

# WORKERS VOICE

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Iraq, Bosnia, Rwanda

## The Break-up of the Old World Order

Now that the Cold War is over we know that a world order dominated by two super-powers was in reality actually dominated by one. Like so many other myths of our epoch (not least the lie that Stalinism was "communism") both sides colluded to sustain it. The USSR, for all its later achievements in space, was never in a position to challenge US dominance without an act of total self-destruction. Furthermore, given that it was also a victor of the Second World War the USSR did not need to revise a post-war settlement which left it with its own small empire sheltering behind the barrier of non-convertible currencies. On the other side the masters of the CIA and Pentagon had a vested interest in exaggerating the "red menace" if only to increase military budgets. More crucially the US state machine as a whole could use the "threat of communism" as a means to discipline its NATO satellites and reinforce its own domination over the European powers.

Such a domination allowed them to force Britain and France to abandon their colonies, and to sideline them in the Middle East (the setting up of Israel in 1947 and the US refusal to support the Suez invasion in 1956 demonstrated this clearly). The US also managed to get the other leading Western capitalist nations to pay for the onset of the economic crisis in the USA by devaluing the dollar in 1972. The latter fact also signalled the beginning of the present economic paralysis which is the background to the slow but perceptible growth of international tensions between the USA and its erstwhile NATO allies since the fall of the Berlin Wall five years ago.

### "The New Course"

In 1890 the recently crowned German Kaiser Wilhelm II sacked Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, and abandoned his policy of the previous twenty years which kept Germany in a reactionary alliance with the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, despite the obvious rivalry of these two powers in the Balkans. Wilhelm II who cemented the Austrian alliance and allowed Russia to reluctantly drift into the arms of the French Republic by 1894. This was described as the "New Course" in German foreign policy. It set in motion a chain of events which ultimately ended, some twenty years later, in the First World War.

We inhabit an entirely different world from that of the beginning of the century, but the 1990s are beginning to resemble, in some aspects, the features of a century ago. Old certainties are being challenged and the USA is also beginning a new course of aggressive expansionism to maintain its hitherto unquestioned domination.

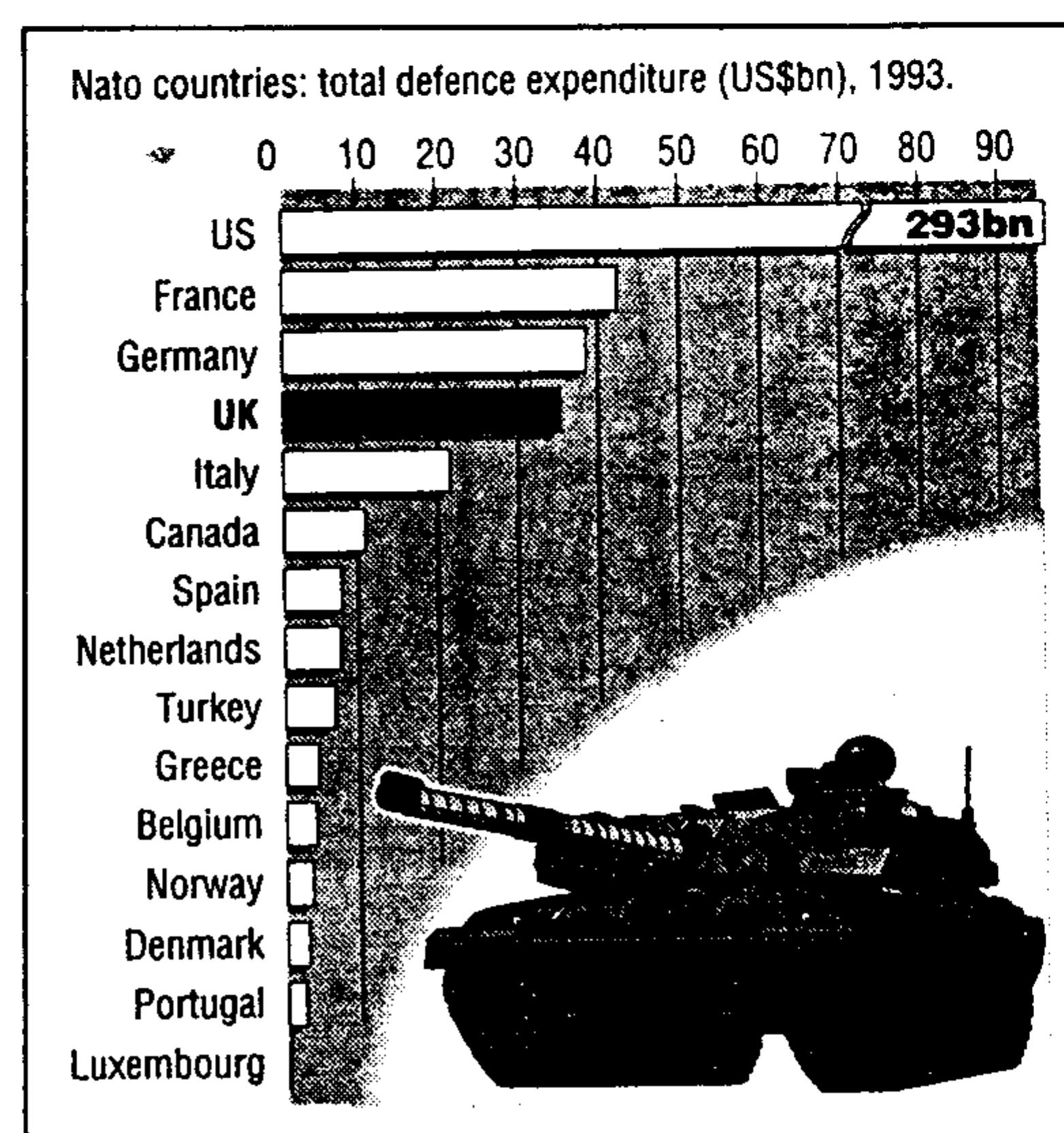
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Here the analogy with a hundred years ago ends abruptly. No power in history has dominated so overwhelmingly as the United States does today. Today whether it is through the GATT agreement which allows the US to browbeat so-called "developing countries" about the working conditions of their workers (as if US workers were living in plenty!) or through NATO where the US spends much more than the rest of the alliance put together (see table) and therefore calls the shots the message is now clear. Whatever hesitations the US had about its new interests after the collapse of the USSR there are none now. "America First", once the slogan of President Warren T. Harding in 1920, has again become the order of the day.

### The Iraqi October Crisis

A more aggressive US is both browbeating former allies such as the Irish and British



governments over Ulster (see *Workers Voice* 74), and the Indonesian President, Suharto over the previously US-supported butchery in East Timor. It has also increased diplomatic and military activity around the globe (for Haiti and Rwanda see *Workers Voice* 74 and 73). In October it was the turn of the Iraqis to once again come under the US spotlight.

That the whole invasion scare was manufactured by the US to prevent its old allies proposing a more lenient policy towards Iraq in the UN there can be little doubt. With the support of China, Russia and France, three of the five permanent members of the Security Council UNSCOM - the UN body monitoring Iraq - was about to recommend that, since Iraq had complied with the spirit of the more than 30 UN resolutions on disarmament, sanctions and the prevention of Iraq from selling oil abroad should be lifted. Iraq has now allowed permanent electronic surveillance of its military installations. It was on the point of formal recognition of Kuwait as an independent country, when the US suddenly announced that Iraqi Republican Guards were moving towards the Kuwaiti border.

It takes no special insight to see that invasion was a rather unlikely move for a regime which was short of fuel, tyres and had just lost hundreds

of millions of its citizens in a bloody war. However as the US satellites hold a monopoly of information in this area there was little the US' allies could do to contest it. All were drummed on board the anti-Iraqi campaign. The idea that sanctions would be lifted was shelved. During the mobilisation for this fake confrontation the US made it clear that the oil embargo would continue as long as Saddam remained in power. The US has two principal motives here. The one is to demonstrate to any potential challengers that it alone controls the Middle East (see article on Gaza on p.3 of this issue). British firms, which had illegally tried to circumvent the embargo by travelling to Iraq to try to restart the £800 millions of trade Britain had there before the Gulf War, will now find that their hopes will be thwarted. Meanwhile the US has frozen out most of its old allies from the \$65 billion of arms transactions it has with the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia. With 20% of the Gulf oil revenue going on US arms US gets its investment in the defence of the Gulf back.

The fundamental material reason why troops are deployed in the Middle East, with less heart-searching about the costs than anywhere else, is that it is the region which has 66% of the world's proven oil reserves and 48% of the world market. With the US' own reserves having fallen to 23% of world oil reserves and its production now only capable of meeting 50% of its consumption (compared with 73% as recently as 1985) it is essential for its long-term imperialist domination that it secures the Middle East for its empire. Today the US needs 900 tankers a day to simply maintain its oil imports (see *The Financial Times* 22.11.94). This oil interest was underlined by former Secretary of State James Schlesinger who told the Fifth World Energy Conference that

**What the American people have established from the Gulf War is that it is much easier to kick the ass of the people of the Middle East than to make sacrifices [by paying higher prices] in order to limit American dependence on imported oil.**

Quoted in *Le Pétrole du Golfe toujours plus convoité* by Nicolas Sarkis in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 1994).

The consequences of the US policy to control the Gulf are that the Iraqi population, trapped between two brutal regimes, suffer unspeakable barbarism. 92% of the electricity industry was destroyed in the Gulf War, 80% of the oil refineries as well as 135 telephone exchanges and 300 locomotives. Today schools are closed, and 33,000 hospital beds are unused not through lack of need but through lack of medicine. The population receives 50% of the basic calorific food intake so that 3.6 millions out of 18 millions now have serious health problems.

### Bosnia: Another Great Power Battleground

The collapse of the former Yugoslavia was largely the product of its own economic and political crisis but the subsequent development

of that crisis into outright war is a product of international forces - or as we say, imperialism. This is sometimes obscured by the fact that imperialist interests have themselves changed during the course of the war. Germany initially made the running by forcing the other EC countries to recognise the breakaway of its satellites in Croatia and Slovenia. This actually started the war but Kohl's aim to revive the Kaiser's vision of *MittelEuropa* foundered on the problems of integrating the former German Democratic Republic into West Germany. Exit Germany who were the main opponents of the US in Yugoslavia at that time. Today the Kohl Government are the strongest supporters of the US in Bosnia.

However to explain that shift we have to look at the development of rivalries amongst the so-called "contact" group. This includes Russia, Germany, the USA, Britain and France. The hypocrisy of this group's pseudo-unity over "peacekeeping" and "humanitarian" aims has been revealed for what it is in the last few weeks. Basically Britain, France and Russia support Serbia (for military and economic reasons) whilst Germany and the US support the Muslim-dominated Bosnian Government. The US, after supporting Serbia at the beginning of the conflict now sees Bosnia as part of a wider strategy in which it does not want its domination in the Middle East to be weakened by accusations of feebleness towards the defence of Muslims. This is why it has abandoned the UN arms embargo publicly (although for months it has secretly connived at Turkish and Saudi gun running to Sarajevo).

However the US Government's announcement of its abandonment of a central UN principle (made, significantly, whilst Clinton was in Djakarta, capital of Muslim Indonesia) sent shockwaves throughout Europe. The tension between Britain and France, who have troops in Bosnia and the US, which does not, had already reached a high level even before the Republican leader, Bob Dole, denounced the UN and proclaimed the collapse of NATO on November 27th. This was largely sour grapes at the failure of the US to use NATO to undermine the way in which Britain, Russia and France have used the UN to back up their support for the Serbians. Behind all the talk about international alliances and bodies lies the imperialist manoeuvring of the various powers.

The British and French Governments are trying to portray themselves as innocent peacemakers who are being undermined by the US but this is a practised form of hypocrisy. UN "peacekeeping" is largely to monitor, rather than check, the hitherto remorseless advance of the Serbs. As Bihac fell under Serb encirclement it was UN commander General Sir Michael Rose who prevented the NATO air strikes demanded by the US. This was why the Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Saladjic openly denounced him to his face on TV.

### The US and its Satellites

However if the British and French, aided by the



# "New" Labour - the Bosses Next Best Hope ?

During the last few months the mass media have spared no effort in highlighting the emergence of the new Labour Party leadership. The profile columns of the "quality" press have all taken their turn to publicise the vacuous platitudes which Tony Blair has quickly made his very own trademark. Every piece of trivia, down to and including the colour of the backdrop at Party Conference, has been reported ad nauseam with the respected commentators offering profound analyses and interpretations.

Alongside the reporting of the shiny new Labour leadership, there have been reports presenting the Government as running out of steam and collapsing in on itself. Even *The Sun* has prepared its ground for a future call for Labour votes. Such events as the dropping of the plans to alter the structure of the Post Office and Major's warnings that disloyalty from his M.P.'s could mean a Government collapse are all presented as symptoms of crisis within the ruling party.

Beneath the press's cult of Blair and the increasingly lukewarm commitment to the Major government is an underlying strategy. The Conservative Party has been in Government since 1979 - the longest period of single party rule in Britain this century. Barring the abandonment of parliamentary procedures there will be a General Election by the spring of 1997 (just over 2 years away) at the latest.

The possibility of a 5th consecutive Conservative victory cannot be ruled out. However, it is crystal clear that there are a number of other options which would be just as viable for the bosses both in Britain and elsewhere. **The first and foremost of those options is the election of a Labour Government.**

## Mystifying the Working Class

Both right and left of the bourgeois political spectrum choose to portray the Labour Party as a party which strives to act on behalf of "ordinary people" - normally the bourgeoisie will avoid any more precise term such as "working class". That myth - that Labour as a political organism has anything in common with the real interests of the working class is an issue which must once again be addressed. To get to the root of the issue it will be necessary to return to the real experience of successive Labour governments.

There is a very wide range of individuals and groups who will repeat or elaborate on the arguments for Labour's pro-working class credentials. At one end of the spectrum are genuinely confused militant workers whose political development is marked by an unevenness which allows elements of emerging class-consciousness to coexist with a conviction that the Labour Party somehow fits in with their own aspirations. At the other end of the spectrum are the myriad of leftist organisations whose political existence is based on the reinforcement of bourgeois mystification. With the demise of the main Stalinist trends, the 57 varieties of Trotskyism, headed by the SWP, are currently pre-eminent amongst the ranks of the mystifiers. In second place are those trends whose roots are in other variants of left-bourgeois politics (e.g. bourgeois feminism, green politics). The journal *Red Pepper*, launched earlier in 1994 is one of the manifestations of the latter trend.

The myth peddlers will usually point to a number of issues as their evidence. The most commonly quoted will be the social composition of the Labour Party, products of previous Labour Governments such as the National Health Service, "lesser evilism" when compared to the Tories open and everyday links to financial and industrial capital and, finally, the links with the Trade Unions. Although the essential counter-arguments must be located in a fundamental

understanding of Labourism it is certainly possible to confront those common arguments separately.

## Labour - Debunking the Myths

The first argument in the left's little list is the fact that most members of the Labour Party are working class or, when not expressed in terms of membership, the same argument is used to say that many working-class people still vote for the Labour Party. A more sophisticated version of that theme is wheeled out by the Trotskyists when they point to the historic links between the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

Without a doubt there is a grain of truth in the assertions about the large number of workers who support Labour. However by asserting that Labour is therefore **politically** a workers party, or a bourgeois workers party or a workers party with a bourgeois leadership is simply a nonsense (.... and quite possibly a bourgeois workers nonsense). The truth is, of course, that the class nature of a party is not determined by the class origins of its members or supporters, else the BNP could well compete with Labour as a "workers party". On the contrary, the class nature of a party is defined by its role in society - that of Labour is entirely supportive of the bourgeois framework.

There is also a deeper implication in the leftists granting Labour the "workers party" label. By doing so they are able to justify their electoral support for and/or entryism into Labour and Labourist organisations. Indeed, rather than reflecting ideological inconsistencies, the intentional reinforcing of Labour's false pretensions is a conscious and deliberate part of the left's support for and participation in capitalist organisations.

The second argument about Labour's previous record on granting welfare reforms is also easily demolished. When Labour has granted substantial reform it has only been in circumstances where the bosses have already agreed on the need for such reform as part of a general modernising of the state. For example the post-1945 "Welfare State" was largely based on the recommendations of the Beveridge Report. On the other hand, when capitalism has moved into crisis Labour Government's have been fully prepared to cut back public expenditure and restrict welfare benefits.

The argument about Labour's previous attacks on the working-class is invariably countered by the Labourists with the argument that the Tories are even worse. This is a line which has become increasingly easy for the left to peddle because a whole generation of younger workers have lived all their adult lives under the Tory Government which has carried out wave after wave of attacks on the working class. What the leftist apologists fail to point out is that under the conditions of ongoing world capitalist crisis the **general** approach of Labour would have been essentially similar.

The leftists display their true colours when they defend their position by clinging onto marginal differences between the claimed records of Labour and Tory Governments. By continually trying to highlight the proclaimed differences their real intention is to keep workers tied into the present system. The alternative of arguing for a revolutionary alternative is simply not on their agenda.

The argument that the links between the Labour Party and the Trade Unions is proof of the "socialist" nature of either, or both, organisations merely serves to underline the massive gap that exists between revolutionaries and the capitalist left-wing. For revolutionaries the links between

Social Democracy and the Trade Unions are not links which lead to socialism but part of the ruling class's methods for making sure that the working-class is continuously offered choices which always stay within safe capitalist channels.

As stated above the really clinching argument placing the Labour Party firmly in the bosses' camp is the role which it has actually played in maintaining bourgeois order. This is true both when it acts as the Government's "loyal opposition" and on the occasions when it has been allowed to form a Government. It is also certainly true of the numerous situations where Labourists have run other parts of the State, such as local councils or other public bodies.

## Labour in Government - Past and Future

The first Labour Party member to be part of a British Government was Arthur Henderson who was installed as President of the Board of Education in 1915. Apart from his formal role he was also charged with minimising labour struggles so that the slaughter of the First World War could proceed without disruption. Henderson was soon brought into the Cabinet and two trade union leaders, John Hodge and George Barnes were made Ministers of Labour and Pensions respectively.

That experience of Labour being given a taste of power as and when it suited the ruling class (and nothing could have served them better than the assistance Labour gave them in helping send millions of workers to their deaths) has been a consistent theme since then.

A minority Labour Government was allowed to administer two years at the start of an economic slump from 1929-31 until it became expedient to replace them with a National (cross-party) Government. At the end of the Second World War, Labour was allowed to administer 6 years of austerity which involved restructuring (including were necessary nationalising with massive compensation) worn-out industry, extensive use of the military to break strikes, developing and authorising the use of atomic weapons and sending more troops to die in Korea and other colonial battlefields. Having provided such services to the bourgeoisie they were then kept out of office during 13 years of capitalist expansion.

They again were allowed into office as the post-war economic crisis from 1964 - 70 where again Wilson (a one-time member of the Labour left) was to use troops to break strikes. Fellow left Minister, Barbara Castle, also set the precedent for future ministers by trying to introduce legislation to increase state control over the right to strike.

The last Labour Government from 1974-79 presided over soaring unemployment as the ongoing imperialist crisis deepened. During the last two years, Callaghan, acting on the dictates of the IMF set about slashing public spending and enforcing pay restraints to pass on the full costs of the crisis directly to the working-class. It was those policies which were subsequently taken up and developed during the early years of the next Tory Government.

## Blair's heritage - Continuity and Change

The new cult of Blair and the organisational and political realignments around it have a complex nature.

Firstly, the crucial nature of the Labour Party as a safe party of government for capitalism has not changed one jot. The fact that ruling-class opinion makers are now prepared to publicly

admit to it has far more to do with them coming to terms with a potential new government rather than any fundamental change in the character of the Labour Party. It is undoubtedly true that the death of John Smith and the emergence of Blair provided an appropriately timed catalyst to the process.

Wrapped around that continuity is the appearance of change which in turn feeds off and is fed by the approving words of the media commentators. Commitment to nationalisation, full employment, restoration of welfare cuts, removal of laws against strikes are all being ditched. The Labour M.P.'s could not even find it in their hearts to vote against the Criminal Justice Bill. This ditching of the former Labourist fetishes is possible because the old-style mass base of manual workers on which the old Labour Movement rested (and leeches off) no longer exists.

The ditching of previous totems as the Labour Party goes for one last push will certainly help it keep its credibility with the leader writers and TV commentators. It will cause one or two puzzled frowns from the Trotskyists who will wail about betrayal and look for this or that left Labourist - Benn?, Skinner?, Livingstone?, Abbott? - to be a new standard-bearer. What it will not do is persuade any of the Trot "big battalions" (SWP, Militant Labour, Socialist Organiser, Workers Power etc.) to abandon their efforts to maximise the Labour vote.

## Clause 4

Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution was inserted by the Fabians when the party reorganised itself in 1918. It was intentionally drawn up to divert the emerging radicalism inspired by the Russian Revolution. It also ensured that the left of the party could have a token to cling to despite the commitment of the party as a whole to the preservation of the capitalist state and the imperialist framework.

The current version of the clause reads ***To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.***

Just as was intended, the clause represents a vision of a paternalistic state socialism entirely within the social-democratic parliamentary tradition. Its value as a totem for the left is based around the presentation of state capitalist measures - nationalised industries, powerful national and local state apparatuses, social provision within capitalism etc. - as being equivalent to, or at least a major step towards, socialism. That belief in the benefits of state socialism has been the cornerstone of successive generations of the Labour left including the followers of Lansbury, Attlee, Bevan, Wilson, Benn et al.

The fact that the Labour establishment is seeking to shed Clause 4 is symbolic of their attempts to shed the "S" word ("Socialism") from their vocabulary and image. Their belief that they will be able to carry out their plan reflects the current weakness of the state capitalist left within the Labour Party. That weakness in turn reflects changes in the structure of the working class in which communities based around large scale units of production (factories, mines, shipyards etc.) have been replaced by far smaller workplaces and much more diffuse and less well-defining working methods.

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# Queen's Speech/Budget Another Cynical Attack on the Working Class

The return of Parliament has meant that the capitalists' class war against the working class is once again in full swing. Forget diversions like Tory antics over Europe. The real issue is the continuing offensive against an increasingly fragmented working class. Most of what Clark said in his Budget had already been stated in the Queen's Speech. Clark added the extra hypocrisy of pretending to do something for the unemployed when in reality the aim is to cut state spending and turn the UK into Europe's low wage economy.

## Hitting the Unemployed

One of the major proposals is the introduction of the 'job seekers allowance'. The state can no longer pretend that unemployment benefit is an insurance scheme. It is now to be replaced with an 'incentive' scheme which will merge Unemployment Benefit and Income Support, making people "actively seek work", in other words take low paid, dirty or dangerous jobs or else they'll lose their benefits. It will also reduce the length of time unemployment benefits are paid from one year to 6 months. The Tories are supported in peddling the myth of the scrounging lazy worker by Tony Blair who is also anxious to attack "Welfare Dependency". In fact the Labour Party is just as keen as the Tories to shift blame for the current economic mess onto the working class. The most important truth they need to hide is that capitalism has no solutions to its own crisis and so has no alternative than to attack workers more and more viciously. The unemployed are always a favourite choice because the state cannot maintain the levels of spending necessary to give them even the minimum on which to survive but it also knows they are the weakest sector of the working class and so are least able to hit back. The measures outlined in the Queen's speech will save the state £20 millions per annum by cuts in benefits. As a result 90,000 workers will lose benefits completely and a further 150,000 people will be means tested. Young workers will be hit by a 20% cut in benefits.

The idea of making unemployed workers "actively seek work" before they can get benefits is already happening now. In August Portillo issued instructions to Job centres doubling their

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## Labour

As the class has changed and as the individual membership of the party has shifted towards the newer younger workers the traditional identity with paternalist state capitalism and all its paraphernalia (Trades Union bosses sitting at No 10 while their members were stitched up) has become an embarrassment which can be abandoned. The speed with which it can be abandoned will, of course, increase if that will help Blair, Prescott (the choice of the Left !!) and their other chums to get their snouts further into the Parliamentary trough.

## Clause 4 - The Update

The Labour Party is frantically consulting to find a form of words to replace its traditional mantra. Instead of reaching into the U.S. Democratic Party's phrase book - after all the slogans didn't do Bill Clinton much good in November - they might try telling the truth at last. Why not try

***To secure for the bosses' class both in Britain and elsewhere the fruits of the toil of the world's workers, and the assurance of their permanent enjoyment thereof, using exploitation, warfare and oppression as required, by providing the alternative party of government particularly dragging the working class into the mystifications and spectacles of bourgeois democracy and permanently trumpeting the impossibility of a revolutionary alternative.***

Not only would the tenor of the Webbs' original be preserved but it would also be a whole lot more truthful !**KT**

targets for the number of people to have their benefits cut for failing to actively seek work, from 69,000 to 135,000. Attacks on the 'work shy' come at a time when the number of full time jobs is falling due to employers need to cut labour costs and replace full-time jobs with badly paid and insecure part-time work. Last year the number of full-time jobs fell by 27,000 whilst the number of part-time posts rose by 183,000.

Attacks like this on the unemployed are also designed to push wages down generally and add to feelings of insecurity and fear. But don't worry because women workers will get equality once the retirement age is pushed up to 65. Cynics may point out that 60 is an equal age, but again the move comes without the merest mention of why the state cannot continue to pay out pensions to women over 60 after 2020. Surely this must have absolutely nothing to do with the fact the state has been dipping into the National Insurance fund for years to tide itself through the present crisis. The only problem is that the crisis has been going on for over 20 years now and the constant thieving by the state, if its true levels ever do come to light, will make Maxwell look like a schoolboy shoplifter.

## "Care" in the Community?

Another idea heralded as a great leap forward is Care in the Community. Rather than being dependent on institutions (ie receive care which has become too expensive) the elderly, mentally ill or anyone else unlucky enough to need help but isn't rich enough to pay for it can now be cared for in the community. There are only two small flaws with this plan. One, there is often not even the money to deliver the very basic of

care needs, even for those who do qualify for help, and two, there very often is no real community either. Community Care is a frightening example of how bad things really are. Originally designed as a way of cutting down the states responsibility for those who need care by either getting relatives to do it for a fraction of the price (if not for free) or by dumping people into society with a care package, community care has now reached low depths. Many local authorities are now unable to cope with the increasing needs of an aging population or with the increasing mental illnesses which are emerging from the day to day grind and despair facing millions of workers. Although there is clear evidence of a link between poverty and ill health, both mental and physical, there is not even the most basic cover provided with community care. In the past few weeks six local authorities have made public the crisis in Community Care funding. Gloucestershire County Council is currently £1million in the red and says it cannot cope with the growing number of new cases it is getting. The lack of funding led to a demo by 100 elderly and disabled people protesting at County Hall.

## Their "Choice" ... and Ours

The idea of choice is one often used by the ruling class when there really is very little choice at all. Unless you have the money for private health care your choices are severely limited. Likewise the choice for schools to opt-out of local authority control hides the fact that education now gets a 10% lower budget than it did a decade ago. Local management, in effect, has not led to a greater choice for pupils or parents, let alone for teachers, but has been a way of managing cuts at the local level.

'Choice' also goes hand in hand with the idea of the free market which is the ideology behind privatisation. It is only an ideology since it has no roots in reality. Privatisation has not taken

us back to laissez-faire capitalism, but has been the method by which the state has been able to release large amounts of capital whilst at the same time releasing itself from the burden of investment. It has also proven an invaluable way for the ruling class to make personal fortunes at the expense of the rest of us. Rather than leading to a 'share holding democracy' promised by the propaganda of the day, the exact opposite has happened in reality. In the early 1960's individuals owned 60% of shares and the institutions owned 28%. Institutions now own 61% and individuals own 21%. Prices are now inflated to take into account the need for shareholders profits and the inflated salaries of top managers. Whilst British Gas announced it was to give its chief executive a pay rise of 75%, some 25,000 workers are set to lose their jobs at British Gas on top of the 7,000 sacked earlier this year alone. Privatisation gives the "consumer" the choice between paying inflated bills or having the service disconnected. It gives workers in the industries the choice between worse working conditions or the sack in the name of productivity and it gives the bosses the difficult choice of how much they should pay themselves and when to cash in on their cut price shares.

## Another recovery "soon"

The lie that capitalism can solve its economic crisis continues, even in the face of plans to cut £5 billions from the public sector borrowing requirement (which is expected to reach £263 billions next year) with social security and housing facing the biggest cuts. The reasons for and daily effects of the global economic crisis are glossed over with the phrase "a lack of consumer confidence", and the whole thing is boiled to to the simple fact that we don't go shopping enough. There are a few reasons why workers may not be able to oblige in becoming model consumers:

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# The Sham Peace in the Middle East Means More Misery for the Working Class

There comes a stage in all "national liberation struggles" when the so called liberator becomes the oppressor. This has nothing to do with human nature but everything to do with the nature of the world domination of capitalist production characterised by imperialism.

The 18th of November massacre in Gaza City when Arafat's police fired into a demonstration, killing 15 and injuring 200 was an entirely predictable and grim reminder of the bankruptcy of national liberation in this period of the development of capitalism. Only a few months before the establishment of Palestinian autonomy in Gaza we wrote in ***Workers Voice*** that its main purpose was

***to establish a Palestinian entity which will exercise control over the seething social discontent in this area.***

Arafat is aware that he has no chance of extending the Gaza-Jericho micro state unless he can demonstrate an ability to keep order. The injunction to smash Hamas and other anti-western groups has been clearly spelt out as one would expect by Israel but also by the head of western imperialism, U.S. President Clinton who recently told Arafat to "combat terrorism, especially Hamas".

On the face of it the November 18th incident was another ugly squabble between two bourgeois organisations, the PLO and Hamas. However the reality is somewhat more complicated. Since the granting of autonomy the already desperate situation of the Palestinian working class has worsened. Israel has sealed its borders with the autonomous areas creating more unemployment amongst the many workers who used to work within Israel. What minimal public services were previously provided by the Israeli occupation have been transferred to the Palestine National Authority which has no financial resources to run them. Furthermore the promised western "aid" for the Gaza strip has failed to materialise.

Only \$140 millions out of a promised \$700 millions of aid has been distributed. In addition the Israeli state has refused to hand over customs revenues worth \$10-15 millions a month as well as holding back the VAT payments it promised to the Palestinians in the original "peace accord". The Palestinian authority budget is a farce. Expenditure is \$234 millions (about an eighth of it on the police) for the first six months whilst tax revenues amount only to \$77 millions.

The economic misery resulting from these policies is cynically manipulated by Hamas and other Islamic groups who present their own capitalist interests in an anti-imperialist guise. The mosque often provides the only source of social welfare so it is not surprising that the Islamic groups command considerable support amongst a desperate population. However it is apparent that the demonstrators against Arafat were not just Islamic militants but included a proletarian element venting their anger against the economic misery of life for the working class in Gaza. As one observer (quoted in *The Independent*) said:

***It was ordinary people who threw stones. It was not just Hamas and Jihad, it was people with no money and no jobs.***

It is not surprising that Arafat and his millionaire cronies do not have the interests of the working class as a priority on their agenda. Instead they will do the bidding of their imperialist masters and ensure that they are the beneficiaries of any western capital which may be invested in the area. This is the classic pattern of "national liberation" in this epoch. The "liberated" states simply do not have the capability to generate enough surplus internally to finance any significant economic development. Capital can only be attracted where the local bourgeoisie are in a position to guarantee the "peaceful" super exploitation of the working class. This means whipping the class into line by brutal state repression and starvation wages whilst the ruling

elites are well rewarded for their services to imperialism. It is for this reason that communists say workers have nothing to gain from participating in national struggles as the result will just be the substitution of one set of bosses for another. The continuing misery of the Palestinian proletariat underlines this essential truth.

Whilst Arafat shoots down workers in Gaza, the Israelis continue their state terror in the occupied territories, imposing curfews and collective punishments. The Israeli army sends troops into southern Lebanon and civilians on both sides are killed in rocket and bomb attacks. This is apparently what the bourgeoisie call the "peace process".

Now, with no option but to bow to US demands in the area reluctant Arab states are being forced to recognise Israel. Jordan signed a deal in October supervised by the US President himself. In return for further undermining the Palestinians in Jordan, King Hussein will be able to do a deal with Israel over water resources in the Jordan Valley which the Israelis control. A totally isolated Syrian regime is now holding out for a few more miles of territory in the Golan Heights before it signs up to the peace which would complete the jigsaw of US total control in the Middle East.

But any "peace" that is achieved it is only it is likely to be fragile in the extreme, as all imperialist deals are. The main victims will be the working class in all countries who will find further massive exploitation will follow. It is necessary for class conscious workers to organise against the national interests of the bourgeoisie and put forward the international interests of the working class. Only generalised class struggle can challenge the murderous policies of imperialism and pave the way for a world economy based on production for need rather than profit.**PBD**



# Why Internationalists Don't Support the Castro Regime

The leftist pro-Castro lobby is once again whipping up sympathy for the beleaguered island of Cuba. The collapse of the USSR and its Eastern European satellites has brought disaster for the Castro regime. Since 1989 the US under both Bush and Clinton have turned up the pressure by trying to further extend Cuban isolation. Their aim is quite clear. To destroy the last bastion of "communism" and one that is particularly annoying for the US ruling class since it is on the doorstep of the USA. The results of the US embargo (which has existed now for almost 35 years) have intensified since 1989. The rations which Cubans now receive are pathetic covering only 40% of basic necessities and health levels, once the proudest achievement of the Cuban regime, are now declining rapidly. According to UNICEF half of all children between the ages of 6 and 12 are anaemic. Wages in real terms now average out at just over £1.20 a month. However this should not disguise the fact that for the last decade the situation was getting worse in Cuba and that the major factor in its present crisis is not the US blockade but the loss of its imperialist godfather, the USSR.

This fact underlines our case, made often enough over the last twenty years, that regimes like Castro's are not "socialist" but state capitalist. For Marx communism, or socialism, could only come about from a society of material abundance. In it goods would be distributed on the principle of "from each according to his ability to each according to need". This is hardly the scenario in Cuba where distribution takes places on the basis of scarcity. Furthermore wage labour still exists in Cuba. Marx identified exploitation of wage labour as the most essential aspect in the existence of the capitalist mode of production. Leftists have taken refuge in the view that if the state becomes the owner of the means of production that this is also a step towards socialism. But as Engels wrote a century ago, *...the transformation ... into state ownership does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces ... The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine ... The workers remain wage labourers .. The capitalist relation is not done away with.* (Anti-Duhring pp.329-30)

Nationalisations, then, do not represent a step towards real socialism however "progressive" they may appear in relation to what existed before or in comparison with the more extreme examples of capitalist barbarism to be found in much of Latin America. Such definitions of "progress" have been used for most of this century by both social democrats and Stalinists to get workers to support the very welfare reforms and nationalisations which bind them ever more tightly to the capitalist state. On the basis of such ideas we would be deluding workers that the welfare state is a step towards socialism when in fact it has been paid for by taxing the surplus value that they themselves produced. Welfarism has both ideologically and materially helped to prolong capitalism. In no way is it a step towards its overthrow. Improved living conditions under capitalism are not stepping stones to socialism but capitalist bulwarks against the revival of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. And, as we know to our cost, they are abandoned as soon as the capitalists no longer fear the working class' collective consciousness.

## A Real Revolution

Such a revolutionary collective consciousness was achieved in the struggles throughout the world at the end of the First World War. Even in places as far apart as Winnipeg, Seattle, and Lima in 1919 there were echoes of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism and

war. Of course the most shining example was the Russian Revolution. The October Revolution, despite all the lies heaped on it by the capitalist ideologues of all colours, was the first and only successful takeover of political power by the working class. However taking over political power and transforming the basis of society are not the same thing. The war that imperialism launched against the young Soviet Republic was enough to wipe out any hopes of a real transformation of society. With more than a third of the proletariat dying in that so-called civil war in Russia hopes of a socialist society were crushed. Although the Communist Party won the war it had ceased to have an active, mass proletarian base by 1921. At the same time international revolutionary movements elsewhere were either crushed or succumbed to capitalist ideology.

No socialist thinker before 1917 had ever considered the prospects of a proletarian victory in a world surrounded by hostile imperialist powers. Over the next six decades this led to all kinds of debates between revolutionaries about the nature of the mode of production in the USSR. Our predecessors in the Communist Left concluded before the Second World War that the USSR was fundamentally state capitalist. This was on the basis that all the categories of capitalism still existed. Wage labour created commodities which were alienated from it by a class which disposed of the surplus product and enjoyed the privileges of that surplus product. An internal market existed which governed the relations between the different sectors of the economy even though this was distorted by the state (a fact which was also happening increasingly in the capitalism of the West). Yet, although it was important to have such a debate about the USSR - since, despite its capitalist relations it had emerged from the failure of a genuine workers' revolution - the same cannot be said of the Castro regime in Cuba.

## 1959 and All That From Nationalism to Stalinism

Castro began as a typical Latin American nationalist (and in many respects this remains the one consistent thread in his subsequent political odyssey). In 1952 he was a young lawyer standing as a candidate for the Ortodoxo Party when Fulgencio Batista carried out yet another coup d'état and annulled the elections. Castro's political ambitions (as well as his financial future) received a severe jolt. His response was to organise an attack on the Moncada barracks in Cuba's second city, Santiago, on 26th July 1953. Seventy of Castro's followers were brutally killed in the fiasco which followed but Castro was able to use his lawyers' training to turn his trial into an indictment of the regime. He was let off lightly and amnestied after a year but his speech "History Will Absolve Me" was later printed. It is the manifesto of a liberal democrat with a social conscience. It calls only for a minor land reform, expropriation of the property of the corrupt and for profit-sharing. These are the nearest he gets to any idea of socialism and most of these ideas were already to be found in the Cuban Constitution of 1940 (which existed merely on paper and which Castro wished to restore). However it was also a fundamentally anti-working class document which called on workers to abandon class solidarity in favour of nationalism. He said that the Cuban worker

*.. should not be alien to the fatherland's sorrows and should abandon his class isolation and negative passivity.*

He further stated his intentions after gaining power. On a visit to the USA in May 1959 he announced

*I have clearly and definitively stated that we are not communists ... The gates are open for private investment that contributes to the development of Cuba.*

Castro then did not have a "socialist" programme nor was he in anyway a Stalinist fellow-traveller as the US State Department subsequently tried to maintain. Relations with the Cuban Communist Party were mutually hostile. The Stalinists accurately denounced him as "a petty bourgeois putschist" whilst he, with equal accuracy, pointed out that two CCP members had been in Batista's Government (before Batista subsequently dissolved the CCP trades unions and set up his own mafia-style organisations when the Cold War started).

But if Castro was neither programmatically a



"No meat today", Empty shops - "The Cuban Way" of implementing austerity.

communist nor a sympathiser with Stalinism the way in which he came to power owed even less to socialism. If socialism is the product of the self-conscious movement of the majority of the working class then Castro's victory was the clearest example of its antithesis. Why does the myth still persist then that Castro's Cuba is somehow socialist?

Castro's 26th July Movement was the first successful guerrilla movement in Latin American history. It spawned many imitators. Their whole strategy was based on the idea that the working class was useless and in fact that the bourgeoisie in Latin America should adopt a nationalist and anti-American programme. All this has been passed off as a valid road to socialism and was theoretically justified in the works of Che Guevara. This is Marxist only in the Grouchoist sense of the word. But it is not a laughable issue since the illusions continue. They largely persist for two reasons. The first is that the Castro regime proclaimed itself to be "socialist" and carried out social reforms in a country where the disparity of income between rich and poor was obscene even by Latin American standards. The second is that the USA's implacable hostility to any reformist regime which attempts to mitigate the worst effects of multi-national imperialism within its own borders naturally provokes a reaction of sympathy amongst those who feel themselves to be the victims of the most powerful imperialism of the century. The myth of Cuban socialism was thus born in the USA.

## The Making of "Communism" in Cuba

In the dying days of the Batista dictatorship, the then Vice-President of the United States, Richard Nixon visited Havana. He reported to Eisenhower that the majority of Cubans were hostile to Batista but that he was "remarkable", "a master politician" and "a friend of the United States" who admires "the American way of life and believes in free enterprise". It was on this basis that the USA looked with suspicion on a guerrilla movement which the CIA had judged as too

weak to be a real threat but which was not a proven friend of the US. It should not be forgotten that the USA had intervened militarily four times in Cuban history already and as recently as 1954 they had overthrown the reformist regime of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. In 1959 Castro was to commit the same sin as Arbenz. He authorised a land reform. This land reform was less radical and wide-ranging than that carried out by the US administration in both Japan and the Philippines after World War Two but the issue then had not involved US-owned land. It was the fact that the landholdings were US-owned that led Eisenhower to suspend all aid to Cuba. The tension mounted throughout 1959 and 1960. Castro offered to compensate the US multinationals but Eisenhower demanded this to be paid instantly - a condition which the penniless Cuban Treasury could not possibly meet.

With the US increasingly tightening the embargo on Cuba, Castro turned elsewhere for necessities. In 1960 the USSR sold a small quantity of crude oil to the regime but the US-owned oil refineries refused to refine it. The gauntlet had now been thrown down. As well as arming a series of raids by ex-Batista supporters the US were now paralysing economic activity. Castro was now faced with a historic choice. Given his declared intention to industrialise Cuba the result was a foregone conclusion. US arrogance and stupidity (as the recently published State Department documents make clear) forced Castro to turn to the USSR.

## Anti-imperialism or Changing Masters?

This was presented at the time and has been presented ever since as an anti-imperialist move. It was not. What Cuba did was to exchange one imperialist master for another. Castro tried to avoid the consequences of this new dependency but it is impossible to ignore the material demands of the real situation. After the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, Castro was forced to turn more and more to the USSR. Not surprisingly he declared himself to be a "Marxist-Leninist" in December that year. At this point he let the sugar industry, the symbol of Cuban dependency, decline as he tried to promote economic diversification without the necessary capital. Growth rates plummeted. At the same time Castro also felt betrayed when the Politburo in Moscow forced Khrushchev to back down in the missile crisis of October 1962. He now turned to the Chinese for support. However China was not a leading imperialist power in the sense that it controlled an economic bloc. After 5 years Castro was forced to return to the USSR. The sign of Castro's submission was his support for the USSR's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. This dented Castro's independent revolutionary image amongst the Western European fellow-travellers of the Stalinists (like Jean-Paul Sartre etc) but it underlined a much more fundamental economic submission.

The USSR now provided a massive secure market for Cuban sugar, as much as could be produced. The USSR stated that it would buy all the Cuban sugar harvest (zafra) up to 8.5 million tons. Even in the post-war boom Cuba had never produced more than 7.3 million tons. Now, against everything that Castro had ever preached, increased sugar production was claimed to be the path to economic liberation. The zafra rose higher and higher and reached 8.6 million tons in 1970. This in itself was a failure since the target was 10 millions and the cost of the 1970 effort not only ruined other sectors of the economy but told on future years. What it meant was that Cuba remained as sugar dependent as ever and the whole reform

*continued on back page*



*The opening of China to the world is like the discovery of a new continent.*

Prof. Tong Dahin, Vice chairman of the Chinese Society for Research on Restructuring the Economic System.

Many in the West see the reform process, the 'opening of China', as something of a saviour. In the face of the ongoing crisis of capitalism, the decline of world trade, the lack of sufficiently profitable markets for capital investment, the decline in foreign markets for goods, China has appeared to be an answer for western capitalists. For the Chinese, 'to be rich is glorious' (Deng Xiaoping's infamous statement) has brought a smile to the lips of those with the capacity to do something about it. Hence, those taking advantage of Deng's pronouncement have been the bureaucrats, managers and party officials, even the army officer class, a bureaucratic boss class becoming a profit-taking bourgeoisie. There is though the opposite side of the coin - the growth of unemployment, and continuing and growing poverty (particularly in the non-coastal provinces).

### Groping for Stones

'Groping for stones to cross a river' was how the outset of the reform process was described. It began in 1979, the effective end of the 'iron rice bowl'. From that time we have seen both huge changes and huge growth, but that change can be described as incremental, a step by step approach rather than the big bang elsewhere. However, it has become less a process of groping for stones and rather more a carefully considered capitalist programme.

Prior to those initial reforms, China was not, though, an example of socialism. It was and it remains state capitalist. The 'iron rice bowl' was still a wage relation. The economy was commodity and capital based, profits were taken, exploitation enforced, under the command of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and its appendage the state bureaucracy. The law of value reigned. It matters not that various things were subsidised, various things assured, even that there appeared to be a popular voice in some matters. (See **Workers Voice 49**, p.7)

The early days, some of which were presided over by the so-called 'arch-stalinist' Chen Yun, saw a limited series of 'reforms'. The outward appearance may have changed, but the content, the fact of exploitation, remains in place. The problematic agricultural sector was overhauled, land being returned to private ownership, productivity increasing at the same time. Small proprietors and rural workers were conned into working harder believing they had something to gain. The green and white ticket system of IOU's were used to pay rural producers. Certainly on two occasions there have been riots following the state's refusal to exchange these for cash after the cash allocated was spent elsewhere, often on prestige building projects. The food producers, be they rural proletarians or small-scale proprietors, have effectively been told - let them eat green tickets!

### Growth

**By 1992, foreign trade had risen to \$166 billion, signifying that China had moved from autarky to being one of the world's major trading powers.**

W H Overholt. China: the next economic superpower.

Indeed, China is now the eleventh largest exporter in the world economy. From the early period of 'reform' small to medium light industry was given priority, whereby relatively little investment would stimulate huge growth. Consequently, China followed the earlier example of Hong Kong and Taiwan, exporting a flood of textiles, garments, shoes, consumer electronics and the like, throughout the 80s. In 1979 Chinese exports were worth \$14.8 billion, by 1992 they were \$85 billion, more than three quarters of which were manufactures. In 1977 China had 0.6% of world trade, in 1993 2.5%.

In addition to state funded investment China has opened up to increasing quantities of direct foreign investment. China attracted around one third of all foreign direct investment going to 'developing countries' in 1993. From 1979 to 1991 over \$20 billion had been attracted, in 1992 \$11.2 billion with a further \$57.5 billion agreed, in 1993 \$21.3 billion. Much of this has been concentrated in Special Economic Zones. Korean and other investment going to Taijin, Taiwanese

# China - the lie of the socialist market

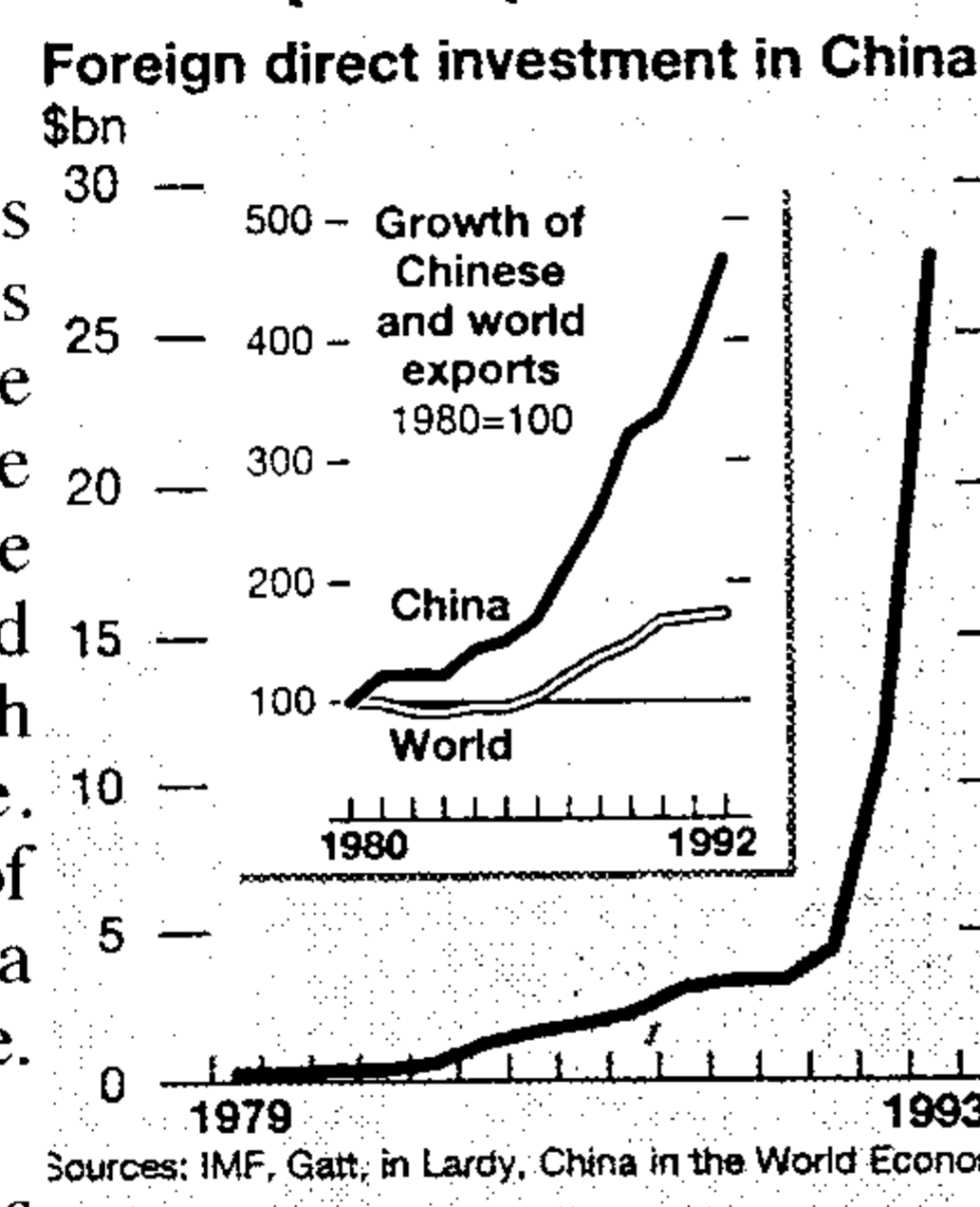
investment to Fujian and then a link between Hong Kong and Guangdong.

### The Overheating Economy

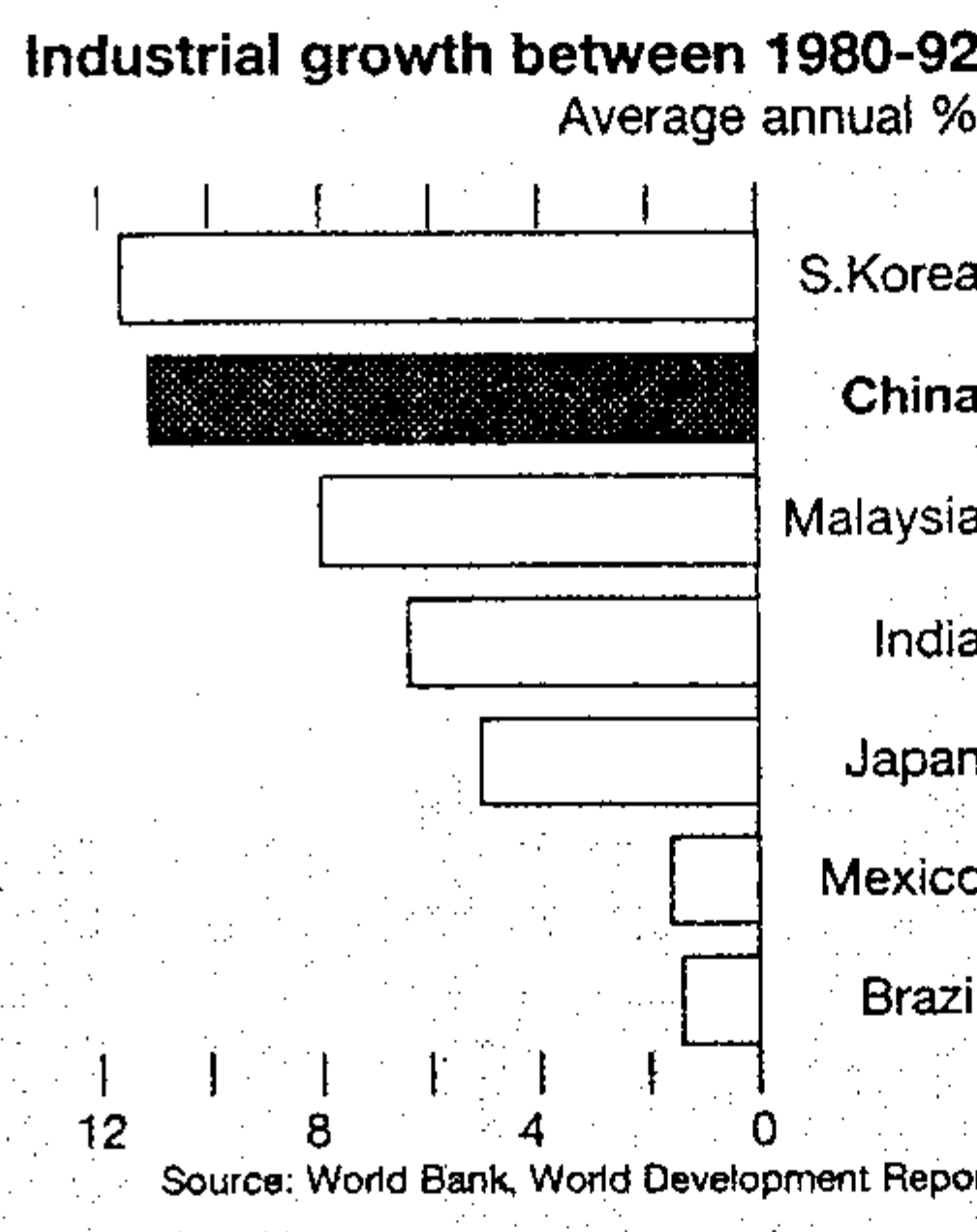
All of this has fuelled huge growth in comparison to the rest of the world's 2-4%. In July 1993 Zhu Rongji was appointed overseer of the economy while the governor of the Central Bank was scapegoated for the run away economy. The cheap labour of China had attracted foreign

Deng Xiaoping's now infamous southern trip, where he advocated the setting up of Special Economic Zones, as a way forward to attract and utilise foreign investment, caused great problems. Both coastal and inland areas took this to heart and thousands were set up, often illegally. In the case of the coastal region this has become a sort of return to the era of the treaty ports in the nineteenth century. On the one hand the process of decentralisation has allowed provincial officials set up their own effective fiefdoms, often ignoring central government. On the other hand it spells a return to the ruthless exploitation of Chinese workers by an unfettered imperialism as also happened in the era of the treaty ports.

### China opens up . . .



### and grows quickly



investment but those wages sought an outlet in goods and services. Alongside the sometimes haphazard price reforms, allowing selected prices to achieve a 'market level' after being centrally controlled, inflation has become rampant. All of this had political repercussions.

Deng has balanced two factions within the CPC over the past few years. He has completely sidelined the 'reforming Stalinists' such as Chen Yun who had wanted only marginal change, and Li Peng and Zhu Rongji have been brought into power. Li Peng heads those termed the 'bureaucratic socialists', looking for slow and very steady change, letting little power slip from party grasp. Hence at the March 1993 National People's Congress:

***economic development is the centre of our work...social stability, in turn, is an indispensable prerequisite for economic development and smooth progress in reform....The corrupt practices of a few government functionaries... have impaired the close ties between government and people.***

Zhu Rongji, a follower of Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang (the darlings of the student democracy movement).

The 'modernisers', have looked to very rapid change, risking high inflation, unrest and so on. This is the faction which suffered a forced retreat after previous periods of inflation and unrest as in 1988-9, culminating in Tienanmen. Hence: ***China is aiming for fast, healthy and sustained economic growth, and if the rate of growth was forced down artificially it would cause social instability.***

In July 1993 the state attempted a variety of austerity measures. They tried to take \$20 billion out of the economy, bringing in price controls, reforming the tax system and banking laws. Their major means of success, though, has been the creation of a bond market. The promise of up to 6% above the rate of inflation in interest has mopped up large amounts of excess cash. Coupled with the high savings rate, this lessens the pressure of inflation and continues to supply the state with capital, continuing and expanding the state's capacity to exploit Chinese workers.

### Problems

The Chinese state is not the success story western capitalists try to make out. The lid has only barely been kept on a number of potentially explosive situations. In addition it does not always have the control of the economy it might wish.

The form of industrial development itself strained a vulnerable infrastructure. The huge growth of light industry made demands which power generation, for example, could not supply. Blackouts became a regular occurrence, hence the import of US electricity generation and transmission equipment (21% of US exports to China in 1993).

Socially and politically there are increasing tensions within Chinese society. With the new 'socialist market economy' has come a welter of problems - triads, drugs, religious sects, minority nationalisms, dissident democrats etc.

Whereas for some workers jobs have been created, wages have risen, and a consumer society encouraged, this has not meant well-being for the majority. The unemployment rate has rocketed as state operated enterprises have either closed or shed excess workers to become competitive alongside foreign joint ventures. Millions have left the land, often fleeing abject poverty (monthly earnings of less than £1 per month). There are around 200 million 'mangliu', people roaming the country seeking work, often from the inland provinces some have found temporary work in the cities and the coastal region, many have not and so starve.

### China and the World

China is currently being courted by the west, particularly concerning its membership of GATT now the World Trade Organisation. Many in the West want China to become a founding member of the WTO. The Chinese leadership are resisting too hasty an entry looking for a lengthy period of transition and/or concessions. The West are particularly looking to end the endemic intellectual piracy in China (which the leadership has at least partially promised to curb), the freeing of markets in services and the termination of a whole array of tariffs and other barriers to western goods. Western capitalism is seeking a swift penetration of Chinese markets before the Chinese themselves can create their own formations to effectively compete with the better backed foreign competitors. The West (in which we include Japan) is thus looking to enforce its imperialist advantage and capture as much as it can of a large and ripe market.

### Another False Capitalist Promise

In all of this the Chinese working class faces ongoing and increased exploitation. For 40 years they have been conned into thinking that one final great leap forward, one last sacrifice, would bring them to 'socialism'. Now they are asked to ignore the increasing numbers of unemployed in the hope that the 'socialist

market economy' will bring better living standards. The opposition to Deng offers even less. The supposed taking on board of workers and economic issues by the 'democracy movement' is a blind alley. They are still largely tied to ideas derived from Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang and comprise social layers centred upon the students and intellectuals. They can offer only bourgeois democracy and reinforce class society. If Western (and especially US) pressure bring them to power they will blight more than the 200 millions already homeless and destitute.

There will be no progress for the Chinese proletariat until it realises that the radical leftist nationalism of the Mao era bears no relation whatsoever to socialism, that the 'socialist market economy' has nothing to offer them apart from exploitation and misery, that any gains are illusory and false. That will bear fruit only when they can unite around a proletarian internationalist programme, for a world without wage labour, without exploitation, where production is for use and has nothing to do with 'competitiveness' but looks to fulfil human needs. **Clastre.**

*continued from front page*

## The Break-Up of the Old World Order

increasingly vocal Russian Government have won this round in Bosnia the US still holds most of the cards. The prospect of its much weaker rivals significantly grouping into a new alliance are at present remote. Not only are they relatively much weaker but they also share some interests with the US in different struggles around the world (e.g. the British line up with the US against the French in Rwanda, whilst Russia, the US and Germany are opposed by Britain and France in the Ukraine). As the December Budapest Conference on the prospects for a new security order throughout the world looms the signs are that the increasingly aggressive policy of the US is beginning to alter the picture. The stagnating EC looks like gaining new life from US arrogance (the appointment of Hans van den Broek as EC Commissioner for integrating Eastern Europe is an example of this). At the same time the Western European Union (unheard of during the Cold War) has re-emerged to become a focus of anti-US action. Its 'revival', according to *The Financial Times* expresses a need for common European action from which the US is absent. A view expressed also by the French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe

***The conflict in Bosnia has shown the necessity to move beyond Nato and American guarantees...***

### The End of the NATO Alliance?

What the recent events in Iraq and Bosnia have made clear is that European capitalism can no longer rely on the US to defend its interests. After the so-called Iraqi 'invasion scare' in October, Major and Balladur met in Chartres. The agenda wasn't about how to hide the corruption of their governments but how to set up an Anglo-French project to launch their own spy satellites so that they would no longer be dependent on the USA for intelligence gathering and have to rely on US information before determining their own policies.

Bosnia further underlines European military dependence after forty years of the Cold War. When the US pulled out of enforcing the arms embargo the inability of Europe to have adequate electronic intelligence, to run a command system or even to have adequate air and sea transport to maintain the embargo was further underlined. A single British aircraft carrier (HMS Invincible) is all that the Europeans have to replace the US control system. It is not surprising that the present British Government, deeply-divided over whether to be pro-Europe or pro-US, has said little on all this. It has been left to the opposition defence spokesman to point out that

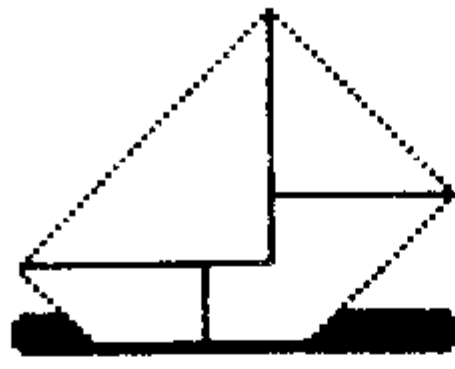
***...American action reveals the need to enhance Europe's own defence effort.***

It is a message echoed by the leading European powers. It means that the events of this late autumn have laid bare the crisis within the old NATO alliance. With a more nationalist Congress now installed on Capitol Hill and a continuing stagnation in the world economy the prospects for more catastrophes to be visited on humanity by the further manoeuvres of imperialism are inevitable. **JD**



# Letters

should be addressed to the CWO  
PO Box 338, Sheffield S3 9YX



*Political debate and discussion are the lifeblood of any organisation which wishes to be part of the formation of a revolutionary class consciousness. Workers' Voice appeals to all readers to become an active part of that process by sending in their comments and criticisms. All will be printed (with initials only) and where necessary replies furnished. We ask that letter be no more than 2 sides of A4 (longer than this and we reserve the right to edit them) and priority will be given to those which are sent on disk (AppleMac or ASCII formats).*

## Big Brother's National Lottery

Dear WV,

I am not generally a great admirer of George Orwell. Politically, he represents the usual mish-mash of British radical Social Democracy - opposition to Stalinism combined with a commitment to state socialism, "anti-imperialism" paired with support for the Second World War etc. etc. I thought that your readers may nevertheless be mildly amused by the following extract from "1984". It reads very much like the real agenda behind the latest state-sponsored spectacle.

*The Lottery, with its weekly pay-out of enormous prizes, was the one public event* Yours  
W Smith

**We publish below a further letter on Socialism and Parliament from a member of the Socialist Party. In WV 74 we replied to a letter on this theme and although this letter covers some of the same ground we are printing it in full including the gratuitous invective. The letter represents the first attempt to date by the SP to respond to the arguments we have raised concerning the consciousness of the working class under capitalism. We would welcome further letters on this issue.**

## SOCIALISM AND PARLIAMENT

Dear WV

I'm not sure whether your piece about the Socialist Party in WV73 was a celebration of irony or an exercise in dogmatic sectarian prejudice. Despite titling the article "A report on meetings with the Socialist Party", you gave no details whatsoever of the proceedings of those meetings and instead chose to devote almost two whole columns to distorting our political position.

It is a caricature of our conception of social revolution to imply that we say class consciousness results entirely from Socialist Party propaganda activities, and that all the proletariat have to do is put Xs on ballot papers and the Party will do the rest; even a cursory glance at our Declaration of Principles reveals that we hold the emancipation of the working class to be the work of that class itself. It is not the majority vote that we believe will overturn capitalism, but the majority of class conscious workers that vote presupposes. The point of voting for socialism is to strip capitalism and its political representatives of every shred of legitimacy, and prevent the bourgeoisie from using democracy as a counter-revolutionary ideology.

There are only two arguments against this tactic and both of them are elitist. The first is rooted in the anarchist dogma that workers do not have the moral stamina to withstand the alleged corrupting effects of bourgeois institutions and therefore should not dabble in bourgeois politics. The second is rooted in the Leninist dogma that workers are too stupid to understand what socialism is and therefore cannot be expected to vote for it in the first place.

It is ironic that you support this elitist filth with the assertion that "historically capitalism did not grant the working class the vote until it could guarantee the election results would not be anti-capitalist" - ironic because in the paragraph preceding this rubbish you accuse the socialist party of lacking any understanding of working class history. The fact that the vote was not granted but fought for and captured seems to have escaped you. In this country over two hundred years of bloody class struggle, from the Levellers to the Chartists and beyond, preceded working class suffrage.

Nor can capitalism ever guarantee that election results will never be anti-capitalist. True there are a number of tendencies keeping the balance in its favour, such as the illusion of choice created by the conflicting policies of the various factions of capitalism's political machine, and the

*to which the proles paid serious attention. It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant. Where the Lottery was concerned, even people who could barely read and write seemed capable of intricate calculations and staggering feats of memory. There was a whole tribe of men who made a living simply by selling systems, forecasts, and lucky amulets.*

tendency of the extreme left wing of this machine to act as a safety valve on the system by attracting dissenters and either telling them to vote for one of the big parties (with no illusions) or, like yourselves, telling them not to use the electoral system at all.

The confusion that leads you to objectively support capitalist domination seems to stem from a misunderstanding of Marx's assertion that "in every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas", together with an irrational fear of the media. Marx did not mean that the ruling ideas are the only ideas, or even that they are always the most widely held. The ruling ideas are those that inform social praxis and justify it after the fact, in other words:

**The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; they are "the conditions of existence of the ruling class .. ideally expressed in law, morality, etc.."** (German Ideology), i.e. they are the legal system and the value system.

Class societies, as you should be aware, move through two separate phases: an ascendant phase, in which the mode of production is historically necessary for the development of the productive forces; and a decadent phase, in which the further development of the productive forces becomes fettered by society's relations of production, making the continued existence of that mode of production historically gratuitous. In decadent society the value system that originated when the mode of production was historically necessary and progressive no longer corresponds to material reality hence a vacuum opens up which can only be filled by ideas that really do express material reality. The new ideas will not originate with the ruling class, who wish to maintain the conditions of their dominance, but with the oppressed class. Thus we find Marx referring to "the idea of the revolutionary tasks that material conditions dictate to an oppressed class," and "the existence of revolutionary ideas", which "presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class." (The German Ideology)

It is the reflection on a material reality that produces unemployment, war, environmental destruction, starvation amidst plenty, and all the other horrors of capitalism that creates revolutionary ideas and revolutionary socialists; the media cannot stop this development, merely delay it. The role of the Socialist Party in this process is to aid the growth of those ideas and to give them a political form, challenging the legitimacy of capitalism in the political arena.

This brings us to a further irony in your article (perhaps contradiction would be a better word); namely that you believe that the capitalist state will intervene militarily to counter any growth in support for socialism politically, but stand idly by while the proletariat form themselves into workers councils (under the direction of the CWO, presumably) and attempt to seize control of the means of production.

Contrary to what you assert, the Socialist party is well aware of the very real socio-historical phenomenon of workers councils (soviets) and has no doubt that this organisational form - the total direct democratisation of the processes of production and distribution in the workplace and community - will have a role to play in a socialist revolution. Unlike yourselves, we are also well aware of the fact that on every occasion so far that workers councils have appeared, they have been suppressed by the capitalist state - including the capitalist state established in Russia in 1917 by your Bolshevik role models. This is precisely why we maintain that the working class must unite consciously and politically to take the state out of the hands of the capitalist class. To attempt to do this by abstention from voting is absurd, to attempt to do it by insurrection you persistently allude to is suicidal; it can only be done by revolutionary use of formal bourgeois democracy by a socialist majority. When socialists are the majority they will predominate in all walks of life: in the centres of production and distribution, in the trade unions, even in the civil service and the armed forces. The capitalist class would therefore be denied the personnel, the material resources and a major ideological justification (defence of democracy) for staging a counter-revolution. Lest you be tempted to wheel out the example of Chile again it should be pointed out that in this instance there was no class conscious majority of socialists voting for social revolution, but merely a passive electorate voting for capitalist leaders; and it was the belief that those leaders might take Chile into the orbit of a rival capitalist power that prompted the US to back the 1973 coup.

The final irony in your piece is that despite showing yourselves to have a wholly inadequate grasp of Marxist materialism, little knowledge of working class history, a big old sectarian chip on your shoulder and absolutely no political sense, you then go on to describe the Socialist party as having nothing to offer the working class"! I shall continue to read Workers' Voice and ICR, partly because I like irony, and partly because I am confident that with a little more reflection on material reality the CWO might develop into an organisation that can make some contribution, however banal, to a socialist revolution.

Yours for socialism, IS

## CWO Reply

Dear IS

A response to many of your remarks about parliament and socialism is contained in our reply to an earlier letter from a member of the SP which we published in WV 74 and we refer you to this reply. We note that you say that capitalism will be overturned by the majority of class conscious workers and voting is a **tactic** to "strip the political representatives of the bourgeoisie of their legitimacy" as if this was the declared political position of the SP. This is not the case. The SP believes that it is **necessary** for workers to gain control of parliament, and this means it is **necessary** to vote in a majority of SP candidates in a bourgeois election. The purpose of this is to take over the bourgeois state and use its administrative machinery to abolish capitalism and establish socialism. This is not a tactic, it is an essential step in achieving socialism. Socialist Party publications are peppered with such statements. We refer you to *From Capitalism to Socialism* p.44, *The Socialist Party and War* p. 73, *Questions of the Day* p. 25 to name only a few. The reason you yourself advance for voting, apart from apparently contradicting SP positions, is itself contradictory. If the SP candidates, "the authentic representatives of the proletariat", stand on the same platform with the representatives of the bourgeoisie, debate with them and offer themselves for election alongside them, how on earth does this discredit them? This is equating yourselves with them. This is giving them legitimacy, not stripping them of

legitimacy! If the majority of the working class are conscious of their interests why should it be necessary to "strip the political representatives of the bourgeoisie of their legitimacy"? Surely a class conscious majority of workers will see them for what they are, the executive committee of the capitalists? Why this fear of the bourgeoisie using democracy as a counter revolutionary ideology when we have this class conscious majority of workers who permeate all sectors of society including the armed forces? It is the SP who never cease to ridicule the idea, put forward by the CWO, that the bourgeoisie will move militarily against a communist parliamentary majority as soon as their power is threatened. At the end of your letter you yourself ridicule the notion that the bourgeoisie could organise a coup, as happened in Chile, against a SP majority; yet at the beginning of the letter you claim voting is to neutralise such a possibility. How could the possibility of the bourgeoisie using democracy as a counter-revolutionary ideology ever exist when the SP is committed to coming to power through the means of bourgeois democracy. Is it perhaps that the SP no longer intends to establish socialism through the route of bourgeois democracy, as some though not other, members of the SP now seem to think? We are entitled to demand consistency in your arguments, and pose two simple questions to which we require unequivocal answers:-

- 1) Does the SP believe it is necessary to win a socialist majority within the bourgeois parliament in order to establish socialism? Yes or No?
- 2) Does the SP believe that socialism can be established by any route other than through a parliamentary majority of SP candidates?

If the answer to the first question is NO we request a statement saying that your previous position which you supported in the debates you conducted with us has been abandoned. We would also welcome some explanation of the new position.

There are not as you assert only two arguments for not participating in parliament. At the various debates with the SP the CWO has argued that parliament is the fig leaf covering the naked dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over society. Participation in parliament and in bourgeois elections gives credibility to the camouflage under which this dictatorship is concealed, in effect, it supports and so prolongs this dictatorship. We argued that the electoral charade by its very nature militates against the collective consciousness of the working class by splitting workers into individual citizens and demanding choices to be made on the basis of the isolated individual. It is thus a means of fracturing class consciousness and dissipating working class discontent - a means of heading off the revolutionary threat. Further we are correct in saying that the bourgeoisie granted the franchise. The reform acts of 1867 and 1884 were introduced by the bourgeoisie long after the Chartist movement had collapsed and when Disraeli et al. were entirely confident that the working class would have no real independent voice. Votes for women over 30 (as well as universal male suffrage for the first time) was introduced in 1918 to diffuse the revolutionary discontent sweeping Europe following the first world war and revolutionary movements in Russia and Germany. Whatever our ancestors hoped and thought in the nineteenth century, Parliamentary elections have been used and continue to be used as a weapon against the working class. We are not aware of any election where an anti-capitalist vote has been the slightest embarrassment to the capitalist class and this includes the recent elections to the European parliament. This is because elections produce pro-capitalist results which as we have repeatedly explained to you is because the ideology of the bourgeoisie is the dominant ideology in capitalist society.

### Consciousness

When Marx says that the ruling ideas are in every epoch those of the ruling class he meant, as he says, that these ideas are the dominant ones in society. He says in the lines directly above those you quote,

**The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the**



# Life of the Organisation

### Who are we?

The Communist Workers Organisation has existed since 1975 but the political origins of our positions are much older. We regard ourselves as heir to a common tradition which goes from the Communist League of Marx and Engels through the First, Second and Third Internationals to, most recently, those left currents which were expelled from the Third International in the 1920's as the process of Stalinisation developed. We have always been opposed to Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism and all the other counter-revolutionary distortions of Marxism.

Since 1984 we have formed part of the **International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party** initiated by **Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista** (*Battaglia Comunista*).

### Appeal to Readers

Twenty years of capitalist onslaught have left communist groups as tiny minorities compared to the tasks in front of us. Our resources are inadequate to fight the lies of the capitalists (both free market and state varieties).

We therefore appeal to all contacts, readers, sympathisers and subscribers to help in the struggle to give an authentic internationalist communist voice to the process of self-emancipation of the working class.

You can help by sending for bundles of leaflets or papers. The essence of political organisation is debate so you could also help by sending us letters (however critical), either about articles in previous issues or about your own experiences or ideas.

The continuation of capitalist rule depends on the passivity of the exploited class. Help us to break that mentality.

### Addresses for all correspondence

CWO  
**PO Box 338, Sheffield S3 9YX**

Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista,  
**CP 1753, 20101 Milano, Italy.**

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### Socialism and Parliament

*same time 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. (German Ideology)*

As long as the capitalist system remains in place the bourgeoisie will control both material and mental production and the working class will, **generally speaking**, be subject to the ideology of the capitalist class. Do you accept this or not? If you accept this then we would be interested to see your explanation of how the SP expects to obtain a parliamentary majority while capitalism is in place and the bourgeoisie dominates intellectual production. If you do not accept this then you must propose some other explanation of consciousness in opposition to materialism and in opposition to Marx. As you are doubtless aware the only alternative explanation is an idealist one. The SP believes that a majority of workers can achieve communist consciousness while the capitalist system remains in place. It is for this reason we argued in the debates that you were idealist, an argument to which the SP has never responded. The truth is that consciousness has a materialist basis which cannot be wished away. Your attempts to support you positions with an argument derived from consciousness are simply opening the ground under your feet.

Although consciousness is at root consciousness

### Our Basic Positions

- 1. We aim to establish 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 states 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!**

of human beings in their actual life process, it is not, however, a direct product of existence. It is an historical and social product, mediated by the interaction of experience with existing consciousness. Contrary to what you say we have **never** said that bourgeois ideas are the only ideas in society. Such a statement would be completely absurd since the dominant ideas in society change. What we have said is that only a minority will achieve communist consciousness under capitalism. Why should the SP raise such a hue and cry over this? This conclusion is merely the corollary of Marx's conclusion that, generally speaking, bourgeois consciousness will predominate. We argue that communist consciousness arises from the scientific reflection on the history, social development and experience of the working class, and is developed by those who have the means to undertake this reflection and identify themselves politically with the class. To develop communist consciousness the real life experiences of the working class need to be interpreted and structured by a communist world view. Simply experiencing the results of capitalism such as unemployment, homelessness, starvation or war will not of themselves lead to communist consciousness in the direct way you suggest in your letter. On the contrary the ideology of the capitalist class offers explanations such as nationalism, racism, fascism etc. which will, **generally speaking**, predominate. But how could we seriously expect anything else? The capitalist system of production, despite its atrocities, persists and the communist one exists only in the realm of possibility!

### Publications

**The Platform of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party**  
This is now available, in an updated version in English, French and Italian, and will shortly be translated into Spanish, German and Farsi. Each price £1.

**Internationalist Communist Review**  
is the central organs in English of the IBRP. Each individual issue is £1.50. Back issues are available. **ICRI3** will appear shortly and contains articles on:  
**The Nature of the Working Class today(2)**  
**The Approach to the Issue of the Party**  
**Capitalist Restructuring after the Cold War**  
**Gramsci's "Marxism"**

**Internationalist Notes**  
in Farsi

**Prometeo**  
Theoretical journal of the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy)

**Battaglia Comunista**  
Monthly paper of the PCInt (Italy)

The International Bureau also has publications in **Bengali, Slovene, Czech, and Serbo-Croat**. Please write to the appropriate address. (PCInt for **Internationalist Notes**)

### Pamphlets

**South Africa - The Last 15 Years**  
A compendium of articles from Workers Voice since 1980. £3

CWO Pamphlet No. 1  
**Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decadence** £1

CWO Pamphlet No. 2  
**Russia 1917** £2

**New Pamphlet in Farsi**  
**The Origins of Trotskyism** £1.50

We argue that it is only during the revolutionary eriod itself that the dominance of bourgeois ideology can be thrown off and a majority of the working class reach communist consciousness. As Marx states in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, **The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.**

The vehicles through which such consciousness and revolutionary practice can develop are the political organisations of direct working class democracy, the workers councils. It is true, as you say, that we believe that the most conscious workers should give a lead in this process, indeed the process will not succeed if they do not do this. This conclusion, notwithstanding your suspicion of it, is derived from a materialist view of consciousness. We cannot understand why it should produce such outrage in the SP! Through the workers councils communist consciousness will be able to spread to wider layers of the working class and thus allow the revolution to succeed.

We refer you to two recent articles on class consciousness printed in WV 71 and WV 73. We look forward to your response to the questions raised.

Communist greetings  
**CP for the CWO**

### Meetings

**Readers' Meetings Sheffield**  
The Sheffield section of the CWO meets at 8.00 p.m. on every third Tuesday of the month (next meeting January 24th The Foresters Inn, Division St.. All welcome.

**London**  
These will be held regularly in Conway Hall. The next will be at 2.30 on January 14th, 1995. Topic: Why trades unions are anti-working class.

### Bureau Pamphlets in French

**Approche a la question du Parti**

**Le bordiguisme et la gauche italienne**

**La conscience de classe dans la perspective marxiste**

**Les origines du trotskysme**  
All 15FF(postage included) or £1.50 from the Sheffield address

### Subscription rates

Subscription to **WORKERS' VOICE** (6 copies): £3.00 in UK and Eire, £5.00 elsewhere.  
Subscription to **WORKERS' VOICE** (6) and **Internationalist Communist Review** (2): £5.50 UK/Eire. £6.50 elsewhere.  
**Supporter's subscription** (entitling you to leaflets and news from our internal publications): **£10**

Cheques should be made payable to "CWO Publications"  
Back issues of most publications are available. Please send local currency OR if writing from abroad **INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS** (within the sterling area postal orders are acceptable). We regret we cannot cash ordinary cheques as the international banking system takes \$9 out of the first \$10 for doing this).

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### Budget Attacks

- official figures place over 11 million people as living in poverty due to high levels of unemployment and low wages
- real personal incomes had their biggest drop for 15 years in the spring
- the new round of tax increases is on the way, including the rest of the VAT on fuel
- the average household debt, not including mortgages currently stands at over £2,000
- over 1/3 of all jobs are now part-time with low wages to go with them.

The only certainties we have is that the crisis will get worse, and the more desperate capitalism becomes the more vicious its attacks will be. The ruling class is more sophisticated than ever before in attacking us on an ideological level before attacking other aspects of our lives. We cannot hope to fight back by following the old Labour Movement which is not a workers' movement. The defeats of the 1980s can only be reversed by recognising the limits of the past. What workers have to do is create a political movement which is fundamentally revolutionary. This is not a quick fix. Our task (which is that of internationalists everywhere) is to lay the groundwork for a future political organisation of the working class which is dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism. Capitalism cannot be reformed piecemeal nor can exploitation be ended by passing laws. Only the revolutionary working class can put an end to capitalism's continuing catalogue of misery.**RT**



*In Italy the Berlusconi Government continues to try to solve the Italian budget crisis on the backs of the working class. This has inspired the left of capital led by the trades unions to try to regain some of their lost credibility. The great anger of the Italian working class has so far been contained by the unions who organised the four hour October General Strike and the “biggest demonstration in Italian history” in November. Both are intended to disorganise a real class response to the latest attacks as the following article and accompanying leaflet show.*

14th October was a great victory... for the unions. This was precisely because the unions succeeded, without any strong opposition, in channelling all the discontent stirred up by the government and bosses' barbaric attack on our pensions into its own campaign. And these are the very same unions which, not so long ago, took the lead in preparing the conditions for this attack: they called for a social peace as quiet as the grave; it was they who stifled any class consciousness and therefore any idea of social conflict. And the predominance everywhere, but especially inside the working class, of the idea that the state accounts, the bottom line, the interests of the national economy are as inescapable as they are beyond the possibility for human comprehension

From Battaglia Comunista

# The General Strike in Italy

or action also has union backing.

The trade union leaders are right, when they accuse Berlusconi's finance policy of endangering that social peace, which they worked so hard to achieve and which the July accords were supposed to benefit, but this doesn't stop them from being equally ridiculous. But that's the way it is: when a mediating organ between capital and labour is forced, by the needs of capital, to act solely for the former as the unions do in this epoch. All manner of mystifications and tight-rope walking is possible.

Even less credible, and even more disgusting, are those who pretend to be opposed to the unions, but actually follow their lead and are with

them when they make "important agreements".

This is the case with the Alfa-Romeo Cobas (Comitati di Base or rank and file committee - for more on the Cobas see, for example, *Workers Voice 61*) and their Trotskyist and Rifondazionist leaders who, after years of fake opposition, were given the right to exist by the union federations. They announced this from the platform at the demonstration in Milan's Piazza Duomo. What was the price? This was no secret: the price was to fall into line with the progressives' "political economy": the fake defence of the welfare state and of investments for socially useful work... Two points to sum up. The first: it is obvious that Rifondazione, through its Trotskyist left wing in the leadership of the Cobas, has succeeded

in limiting the perspectives of the angriest of the Alfa workers, who were threatening to break with the traditional reformist policies, to one of demanding a progressive government which would include Rifondazione Comunista. The second: neo-Keynesian illusions, originally worked out by the Greens, have also cast their spell on the ... opposition, who, even a year ago, were saying, outside of and apparently against the unions, that it was necessary to reacquire class identity and on that basis "form a front" against the mounting neo-liberal reaction. Class identity in support of capital's anti-crisis policies, which are, moreover, stupidly illusionary? But that's what they are saying: and even the more oppositional Autonomia Operaria has also joined the line-up on this basis, as we saw in the Rome assembly of its transparent front organisation, the Centri Sociali, which is launching a national campaign for "socially useful work." Amen.

We too were present in the streets on 14th October and in various other cities, distributing a leaflet which was also signed by youth organisations which are not part of the Party, and which we reproduce here.

## Defeat the Pension Cuts Break the Social Peace!

Governments may change, Republics may change, but the attacks are always the same. And these are the same because this society is founded on the misery of the many for the advantage of the bosses and their servants: because the exploitation of human beings by others is the basis of capitalist society.

It is this that is the source of the attacks on pensions and health care which everyone knows about. But who remembers and keeps in mind that this is in perfect continuity with the governments of Amato and Ciampi, who were substantially supported by the Progressives(1) and the unions?

The unions which are today pretending to shout so loud are the same that signed a series of agreements which guaranteed nothing but the bosses' profits (from the elimination of the scala mobile(2) to the Amato government's first massacre of pensions), as was shown by the latest contracts and the declaration of agreement by all the bourgeoisie's representatives. And they are the same who will sign up to further attacks on the working class by Berlusconi.

The story is the old one: "we must save the INPS(3) from bankruptcy".

Comrades: That the figures that are being bandied around are false is now obvious to everybody.

In reality the only choice offered is a capitalist one, or rather that they are shifting money from the pockets of the workers to those of the bosses. This has already happened with the taxes for social duties, the introduction of worse training contracts etc. By saving on pensions and health, they are seeking to pay interest on a public debt largely owed to the bosses themselves and the richest part of the population.

On the other hand, this is the logic of capital, which the progressives (the PDS and allies) once claimed they wanted to change and to which they now submit.

There are no rights, guarantees or better times on which we can count. The future will be ever harder, because the crisis - even when the capitalists talk about recovery - gnaws away at every "privilege" (as Berlusconi calls our miserable pensions) and creates the one alternative allowed by capital: that of being worse off.

No political change under this system can improve our conditions of life, if this mode of producing and distributing wealth is not completely and radically transformed i.e. abolished.

The interests of the proletariat (the waged, the unemployed, pensioners, men and women) are in clear contrast to what is economically

compatible with the system (and so to what is socially and politically compatible too), which the state, the government, the political parties and union confederations (that is, the whole bourgeois institutional political apparatus) defend in the name of capital and profit.

The meaning of the general strike called by the unions has been well explained by the unions themselves: the bosses must understand the efforts that the unions have so far made to contain the class and maintain social peace. This must not be rendered null and void by an irrational attack on pensions, which runs the risk of breaking this social peace. And they repeat, together with the bosses and the unions of all Europe, that the "welfare state must be rationalised", meaning that to finance the recovery of profits it is necessary to cut social expenditure (and it does not matter if workers have already paid for it through the indirect part of their salary (contributions, etc.)).

However, it is precisely this social peace imposed by the iron pact between the bosses and the unions that must be broken, to open the way not to the revival of profit but to that of working class initiative.

Comrades It is necessary to recognise that truth of what they are all trying to deny: society is divided in classes whose interests are

irreconcilable. Whoever preaches "citizen's" unity, the alliances between parties, whoever preaches and practices unity with union and political forces allied with the bourgeoisie is outside this perspective. They are objectively making the working class's dismemberment and submission to capitalism's dynamic easier, with all the horrors which that means. Horrors which are already happening throughout the world.

The unity and organisation of the class vanguard must be reborn by breaking the social peace. From the rupture of social peace, to the revolutionary revival!

**Il Partito Comunista Internazionale (Battaglia Comunista)**

### Footnotes

**1** The former Italian Communist Party has now split into the majority PDS or Party of the Democratic Left who like to refer to themselves as the Progressives and Rifondazione Comunista which is the old hardline pro-Stalinist faction. Naturally, neither has anything to do with socialism or working class liberation.

**2** System of linking wages to inflation.

**3** Equivalent of National Insurance

*continued from p.4*

## Cuba

programme in Cuba was actually based on the massive subventions from the USSR (a million dollars a day by the 1980s) to keep the Cuban economy going. But the USSR did not lose out here since it re-sold Cuban sugar at higher prices to Comecon countries which could have produced most of their own needs from sugar beet. This was hardly the disinterested fraternal socialist aid that Stalinist propaganda made out at the time. A more objective judgement would call it "imperialism".

### The Present Crisis

Today however the problems are mounting. Soviet economic aid has disappeared and the Yeltsin government has gone back on all its previous agreements (with the excuse that the Cubans were not furnishing enough sugar - a major reason for which was the failure of Russia to maintain its oil supplies!). All this occurs at a time when there is a glut of sugar on the world market. Cuba is thus to all intents bankrupt. There are power cuts lasting up to sixteen hours a day. Families who have lost contact with their relations exiled in the US cannot benefit from the fact that since the summer of 1993 the dollar

has been virtually the legal currency of Cuba. They are living in great distress. Ironically those who have been the most loyal to Castro's promises of socialism are now in the greatest poverty since they are the ones without this foreign currency and also the ones without the petty bourgeois production units which have also been tolerated since the beginning of the year. Thus engineers, doctors, teachers and academics have seen the most spectacular collapses in their incomes. Many have become taxi drivers or mechanics or have joined the thousands who have taken to the Florida Straits.

Whilst Castro hopes that foreign currency from tourism will provide a lifeline this also has the effect of increasing the inequalities in a society where income ratios were once 1 to 4 (the nearest capitalism will ever get to equality). Prostitution and its controlling mafias have returned to Havana. But this is likely to be just the beginning. Castro has invited IMF officials and Carlos Solchaga the former Spanish Minister of the Economy to analyse the needs of the Cuban economy and suggest possible solutions. Castro is playing for time. The US, by not relaxing its blockade, is trying to deny him that time. However the collapse of the Eastern Bloc has also unfrozen the NATO alliance. This has benefitted Castro to a certain extent in that he

has managed to set up 20 joint enterprises with European multinationals. Currently, there is some concern in US ruling class circles that Castro can find a new dependent relationship which will once more hold the USA octopus at bay.

Inside Cuba the secret police, the G2 have been highly successful in preventing any opposition emerging to Castro and the situation of nationalist pride which has maintained support for Castro for 35 years continues. The secret police crackdown is now greater than ever (with some contradictory results. Peasants encouraged by government pronouncements to sell their produce on the roadsides have had it confiscated by the police). Despite such short-sightedness the imminent overthrow of the regime, though weekly predicted by the US press, does not look likely.

However we'll leave speculation about this to capitalist scribblers. What is clear is that Cuba will somehow, and in some way, have to adopt the free market reforms now being carried out in Eastern Europe. For revolutionaries this is not a matter taking sides. If Cuba was capitalist with a state command economy dominating production before it will still be capitalist even with a reduced role for the state. Our task is not

to find "progressive" causes to support but to fight for the socialist programme. The idea that socialism can be imported by a band of middle class intellectuals wearing olive green combat dress is farcical. Socialism can only be built by the independent action of thousands of proletarians who create their own organs and who are in a position to control power by replacing their delegates on a permanent basis. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a temporary situation where the majority class deprives the privileged minority from exercising their domination over society until classes are abolished and a new form of human administration of an entirely different mode of production has emerged. It has nothing in common with the dictatorship of a single individual using an artificially created Communist Party to mobilise "the masses" behind this or that arbitrarily-manufactured goal.

Socialism means an end to wage labour and to money. It means no ruling class like the comandantes in Cuba with their extra privileges. In short there was, and is, nothing socialist about Cuba and revolutionaries can only defend the socialist programme by denouncing the Castro regime for what it is. **Jock**

The above text is based on the introduction to the November 17th CWO Public Meeting in Sheffield.