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As British workers start to break from Labour Party

Facing tasks of working class

Comrades in Revolutionary Workers' Tendency (Ukraine) asked how Workers International viewed the parliamentary election results in Britain and how our members in the UK approach the Socialist Alliance. This article by DOT GIBSON and BOB ARCHER is based on the reply we sent them.

At its founding Congress in Budapest in 1990, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WIRFI) had to reckon with the first results of the collapse of the regimes in the satellites of the USSR, the break-up of the Communist movement around the world and a growing change in the reformist "socialist" parties.

This was bound up with a terrific attack not just on Marxism but on any conception that the working class was an effective actor on the historical stage. All varieties of "socialism" have been actively and loudly denigrated over the last few years at every level of society.

This is one arm of an attack which, with its other arm, has also attempted to demobilise, shut down, or at least stun into quiescence the class movement of the working class. The destruction of the old Labour Party in Britain and the emergence of "new" Labour is a particularly clear example, but it is a process which is also taking place in other countries and in many official trade union movements.

Stalinist and reformist leaders have emerged into quite a new role. Both have turned into directly bourgeois politicians who have frankly set out to destroy the movement of the working class.

In general, this is a positive development because it opens the way for building the genuinely revolutionary movement of the working class which Trotsky envisaged. However, the real crisis of political and trade union organisation in the working class brings enormous immediate dangers which we must take into consideration.

Workers in many places (even in Britain, the home of the modern mass trade union movement) lack the legal and organisational means to mobilise using appropriate tactics and class-based methods of struggle in order to achieve their demands. In many more places they struggle at the moment in vain to overcome these weaknesses. Often they struggle with little real conviction that progress can be made. To approach such workers with abstractly revolutionary demands would be to drive them further into disillusionment and frustration.

The whole question is how to work so that they start to see revolutionary Marxism as a material solution to their problems. The WIRFI therefore, in studying the results of decades of struggle for the Fourth International and clearly establishing the need for its reconstruction, adopted the view that the rebuilding of the Fourth International and

the reconstruction of the workers' movement are two linked processes which mutually condition each other.

Not the least of the problems with many groups which strive to be revolutionary Marxists (and it is necessary to bear in mind that many of their ranks are sincerely devoted revolutionaries) is that they can see little connection between their own revolutionary politics and the immediate issues that working men and women face and the interests that they express.

They therefore conclude that workers have to be lectured abstractly about the superiority of Marxism, an activity which turns out to be utterly unprofitable.

The would-be Marxist then quickly decides to leave his or her Marxism in his or her pocket and only talk to workers about what he or she conceives to be of interest to them. Such "revolutionaries" labour under the error that they alone are the exponents of the revolution in the historical process, forgetting Marx's opinion that it is the working class which forms the revolutionary force in society.

The truly revolutionary party is not merely the grouping with the "purest" revolutionary doctrine, it is the party which best and most concretely expresses the historical interests and embodies the historical movement of the working class.

Many "Marxists" mistake the nature of the working class because they see only one side of the forces which condition it — the class domination of the bourgeoisie and the present period of defeats and retreats. But if the working class is the real revolutionary force, then the real Trotskyists (and not petty bourgeois poseurs) can only find a way out of their isolation by devoting real attention to the development of a new leadership in the working class on the basis of frankly facing the problems of working class organisation and proposing joint actions in order to overcome them.

As a member of the LIT-CI in Britain (Bill Hunter) put it recently:

"In 1938, Trotsky wrote a little article about the founding conference of the Fourth International, declaring that he thought Trotskyism was now entering a new phase. In this article, 'A Great Beginning', he said that Trotskyism, which had gone through several stages of development, now stood face to face with the task of the mass movement. I was quite a period in the Trotskyist movement before I realised what that meant — that the most important questions

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THE BANGLADESH National Federation of Garment Workers reports that their 1 July strike call was a modest success.

Thousands of garment workers took to the streets to press their demands for: a new wage structure and basic minimum health and safety conditions steps to develop and expand the garment industry and its markets trade union rights in the garment industry, including in EPZs industrial zones for the garment industry including housing, schools and hospitals implementation of previous agreements

There was also a rally in Muktangoan chaired by labour leader Abul Hossain.

Ten people including two policemen were hurt during skirmishes, twenty-five strikers were arrested and five legal cases have been started against strikers and union organisers.

The NGWU still desperately needs financial help. Please send donations to:

NGWF
PO Box 864
Dhaka, Bangladesh
email unity@bdmail.net

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

That very odd Trotskyist Nicolino

It has become fashionable to use prime minister Lionel Jospin's past to try and besmirch Trotskyism and abate the growing interest in the Trotskyist movement.

One inglorious has-been (there are others, witness the article published in "Le Monde" (21 June) signed by several ex-Trotskyists) is the former Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire member Nicolino (see "That odd Monsieur Lambert", "Le Monde", 28 June). He selected the short but tortuous path of amalgam, distortion, implication and lying directly and by omission, in short, the path of slander. It demands a reply, from me if from no-one else.

Not that I defend Lambert or Hébert. There are good reasons why I should not. After violent controversies and disputes lasting almost a year, my political friends and I broke with the opportunist-sectarian Lambert in 1972 and left the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste.

To stop a considerable number of members from following us, Lambert and his group launched a vicious campaign of public slander in 1973, describing me as an agent of (both!) the KGB and the CIA. For this purpose they disloyally used my archives—which they had stolen—containing hundreds of letters I had written during my political peregrinations after the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. At the same time Lambert and his consorts attacked—in some cases physically—all those who dared utter doubts or followed me and the east-European members in general.

Not surprisingly, therefore, I most certainly do not defend Lambert-Hébert. However, I must rise in indignation against the grossly exaggerated, hateful and lying accusations against the past of the OCI by a former political adversary. In this frontal attack, "therefore", "not sure"

Earlier this year it was revealed that in the late 1960s and the 1970s the current French socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin was a member of one of the French Trotskyist parties, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) of Pierre Lambert. It is not clear when he left the organisation, but he certainly maintained contact with it even while he was first secretary of the Socialist Party and François Mitterrand was president of the French republic. All this started a discussion in the media in France which revealed a certain interest in Trotskyism. Interestingly, few people expressed the view that it was wrong to be a Trotskyist, only that it would be dishonest to lie and deny involvement. It was probably in order to counteract this growing interest that bourgeois newspapers published articles by renegades from Trotskyism. BALAZS NAGY, who was a member of the OCI, sent the following letter to "Le Monde" newspaper in answer to an article which tried dishonestly and through lying to discredit the policies of Trotskyists at that time. As we go to press, 'Le Monde' has not yet published his letter.

and other unsupported insinuations replace proof and argument while its omissions, massaged meanings and exclamations are redolent of a particular style, the style of a petty-bourgeois delirious with class hatred.

Slanderers and liars in general enjoy the enormous advantage that they can issue their absolute and categorical "truths" in one or a few words and are spared the hard work of citing evidence or developing a line of argument. A reply, on the other hand, requires a whole arsenal of justification and explanation. I am therefore at a disadvantage, as I must severely restrict my reply to a limited number of questions dealt with briefly.

First of all, there is the way that Lambert was made leader of the OCI—something which Nicolino finds very mysterious. "It was in 1955", he informs us. Everything between the immediate post-war years and 1955 becomes a quite bald "meanwhile" for this chronicler of hard times, but it was precisely during this "meanwhile" that Lambert became a leader. Indeed, this shadowy "meanwhile" includes the violent and painful process of the historic

split in the Fourth International. The majority in France rejected Michel Pablo's assertion (with all its political implications) that the Stalinist bureaucracy could become revolutionary. It turns out that this French majority, which later became the OCI, was led by Lambert and bureaucratically expelled from the International. Since that time, history has more than once confirmed the stance of the majority and condemned that of Pablo-Frank-Mandel. However, this decisive break, heavy with consequences, is not mentioned by our unfortunate historian and disappears as if by magic.

However, precisely this fundamental disagreement explains the attitude the OCI took on the Vietnam war. Since Nicolino does everything he can to hide the radical break with the Fourth International and everything it stood for, he has nothing but lying slanders when it comes to describing the OCI's ("that small but happy band", as he calls it) attitude to the Vietnam war. It is indeed a lie to say, as he does, that the OCI was passive or neutral in relation to that war of liberation. On the contrary, it resolutely support-

ed it. On the other hand the OCI, it is true, had no confidence in the "revolutionary capacities" of Ho Chi Minh and his party and thus in the revolutionary outcome of the war. All the more so since the that very same Stalinist party had already previously considerably diminished the strength of Vietnam's anti-colonial resistance by destroying and massacring the Trotskyist party—even though it had won a big majority in the Saigon municipal elections—including the assassination of its leader Ta-thu-tao.

The way he presents the policy of the OCI in 1968 is also false and lying. On 10 May that year an OCI march to the Latin Quarter (the traditional university district of Paris) called for a workers' general strike, and for such a strike to be called by the trade unions, and certainly not for the students in revolt "to go home and go to bed". The OCI clearly explained that, in itself and confined to the Latin Quarter, the student revolt would be inadequate and that it would be defeated without an intervention by and massive support from the working class through a powerful general strike. Subsequent events

confirmed this political line.

On the other hand Lambert did make a sectarian mistake: while struggling and intervening in the streets and in the factories for this correct policy, he at the same time stopped the OCI from going to support the students on the barricades, as was vainly demanded by, among others, the sorely-missed Claude Chisseray.

And what can one say about the important theoretical controversy over the growth or decline of the productive forces? It is impossible here to develop an argument in support of the OCI's theses of the time. You cannot—as the irresponsible and categorical Nicolino does—reduce this decisive ideological problem to a dozen lines of type! Let him if he will—like a whole legion of ideologists—believe that the productive forces have undergone a development since 1914, with two devastating world wars, a series of wars and revolutions and their train of destructive crises. This is far too important a subject to pass over with an ironical chuckle and a few sarcastic words, as does our "ecological correspondent". Whole studies and books have been devoted to this vital topic since 1914,

and it is impossible to summarise them here, particularly since Nicolino has quite obviously got the growth of the productive forces conflated and identified with technical development in a manner common to all those for whom the economy is synonymous with the technical side and strictly economic categories, putting aside its human dimension and content.

These discussions have been going on for a long time, between progressives and defenders of the established order, those for whom the last word in economics is the human being and those who think it is the golden calf. It may be that Nicolino is on the side of those—and there are many of them nowadays—who strain to reconcile the two.

Am I trying to justify Lambert or the OCI? No way. Lambert was and is characterised by his policy of constant vacillation between sectarianism and opportunism. He is able to draw the whole OCI along behind him at the cost of getting rid, often violently and mendaciously, of those who find such gymnastics unacceptable. He showed repellent sectarianism, for example, towards the student youth on the barricades or in relationship to the other organisations claiming to be Trotskyist, but conversely rampant opportunism towards the "socialist" leadership who, from Bergeron to Mitterrand, greatly benefited from it.

If there are, as Nicolino says, some former leaders of the OCI who wonder "for whom and for what they struggled so long", then I have an ever greater right to ask: for what variant of capitalism does the former LCR member Nicolino struggle today?

Balazs Nagy
Pensioner, member of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

Letter

Solidarity with suffering people of Iraq

I am writing in solidarity with those that are suffering as a result of the United States/United Kingdom sanctions on Iraq.

As the sanctions bite deeper into the everyday lives of Iraqi citizens, the effects on housing, health and education get ever worse, leaving only the Iraqi men, women and children as victims of the sanctions policy.

Due to sanction policy, Iraq is unable to buy much-needed medical supplies to combat leukaemia and diarrhoea. Even pain-killing medica-

tion is banned. Iraq is also unable to maintain basic housing and hospital repairs and it is even known that parents are having to look after their own children in hospital.

The problem is being exacerbated by the almost daily bombing of Iraq by western forces. This includes residential areas, hospitals and schools, i.e. non-military targets.

I for one am sickened at the thought that Blair and Gush junior are following in the footsteps of Madeline Albright, Clinton, John Major and Bush senior who thought

they had the right to kill 5,000 children a month.

As Albright chillingly said: "the price is worth it". But to whom is "the price worth it" for the Americans to get their hands on Iraqi oil?

Ann-Margaret Parkinson
Greater Manchester Coalition
Against Sanctions and War on Iraq

c/o
5 Bridge 5 Mill,
22(A) Beswick Street
Ancoats
Manchester

Send your letters and articles to:

Workers International Press:

PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS,

UK.Tel: +(0) 0207 627 8666

email: wirfi@appleonline.net

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The Irish Worker by John Steele

Restore Political Status!



For a New Movement in Ireland

“Sinn Fein ministers (in Stormont) conduct themselves within the rule of law. They accept the consent principle and they implement British law.” Who do you think said this? Dissident Republicans, perhaps? Members of the breakaway Republican Sinn Fein or 32-County Sovereign Movement? No, it is a summing up of the role of Sinn Fein in the Stormont executive by Sylvia Hermon, newly elected Ulster Unionist member of the Westminster parliament and wife of Jack Hermon, the former chief constable of the RUC. And you would think she should know.

With every crisis that develops in the Stormont administration Sinn Fein is revealed, not as merely another political party which supports the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), but as the mainstay of the agreement and the strongest supporter of the partitionist parliament through which Britain maintains its class rule in Ireland. From closing hospitals to developing the Private Finance Initiative its ministers cheerfully, and naturally, implement the most important aspects of New Labour’s political attacks on the working class.

The latest crisis—the resignation as First Minister by the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble—has seen the Sinn Fein leadership rush to shore up the administration and plead with him to change his mind. In an article in the Irish Times, Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, talks about what he calls, “Mr Trimble’s mistake”, and bemoans the effect it will have, “on would-be investors, on tourism, on the economy, on community relations.” After decades of struggle against the six-county parliament the main Republican

movement has now been reduced to being the main apologist for the existence of Stormont.

Trimble, struggling to maintain his position in the Ulster Unionist Party as opposition to the GFA grows among Protestants, has resigned over the issue of decommissioning of IRA guns and explosives. In many respects, of course, this issue is a red herring and represents the last desperate attempt by many die-hard unionists who do not want to share power with Republicans under any circumstances. Trimble’s struggle to hold his party together means that he is increasingly a hostage to the most reactionary elements but it is only a matter of time before there are further splits in the once monolithic Unionist Party.

However it is interesting that, on this occasion when the decommissioning issue has again become an obstacle to the stability of British rule, there is intense pressure from the London and Dublin governments and the SDLP for Sinn Fein to ensure that weapons are surrendered. Blair, Aherne and Hume know full well that the existence of the arms dumps—and indeed the IRA—is a growing embarrassment for the Sinn Fein leadership as they present themselves as responsible capitalist politicians mixing with the world’s diplomats and business people.

But they also know that it is unlikely for the IRA to act under this sort of pressure and that Adams must be protected from a premature split in the Republican movement which is the risk that any surrender of weapons poses. Their desire to see the decommissioning issue settled is probably driven by

their intelligence reports which will indicate that there is growing unrest among Republican activists about the GFA and the road the movement is taking.

Issues such as coalition with anti-Republican parties in the south of Ireland and the refusal of political status to Republican prisoners go to the heart of Irish Republicanism and, coupled with the embrace of the market economy by the Sinn Fein ministers in the Stormont executive, can only serve to feed the discontent among much of the membership. The political establishments in London and Dublin fear a split which would give dissident republicans access to the arms dumps and they are pushing Adams to see how far he can force the IRA leadership on decommissioning.

As the reality of the enormous defeat that the Sinn Fein leadership was able to inflict on the nationalist revolt begins to reveal itself the question of how to build a new movement, in opposition to the GFA and fighting against partition and for social justice in Ireland, is posed ever more urgently. It has been understandable that the opposition inside the republican movement has been slow to emerge. Many of those who voiced disagreement have had to face intimidation and misrepresentation from Sinn Fein members and supporters. And there is also the reluctance to make a political break from friends and comrades.

But gradually the voices analysing the reasons for the defeat and looking for answers in a new political movement are being heard. The greatest danger is if this discussion takes place within the limits of Irish Republicanism and doesn’t see the politics of the Sinn

On 23 June the Irish Political Status Committee (IPSC) organised a picket of the British Home Office in London. This was the Committee’s first public activity and they were joined by a contingent of Turkish comrades, supporters of the political prisoners currently on hunger strikes in Turkey. When Sinn Fein signed the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) they agreed to the end of political status for anyone sentenced on political charges after April 1998. In a statement the IPSC said:

“The so-called ‘Peace Process’ has not ended the struggle for freedom and democracy in Ireland. The GFA of 1998 is merely an attempt to strengthen and update British imperialist rule in Ireland by drawing in new allies among the Irish middle class and even groups like Provisional Sinn Fein. There cannot be peace in Ireland while Britain denies the Irish people their basic right to self-determination. We say that Republican prisoners who resist British rule are political prisoners and are entitled to political status.”

“In 1981, ten Irish revolutionaries were murdered by the British state for refusing to accept the British policy of ‘criminalisation’ or the removing of special category status for Irish

POWs. The policy of ‘criminalisation’ was devised by the Labour government in 1976 and designed to deny legitimacy and support to the Republican struggle. Britain could not publicly admit that the IRA and INLA prisoners in the H Blocks were freedom fighters in a war of liberation against British rule and that they had mass support, especially amongst the nationalist working class in the occupied six counties...”

“Provisional Sinn Fein have now abandoned their anti-imperialist principles and are prepared to help administer British rule in return for ministerial jobs in a British parliament for the north of Ireland. Sinn Fein are a signatory to the GFA which attempts to put an end to the struggle against British rule in Ireland. Subserviently, with personal gain in mind the Provos took their seats in Stormont and bowed down before Westminster and the Crown...”

“We call on all anti-imperialists and all those opposed to racism in Britain to join us in supporting the campaign for political status for Republican prisoners...”

The Irish Political Status Committee: BM Box 1981, London, WC1N 3XX. Email: statusnow@yahoo.co.uk

Defend Irish trade unionists

Over the last few years important sections of the British working class have suffered major defeats due to the role of the leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) under the so-called “left”, Bill Morris. The Liverpool dockers, the Magnet workers at Darlington and the Skychef catering workers at Heathrow airport were betrayed as the TGWU bureaucracy used the anti-union laws as an excuse for not leading campaigns that could win their disputes.

Now this leadership has spread its dirty role to Ireland. It has suspended its district secretary for Ireland, Mick O’Reilly, and its Northern Ireland organiser, Eugene McGloin. The pretext for these “precautionary suspensions pending a disciplinary hearing” was the findings of an administrative audit of the TGWU’s Irish operation by deputy general secretary, Margaret Prosser. The Irish region is called the ATGWU — originally to distinguish it from the Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

But the real reason for the suspensions is that the TGWU has been seeking ways to sideline O’Reilly who is one of the leading opponents of the national agreements which tie the trade unions to the capitalist state. Under these agreements the trade union bureaucrats sit down with the government, the bosses and the leaders of farming, community and religious organisations and agree three-year deals which set limits on wage rises. It means, in effect, capitalism in Ireland rules through the agreement and mediation of the Irish trade union leaders and, in particular, SIPTU, the largest union.

Not only do these partnership deals do nothing to reduce the growing gap between the rich and poor in Ireland they, most crucially, stop the industrial working class from winning large increases in their standard of living at a time of industrial growth and a booming economy.

The timing of O’Reilly’s suspension is instructive. It came one day before a ATGWU regional executive meeting, just ahead of the

union’s biennial conference and a week before the Irish Congress of Trade Unions conference. At its meeting the Irish regional executive condemned the suspensions and decided to withdraw its delegates from the ICTU conference in protest. Because of his suspension O’Reilly was not allowed to attend the ICTU and lost his seat on the executive when the rule was enforced that he had to be present to be elected.

A key item on the agenda of the regional executive meeting which O’Reilly was barred from attending was a ruling by the ICTU that the union should withdraw from its attempt to represent train drivers at the nationalised railways, Iarnrod Eireann. O’Reilly had recruited 120 train drivers who, last summer, were involved in an unsuccessful 10-week strike to gain recognition for the Irish Locomotive Drivers’ Association, the union they had set up after leaving SIPTU and the National Bus and Railworkers’ Union in protest at the deals that were being done.

In May of this year the train drivers resumed industrial action when Iarnrod Eireann refused to recognise their right to be represented by the TGWU. The strike was called off after the intervention of government bodies and referred to the ICTU and the Labour Court.

O’Reilly had threatened to withdraw from the ICTU rather than abandon the train drivers who had joined his union and Bill Morris is obviously afraid, not only of a major dispute with SIPTU who want the drivers back into membership in order to control them, but also that O’Reilly would carry out his threat and it would become a focus for other workers who are suffering under the restraints of the national agreements.

But Morris also knows that if he ditches the drivers there will be major problems among the TGWU membership, particularly in the south of Ireland. It is important that every TGWU member in Britain and Ireland joins in the campaign for the reinstatement of O’Reilly and McGloin.

Fein leadership in the context of the international struggle for socialism and the crisis of working-class leadership.

Adams and McGuinness led Sinn Fein into coalition with the Unionists because of the class nature of its political programme. Its role is to attempt to stabilise capitalism in order to make the Irish working-class secure for economic exploitation.

It is no coincidence that its political programme is now essentially no different from the Communist Party of Ireland and the Workers Party—this is to hold out the prospect of a united, socialist

Ireland sometime in the future but in the meantime everything is subordinate to the task of democratising the six-county parliament through the development of capitalism. For the present, in De Valera’s words, “Labour must wait.”

The opposition to this approach has been raised in Ireland since the time of Connolly and is encapsulated in the slogan of a Workers’ Republic. This is not a “dogma” or an “old canon from the past” but represents the only way forward in building a movement that will remove partition. There are, of course, always many things

that are new and which necessitate new tactics: these include the growth of the ecology and anti-capitalist movement among the youth; the growth and power of transnational corporations and the globalisation of capital which demands the strengthening of the internationalism of the working-class movement.

But it is only through a working-out and testing in practice of the tactics and organisation which brings the working class into the leadership of the national revolution that the necessary movement will be built.

As British workers start to break from Labour Party

Facing the tasks of working class

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were those that faced the working class, and Communists (true Communists) can't 'represent the future of that class' as the Communist Manifesto puts it, if they don't start with those problems." Well put!

It is this which underlies our approach in Britain to the recent parliamentary elections and the Socialist Alliance, and a real struggle has now broken out on these questions.

The Labour Party was described by Lenin as a "bourgeois workers' party", and as such for many years it enshrined the hopes workers had for an improvement in their conditions. Actually the contradiction it embodied has been impossible to sustain for decades — at least since the late 1970's. Nevertheless, it took quite a time for that fact to be expressed clearly in the party's programme and organisation. Only in the last decade did it openly throw off its commitment to public ownership of the means of production and change its structure to eliminate the influence of organised workers. For example, Blair reduced the share of the votes wielded by trade unions at the Labour Party annual conference and converted the conference from an open, decision-making body, into a sort of rally for the media.

We are dealing here with the gradual, explosive and clearly necessary break of the working class from the Labour Party, but, importantly, it poses something which masses of workers do not want to face — the break with reformist politics for a revolutionary party. It is this that gives the working class and so us Marxists the greatest challenge. At one and the same time we have to understand the way in which workers come to understand this real break with Labour which has openly

thrown off its commitment to public ownership — and how this break develops from a mixture of cynicism, anger and abstention into a positive step to build a new party. A lot depends on the way leading workers take up this challenge and how closely the Marxists build relations with them.

In Britain the Communist Party (CP) was never a mass workers' party — not simply because of its Stalinism, but because of the inherent reformism of trade union consciousness in an imperialist country. The Communist Party had a membership of an important layer of active workers with a strong shop stewards' movement (particularly in the engineering industry) and its paper had a wide readership, but the Labour Party was the workers' party. It came into being through a mass movement led by the trade unions. Arising out of these struggles for the trade unions to have their own voice in parliament, the Labour Party was integral to the way the class saw its independence. That's why Lenin's description is so apt — "a bourgeois workers' party".

Reformism was and remains the nature of the politics of the mass of workers which was based on the so-called aristocracy of labour — the skilled workers. But this reformism (possible first on the gains afforded to British workers by colonial exploitation, and then through the state's fear of the power of the organised industrial workers) no longer has the same basis. Largely to break the power of the trade unions, the capitalists moved industry out of Britain to cheap labour areas around the world, at the same time putting more concentration into finance capital. Simultaneously the development of technology meant an attack on skills.

In 1945 a Labour government had

been swept into office by a mass movement of workers, tired of the war and determined not to go back to the unemployment and impoverishment of the 1930s. Industries (like the railways) were nationalised, and public services (like the National Health Service) were established. The first was necessary to rebuild the damaged infrastructure at the taxpayers' expense to serve private industry. The second was necessary to assuage the demands of the working class and prevent them from going towards revolution.

For the past 20 years, and with increasing pace today, these industries and services are being privatised. Now the working class is witnessing "its own" government carrying out these attacks. And so we have to assist workers to draw the conclusion that it is impossible to sustain public services within a capitalist state, or in a capitalist world.

Even before the 1997 general election, the eventual break between the trade unions and the Labour Party had started when the Blair leadership forced through the deletion of Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution (the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange). That was the point at which Arthur Scargill — president of the National Union of Mineworkers — broke with Labour and formed the Socialist Labour Party. He was joined in this by a significant number of former Labour Party and some ex-Communist Party members, an important minority of whom were national leaders and rank-and-file leaders of trade unions. However, the mass of workers watched and waited, but did not get involved.

Scargill was impatient. He imposed this party "from the outside". He arrogantly considered that

the working class would flock to his side and he would have a mass party in a short time. But the relationship of the working class to the Labour Party is not simply a question of "politics". It is a social question with roots going back through generations of workers. This contradiction — the independence which workers thought they had, and the reformism of this party which tied them to the capitalist state — could not be fully understood by the working class without more experiences. Therefore reformism was (and remains to a great extent) the nature of the politics of the mass of workers.

Nevertheless the formation of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) was an important part of the forthcoming break-up of relations between the working class and the Labour Party. Revolutionary socialists cannot simply wait for the final break of masses of workers; they must also lead the fight for this break. However, despite the intentions of many of its members, under Scargill's leadership the programme of the SLP was reformist (so-called "old Labour") and Scargill acted with bureaucratic methods to keep it so.

The Militant Labour Tendency (a Trotskyist current which had been expelled from the Labour Party and which is now the Socialist Party) suggested to Scargill an alliance for a new party with the right to tendencies. He rejected this. Nevertheless various tendencies, with pretensions to Trotskyism, did go into the SLP and fought for democratic rights, though with no connection with the working class and therefore in an extremely sectarian way. Scargill used typical Stalinist methods to expel them.

A number of former members of socialist currents, with claims to Trotskyism and former members of the Communist Party who had turned against Stalinism lasted longer. They had joined the SLP "loyally" to build it and they opposed the right to tendencies (in our opinion, wrongly). Finally they too were expelled by Scargill. Today the SLP is an empty shell. It has money from properties bought with large donations received at its inception, and it has enough individual members (often the only one in a district!) to stand in elections.

In the meantime, Scargill having rejected their proposal for an alliance, the Socialist Party went on to initiate the Socialist Alliance. This was founded on the basis of uniting socialist groups, but also — as it grew — it started to recruit individual members. Its development was based on the numerous movements building up against pri-

vatization. With the trade unions rendered largely toothless as a result of the Tory government's anti-trade union laws, their leaderships' complete failure to fight this legislation and now the Labour government's refusal to repeal these laws, workers found other ways to campaign against the state's attacks.

A key question in this general election, therefore, was how was the working class to intervene with a political voice? Who was to do it? Now, this is a vital matter in a number of concrete ways for millions of workers.

Some essential political questions for the working class are: restoring the rights of trade unions to carry out strikes etc; preventing further cuts in social services such as housing, education, the health service, unemployment benefit; preventing further attacks on workers in publicly-owned enterprises such as the London Underground system, schools, hospitals and local authorities through encroachments by private capital, "deregulation", etc.; defending the rights of immigrants and refugees under attack by reactionary legislation; reversing other proposed laws attacking civil rights, including limitations on the roles of juries in legal cases and removal of the law on "double jeopardy" (i.e. a person cannot be prosecuted twice for the same offence); preventing involvement by the Labour government in foreign wars of aggression (for example against Iraq and Serbia). A few minute's reflection would produce other important questions!

On all these matters the Labour Party has a policy diametrically opposed to the interests of the working class, who are therefore deprived of political expression as a class. Unfortunately, the answer to this problem is far from clear.

The Socialist Alliance came into existence in London during the elections for the newly-created Greater London Authority. In the rest of the country it established itself in new areas in the parliamentary election campaign. It was the possibilities for their own organisation presented by these elections that encouraged the Socialist Workers' Party to join with the other groups already in the alliance. And so this development was based on electioneering in which the Alliance held together with the common purpose of standing candidates against New Labour.

The Socialist Alliance (In Scotland — the Scottish Socialist Party) and the SLP presented candidates in around 200 areas. Sometimes they actually competed with each other. Taken together these "left" candidates, with 186,000 votes, obtained the biggest-ever "independent" socialist vote, but in only about ten areas did candidates receive between 1,000 and 3,500. All the others got fewer than 1,000 votes out of a possible 10,000 or 30,000.

It would have been a lot better if all these groups had organised the election campaign as the political expression of the working class but this necessity was denied because the nature of the Alliance was, and is, an expression of themselves presenting what they consider is best for the working class.

It is possible to see how the campaign could have been a turning-point towards listening and learning from the working class by the thoughtful articles published in *UNITE!* This newspaper (based on the experience of the 22 issues of *The Dockers Charter* published during the sacked Liverpool dockers' dispute) came into existence seven months ago through our alliance with some sacked Liverpool dockers, some London Underground workers and other socialists and trade unionists. We all agree that there is a necessity for

One essential question for the working class is preventing further privatisation of public services. (Left) railway workers in the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation organise a public campaign against Blair's plans.



a new workers' party, and that the paper must initiate the widest possible discussion and campaign throughout the working class about the way forward—what kind of party with what programme does the working class need?

Although so far only on a limited basis, it has been possible to open up a discussion in *UNITE!*, bringing out experiences and airing views from workers who do not often put pen to paper. We can work together and learn from each other. But it is especially important to grasp that we members of the WIRFI and other socialists can learn from workers who spend their lives dealing with and fighting over the problems of those they represent. Most of these workers remain outside the Socialist Alliance, and some welcomed the alliance as a framework for participation in the elections, although being very wary about the political groups.

In the meantime *UNITE!* will continue to publish articles by local leaders sharing experiences and posing problems. It will continue to open its pages to campaigning organisations to publish their own news and views.

We believe that we must clarify the class character of reformism and the need for a revolutionary party. This does not mean repeating the word "revolutionary" at every moment, but it does mean campaigning with workers in such a way that the impossibility of reforms is revealed and through this activity and experience, putting forward revolutionary demands and forms of organisation towards the necessity of the new party.

In the parliamentary election campaign the main political groups in the Socialist Alliance decided on an election manifesto along the lines of "old Labour" reformism — policies which give the impression that all that is needed is to build a party to the left of "new Labour" (just the same as Scargill's SLP).

Some groups in the Socialist Alliance boast of an "alliance to the right"! By this they mean that they have won former Labour Party members, who believe that the task is simply to go back to the old reformism. However they have also "won" former Labour Party members and trade unionists who are breaking with reformism and are quite critical of these groups' adaptation to it.

In the event, a very large number of workers simply abstained in the general election. Forty-one per cent of the electorate did not vote. This sort of boycott is far from passive — many millions actively hate what they see the Labour leaders doing. The abstention actually expressed their present political development. They do not yet see a viable alternative to Labour — but they are breaking from Labour. Above all this sort of contradictory development requires careful thought. What proposals should we make for discussion among the very small number but important workers we work with about approaching the masses who are still, as it were, stuck half way?

The clearest election result (a majority of 17,000 votes and a seat in parliament) went to a doctor — by no means a left-wing socialist — who has carefully and systematically opposed the closure of hospital emergency services in the small town of Kidderminster in Wyre Forest. Workers and others locally have seen his work over a number of years and have confidence that he will lead a consistent fight FOR THEM. They are less convinced about the political groups.

Another point about the election was the catastrophe suffered by the Conservative Party. They have been abandoned by many of their business backers who are keen on

In many places workers lack the legal and organisational means to mobilise successfully using class-based methods. Often they struggle powerfully but at the moment in vain to overcome these weaknesses. (Right) supporters of the Liverpool dockers march through the city during their long dispute over jobs and trade union rights



Britain joining the Euro currency zone. The Conservatives are firmly opposed to this. By and large the capitalists here are relying on the Labour government to prevent massive opposition to the attacks on the working class and at the same time to pick the best moment to join the Euro. Unfortunately for them, there may not be a "best moment".

Since the election, the new government has been shaken by arguments on this question and by a revolt of some leaders who think Blair is going too far too quickly to the right. In London, every MP is openly in opposition to the government's decision to go ahead with the part privatisation of the underground railway system. It remains to be seen how serious a movement this is, and whether it will affect many people still in the Labour Party.

However, a significant sign of the workers' move away from the Labour Party is the decision of a number of trade union conferences on the question of affiliation fees and donations to that party. The fire-fighters, communication workers, RMT railworkers' union and local government workers' unions have all decided that in future they will only hand over money from their political funds to candidates who support the unions' policies, and they mainly refer to their opposition to privatisation. This is a break from the automatic handing over of large financial donations to the Labour Party although all these unions say they remain committed to that party.

Of course this is not yet the move to a new party, and generally the votes on this issue have been very close — i.e. 51 per cent to 49 per cent. But it is a reflection of the split that is taking place inside the organised labour movement where the mood of millions of workers is beginning to make itself felt, and the most active workers are critically looking at the alternatives.

The most important point about the election is the huge social crisis building up underneath official society. Recent decades have seen massive closures of factories, mines, shipping companies, etc. Millions of people in the old industrial towns are living in poverty from state handouts or useless, unskilled jobs. The problem is doubly hard for millions of mainly Asian immigrants in these areas who often suffer endless official and institutional racism. Race riots broke out in areas of Leeds, Bradford and Oldham in the weeks and days leading up to the election. In Oldham and Burnley, openly racist candidates obtained more than 10,000 votes.

Ethnic resentments are encouraged by the Labourites' official "anti-racism". The Labour Member of Parliament for one of the Oldham constituencies has "instructed" local people to integrate! At the same time, "Asian" areas are physically separated from "white" areas by wire barricades, like in the north of Ireland, and the Commission for Racial Equality has criticised the local council over its racist housing policy.

Here again is a problem which cannot be solved by a slogan. Overcoming the poisonous effects of racism means a working-class leadership must be developed in the places where workers of different nationalities live, by individuals and groups who have the confidence and respect of their fellow-workers and neighbours. This last point is of great importance. A movement to defeat the racists and racism cannot come by parachuting in a "ready-made" anti-fascist group (like the Socialist Workers Party's Anti Nazi League).

Since the general election there are moves by some groups inside the Socialist Alliance to turn it into a party without going any further down the road of testing each other in joint actions, widening the discussion throughout the working class, bringing in more and more of the local and national campaigns to defend public services, and allowing time for the development of the discussion and the struggle inside the trade unions against New Labour.

The British supporters of the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International (Usec) believe that the Alliance should become a party with its own newspaper, full-time organisers and central office etc. They believe that all affiliated groups should dissolve into this party and become "tendencies" with democratic rights within it.

The two biggest groups in the Alliance act in their own interests on the basis that they are "the true and only representatives" of the working class! This, of course is, or certainly will be in the future, the cause of internal conflicts.

The Socialist Party virtually withdrew from the Socialist Alliance during the general election campaign. Its members only worked in those areas where it had its own candidates. Although the Socialist Party does attempt to open up the discussion about the underlying reasons for the impossibility of reformism solving the problems of the working class, its members have been removed from the contradictions of life in the Socialist Alliance, its members are cut off from the necessary internal discussion among the other groups and the non-aligned (very often ex-Labour) new recruits. In some areas, on the basis that they are closer to the working class than the Alliance, the Socialist stand candidates in local elections and set up campaigns in opposition to the Socialist Alliance.

The Socialist Workers Party (the biggest group) appears to do the opposite. During the general election campaign its members became the main organisers centrally and in all the areas (apart from the 12 that were run and controlled by the Socialist Party and some others that were organised by local independent workers' or campaigning groups). Its members did not sell their party paper, and were encouraged by their leadership to make "alliances to the right". It didn't matter about programme — the important thing was activity. Now

they are using the general election recruitment lists and contacts to get support for their own activities and meetings. Their leadership drives them towards more and more activism — they must organise their own party, its paper and campaigns as well as keep control and take responsibility for the Socialist Alliance.

On the basis that it represents "democracy", in most places the SWP is forcing through (with their majority position) a change of organisation which does away with the "alliance" and consensus, replacing it with committees elected by majority votes at meetings. In this way the Socialist Alliance becomes another "front" organisation for them.

The main voice in the Socialist Alliance, therefore, is the Socialist Workers Party and they call on all of us to "be optimistic, and see the new and exciting situation in which workers are moving forward" etc. etc. and carry out much more effective propaganda for socialist ideas (very diluted of course) and we will inevitably recruit members as the true nature of the Blair government becomes more and more apparent.

In fact, such a propagandist approach never convinces significant layers of workers, who need concrete solutions to material problems. Members of the Socialist Workers Party think the Socialist Alliance ought to have presented its own candidate in Kidderminster, against the anti-hospital-closure campaign, because the latter was a "single issue" campaign and the presence of a socialist candidate would have helped spread socialist ideas. In our view it would have done a great deal to discredit socialist ideas in the local community.

In fact we had already taken up a fight against this kind of sectarianism when we supported the London Underground workers' candidates in the Greater London Authority elections. Eleven tube workers stood as Campaign Against Tube Privatisation candidates. This was the first official trade union stand against Labour, but the majority of the London Socialist Alliance decided to stand candidates against them, saying that it was simply a single issue campaign.

It is reported that the Kidderminster Hospital Campaign candidate invited the neighbouring Dudley hospital strike committee (secretary in the SWP) to assist in his campaign during the general election. It would have been a very important development for the Dudley hospital workers to go in as an organised force to give confidence to working-class supporters of the Kidderminster Hospital Campaign. However the invitation was refused on the basis that the candidate was only fighting a "single-issue" campaign and he was in any case not a socialist.

In the meantime the necessity of maintaining the Socialist Alliance as an alliance (albeit developing a kind of federalist organisation to take account of developments in and since the general election) is

important from the standpoint of principled politics. There are big discussions and many experiences to go through both inside the political groups and throughout the workers' movement.

The Socialist Alliance programme proposed during the general election was reformist and unprincipled. But worse is to come: it looks as if there may soon be some closer political unity between the SWP and the Unified Secretariat. Now the Unified Secretariat contains the political successors of those who thought that Stalinism could "project a revolutionary perspective", while the SWP was set up by Tony Cliff who had a diametrically opposed view — that the Stalinist bureaucracy was a new capitalist class running a "state capitalist" USSR.

These forces may well come together because they think they can turn their backs on these vital questions since they are now of merely "historical" interest. The obvious opportunism of such a move is complemented by a real sectarianism towards workers. In their assessment of the election they constantly refer to the way forward for "the left" but not for the working class.

How should we deal with this political situation? We can, of course, and do, condemn their ridiculous combination of opportunism and sectarianism, counterposing our programme to theirs, but we cannot stop there. Essentially both the Pabloites/Mandelites and the state-capitalists fixed their eyes on the bureaucracy. One group thought the Stalinists could still embody the revolutionary perspective, the other group thought that the characteristics of the bureaucracy determined the class nature of the USSR. Both groups left out the working class and saw only the bureaucratic leaderships that bore down on it.

The discussion of what the Soviet Union was and what fate befell it, and why, is far too important to be held behind closed doors between tiny groups. We have to create conditions where workers can see the differences between the various tendencies in their daily practice, arising out of the problems of their movement. The main problem with a hastily-organised unity between the revisionists is that it will fly apart at the first political test, leaving workers trying to grasp smoke.

However, many of the people attracted to the Socialist Alliance are trade union activists who understand how their fellow workers move, and are motivated by what real problems they face. It is this new "independent" group of members in the Socialist Alliance—and the many outside of it who are thinking about what next steps must the working class take—that will hopefully take part in the discussion through *UNITE!* It is this group that may well come forward to decide its future. We will certainly do our utmost to assist such a development.

The situation in Ukraine

**By Sergey Koltsov,
Revolutionary Workers'
Tendency/Ukraine**

PRACTICAL work to re-establish the Trotskyist movement in Ukraine is already in hand. Our organisation, the Revolutionary Workers' Tendency (RWT) has been working for some years to rebuild the Ukrainian section of the Fourth International. The job of rebuilding a genuine Fourth International has been carried out in a principled struggle against reformists and centrists. This aim cannot be achieved without forming a mass workers' movement on a revolutionary platform.

It is clear that, as Marxism analyses, the world antagonistic system has given rise to its own gravedigger, the world proletariat. However, it is necessary to describe this process in greater detail in the concrete context of Ukraine, ruined by the neo-liberal project and the legacy of Stalinism.

Whole sectors of Ukrainian workers, and what they are able to do, are marked by long years of Stalinism and post-Stalinism. State control of the trade unions since the 1920s has deprived workers of their own class organisations of economic defence. Consequently the processes of restoration and globalisation caught working people unawares. Hence the need to re-build the trade union movement in Ukraine.

The first important event of perestroika was the famous Donbass miners' strike, which provided the

impulse to found the Independent Miners trade Union (IMTU) of the USSR and then the IMTU of Ukraine. Not without reason, many observers hoped that, with about 100,000 miners joining it, the IMTU could act as a base for workers to oppose neo-colonial policies and shock-therapy. However, financial donations from US trade union bodies in many ways determined the political direction taken by the independent trade unions in the Ukraine.

"long Stalinist domination over the leadership of the USSR had discredited "communist" ideas"

The aim clearly was to steer organised trade unionism out of any real decision-making sphere. In economic policy, the IMTU and the other independent Ukrainian unions which arose out of the 1989 strike wave were directed towards the rapid privatisation of the mines and main industries and the integration of the Ukrainian economy into the world neo-liberal globalisation project.

The fact that the long Stalinist domination over the leadership of the USSR had discredited "communist" ideas meant that when successor political organisations to the CPSU arose in 1991-1994, they only had weak influence among workers and youth. It was only in 1995 that the political balance in parliament started to shift slowly but surely to the left. However, even now the main force opposing globalisation—the post-

Stalinist Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) — only has weak influence among the independent trade unions, even though the US trade unions stopped financing them in 1997, when the integration of Ukraine into world capitalist economy on a colonial basis was generally completed through the privatisation of large and medium-sized firms.

It should be noted that even after Ukraine achieved independence, it retained the structure of "official" trade unions—the Ukrainian Trade Union Federation (UTUF). This structure often successfully serves the state power by suppressing all forms of social protest. The federation owns a great deal of property in land and buildings, which it kept after 1991. It should be pointed out that similar property belonging to the CPU and the Komsomol (Young Communists) was nationalised. The restorationist forces consciously allowed the UTUF to keep its property so that they could blackmail its leadership from time to time to keep it in its place and stop it threatening the regime. At the moment this enables the UTUF to maintain a huge bureaucratic staff.

"emphasis should be placed on the political component of the anti-capitalist resistance."

They are not paid for by workers' subscriptions (most workers earn very little or are on unpaid leave) but by leasing the property inherited from Soviet times to various businesses. Any struggle between the independent unions and the UTUF always ends with the UTUF winning. In particular the UTUF have a virtual monopoly of the right to manage the assets of the State Social Insurance Fund.

In our opinion, therefore, emphasis should be placed on the political component of the anti-capitalist resistance. The most serious and influential force is undoubtedly the CPU, the Stalinist party, which has the largest faction in the Ukrainian parliament (110 out of 450 members of parliament).

"Real power in our country is concentrated in the hands of large capital"

This Stalinist body, led by Petro Symonenko, was re-born in 1993 on the basis of the numerous veteran's organisations and middle-ranking members of the former party and state nomenclature. It aims to re-establish a unified Slav state including Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This was again confirmed during recent in-fighting between bourgeois clans in Ukraine, when the CPU virtually supported pro-Russian president Leonid Kuchma against the pro-IMF block of Yuchshenko/Timoshenko.

Recent official CPU documents

have stated with absolute objectivity: "At the present time in fact the growing together of criminal organisations with the executive power, including the police, is leading to mass corruption. Real power in our country is concentrated in the hands of large capital, which is grouped along regional lines. The rapid concentration of capital has buried the illusions in future prosperity not only of workers but also of the middle and petty bourgeoisie. This process intensifies and sharpens the fighting between clans over the distribution of property."

"At the present time in fact the growing together of criminal organisations with the executive power, including the police, is leading to mass corruption."

"All of it inevitably leads to the strengthening of bourgeois dictatorship, the destruction of democratic illusions and, in the end, the establishment of an authoritarian regime".

As we can see, the CPU's analysis is completely couched in anti-liberal and anti-capitalist terms. However, it must be clearly stated that the post-Stalinist nature of this organisation objectively prevents it from extending its influence over considerable sections of the working class, particularly the youth, because the average age of CPU members is about 60. Any hope of transforming the CPU into a militant workers' party looks illusory.

After 1994 a moderate Stalinist wing—the All-Ukrainian Union of Workers (AUUW) formed within the CPU, which talked in its programme about establishing a "proletarian dictatorship". The AUUW has 4 members of parliament who were elected on the CPU party list. Recently some problems seem to have arisen between bureaucratic CPU leaders and the AUUW leadership. However, in our opinion this is a "leadership" squabble far removed from the broad mass of workers. Quite shortly we expect the CPU to become the embryo of a new "communist" party which will be oriented more strongly than the present CPU towards labour collectives.

Also interesting is the recent split from the CPU which gave rise to the

Communist Party of Workers and Peasants (CPWU) led by two members of parliament who were formerly leading members of the CPU—Volodymyr Moiseenko and Olexander Yavonenko. The CPWU is a radical Stalinist pro-Russian chauvinist party. It is sponsored by the Eastern Ukrainian bourgeoisie, above all capital in the Donetsk and Lugansk mining regions.

A very interesting factor is the Progressive Socialist Party of the Ukraine (PSPU, led by Natalya Vitrenko and Volodymyr Marchenko). Creating a strongly-authoritarian party organisation, the PSPU adopted the Trotskyist-state capitalist paradigm as their ideology and received 14 seats in the 1998 parliamentary elections. This at present has been reduced to 7 since some PSPU members of parliament have crossed over to bourgeois factions.

At present the PSPU rank and file feel disorientated and disorganised, and this seriously prevents this party from presenting a left alternative to the post-Stalinist CPU.

"It is necessary to transform the spasms of global imperialism into the birth-pangs of a new society"

The Revolutionary Workers' Tendency is only starting to establish links with youth and the trade union movement in Ukraine. As never before, the RWT needs to reach a new international level in its development and integration into an international workers' organisation based on a principled and clear Marxist, Trotskyist heritage and clearly standing for the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the workers' revolutionary platform.

Of course, world capitalism will do all it can to conserve the existing system of socio-economic relationships. On the other hand, the world revolutionary vanguard must do everything necessary and possible to concentrate and direct the energy of the working class and youth and all oppressed people towards the destruction of the market system which threatens to create new cataclysms in the new millennium. It is necessary to transform the spasms of global imperialism into the birth-pangs of a new society.

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War Crimes Tribunal a travesty of justice

Continued from page 8

weakness and unwillingness to collaborate, and the financial credits will be turned off again.

If Serbia will have to supply all the evidence, why not try the case in Serbia?

The "pragmatist" Djindjic took the risk of turning Milosevic over for money. Kostunica claims he was against it and that he was not informed, but he does not exactly have money to burn either. Djindjic decided that the spectre haunting Serbian politics would remain a threat and wanted to be rid of him. A bit of cash in hand would help to sugar the pill for more than one former Milosevic supporter. But he got caught in an even worse danger. Far from home and turned into a martyr, tried by the very people who bombed Serbia, choosing a highly political defence and stoutly denying the material evidence, Milosevic is a greater threat to Serbia in The Hague than he was in Belgrade.

When the new Serbian government jailed dignitaries of the former regime—and there are more than 200 of them so far accused of flagrant embezzlement and every kind of fraud—the Serbian people supported the government and only wished it would move quicker. If they are then extradited just to keep the credits rolling in, public opinion will change radically.

Even virulent opponents of Milosevic are showing signs of bitterness, not because they want the tyrant back, but because they do not want to lose the tiny shred of dignity they won back on 5 October.

Scenting this change in the public mood, the chauvinists in Milosevic's party have joined more firmly with Seselj's fascists and Arkan's criminals, finding new hope after the shared defeat of 5 October.

Milosevic's extradition to The Hague prevented Serbia itself from trying him for crimes ranging from embezzlement to war crimes, including a notorious series of assassinations of Serbian democrats.

This makes it impossible for the truth about Milosevic's mafia-style criminal involvement to be exposed in front of Serbs themselves. This will play into the hands of the right-wing, who are now kicking up a fuss about the many wrongs inflicted on their liege lord. It serves only to inflame patriotic feelings.

The War Crimes Tribunal's legal quibbling and political compromises will form the main obstacle to getting to the truth about the past ten years in Serbia itself. Until the whole country can confront its own recent past, until Serbia puts its own government on trial, it will languish in a vicious circle of bad conscience and the feeling that her people are being made collectively responsible. Until the country itself can pay its debt to history it will not be able to re-establish frank relations with its closest neighbours.

But without Serbia there will be neither peace nor progress in the Balkans.

However judiciously (or arbitrarily) the War Crimes Tribunal metes out the charges against the various parties to the war: it is merely a continuation of the diplomatic, military and financial pressures the great powers have brought to bear. Under conditions of economic stagnation, this policy deepens social decay, worsens the position of refugees (making their return unlikely) and prolongs the mutual distrust between peoples.

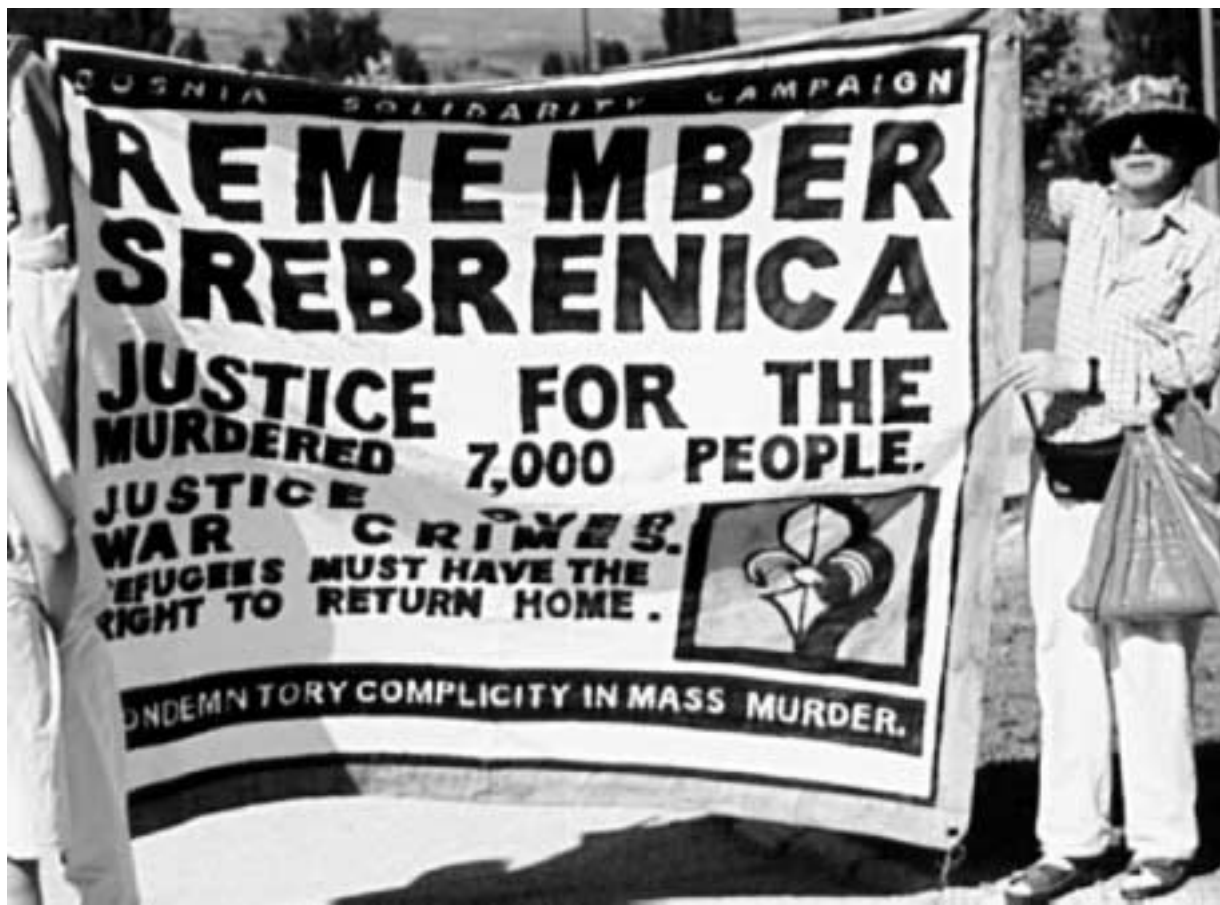
The trial of Slobodan Milosevic is the key to a real peace because it

ought to reveal to all the obscure and profound causes of so absurd and devastating a war. To reduce this war to the megalomania and politico-psychological pathology of a single man, is to over-estimate this mere apparition, to treat him as a *deus ex machina*, almost a genius; for the crime is so great and the scenario of successive wars so sophisticated that it would take a genius to dream them up.

The arrests and charges are carefully meted out and affect only Serbs and Croats. Why is Naser Oric left out, who burned several villages together with their inhabitants? The court procedures are choreographed down to the last detail. Above all, the main killers in the Bosnian war, Karadzic and Mladic, are still at large

that she will be set free in return for this service. This is the sort of thing that happens with Italian Mafia super-grasses, but they just get a new passport and a pardon for money-laundering and the odd murder. War crimes on the grand scale and crimes against humanity are something else. But the tribunal, which is the product of political horse-trading and forced to function in an atmosphere of political wheeler-dealing, operates along entirely the same lines.

Every citizen of the former Yugoslavia will remember vividly the photograph of Biljana Plavsic kissing Arkan after he had driven the last Muslim out of Bijeljina. If she gets let off completely or with a symbolic sentence, this will reveal the hypocritical face of the Tribunal. Plavsic is



The Bosnia Solidarity Campaign banner from Britain on a previous Srebrenica anniversary in Bosnia

six years after charges were made out and arrest warrants issued. All this exposes the political background to the War Crimes Tribunal's activities.

What a travesty of justice the War Crimes Tribunal is was revealed in the way Biljana Plavsic's trial was staged. She was a member of the ruling trio of Bosnian Serbs along with Karadzic and Krajisnik, and just as responsible for the war as they were. But she changed horses in mid-stream. She offered her services to western diplomacy, who made her president of Republica srpska. Then she lost the first elections and then she went to The Hague "voluntarily". Her welcome there, the way the judgement was orchestrated in what was said and what was not said, and the subsequent arrest of Krajisnik suggest a scarcely-concealed deal. She has not been sentenced yet because they are waiting to see whom else she can implicate to save her own skin. She is shortly to be released on bail. Knowing in advance that she risks a lot less than, for example, young Erdemovic, an executioner acting under orders, who really repented what he had done and gave himself up to the tribunal to save his life and his conscience, she has told the press that she will live in Belgrade until her case comes up. In fact she will act more as a witness for the prosecution (against Milosevic, if not Karadzic, Mladic and Krajisnik) than as a defendant. It is an open secret

hated by the Muslims and also hated and despised by the Serbs. Set free in return for services rendered to the Western powers, her "trial" is anything but a guarantee that the truth will be told and that there will be peace in Bosnia. This kind of justice has nothing to do with the punishment of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Serbs, Bosnians and Croats all agree on one point: the criminals must pay for their crimes, all of them, without exception, especially the ones with important political roles. Variable-geometry justice may satisfy petty-bourgeois Western democrats, who were duly shocked by the unbearable images on television but then went on to something else and forgot a distant war which never affected them personally. But among the peoples of the former Yugoslavia it can only leave a bitter taste. As for the women of Srebrenica, still vainly demanding the truth, justice and the right to return six years after the massacre, what illusions can they still have about the War Crimes tribunal, when neither Karadzic nor Mladic have yet been brought before it?

Despite the laborious preparation of the prosecution witness, Milosevic's trial could well be cut short. If his former subordinates and friends are ready to save their own skins by blaming him, why should he not do the same to the great powers? Besides, he has no other way out. He

will conduct his defence politically and forcefully on quite other grounds than common law. That is what they are afraid of. Otherwise, why should three former British Foreign Office ministers (Lord Carrington, David Owen and Douglas Hurd) rush to state that they had nothing against him?

The dirt on NatWest Bank alone is enough to force British diplomacy into retreat. At least they are better situated than the French generals, another group that can safely be expected to back off hastily. The Milosevic trial could well thoroughly expose Western complicity to the public gaze, and that is how the real revelations will come out. That is the danger former War Crimes Prosecutor Louise Arbour meant when she said there could well be a "circus" and a "comedy". She should know.

It will be difficult to keep the television cameras out of the court, as Milosevic and his legal team well know. The court will not be able to keep interrupting him the way they do with some terrified juvenile delinquent. Nor can they afford to present him with a political trial in Serbia. So what can they do?

committed in its name. But neither Djindjic nor Kostunica—former friends of Karadzic who never opposed Milosevic over the war—wanted it to happen.

By handing over Milosevic they hoped to make people forget their own role as a fake opposition. Public trials in Belgrade would have brought out the whole entanglement of money, political assassinations and war crimes. What is merely vaguely suspected by a small part of public opinion would have been clearly proved in front of all. And that is the only way Serbia could have purged its heavy debt to history. Terse press statements from the Tribunal retailed in the Serbian papers are one thing. It would be something else if the women of Srebrenica took the stand in Belgrade, for all to see and hear on the television, no interpreter needed, no big-shot politicians getting in the way, simply saying what was done to them in the name of the "celestial people".

It would have a huge salutary shock-effect. Most of the people would feel the life sentences handed out by the Tribunal trivial compared to the seriousness of the offence. It would give Serbs a chance to redeem themselves by severely punishing the man whom most of them adored and acclaimed but who conned them by committing the worst crimes Europe has seen since the world war.

Locked up in The Hague, this brutal and direct truth will never hit Serbs where they live, and most of them will have a feeling that through Milosevic the tribunal will be passing a collective judgement on Serbs.

Milosevic's most ardent opponents, those who opposed the war the most bravely, are today in the greatest perplexity, because they have no illusions in Djindjic or Kostunica. They can see the truth about the underbelly of the dirty wars in the Balkans evaporating in The Hague while the Serb people remain hostages to the "democratic" nationalists in power who need to clean up their own political CVs by letting Milosevic take the rap for all the crimes.

Meanwhile another, apparently quite different, event has struck public opinion. While the university has solemnly suppressed the teaching of Marxism, the education minister has re-introduced religious education in state schools. He did so suddenly, by decree, without consulting parliament or public opinion and as of 1 September.

Where will he find 1,500 specialists to teach the subject? No one knows.

The "Women in Black" and a whole number of resolutely anti-militarist, anti-nationalist and anti-clerical local feminist groups, have not minced their words over this:

The new teachers will be picked up, they say, from among "illiterate priests, de-frocked monks, failed theologians and similar trash".

Demoralised by ten years of material and cultural impoverishment in which their devotion to the children and professional pride never flagged, most teachers are simply flabbergasted. They hardly have the strength left to shrug.

The journalists on "Damas", the main democratic daily, have denounced this as a step backwards which only opens the door for a restoration of the monarchy, as in Bulgaria.

Serbs—at least the democratic element of public opinion—can hardly believe their eyes. Last autumn broke the ten-year entanglement of wars and misery, and they expected economic reconstruction, democratic institutions, justice and the punishment of war criminals and profiteers and a democratic and transparent political life. Instead, they have this jump backwards of a hundred years. They cannot understand it, but they are not going to put up with it, either.

Who says that morality and justice is not class morality and class justice?

After 5 October Serbia prepared to learn the truth about the war crimes

Srebrenica massacre remembered

People of Balkans should judge war criminals

We print here a speech made in July by BRONWEN HANDYSIDE at a rally in London to commemorate the massacre at Srebrenica in July 1995

In 1992 Bosnia, was attacked by a genocidal aggressor, who now stands before the Hague War Crimes Tribunal. During the three year conflict, the UK government joined with the US, Russian, French and German governments to impose an arms embargo on the Balkans.

The only troops affected by that embargo were those of the Bosnian army, and its people were disarmed in the face of a genocidal enemy. Throughout the whole course of the war those governments regarded Milosevic as the force which would control and "stabilise" the region, and dealt with him as a legitimate politician.

United Nations forces acted under the direction of these

governments, in support of their policies, during the whole course of the aggression.

The outcome was a hideous litany of war crimes inflicted on the undefended, including the mass murder of civilians, the setting up of concentration camps, systematic rape used as a weapon of war, and the displacement of one and a half million people out of a population of four and a half million. It culminated (but did not end) in the worst single atrocity since the Second World War—when UN soldiers handed over 8,000 men and boys to be slaughtered at Srebrenica in July 1995.

At the end of the war, the western governments joined to

impose the Dayton agreement on Bosnia, reinforcing and legitimising the ethnic divisions created by Milosevic and his nationalist supporters. They rewarded the war criminals with 49 per cent of the country.

These governments have now decided, after doing business with Milosevic for a decade, that he no longer suits their purposes. After the Serbian people themselves acted to throw Milosevic out of office, they have switched their allegiance to others in power in Serbia they can deal with just as well.

Although we must be glad that he begins in some limited way to pay for his crimes, those governments that disarmed the Bosnian people and enabled Milosevic and his allies to carry out all these foul atrocities are the very same governments who now say they have the right to call him to account.

They set up the scene for the war crimes, they treated the nationalist Serbs as legiti-



Mohamud Jakupovic gave up part of his fourth birthday to hand in a petition in support of the women of Srebrenica at No. 10 Downing Street. His father Nisad Jakupovic is chair of the Bosnia Herzegovina Association UK

mate politicians throughout the whole time they were taking place, and now they say they are the only ones with the right to try him for those crimes. Shouldn't they be standing in front of their own tribunal?

The division and occupation of Bosnia maintained by these governments, including the British, prevents the Bosnian people from indepen-

dently governing their own land, and dealing out their own justice. The War Crimes Tribunal, whatever the intentions of those who work within it, has usurped the right of the people of Bosnia, and the people of the Balkans to judge and punish Milosevic.

He, Karadzic and Mladic and all the other war criminals must answer to the people of the Balkans, and especially the

Women of Srebrenica, for their crimes—until they do, there can never be a true, just and lasting peace.

War Crimes Tribunal a travesty of justice

by Radoslav Pavlovic

WESTERN governments were hugely relieved by the lightning extradition of Slobodan Milosevic to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague after years of their own tacit complicity with the Serb dictator. Besides, it served as delayed justification of the NATO bombing.

The official media made a huge meal out of it until interest waned and silence fell.

From 1993 onwards we denounced Milosevic as a criminal and his stooge Tudjman and the big Western powers as accomplices in barbarism on an industrial scale which tore Yugoslavia into fragments. Meanwhile Western diplomats organised an endless series of "international peace conferences" drawing and re-drawing the map of the Balkans in line with the facts established on the ground by the Serb paramilitaries.

What right do they have to try him now, when all they ever did was give way to his megalomania?

In 1995, when the monstrous crime of Srebrenica exposed their complicity—a universal complicity crowned by the UN's calculated cowardice—first Washington, then London and Paris, opted for Dayton, reckoning that both sides in the Bosnian war were exhausted and the time had come to dictate a peace settlement. It was an unfair and artificial peace because the real president of Bosnia, the chief of staff and the governor of the central bank are still foreigners appointed by the great powers.

One of the main signatories to the Dayton Peace Accord was none other than Slobodan Milosevic, subsequently charged with crimes against humanity in that very same war!

History is indeed written by the victors, and it is the strongest who decide what is right. Nor has imperialism ever been short on hypocrisy. In sending 80,000 troops drunk with

fear, vodka and nationalism to exterminate the Chechens, Putin is only doing what Milosevic's and Arkan's gangs did but on a larger scale. He remains a friend of the Western democracies.

Talk about double standards! Putin still has nuclear weapons, while Milosevic has been defeated. So don't talk to us about justice, democracy and above all that catch-all, human rights!

To get his goal of Eretz Israel, Sharon imports Jews from all over the world at enormous expense while Palestinian homes are destroyed and Palestine is cleansed of its thousand-year-old Arab population, its youth driven to hopeless suicide attacks. But the media call the young Palestinians terrorists and Sharon a respectable diplomat.

Slobodan Milosevic is as "innocent" of the crime of Srebrenica as Sharon is of the crime of Sabra and Chatila. One is a respected partner in international diplomacy, the other is in prison.

How to explain this apparent contradiction? Sharon stays firmly loyal to US imperialism, while Milosevic cocked a snook at them. That was unforgivable.

Their satisfaction at seeing the Serb government accept the carrot dangled in front of it was quickly tarnished by Milosevic's first television appearance, which, if he carries on that way, is very likely to be his last.

After the event, nobody was particularly surprised, you expect people to defend themselves as best they can. And above all, Milosevic is not stupid. He is a cunning tactician, confident in his brute political instincts and unencumbered by any ideology. That was how he managed to fool almost everybody for ten years.

Since they main defendant before the War Crimes Tribunal does not look very co-operative, it promises to be a long and lively trial. The outcome is not yet clear but will, no doubt, be determined by the vicissitudes of international politics. Bearing in mind what is at stake, their

is no guarantee either that the verdict will be quick or that the proceedings will be transparent. The extradition was, in itself, a big political victory for the Western capitals, as it allows them to bury twelve years of silent complicity. However, they will certainly be less triumphant in future and the war is not won in advance, despite the flagrant disproportion of the forces present.

The War Crimes Tribunal was conceived as a competent and objective international court, but it was set up and funded by particular forces and the Tribunal will unquestionably find it impossible to escape their control. It is a judicial body at the service of political imperatives. But such a court cannot—and this Tribunal certainly does not want to—run a political trial. Written and material evidence will be needed, the testimony of his subordinates, to try the former president of Serbia properly. The Serbian government will be asked to furnish all this, otherwise, it will be accused of

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