the consequences will be unforeseeable... It is a vital interest for us not to permit the internal developments: taxation policy, the privileges of the agrarians ... etc., to be pushed into the background. But that could happen if we ourselves were to speak on the Morocco question in every hamlet, and were thus to strengthen the counter-tendency.⁸

That is, the avoidance of a hostile slogan in the elections was to be given priority over statements of principle.

Surrendering to Liberalism

The next election, of 1912, saw a secret pact concluded between the SPD leadership and the left-liberals, Fortschritt. If it had not been for this agreement, Fortschritt would have been wiped out, and, despite this, it broke its side of the bargain! To return to the more important question of principle, we can let Luxemburg state this:

Up to now it has been a fundamental principle of Social Democracy that an election serves first and foremost [for] agitation, of enlightenment concerning the aims of Social Democracy, and in this sense it was a sacred duty and a matter of honour to use every day, every hour of the campaign to perform the maximum of agitational work.... The Party Executive, for the sake of Fortschritt, forbade our comrades to agitate for their own party... For bourgeois liberal politicians, constituencies are worth consideration and agitation rewarding only if a mandate is to be won; for Social Democracy, the agitation comes first and the mandate last.

(Luxemburg, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, quoted in Schorske)

War and Imperialism

It is perhaps here that the contradiction between reform and revolution was the strongest in the pre-war SPD. In 1912,

the Party introduced resolutions to the Reichstag calling for pre-military training in state schools and a share in armaments production for SPD-run cooperatives. Although revolutionaries do not oppose measures like conscription per se (because an armed working class is dangerous for capitalism, once army organisation breaks down), the second resolution shows that the majority of the SPD Reichstag Fraktion⁹ was in favour of strengthened army, and therefore state, organisation. Also in 1912, the SPD was faced with a choice either support the military budget and have it paid for by increases in direct taxation, or oppose it and face increased indirect taxation, resulting in the working class facing a greater part of the burden. Trapped within a narrowly parliamentary perspective, they voted for the budget, rather than opposing militarism inside and taxes outside the Reichstag. Nevertheless, the SPD continued to support international declarations against war and to issue its own at home. As late as 25th July 1914, it called for demonstrations against the war and issued a manifesto stating:

The class-conscious proletariat of Germany, in the name of humanity and civilisation, raises a flaming protest against this criminal activity of the warmongers. It insistently demands that the German Government exercise its influence on the Austrian Government to maintain peace; and, in the event that the shameful war cannot be prevented, refrain from belligerent intervention. No drop of blood of a German soldier may be sacrificed to the power lust of the Austrian ruling group [or] to the imperialistic profit-interests.¹⁰

EDL

to be continued

Footnotes

- 1 Wolfgang Schroeder, *Klassenkaempfe und Gewerkschaftseinheit*, quoted in John Moses, *Trade Unionism in Germany, from Bismarck to Hitler*.
2. John Moses, op. cit.
3. Wolfgang Schroeder, op. cit.
4. Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-17*.
5. W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party*.
6. Actually, a hang-over from the pre-unification days before 1871, these were the parliaments of the states existing then.
7. Carl E. Schorske, op. cit.
8. Quoted in Carl E. Schorske, op. cit.
9. The SPD Fraktion tradition was always to vote as a bloc in the Reichstag. Before each session, they held their own meeting to decide the Fraktion's position.
10. Carl Gruenberg, *Die Internationale und der Weltkrieg, I, Vor dem Krieg und waehrend der ersten Kriegswochen*, quoted in Schorske.

From Battaglia Comunista 3 March 1997

Deng is dead! Long live Chinese Capitalism!

Deng's death, which physiologically occurred on the 19th of February of this year, although in fact "the great helmsman" had been absent from political life for almost five years, has reopened the Chinese situation. The bourgeois press, in celebrating the death of the last Emperor, has not begrudged its praise for post-Maoist China for the economic success of its gradual conversion towards capitalism. Western economists and politicians, after the historic victory gained against the USSR, gleefully anticipated that the second "communist" power in the world might collapse on its own accord, thus granting them a victory to crow over the working masses, even bigger and better than they had already celebrated with the disappearance of the first home of "socialist realism". In the absence of that collapse, the Western bourgeoisie has contented itself with declaring that China could only be saved from economic ruin if it is opened up to capitalism, to the market economy, without falling into the hesitation of Perestroika. Each to his own. To Stalin and Mao the responsibility of having palmed off State capitalism as Socialism, to the international bourgeoisie the responsibility of having made full use, at the right time, of the collapse of a false communism, to us, the attempt to create a little clarity.

First of all it must be said that the birth of the People's Republic of China in the far-off October of 1949, was made in the image and likeness of the USSR, of its planned economy, its political and economic centralism, of that State capitalism which Stalin created in transforming through counter-revolution the Bolshevik October into "Socialism" in one country. In China as in the USSR not only did all the capitalist economic categories, from capital to profit, from commodity production to the market, remain in place, but were strengthened for decades under the guard of a State which controlled and managed everything. Having said this it follows that the supposed conversion to capitalism was no more than the passage from State capitalism to private capitalism, first of all in the agricultural economy and then in the industrial sector, extending to 60% of the entire Chinese economy. In 1978 when "the great leap forward" had taken its first steps, the problem for Chinese State capitalism was escaping the great crisis of the 70's into which global capitalism had fallen, whether in its planned version or its

traditional version, using those technological and financial instruments of restructuring production and management of the productive forces which had allowed the national capital to expand and hold off the greater competitiveness of the West.

Large scale reform has not reintroduced capital, nor changed its relation with labour power. It has not transformed goods and services into merchandise to put on the market at prices advantageous to capital, it has only taken away these economic categories from the exclusive State monopoly to give them a more agile, more flexible, private dimension, more in line with the demand to be competitive, no longer tied solely and exclusively to the finance and protection of the State.

The first stage was that of the de-collectivisation of the land. According to that project a part of the agricultural concerns would remain in the hands of the State, another part would be transformed into private business with the obligation to sell 50% of their merchandise at prices imposed by the State and the remaining 50% at unrestricted prices. Private property in the means of production was reintroduced as well as free enterprise, previously privileges which were only allowed to the State, or the Party Nomenclature, as well as the liberalisation of the prices of goods and services, granted exemption from a limited number of regulations and planning bodies.

In industry a greater autonomy was conceded to enterprises. However the significant structures of the national economy remained in the State's hands. But many enterprises have been privatised, a network of small and medium businesses have been born and developed; many have transformed themselves into share-issuing companies which finance themselves on the stock exchange, the first one born in a country with a planned economy. In other words the Chinese economy by equipping itself to a certain extent with the foremost financial instruments in order to better and faster finance both State and private enterprise and resorting to the techniques of the "market" economy, had done no more than anticipate the Soviet Perestroika by ten years. Ten decisive years which allowed Deng to integrate better into the world market, the same years in which Gorbachev failed to save the USSR from col-

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The Great Power Struggle in Central Africa

Another Episode of the New World Disorder

The term "new world disorder" has now become a very hackneyed cliché but like all such phrases this is because it expresses a fundamental truth about the state of the world. We have to keep repeating it in words only because the dominating forces of imperialism keep repeating the same old deeds.

When George Bush, the then President of the USA, announced the collapse of "communism" (i.e. the state capitalist Stalinist empire) he was quickly echoed by a string of academic and journalistic hacks who were only too happy to sing paeans of praise to "the triumph of the West". Even the immediate bloody affair in the Gulf in 1990-1 was turned into a triumph of international co-operation as the US browbeat its former allies into stumping up cash or troops for a victory which was almost wholly American (See *Workers Voice* 55 and subsequent issues). Although the number of wars in the world has declined by about 25% (as the loss of support from the USSR has led to some "insurgencies" collapsing) that still leaves 30 or so conflicts going on at any one time around the planet. These conflicts usually have local causes but they only become significant because of the rival support given to different factions by the great powers as they manoeuvre to retain or win influence in this or that region.

US Global Strategy

For the USA the policy strategy is quite clear. The US has now achieved a kind of global dominance unheard of in history. Its problem is to maintain it. The obvious danger is that its former allies, freed from the Cold War knee-jerk loyalty to the US, try to carve out independent policies which are contrary to US interests. This has led to some remarkable permutations since 1990. The British and French tried to line up together in support of the Serbs in ex-Yugoslavia against the US support for the Bosnian government. This rivalry went to the extent of the CIA spying on the SAS because they knew that the SAS were under orders from the British Government not to find Serb targets for the NATO forces to bomb! The subsequent humiliation of Britain and France in the Dayton "Peace" Accords show just how weak the Europeans are against the US. (See

Revolutionary Perspectives 1 and *Internationalist Communist 14* for more on Bosnia). As US worries about their former allies have mounted spying by the CIA has increased. This also occurred during the Cold War but the signs are that it is becoming yet another source of tension between the NATO "partners". In February Germany expelled a US Embassy official bluntly stating that he was a "spy". Apparently other similar cases have also been dealt with without hitting the headlines.

US worries about the reliability of its allies has led it to be very determined to expand NATO. The purpose of this would seem at first to be unclear since NATO was originally aimed at the USSR - which no longer exists! So what is the US State Department up to? Part of the answer is to be found in its lack of faith in the UN as an instrument of US control (it is no accident that the only time the UN has looked effective in the last six years was when it was doing US-inspired work). The NATO alliance however creates a pro-US club in Europe which Eastern European states are desperate to join. Under such conditions the larger European powers who have shown the greatest desire for independence (Germany, Britain and France) cannot very well withdraw and thus the US have an instrument for disciplining its more powerful allies since the military command is under US control. In response the Europeans have tried various schemes to create a military alternative to NATO. The French have been the most active here. Their first idea was the Rapid Reaction Force (with Britain) in Bosnia, then it was to turn the EU into a defence alliance and now France, Belgium and Germany have signed an agreement on military cooperation.

The British now refuse to sanction any military cooperation in Europe, preferring to return to the US fold but this also illustrates how the US has also used the time-honoured tradition of divide and rule against its European "allies". In ex-Yugoslavia the US eventually lined up alongside Germany to embarrass the Russian,

British and French Governments. In Central Africa it is aligned with Belgium and Britain against the French. In Iran it opposes Germany's extension of influence and in the Middle East in general it has slapped down the Chirac regime's attempts to muscle in on behalf of the Palestinians and Syrians. In Afghanistan the main rival still remains Russia which has inherited the USSR's policy of support for Tadjiks and other northern minorities against the Pakistan (and therefore US)-backed Taliban.

The British Government, annoyed that it contributed so much to the Gulf War but got so few of the spoils tried to be more independent of the US in ex-Yugoslavia. Since having its fingers burned in Bosnia the British state has though returned to a policy of supporting whatever the US does. This is partly a recognition of the fact that Britain's economic links to the US are shadowed by its military links. The British have long been the strongest supporters of the NATO alliance amongst the larger states in the EU but the relationship is deeper than that. As the US Ambassador timely reminded us in a letter to the *Financial Times* recently

...Britain is the largest overseas supplier of military equipment and components to the US military. At the American Embassy, we are currently monitoring and a managing Department of Defense contracts with 230 UK companies for direct defense procurements valued at \$2.7 bn...

He further adds that under the UK industrial participation policy the two countries are even more closely tied.

This policy artificially forces a US company selling to the UK Ministry of Defence to provide defence-related work or technology equal to 100 per cent of the contract value, of which 50% must be currently related to the procurement programme.

William J. Crowe Jr., *loc. cit.* 26.3.97

Arms sales are one area not covered by the World Trade Organisation and thus lie outside demands for free trade. They are thus a prime means through which states can influence other states and today the USA controls almost 75% of the world arms trade. Small wonder that the British share of arms sales in the world has risen by 50% to about 7.3% of the world's total. By contrast the French share of world arms sales has fallen from 7.2% to 3.2%. The French have been the most persistent of the US allies to try to develop an independent line on the international stage. Nowhere is this more clear than in the disastrous decline of French influence in Central Africa. Here the British

have acted as the perfect poodles of the USA.

Imperialism in Central Africa

In 1898 at Fashoda on the upper reaches of the Nile in Sudan a small French expeditionary force encountered Kitchener's combined British and Egyptian Force, recently victorious over the Mahdist forces of the Khalifa at Omdurman. It was to be one of the great turning points of the preparations for World War One. The French had been trying to link their Saharan and West African possessions to their colony of Djibouti on the east African coast. The British were still aiming at a "Cape to Cairo" railway up through the eastern part of Africa. Sudan was the penultimate piece in the British jigsaw. Only German East Africa (today Tanzania) would then stand in the way. This proved to be the way out for the French. By ceding Sudan to the British (and they could do little else) they cemented an alliance against Germany which saw the British twice come to French aid in Morocco (in 1906 and 1911), even threatening war against Germany on France's behalf before the two powers finally fought Germany in 1914. As both powers shared the defeated Germany's four African territories after 1919 (a so-called "mandates", a hypocritical formula which allowed them to extend their imperialist domains) their interests in the region multiplied.

However by 1945 all the European colonial powers were economically ruined and when the USA and USSR started giving support to local clients, the era of "wars of national liberation" began. Contrary to the myths of the time (and still defended by leftists like the Trotskyists) these struggles had little to do with "national liberation" but everything to do with reshaping imperialism. Colonies were expensive (policing and local bureaucracy costs actually ensured that all African colonies operated at a loss - the imperialists had operated them in the hope that one day, like India, they would be profitable). With a new wave of resistance from local African elites, supported by the two super-powers, the European powers realised that colonialism was dead. By 1960 "the winds of change" (Macmillan) had brought them to recognise African independence as inevitable. The era of "independence" brought economic ruin and political instability to Africa. In Ghana, for example, the pro-USSR regime of Kwame Nkrumah was undermined by US interference (particularly in the Army) and many other states suffered the same fate. Economically the largely monocultural African states often saw their economies destroyed overnight by a shift in commodity prices in the great financial centres

of Tokyo, London and New York. In Angola, the old Portuguese colony, the death of Salazar led eventually to the collapse of his regime. This, in turn, led to a civil war in

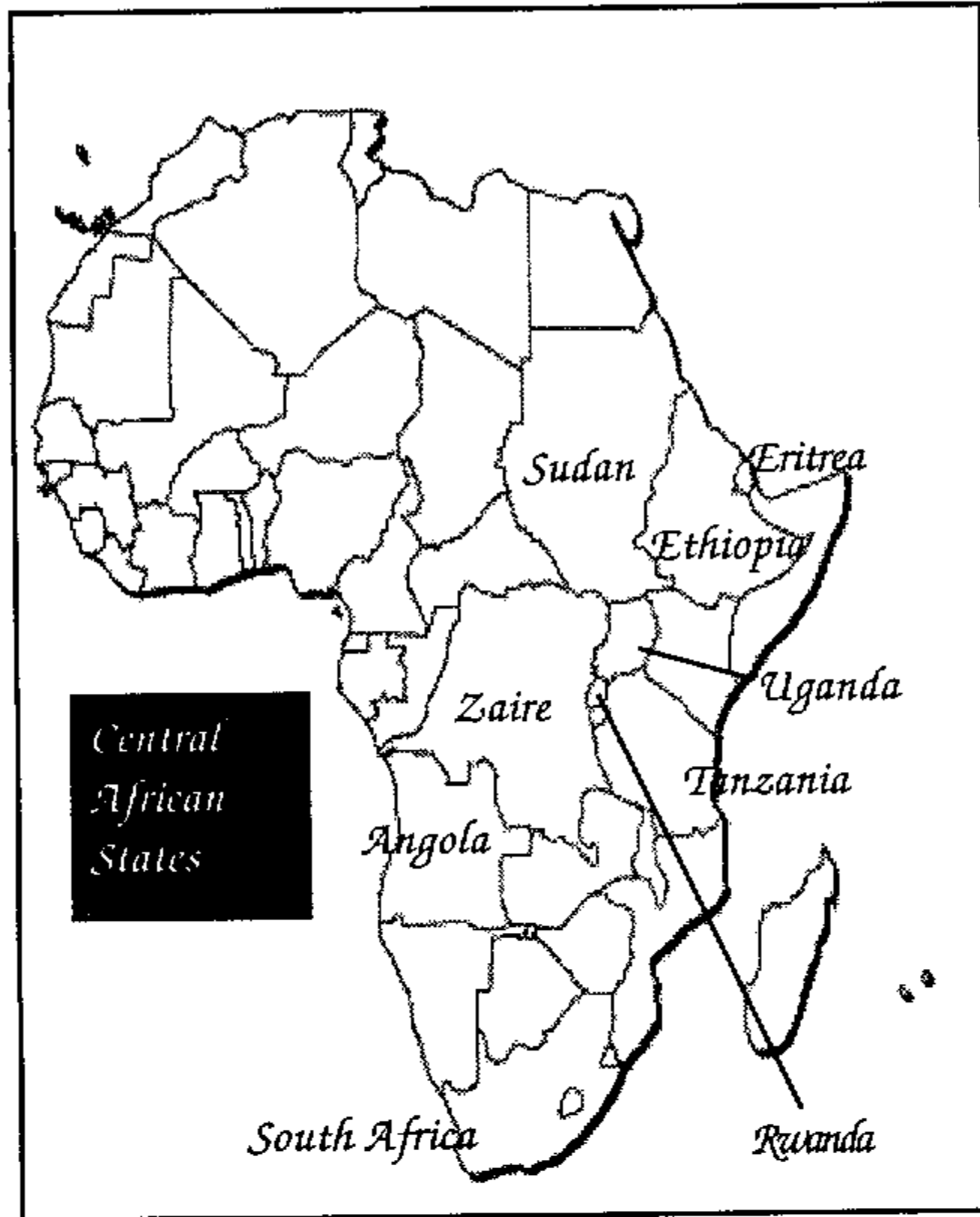
which three different factions were variously supported by the USSR, the USA and South Africa and the fighting has continued to the present day. Millions have died. Bloodiest of all was in the Belgian Congo where in 1960 the abrupt pullout of the Belgians from the huge landmass surrounding the river basin of the Congo (now the Zaire) led to a bloody civil war. Eventually in 1965 Mobutu, backed by the US and the French, emerged as the "strongman" to take control of the Army and the state.

Britain to die before independence was conceded. Instead they installed Milton Obote but he soon demonstrated too much independence by courting Peking. The British had his Government overthrown by the Army led by Idi Amin, a Sandhurst-trained colonel. Amin too soon disappointed his masters and as the country lapsed into chaos the British gave their support to Yoweri Museveni. The Museveni regime has since returned the British favour by making Uganda the launching pad for a British-US offensive throughout Central Africa.

US imperial strategy is generally aimed at two things. The first is preserving world stability so that the US can gain economically from "Pax Americana". The second is taken from the British nineteenth century policy of always assuming the higher moral cause. No longer can the US, as it did in the Cold War, support any anti-communist dictator because he is "our-son-of-a-bitch". Now democracy and human rights are the Gladstonian justifications for US intervention anywhere in the world. Add such things as "humanitarian aid" (remember Somalia?) and protection of "foreign nationals" and you have a full panoply of "good causes" behind which imperialist intervention can take place. This was a little tarnished for both the British and Americans when it was discovered that their firms (along with South Africa) had been arming the genocidal Hutu regime in Rwanda. This was shrugged off as a mistake (although, as far as arms go, it has often been noted that the principles of trade demand the trading of principles). Certainly it was not part of their global plan to support the Hutus since the British had already armed and trained the Tutsi rebels on Ugandan soil. The Tutsi invasion was the beginning of the concerted push to drive French influence out of Central Africa.

Zaire in the Coils of Imperialism

Once a Tutsi-dominated regime was installed in Kigali the next stage was to prevent the Hutu militias in Zaire from regrouping. The Tutsi Government in Rwanda knew that the French would reorganise and re-arm them to re-invade Rwanda as soon as they could. The advance on the refugee camps which were being used to shield the Hutu militias was the logical outcome. By linking up with Tutsi rebels against the Mobutu regime, which had long since lost US support, the advances into Zaire were swift and effective. The revelation of the state of the Zaire Army (which was long known to be riddled with corruption) made it possible for a long time opponent of Mobutu, Laurent Kabila to step up the offensive against the Zaire Gov-



Uganda and the London-Washington Axis

In all of this none of the former colonial powers ever completely lost influence in the region and they were behind the numerous upheavals in the area. As we showed in *Revolutionary Perspectives 4* a similar process occurred in Rwanda (see our article *The Thieves Fall Out...*). There, in 1962, the Belgians who had always used the minority Tutsis to run the country lost out and the French-supported Hutus took over the country. This made France one of the more dominant powers in Africa, particularly in the area from the Mediterranean down to Zaire. Matters remained much like that until 1994 when the massacres in Rwanda led to an invasion by the exiled Tutsis and the overthrow of the Hutu-dominated regime. The biggest losers here were the French. The new Tutsi regime had been armed and trained by Britain, Belgium and the US in Uganda.

Uganda itself is a key player in this "great game". Given its key strategic position, the British, the former colonial masters, have tried to control it ever since "independence" in the early 1960s but have largely had a series of disasters there. From the outset the British opposed the Buganda tribe (the largest) and packed their alcoholic King ("Freddie") off to

ernment. With further support from Uganda (i.e., Britain and the US), Kabila was able to benefit from the surrender of increasing numbers of Zairian troops. Mobutu, receiving medical aid for cancer in France (his last supporter), returned to the country, but the loss of US support has fatally destroyed his hopes of wriggling out of his predicament. In the coded language of bourgeois journalism the British have warned off the French:

Only the reality of a rapidly encroaching war will secure Mr Mobutu's agreement to a hand-over of power, and his own long overdue departure. Outsiders should not allow him to buy time; rather they should help secure such an agreement.

Financial Times editorial 26.3.97

The unnamed "outsider" is clearly France. As France has responsibility for negotiating such an outcome on behalf of the EU it has some chance to regain some of the ground it has lost through backing a loser like Mobutu but it will be the US and the British (hanging on US coattails), who will dominate in the immediate future. Mention of the EU raises one other point which we must deal with in passing. The fact that France has been given the role of negotiating the future of Zaire is a further sign of the confusion and indecision of the various countries in the EU. As in ex-Yugoslavia and again in Albania it is traditional single power interests which dominate and thus paralyse the EU as a body. As the Dutch EU representative in Albania remarked (over the crisis there) "the EU will do what the US tells it" (see *Internationalist Communist 15* for more on Albania).

Imperialist Terrorists in Sudan

The Central African strategy of the US and Britain has not stopped at Zaire. Uganda is also a base for attacks on the seven year old Islamic fundamentalist regime in Sudan currently led by Hassan al-Turabi. War is not new to Sudan which has had civil wars between the Islamic and Arab north and the black Christian and animist South for 30 of the 40 years since it became independent from Britain. Millions of lives have been lost and the war costs the Khartoum Government \$1 million a day. Turabi is the most anti-British and rigidly fundamentalist leader to take over in Khartoum in all that time. His regime is branded as "terrorist" by the US and as a result:

An undeclared international embargo ... has dried foreign investment and aid to a trickle.

Mary Braid in *The Independent* 25.3.97

Only the Chinese, Malaysians and Canadians

appear to have any financial interest in the country. However Turabi has threatened Eritrea, Ethiopia and Egypt (which accuses him of trying to assassinate President Mubarak two years ago). All three have turned to the US for assistance. Washington already aids Egypt militarily but it recently supplied Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda with \$20 million dollars of "non-lethal"(!) military aid. Uganda has also provided a base for the SPLA, the southern rebel movement as well as aerial cover for its fight against the Khartoum regime. (Sudan has responded by arming anti-Museveni forces currently wreaking terror in Northern Uganda). In addition the US has brokered an alliance between Islamic moderates opposed to Turabi (the NDA) led by Sadiq al Mahdi, great grandson of the victor over General Gordon in 1886, and the, mainly Christian, SPLA. For the first time the Turabi regime now faces a concerted attack from both the Ethiopian border and the Uganda border at the same time. The British and the US obviously do not admit to the work they are doing behind the scenes but the *Financial Times* hinted this in the usual vague way. After Kajo-Kaji (a town near the Uganda-Sudan border) was captured by the SPLA, the Turabi regime made the not incredible accusation that Uganda was the place from where all the movements in central Africa were starting. *The Financial Times* commented;

The accusation, which Uganda denies, raised the question of whether those behind central Africa's current upheaval are intent on confronting several perceived sources of instability simultaneously.

Mark Huband Sudanese rebels "seize southern border" 26.3.97

There is no doubt that the regimes in Uganda and Rwanda have benefited greatly from the increased security they now have on their borders but "those behind central Africa's current upheaval" are the US and the UK (even if a British journalist cannot be allowed to state it openly).

And the future?

The central African horror is just one example of the results of jockeying for position which all the great powers are involved in and which explain why local conflicts take on international significance. Recently in Albania the first use of German troops in combat abroad since the Second World War was hailed by the German ruling class as another great step forward for that country. A step forward to where might be the logical question. It is simply another sign of the growing nationalism within the US' former

Cold War allies. The intensification of those wars that already exist around the planet show the determination of the so-called great powers to defend what they perceive to be their interests in every corner of the globe. As Lenin pointed out in 1916 the complete carve up of the earth by that date means that what we will see in the future are more and more imperialist struggles to divide and re-divide the world.

The nature of this rivalry is such that even where a state does not have a direct benefit it will intervene if it thinks it will prevent another state from making gains. The consequences of this in the immediate term are more and more misery, genocide and starvation for the populations on which imperialist war is visited. In the current situation in Zaire the most cynical manoeuvring concerns the fate of the Hutu refugees who were driven further and further into Zaire by the Hutu militias. Once their numbers had been reduced to 100,000 wasted people suffering from malnutrition the militias that had used them as a shield (and taken their food aid) abandoned them as they fled towards the Zaire river.

Most disgusting of all was the attitude of the so-called great powers. When the Tutsi-led rebellion began in Zaire it was the French government which first demanded that an international humanitarian force supported by troops be sent into Zaire. The other great powers blocked it since they saw this for what it was: A manoeuvre to prevent the total defeat of

the French Hutu clients. Once the refugees were driven further into Zaire the powers all changed their tune and the British and Americans began to contemplate sending in troops to prevent the Hutu militia using the refugees as a shield. At this point the French Government went silent on the issue of a "humanitarian force". Naturally these governments would deny this but only the naive would believe them. The truth is that in a decaying capitalist social system there is nothing humanitarian about the intervention of the "great powers". On the contrary, wherever they are involved the local populations are destined to find themselves caught up in a full-blown bloodbath. Its extent is only matched by the huge dose of hypocrisy about so-called "humanitarian" missions to deliver food, or rescue widows and orphans, from a situation created by the very forces who are "saving" them.

In Africa the contradiction between world capitalism's technical capacity to feed all the planet's inhabitants and its actual genocidal performance can be seen at its most acute. There will be many more Rwandas, many more Zaires and many more Albanias between now and the ultimate liberation of humanity. Only the world working class can carry out this task of liberation by overthrowing the criminals who form the ruling class in every country. If we fail (and we have hardly started the task) capitalism, unchecked, offers us only the ultimate barbarism of a global war.

JD

China After Deng

continued from page 19

lapse. Who paid for all this is obvious — the industrial and agricultural proletariat which a decade later has seen the purchasing power of its salaries reduced by 30%, 40% less than those of 1978. Another aspect of this is unemployment. The official figures have never been a true account, but certainly in the background of the uprisings of June 1989, culminating in the ferocious repression of Tienanmen Square, besides the anger at low wages, ever worsening conditions and growing exploitation, was the weight of thousands of unemployed, representing an unemployed army of at least two hundred million dispossessed, who came to help the students first of all at the scene of the clash.

Today China, which is progressing with GDP rates of 8%, with ambitions to become an economic and financial pole of the Asiatic area (thanks to the reacquisition of Hong Kong at the end of July 97, and Taiwan soon) in competition with Japan and in alliance with the USA

(or vice versa as opportunity permits) is preparing for the second great leap forward. Two conditions are necessary for this project. The first is that exploitation rates of the labour force are increased to beyond those of the West. Therefore there will be large scale investments in key sectors and restructuring to a high technological level. The second is represented by the specificity of the actual phase of global capitalism, globalisation. In other words the Chinese government has to create the conditions so an ever larger quota of world finance capital is invested in its market, bringing not only liquidity but also technology. But so that these conditions may be met, laws, especially those which are already in existence, which allow the influx of foreign capital, have to become more liberalised, and the internal labour market has to become less expensive than in the highly industrialised countries, up to 500-600% less expensive. In these conditions, the post-Deng China will be able to increase the current \$40 million of foreign investment and give its 50 million rich more new economic advantages and the rest of the population, more than one billion three hundred million people, a handful of rice less.

Readers' Letters

Communism and Racism

The following letter is an extract from correspondence about the article "Sexism, Racism ... Divisions in the Working Class and the Fight for Communism" in Revolutionary Perspective 4.

Communist greetings

... As regards the article in RP 4, it is difficult to know where to start. ... I shall concentrate upon your discussion of racism, which you illustrate with a picture of a demo in Parma. You offer no explanation of the circumstances behind the demo, merely describe how it ended up in a happy-clappy sing-along.

Let's compare this to the events in Brixton and Broadwater Farm in 1985. In the first, the police broke into a Black woman's home at the dead of night, and shot her in the back. Next morning a delegation went to the police station to see what disciplinary action had been taken against the trigger happy cop. When the police said that nothing was to be done about it, that it was being written off as an accident, people immediately started throwing bottles and bricks at the cops. When a so-called 'community leader' was wheeled out to plead for calm, one of the first mollies of the day landed at his feet. He was not seen again. For several hours the police station was put under siege and serious efforts made to burn it to the ground. Meanwhile substantial damage was done to local businesses, particularly any known for fostering racist attitudes. All this time there was continual street fighting with the police trying to restore law and order.

A week later another Black woman died as a result of her rough treatment by police in her home. Broadwater Farm erupted and one of the police officers sent in to repress the rebellion was killed. When the police eventually restored order, they imposed a blue terror, kidnapping children, taking food and clothing away from estate residents and cutting of the postal service so that claimants did not receive their benefits. This was accompanied by raids on most of the residents, and provided a climate of fear so that they could mount a trial of six people charged with the murder of the policeman. The case against the three juveniles was dropped before the trial, but three others were subsequently 'tried' and found guilty on thread bare evidence and media distortion. (They were subsequently found innocent after spending a long time in jail.) And yet all you can say is that "once every

member of society is materially secure then there can be meaningful battles in terms of fairness and justice." Is this some kind of sick joke? You do not even mention last year's riots, following another death of a Black worker at the hands of Brixton police.

Racism attacks the material security of certain sectors of the working class. It is racism when the police break into Black peoples' homes and attack them. It is part of a racist policy of terror to keep Black people in a subordinate position, in low paid work and shoddy housing, scared to travel outside certain areas. However, when the working class resists this, as in these two examples, you ignore it. You enter some vague discussion of multi-culturalism — without bothering to look at how the Scarman report after the 1981 riots developed these ideas, using ethnicism borrowed from the South African regime principally to divide the various Black communities from uniting against racism.

You go on about "anti-fascism is not the answer", when this is a perspective which has very little support in any of the black communities, where it is generally recognised that the problems of racism go far further. The black community of Brixton is not worried so much about fascists as about police brutality and murder. Clowns like the ANL are generally ignored. You claim to reject 'cultural separatism', but actually seem to perpetuate it — in the sense of constructing your

bourgeoisie because the Black communities could only mount limited resistance, as in the 1919 race riots.

Indeed you display your 'cultural separatism' when you write off migrants being "used as a source of cheap labour". Here you show that you have not escaped from the optic of national socialism. Cheap in comparison to what. The unskilled weekly wage in much of Africa and the Caribbean is about £15. It is comparable in South Asia. From the optic of the migrant worker, migration is an attempt to gain higher wages, even if various racist barriers are erected to prevent them getting comparable wages to those of skilled indigenous workers. I would also be interested in your slur on migrant workers being used as blackleg labour. Undoubtedly this has happened, but you seem to suggest that migrant workers are particularly used in this way — i.e. have a particularly low level of class consciousness. Have you any evidence for this? And in the context of a discussion of race, do you see this as having any racial slant here? (Here I would again refer you to the ICC article concerning the GCI where they discuss the role of migrant workers from Europe playing a presumably distinct role in the development of the workers' movement in Mexico.)

Your remarks on multi-culturalism are similarly one-sided. Workers of Pakistani origin (whatever you mean by that) are no more represented by imams and mullahs than workers of English and Welsh 'origin' are represented by the Bishops and Archbishops of the House of Lords. Rather than simply view multi-culturalism as a guise for state-institutionalised racism, why not actually look at what is going on in the working class. The interaction of workers of different backgrounds and cultures has helped to dissolve a sense of British nationhood. 'Multi-culturalism' is the recognition that this monolithic identity is a thing of the past, and of course it is used by modernist wings of the state to try and muster funds for reactionaries ready to subordinate this or that community to the interests of capital. But culture is not created, as the bourgeoisie would have us believe, by a handful of gifted individuals, but by the social interactions of millions of people. These cultures don't just exist based on ethnic or religious basis. You are ignoring any of the discussions of cultures of resistance. In fact you are ignoring any of the political discussions of race outside of the liberalism of the circles for which the paper was originally written. ...

Yours in struggle
LB

To our Readers
Dialogue with our readers develops revolutionary theory. Take part in the fight for communism. We only ask that letters be as short as possible, with an address.

arguments without any real reference to debates which have been going on in the Black communities. Your positions seem to reflect a common preoccupation that Black workers should 'integrate' themselves into a 'revolutionary' movement which ignores their historic experience, and indeed suggests that their battles aren't even meaningful, which uses a pseudo-internationalism, introducing references to an unexplained struggle in Italy, but failing to deal with either the USA or the RSA, introducing the notion of 'immigrant' in an offensive non-analytical way. Certainly in Britain racism was more prevalent before the immigration of the post-war years. However it was not considered such a problem by the

CWO Reply

A Class Position is Needed

Dear LB

Thanks for taking up our suggestion that you write to us with your comments on our article 'Racism, Sexism and Communism' in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 4. ... In our view the weakness of the article was that it tried to do too much by covering the whole gamut of divisive issues in one fell swoop. In fact we only managed to deal with gender and race, the latter particularly briefly. This is the message we tried to get across to you, not that we've been playing a hypocritical double game of plugging capitalist 'equal opportunity' ideology at work and trying to rejig this to fit a revolutionary perspective.

Now let's go on to the meat of your criticism, starting with our failure to mention specific "events in Brixton and Broadwater Farm in 1985". It's true that these might have been mentioned but as it happens it was taken as read that the state is racist and that there is sporadic resistance to this from black workers. But how to go from this to a unified class response and above all, how to politicise the issue and win workers to communism and the struggle to overthrow the state? In fact the seeds of such a response can be found in the 1985 events which were not confined to Brixton as you make out and were not 'race riots' as the press reported and which mythology you perpetuate in your pen picture of a black peoples' 'rebellion' against the [undoubtedly] racist state [in the shape of the police] and businesses "particularly known for fostering racist attitudes". It's worth putting your version of the 'Brixton events' in a wider context and looking at them from a communist perspective. Here we can quote from an article we published in *Workers Voice* at the time:

Fierce fighting between police and unemployed youths has again erupted in six of Britain's inner cities, sparked off by police harassment and violence. Large scale unrest occurred in Handsworth and Brixton, and in Tottenham local people took over the area for two hours before

police could regain control. Police stations were bombed and riot police pelted with stones, bombs and bullets. ...

As in 1981 the press have done their best to distort the reasons behind the revolts. None were race riots. ... the revolt was sparked off when black youths came to the aid of an Asian man being arrested by police. Most of the shops looted were Asian owned simply because most of the shops in the area belong to Asians. But black and white owned shops were also looted and white, black and Asian youths were doing the looting. ...

It is clear who the anger was directed against. When Home Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived on the scene he was showered with bricks and abuse by an angry crowd. His arrival sparked off further 'unrest'. When he tried to interview white householders he and the camera crew with him were told where to go.

By the time Brixton and Tottenham erupted, claims of racial tension were wearing thin. Even the black community leaders in Brixton couldn't control the situation for the police ... During the Saturday night's events 1,500 had taken to the streets. 30% of them were white. Half of those arrested were also white.

As the intensity of the revolts became clearer, especially when battles in Tottenham left 220 police injured and 1 dead, the police, politicians, the press and trades union and black 'community leaders' eagerly joined each other in denouncing the 'riots' as criminal. All conveniently forgot that the original violence was by the police at the home of Cynthia Jarrett or that the Brixton events were started by the forces of the state shooting Cheryl Groce.

The Times suggested the Handsworth riots had occurred because the police wanted to clear the streets of cannabis. But it couldn't

explain why the police used the Rastafarians to patrol the streets of Handsworth to prevent a 3rd night of rioting in return for the police keeping a low profile in the area.

Although the ruling class has tried very hard to deny any link between these 'riots' and those of 1981, it is clear that the difference is one on intensity only. As we said in 1981, the main reasons behind the revolts were unemployment and police harassment of the unemployed. ... Official unemployment in the Lozells Road area of Birmingham is 60%. Fewer than 5 out of 100 black youths leaving Handsworth schools this summer had found jobs 4 months later. Brixton is the same. Lambeth has male unemployment at 27% whilst on Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham 67% of adults and 90% of youth are out of work.

... Unemployed youths learned a lot about tactics in street warfare. ... But in the end, the ruling class has to be attacked politically.

Unlike the revolts of the last few weeks, this isn't a short-term response but it is a surer road to future success. Looting and spontaneous revolts won't in themselves change anything. They must be linked with the struggles of other workers. Some unemployed workers have already shown the way here by joining picket lines during the miners' strike. This needs to be repeated everywhere, especially in situations where the bosses are trying to recruit blacklegs directly from the dole queues as they tried to do in the British Rail guards' strikes in the summer. ... But this activity won't be really meaningful until it is part of a wider political education movement to form an international workers' party which will give to all workers, employed and unemployed, a programme for the future.

[*Workers Voice* 25, Nov/Dec 1985]

Here, in quite a big nut shell, is our interpretation of the 'Brixton events'. For anyone who is remotely class conscious the main point about them is not that the state is nasty and racist — this is an elementary truism — but that they were part of a more widespread revolt of working class unemployed youth which spanned the so-called 'ethnic minorities'. For obvious reasons black youth were in the majority in these particular areas and we are not denying that the

'Brixton events' were triggered by racist police brutality but to see these inner city revolts solely in terms of a "racist policy of terror to keep Black people in a subordinate position" overlooks the fact that since 1985 similar estate riots and attacks on police stations, though more isolated and contained as a result of media blackouts, have become regular occurrences. More important, your version entirely overlooks the fact that the state's fundamental role is to keep the working class – whatever their race or skin colour – in a subordinate position. One of the ways the state does this is by finding ways of dividing workers against each other. 'Multi-culturalism' is a relatively sophisticated way of doing this, hence our focus on it at the meeting. It would have strengthened our case to have mentioned the money and resources poured into implementing this policy after the Scarman report. State-sponsored black youth clubs, leisure centres and training schemes only serve to emphasise a spurious separation between black and white worker and are designed to blur class identity.

Your letter is full of righteous indignation but you defend multi-culturalism with exactly the same arguments as are used in the sort of bosses' workplace brainwashing sessions you wrongly ascribe our article to. (It is naive in the extreme to assume that self-appointed imams and mullahs, often supported by local government funds, are as irrelevant to the lives of workers' emanating from the Indian sub-continent as bishops in the House of Lords to the majority of the working class in Britain. True, increasing numbers of second or third generation youth are escaping all this but they do so by **rejecting** the identification imposed upon them as Muslim first, Pakistani or whatever second, Asian third.) When it boils down to it how much of working class culture in this age of mass media is "self-generated"? The little that is tends to get turned into a capitalist racket. In fact everything we do, by definition, is shaped by the capitalist society we exist in. Obviously there are local and regional traditions within the working class which are worth perpetuating but this is a diversion from the real issue. You can't get away from the fact that multi-culturalism is an ideology designed to obscure and bury class identity and reinforced by the state to maintain divisions inside the working class. Once upon a

time a radical liberal such as yourself would have been for 'beyond the melting pot'. At least this slogan holds the potential of a unified proletarian "culture of resistance". As it is, however, your multi-culturalist standpoint leads you to forget that 'black communities' are class divided (and incidentally with their own ethnic and cultural differences). Moreover, there are just as many divisions amongst black workers as any other part of the working class.

As for your moral angst about what you call our "slur on migrant workers being used as blackleg labour", this is a question of fact which has to be looked at historically and materially. To take one well known example, that of Irish labourers in the 19th century being brought in to break strikes in the Durham and Northumberland coal mines, there is no question that the migrant workers were less class conscious. For a very good reason – they didn't realise that they were taking over the jobs and homes of evicted miners on strike. No doubt a social historian would also tell us that they themselves were dispossessed small holders and peasants, new to the ranks of the proletariat. In fact over the centuries emigration has often been the first step towards proletarianisation (as it was for some of CWO members' ancestors) and it is unsurprising that people dislocated from pre-capitalist and farming communities should be amongst the less class conscious. This is not to say that immigrant workers are **necessarily** less class conscious (especially since they include some of our comrades). However, here is not the place to embark on a treatise on migrant labour. Suffice it to say that we stand by our guns that,

Like women, migrant workers are used as a source of cheap labour and even blackleg labour.

[RP 4 p.25]

Notice we do not say "particularly black leg labour". Nor do we apologise for using 'cheap labour' as a relative term to be used in comparison to the average price of labour power in a given area. If you had argued that the concept of a

local (i.e. national) wage rate is being undermined by globalisation and the ability of capitalist firms nowadays to move productive units from country to country according to where the price of labour power is cheaper, you would have been more convincing. As it is, your idea that our recognition that migrant workers are used to undercut local wage rates betrays a "national socialist" standpoint is quite simply ridiculous and demonstrates your own lack of seriousness. Again, you might have argued that at the back-end of the Nineties, with a massive pool of unemployed and workers subdued by the fear of losing their job or intimidated off the dole queue into hitherto unacceptably low-paid jobs, capitalism in Britain has little need of the migrant worker. But it seems to us that you are not really interested in the actual situation of the working class as a whole. Certainly you fail to confront the question of racism inside the working class and in terms of the need for a class-wide struggle against capitalism. Instead you pretend that 'multi-culturalism' "has helped to dissolve a sense of British nationhood" when what is really happening is that the ruling class is attempting to redefine what is, after all a bourgeois construct above all else – 'the nation' as a multicultural entity. This has nothing whatsoever to do with breaking down divisions inside the working class or the struggle for communism which demands first of all a class identity. (And by this we mean the sense of belonging to the same international class.)

As communists we have to focus on the essential similarity of workers' lives and that whoever they are, whatever their wages or lack of them, whatever the differences in their material situation, they are being exploited and killed by capitalism and have a common interest in its overthrow. We all have to learn from each other and no doubt some workers will learn more quickly than others from bitter experience but as we said in 1985, ...

spontaneous revolts won't in themselves change anything.

Class anger doesn't automatically become revolutionary political consciousness. It is the job of those

who are already politically organised to politicise such situations. That is why we mentioned anti-fascism, not because we think the anti-fascist campaigners are influential but because they are putting forward a political solution. We know anti-fascism is completely reformist and unrevolutionary but it is a political response which needs to be answered by revolutionaries precisely because the capitalist left presents it as part of the struggle for socialism.

You, on the other hand, appear to see no need at all for workers' struggles to take on a political perspective, unless you think that meaningful battles for fairness and justice can really be won inside the present system! (Judging from how you distort our argument here it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that you **do** think that battles to reform the present setup can be meaningful.) After you have praised the burning down of the police station what have you to propose to angry workers? — A campaign for the police to act more "fairly and "justly" towards "black people"? We think not but the point is you give no indication of how class consciousness can develop out of anger against the system; you have nothing at all to offer politically and offer no alternative to the sort of reformist dead end workers get themselves into when there is no class perspective. Indeed, your use of 'black people' betrays that you do not have a class perspective.

Our stand is perfectly clear. What's needed is not radical intellectual posturing but political organisation to unify all class conscious workers on the basis of the programme of communist internationalism. This is not a question of joining an existing revolutionary movement — the tiny communist political groups which exist at present hardly justify such a term — but of transforming the political programme they alone defend into a concrete political movement for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. We are talking about establishing the basis for a future international party and by definition this means developing an organised political life which transcends the divisions capitalism imposes on the working class. In a small way the comrades

of Battaglia Comunista and sympathisers from the 'Youth Groups for Proletarian Struggle' [GLP] showed how this can begin when they demonstrated last May Day and called for solidarity of local and immigrant workers on the basis of proletarian internationalism — i.e. a united struggle against capitalism, the common enemy. After the demo the capitalist left (Rifondazione Comunista, Stalinist), the PDS (ex-Stalinist) and Autonomists (whom you obviously identify with) all went off for a "happy clappy" festa. Our comrades then organised a public meeting nearby, at the behest of immigrant workers, during which they explained that:

In fact it is the interest of all capitalists to foment competition amongst the exploited. This allows the bosses to impose exhausting shift patterns, wage cuts, widen the black economy and in general brings increased insecurity (even physical).

At the end of the meeting an immigrant intervened:

"I am often accused of stealing work from Italians ... but capitalism is the same everywhere in the world. This is what exploits the wealth of the Third World (for example, oil), which creates unemployment in these countries and in the West; which all the time exploits and against which therefore ... the only solution is the struggle against capital!"

[Battaglia Comunista 5, 1996]

We are grateful that your letter has allowed us to expand on what we dealt with in passing in RP 4. Hopefully this has explained to you our class political aims. Our only question to you is, 'What are yours?' Cynicism to disguise your essential liberalism is no substitute for a commitment to the working class.

Internationalist greetings
CWO

Our Basic Positions

1. We aim to become part of the future world working class party which will guide the class struggle towards the establishment of a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Marx): COMMUNISM.

2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.

3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an international political party for the promotion of

world revolution.

4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist societies anywhere in the world.

5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve — the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!

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Review of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

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