TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

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Halt the genocide in Rwanda!

International Secretariat of the LRCI, 11 June 1994

The present conflict in Rwanda is only in part a continuation of the civil war that raged from 1990 to August 1993. That war, between the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the Hutu dominated government of President Juvenal Habayarimana, ended in August 1993 with the Arusha accords. These accords promised a multi-ethnic government, a smaller army and the reduction of the army's role in political life. The RPF was in the process of demobilising its forces between August 1993 and April 1994. When the President's aircraft was shot down and the President was killed on 6 April 1994, fighting resumed between the RPF and the army. The RPF denied responsibility for shooting down the President's aircraft. It is highly probable that it was in fact shot down by Hutu army officers who were opposed to the Arusha accords and the threat to their power which the accords represented. These officers were violently against any concessions to the Tutsi population of Rwanda. These events changed the character of the civil war, turning it into one which, on the government side, was aimed at a genocidal ethnic cleansing of the Tutsi, and of all Hutu who in any way supported them. Unfounded stories of potential Tutsi inspired pogroms have been broadcast by the government radio, which also openly encouraged its Hutu listeners to massacre all Tutsi people and all Hutu people who support them.

The scale of the resulting conflict was horrific. It was not merely a bloody war. The massacres of civilians assumed genocidal proportions. Estimates vary, but between 250,000 and 500,000 people have been killed. Two million have fled the country—250,000 flooding into a refugee camp in Tanzania in one day. Those killed, together with the refugees, account for over a quarter of Rwanda's population.

The slaughter has produced real horror. Tales of civilians having their limbs hacked off before being killed abound. Sympathy for the victims has mounted as television pictures of corpses and rivers turned red with blood have been beamed into homes across the world. It has also produced a filthy tidal wave of racist, imperialist propaganda depicting the carnage as an example of how "uncivilised" black Africans are and how nothing can be done to help them escape from their "natural" state of barbarism and endemic propensity towards "tribal" conflict. Nevertheless, this bloody cycle of inter-ethnic or inter-communal slaughter is not based on ineradicable "racial", "tribal" or "national" hatreds amongst the masses. It is based on the deliberate and cynical manipulation of real experience of political oppression and social exploitation and discrimination over decades by unscrupulous political forces in Rwanda and Burundi, in the surrounding states and by the interference of various imperialist powers. It is also only understandable when set against the background of the terrible poverty which imperialism, as a world economic system, condemns sub-Saharan Africa to endure.

No amount of revulsion, that every worker feels at the relentless images of the carnage, should blind us to the real causes of the conflict and those really responsible for it. The present situation is a direct product of two things. First, the legacy of colonial and imperialist rule in Rwanda; secondly, the effect of ongoing imperialist exploitation of the country since the end of direct colonial rule. Rwanda was part of German East Africa from 1899 to 1916, along with neighbouring Burundi, the scene of a similar though less publicised, civil war. After Germany's defeat in the first world war Rwanda was handed over to Belgium which ruled it directly until it secured independence in 1962 following three years of risings by poor farmers. During both German and Belgian rule the imperialists maintained their control over the country by manipulating and exploiting the social and ethnic differences that existed in Rwanda.

Divide and rule

The Tutsi minority were given western education and appointed as administrators in the colonial government. Identity cards were introduced specifying to which ethnic group a person belonged. Like the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Tutsi were consciously used as a friendly "native" elite, enjoying privileges over the majority Hutu population. This enabled the imperialists to divide and rule the colony. This system sharpened divisions between the Tutsi and Hutu. Ethnic divisions existed, but the two peoples had come to share the same language. The primary division between the two groups had previously been social. Hutu, the majority (about 85%) means "servant", while Tutsi means "rich". There was a social division between the cattle owning Tutsi overlords and the poorer Hutu farmers.

Nevertheless, there was not, as the western media claim, a historic "tribal" conflict. The roots of today's conflict lie in the social conflicts of pre-colonial society. These old social conflicts were preserved rather than being overcome because imperialism had no interest in promoting the economic development of Rwanda and Burundi. It was happy to milk the country through the agency of the pre-colonial feudal Tutsi elite. This legacy was magnified by the divide and rule policy common to all colonial powers. It is continued today in the form of the rivalry of US and French imperialism and intervention by the dictators of the surrounding semi-colonial regimes.

With the end of European colonialism in the second half of the 1950s these contradictions led to massive inter-ethnic strife but one which had a social, class content. In Rwanda during 1959 the Hutu's rose against the Tutsi elite

and overthrew their rule massacring some 100,000 and driving hundreds of thousands of others into Uganda, Zaire and Congo. These Tutsi exiles were trained as elite military units in Uganda, allied to Yoweri Mussevini's guerrilla forces in their war against first Idi Amin and then Milton Obote. The RPF was created from this milieu, and is closely allied to Musevini's military bonapartist regime to this day. Musevini wants to install a regime friendly to himself in Rwanda and at the same time to send back the large number of Tutsi exiles who settled in Uganda over the last thirty years. He will be able to free land to meet the chronic land hunger in Uganda which threatens to de-stabilise his regime. For these reasons he sponsored the invasion of Rwanda in 1990, triggering the chain of events which led to the present carnage.

The terrible pogroms against the Tutsi population in Rwanda cannot be understood without considering the situation in neighbouring Burundi. Here the Tutsi elite never lost power. When Hutu based parties won the elections of 1964 the Tutsi King and the head of the largely Tutsi army annulled them and held onto power. In 1972 an abortive coup by Hutu officers and soldiers was answered by a horrific genocidal massacre, similar to that of 1994. More recently, in Burundi in 1993, after the assassination of former president Pierre Ndadaye, 100,000 mainly Hutu oppositionists were brutally massacred. These massacres of Hutus in Burundi by Tutsi armed forces undoubtedly played a role in fuelling the fears of the Hutus in Rwanda. The threat of a Tutsi dominated regime unavoidably arouses fears amongst the Hutu which were played on by the chauvinists and pogromists in the army and the Coalition of the Defence of the Republic. In the wake of the genocide of Tutsis and the present offensive by the RPF hundreds of thousands of Hutus have fled across the borders into neighbouring states fearing retribution.

But despite imperialism's hellish work in planting the seeds of conflict, they were unable to completely destroy the pattern of co-existence that existed between the two groupings. This is revealed in today's conflict, which is not the "tribal" warfare that the racist propagandists would have us believe. There is an ethnic conflict, but the possibility of superseding it is shown by the co-operation between the Tutsi and Hutu people within the RPF. The chair of the RPF is Hutu, as are a minority of the RPF troops. The massacres that have been unleashed by the Hutu army and the *Interahamwe* - the army sponsored militia, responsible for many of the pogroms - have been perpetrated against those sections of the Hutu population who favour an accord with the RPF. Further proof that this is not reducible to an ethnic conflict is the peaceful co-existence of Hutu and Tutsi refugees within the camps in Tanzania.

Today's conflict is not a deflected or deformed class struggle by the Hutu poor peasants against their former overlords, in the way that the Hutu massacres of Tutsi in 1959 could be construed. Those massacres, together with subsequent pogroms in the 1960s, following independence, destroyed Tutsi privilege in Rwanda. In 1973 a Hutu dictatorship was installed. Many Tutsi had already been either deprived of their wealth or driven out of the country altogether. The high command of the army was firmly in the hands of Hutu officers. It is now over thirty years since the Tutsi were a privileged section of Rwandan society. The present violence against them cannot be explained primarily, as a manifestation of Hutu resentment against their privileged position. Moreover, previous conflicts, including the one in 1973 that brought Habyarimana to power, were between northern and southern Hutu.

Overcoming the legacy of colonialism

None of this is to deny that there is an element of ethnic conflict lodged in the present war. But this element can be overcome if the social problems that imperialism has bequeathed to Rwanda can be tackled head on. For the historically rooted ethnic divisions are reinforced and exacerbated by the terrible poverty that imperialist super-exploitation has created. Rwanda is a terribly poor country, with the average income standing at £3 per week. Traditional patterns of farming were broken up by the colonial powers and replaced by cash crop production (coffee) for export. The collapse of coffee prices on the world market in the mid-eighties plunged Rwanda into an economic crisis that made sections of the Hutu population wary of any concessions to the Tutsi. Fighting over a diminishing share of the national income inflamed the ethnic divisions that imperialism had engineered. In particular, Rwandans suffer from a massive rural overcrowding, with millions farming tiny plots of land. Hence one of the "rational" objectives of the planned genocide was to ease this problem for the Hutu majority by the physical elimination of Tutsis, allowing Hutus to take their land and possessions. Only the expropriation of capitalist landed property and a solution to land use and land hunger in the entire region, can provide an alternative and progressive solution to this problem of relative overpopulation.

Imperialism has no massive economic or strategic interests in Rwanda. For many years it was content to prop up the Hutu dominated dictatorship of Habyarimana. The South African state arms company, Armscor, supplied it with weapons. The French trained the army. With the end of the Cold War the dictatorships and one party states were undermined, one after another, across the continent. But no golden age of democratic prosperity dawned. Rather, Africa sank deeper into the mire of chronic poverty, famine and economic backwardness. Of the continent's 500 million people, 300 million now live in absolute poverty. Imperialism tried to sponsor conservative neo-liberal regimes to pay the state debts and open the domestic markets to the multinationals. In Rwanda, via the UN, they sponsored the Arusha accords and sent in 2,500 troops to oversee the peace deal. With the renewed outbreak of conflict the UN, proving beyond any doubt that it is merely the plaything of imperialism, pulled out its force and only promised to send in a new one if it was made up of black African troops (Clinton, Major and Mitterrand didn't want any whites getting shot!). The lesson from this is clear - imperialism has neither the will nor the capacity to solve ethnic conflicts or human tragedies like Rwanda in a progressive fashion, any more than it has the capacity to solve similar ones in Liberia or Somalia. If the UN, or imperialist troops, intervene, they do so solely to defend their economic or military-strategic interests.

In the present conflict there is no socialist force. Nevertheless, revolutionary socialists cannot be neutral. Whatever the RPF's own guilt in perpetrating some of the massacres, it is the government, army and army directed Hutu-chauvinist gangs that are carrying out planned genocide. The overall character of the RPF's campaign meanwhile is not genocidal or "communalist" against the Hutus. While we therefore condemn any massacres perpetrated by RPF forces and call for organised resistance by workers' and peasants' militia to all pogroms, we have to start from the predominant character of the conflict. It is a reactionary war of chauvinist genocide by the government and army. It

is on this basis, and only on this the basis, that we now advocate a military bloc with the RPF to defeat the government as the only immediate means of stopping this genocide. However, we will give no political support to any RPF government that might be installed as a result of such a military victory and will oppose the RPF using it to establish a regime against the will of the majority of Rwanda's population.

The RPF is in no sense a socialist organisation. It is bourgeois and it will seek to create a bourgeois government, albeit one based on the compromise power sharing solution established by he Arusha accords of 1993. The RPF is a regular military force, trained and equipped abroad, that cannot be expected to install a democratic regime. An RPF government would almost certainly be a military bonapartist dictatorship. Its international backers, Musevini's Uganda and US imperialism, have no interest in political freedom for all Rwandans. The hostility and fear which the majority of Hutus show towards it ensures that it will not base itself on full democratic rights and liberties for the majority. Despite the RPF's claims to multi-ethnicity socialists cannot place any reliance on its assurances.

At the moment it is clearly not in the interests of a small minority ethnic group to proclaim their intention of ethnically cleansing 90% of the population. Realism and elementary self-interest dictate that the RPF presents itself as "multi-ethnic" and anti-genocidal.

The RPF, despite the presence of some Hutus in it, is predominantly led by and made up of Tutsi's, the former politically privileged section of the population and a small minority. The "historically accumulated privileges", maintained in exile, education, military training, all make it likely that the installation of the RPF in power will mean the restoration of the Tutsi to a position of political privilege, control of the army and state bureaucracy, if not to a position from which to wreak bloody revenge on the Hutu majority. For all the above reasons the RPF should not be allowed to install a new dictatorship on the back of any military victory. It should be forced to relinquish power immediately to a democratic sovereign constituent assembly. The way for the masses to ensure that this happens is for them to form workers' and peasants' committees in Kigali, in every town and village and in the refugee camps, open to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. We argue that the road out of the present nightmare in Rwanda lies in the development of a socialist programme and a socialist leadership, capable of building a multi-ethnic workers' state.

An emergency programme

* Stop the government sponsored genocide! Critical support for the RPF's actions to destroy all government forces throughout Rwanda involved in the genocide. Bring the killers to justice. For workers" and peasants' tribunals to root out those those responsible including those hiding in refugees camps!

* For the organisation of a people's militia, under the control of workers' and peasants' councils, to combat all pogroms;

* For a sovereign constituent assembly, convened by the workers' and peasants' committees, with all over the age of 16 eligible to vote;

* For equal political and social rights for all ethnic groups;

* No UN troops in Rwanda; no imperialist intervention at all and no intervention by the bourgeois forces of the OAU on behalf of imperialism or the other African bourgeois regimes;

* For working class action to force the granting of aid to Rwanda with no strings attached; for the organisation of aid from the international workers' movement;

* Land to those who work it; for committees of peasants and rural workers to allocate land and organise its utilisation in the interests of the masses;

* For the cancellation of all debts to imperialism;

* For a workers' and peasants' government in Rwanda, based on democratic workers' and peasants' committees and defended by a workers' and peasants' militia;

* Internationalise the socialist revolution - break the Balkanisation of central and east Africa; for international co-operation across the borders by workers' and peasants' organisations;

* For a socialist federation of the African continent. ■

French troops out of Rwanda!

The military intervention in Rwanda was launched under the hypocritical cloak of humanitarian concern. They offered to set up "safe havens" for refugees in the west of the country. In reality the French are acting to ensure that the former government, dominated by Hutu-chauvinist forces, do not suffer a complete rout. The French government supported this government and was complicit with many of its actions. Now they are seeking to protect and shore up their imperialist interests in francophone Africa by forcing the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) into a political compromise with the defeated Hutu-chauvinist regime.

In any military conflict which might break out between the RPF forces and the French over the fate of the "safe havens" we are for the defeat of the French. However, a protracted military conflict between them is not the most likely development. The RPF are on the verge of completely defeating the Rwandan army and Hutu-chauvinist militia. It has already announced the formation of a new government with a Hutu premier. The RPF could thus rapidly stabilise its power. French imperialism may simply have to accept an RPF victory and engineer a compromise with the the new regime.

With the defeat of the government army and militia, and providing no conflict with French imperialism breaks out, the character of the whole situation will change. The RPF as a bourgeois force, having conquered power, would become the main enemy of the Rwandan workers and peasants of all communities. The tactic of revolutionary communists would change from seeking a military block with the RPF forces against the genocide to a struggle for the overthrow of the RPF government by a socialist revolution of the workers and peasants. ■

International Secretariat
10 July 1994

Sinn Féin: between war and peace

International Secretariat, LRCI, 6 February 1994

The mass anti-unionist revolt of 1969-72 succeeded in bringing down Stormont, the paramount political institution of Orange rule. Since then the anti-imperialist struggle of the nationalist population against British occupation has gradually been demobilised and nearly exhausted by three processes.

First, the British war machine is possibly the most sophisticated at low intensity counter-insurgency operations in the world. It has used its full force to contain the struggle through daily harassment, arbitrary arrests, emergency legislation, frame-ups, assassinations and infiltration into the ranks of the republican movement. Its campaign extends from close collaboration with the paramilitary terror gangs of loyalism to manipulation of the world and British mass media to present the war as criminal sectarian strife. In this latter task it has the invaluable assistance of the British Labour Party and the trade union leadership as well as the Southern Irish bourgeoisie and its parties. To that extent the ideological struggle has been as successful as the military one in hiding the real nature of the struggle from the working class both in the Irish Republic and in Britain. As a result of these factors the republican movement has recognised for some time that it cannot succeed in removing British troops from the Six Counties by force of arms.

Secondly, after 22 years of direct rule from Westminster the British have taken certain political and economic measures that have gone some way to reducing the explosive potential of the nationalist community's grievances which led to the civil rights movement and the revolutionary democratic mass revolt 30 years ago. Housing, one of the key grievances, has been removed as a significant issue of struggle. Community projects, funded by British and European Community money and channelled through the SDLP, have also served to blunt the edge of resistance to partition. This process has accentuated the class divisions within the nationalist community, widening the gulf between the social conditions endured by the working class and the unemployed and the relatively prosperous Catholic middle class. This in turn has weakened the multi-class revolutionary democratic movement

Thirdly, and the most important factor which has led to the physical force republican movement suing for "peace", is the bankrupt political strategy of its own leadership. This strategy has oscillated between giving top priority to the guerrilla struggle and a concentration on petit-bourgeois reformist politics at a local/community level. The "armed struggle" consisted of a military campaign waged by 600 or so volunteers operating in clandestine cells in Ireland, Britain and occasionally in continental Europe. This campaign has proved inadequate to the defence of nationalist communities in the Six Counties against the British and Loyalist death squads—which for the last 22 years should have been the absolute priority for military activity. In terms of offensive actions aimed at undermining the army's will to stay the guerrilla campaign has had a decreasing effect. The crown forces have succeeded in progressively reducing its effect upon them. Over the last three years the numbers of British soldiers killed has slowed to a trickle, the lowest since the troops arrived in 1969. For the last five years the military campaign has shifted to "soft targets" which have little military value and have wrought maximum political and ideological damage to the cause of republicanism itself, outside of the beleaguered Catholic ghettos. Killing off-duty Protestant members of the security forces is hardly likely to weaken the resolve of either the Loyalists or the British. Targeting workers (Catholic as well as Protestant) who performed construction work for the authorities, bombings in crowded town and city centres, have handed propaganda victories to the British and the Irish media's campaign to present the IRA as criminals. The state's deliberate policy of ignoring IRA warnings and the IRA's continued use of bombings in civilian areas despite this, has meant that the consequences of these actions have a negative impact upon the consciousness of the working class.

Side by side with this guerrilla struggle Sinn Féin has developed an extensive network of community and local government political representation in the Six Counties. Its councillors have braved the attacks of the Loyalist and British terror gangs, have battled against the censorship imposed on them by the British and Irish media and the conspiracy of silence imposed by British Labour bureaucracy. But both the methods and object of this community struggle have been reformist. At best, this has brought short term relief from the worst abuses the nationalist working class suffers. At worst, it has led to collaboration in the town halls with the SDLP and even with unionists over the implementation of cuts. Most importantly, it has utterly failed to build a movement of the working class that could overthrow the Orange state itself and smash partition—the very source of their oppression.

From the mid 1980s Sinn Féin implicitly recognised the limitations of its struggle within the Six Counties. It turned to the South. It hoped to overcome its isolation by deepening its roots in the Southern working class, gain electoral strength at local and then national level. It

hoped to get the "democratic" credentials that would allow it to be recognised as the legitimate representative of the Irish People as a whole, like the PLO and the ANC. It aimed to use this to put pressure upon the Southern bourgeoisie and its parties. This too has failed miserably as a strategy. Election results have brought derisive votes outside of a few border constituencies. The internalisation of this failure was another reason that it sued for "peace".

Finally, Sinn Féin has seen its economic programme made irrelevant. Its petit bourgeois programme aspires to a nationally protected economy in a 32 County Republic. This was projected as a path of economic development which could protect Ireland from imperialist super-exploitation. In the last eight or ten years this utopian programme has been turned into a historical curio by the nature of world economic developments. It has been left exposed to ridicule by the rapid economic growth of the Irish Republic itself in the 1980s and 1990s under the impact of inward imperialist investment. Sinn Féin has no explanation fo,r or answer to, this phenomenon. Nor has it proved able to reformulate its theory of imperialist domination in way that can fit this reality.

The combined results of this failure of perspective have pushed the petit bourgeois nationalist Sinn Féin closer towards the bourgeois constitutional nationalists of the SDLP. The emphasis of Sinn Féin on the "pan-nationalist alliance" indicates that the drift towards a reconciliation with the bourgeois nationalists of the SDLP, and even with the bourgeoisie in the Republic, is far advanced. Any long lasting reconciliation within the framework of such a "pan-nationalist" alliance would mark the end of Sinn Féin's credentials as a revolutionary nationalist petit bourgeois-led movement and the beginning of its evolution into a bourgeois nationalist party.

Faced with the prospect of a fourth Tory government after 1992 and having internalised the military, political and economic dead end it had led its supporters into, Sinn Féin either initiated or was highly receptive to "peace negotiations" with the British.

Broker for imperialism

The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) volunteered its services as a broker between imperialism and Sinn Féin/IRA to bring about the capitulation of the latter. The Hume-Adams talks—the exact outcome of which have still not been made public—revealed at least that Sinn Féin was prepared to disarm and accept the existence of a partitioned Ireland and an Orange-dominated state for as long as the Unionists remained unpersuaded of the advantages of a united Ireland. In essence, this means that Sinn Féin has accepted, in principle, the unionist veto and their obligation to give up the armed struggle if the British and the Unionists will only start a process of "national reconciliation". What Sinn Féin wants is some sort of cover for this in the form of all-Ireland talks, with the British putting some sort of verbal pressure on the Unionists to make concessions. This offer alone constitutes a historic betrayal of the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland and a surrender to British imperialism on the question of self-determination for the whole Irish people. In any conceivable system of devolved government for the province the Protestants will be handed back majority control of a regime with greatly enhanced powers of patronage including greater control over the police and military forces. However much this was offset by measures of positive discrimination and grants for Catholic areas it would represent a grand reversal of the victory of 1972 when Stormont was brought down. It would re-enforce and validate the Six County statelet. It means that the republican movement will become not an instrument of struggle against injustice and oppression but a force for surrender, and rotten compromise. It thus marks not simply the abandonment of an ineffective military strategy, but of the whole struggle for national freedom. For these very reasons there is alarm within the IRA and Sinn Féin and rightly so.

The political background to the Hume-Adams initiative was clearly the US sponsored "new world order" with its pro-imperialist deals in South Africa and the Middle East. The election of the first US Democrat in twelve years encouraged the illusions that Britain could be pressured into a peace process in which it would erode, if not reject, the Unionist veto. The republicans have come to the view that not only is Britain the main problem but that the Protestants no longer have the clout which they had in the 1970s when they wrecked one power-sharing initiative after another. The Adams leadership, convinced that the traditional methods of republicanism would never unite Ireland, having learned that the half-way house strategy of the armalite and the ballot box had led to no breakthrough, were wide open to John Hume's reformist strategy.

On the other side, the Major government also saw some advantages to the "new world order" scenario. Major hoped to force a unilateral cessation of the war on the republicans and put pressure on the unionists to stop obstructing an Anglo-Irish settlement that would reflect the two states new relationship within the European Union. Doubtless it was with these ends in mind that it undertook secret negotiations with the republican movement throughout 1993. The fundamental problem was that the republicans simply dared not lay down their arms unconditionally with nothing to show for it and the British could not even admit to holding talks without such an unconditional surrender. Major's inner party crisis over Maastricht suddenly put him at the mercy of the Unionist MPs at Westminster. Hence Hume and Adams broke cover over the peace initiative. This was met in both the British and Irish media with enormous enthusiasm and growing public support in the North. Faced with this the Tory government hurriedly sought to regain ground with its Downing Street Declaration of mid-December 1993. This succeeded in stymieing Hume and Adams' hopes for a pan-nationalist bloc involving the Dublin government around their own declaration. It succeeded in gaining the assent of the Southern bourgeoisie for a pro-unionist interpretation of self-determination. It explicitly underwrites the Unionist veto on steps towards a united Ireland through the process of separate referendums to determine the wishes of the "two communities" in Ireland. In return Dublin were given official acknowledgement of what has been implicit for some time—that the British state has "no strategic or

selfish interest" in a retaining the Six Counties as a part of the United Kingdom. But, crucially, the British government refused point blank to advocate that the unionists should make any moves towards a united Ireland. This allowed the Irish government to stress the possibility of a consensual road to unity and the British to reaffirm the sacredness of the unionist veto and indeed the union. The Declaration threw the republican movement back onto the political defensive with its unconvincing calls for "clarification". Since then a veritable propaganda war has opened up to apportion the blame for the stalling or breakdown of the peace process. Adams sought, during his trip to the US, to pin the blame on the British with the reasonable enough claim that in peace negotiations it is not usual for one side to surrender their arms before discussions are held or terms are announced. In plain soldier's language what the British are demanding is called unconditional surrender. The British government, on the other hand, cannot concede for one minute that it is fighting a war at all. It is merely suppressing criminal terrorism. Nor can it admit to holding negotiations with "terrorists". Major is offering nothing but he has to make this look sweet and reasonable. His only real problems are to avoid either an unwelcome US intervention, a breach with the Irish government, or a serious Loyalist backlash. Hence the British government is obliged to be even more evasive and double dealing than usual, even for "perfidious Albion".

Clinging on to privilege

All classes of the Protestant population of the Six Counties enjoy considerable advantages from their integration into the United Kingdom relative to the Catholic community. The Protestant bourgeoisie remains integrated into the British capitalist class, even though these economic ties have weakened or rather become more variegated over the last 25 years. In addition, its political influence over the Tory party has weakened. The middle class and labour aristocracy benefits greatly by preferential and discriminatory employment practices and a generous system of grants; many thousands are directly employed by the security forces and their ancillary services. Of course the "privileges" of the Protestant unskilled worker or the unemployed are small, not to say marginal. But the ferocity of their sectarianism indicates their determination to cling to their privileges and their status as the ruling community. They are motivated by a desperate fear that equality for the Catholics means that they will lose what little they have. Without the bloated machine of state repression (official and unofficial) and the pretext for its presence many Protestants would undoubtedly be "levelled down". Clearly, all shades of loyalism, whatever the shifting structure of the Irish, British and European economy, have a material interest in retaining political power over the machinery of government and patronage.

Nevertheless, there are differences within the unionist community. Official unionism (UUP), which was itself on the political defensive after the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement, has been shored up by the events of the last six months. First of all, it has seen its parliamentary position strengthened in Westminster thanks to Major's problems within his own party. To get Maastricht through he had to turn to James Molyneaux, leader of the UUP. The UUP extracted a Westminster parliamentary select committee for Northern Ireland as the price of its parliamentary support. By critically endorsing the Downing Street Declaration the UUP has brought nearer the time when it can hope to recover some form of devolved government in the province and thus get its hands back on the levers of patronage at a province wide level. So long as partition and the unionist veto is guaranteed the UUP can live with some limitations on its powers of discrimination and even with some institutionalised consultative role for the Dublin government in the affairs of the North. In short, the ideal situation for the UUP bourgeois backers would be to remain part of an imperialist state, regain powers of patronage in one part of that state and yet enjoy the fruits of closer economic ties with the South in the context of a deepened European Union.

The lower middle class and working class supporters of Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) fear the slightest concessions to the anti-unionists or the Dublin government. Whereas the Unionist bourgeoisie can defend its economic wealth and capital under slightly modified political arrangements, the working class Protestant backers of the DUP know that their position in this very backward economic region of the UK and the EC has hitherto depended exclusively upon the maintenance of privilege, not upon wealth.

The bourgeoisie can enjoy its wealth under a variety of economic and political arrangements but the Protestant working class must at all costs hold onto the machinery of privilege if it is to keep itself above the condition of the rest of the working class. The DUP sees proportional representation, and any voice for Dublin, as inevitably weakening their ability to maintain and broker those privileges.

The growing campaign of unionist terror gangs against the Catholic community shows that the most reactionary sections of the unionists are prepared to take systematic action to prevent their loss of privileges. Although the more militant Loyalist organisations have increasingly used paramilitary terror, rather than mass action, even the prospect of a Ulster Workers Council-style strike cannot be ruled out were there to be any serious threat to unionist privileges.

Southern Co-operation

Dublin has proved its pro-imperialist credentials time and again over the last ten years. The Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), its cross border patrols, its willingness to extradite republicans to Britain, have all reassured the British bourgeoisie that the Irish bourgeoisie of the south can be trusted with some role in a counter-revolutionary peace deal. Conjuncturally, the election of the coalition government has enabled the Irish Labour Party (ILP) with Dick Spring as Foreign Minister to be put to the fore as a reassurance that the Irish Republic will renounce its constitutional claim over the North.

The long history of anti-republicanism inside the ILP is one reason that Spring can be sent out to glad-hand the unionist parts of Belfast with such confidence. The

Irish bourgeoisie stands to benefit from any deal with Britain. It will accelerate, if not the removal of the border, then withering of the border as a barrier to the development of trade and investment between the two parts of the island. These links are at present still very marginal to the economic life of both states.

Prospects for a settlement?

What are the prospects for a counter-revolutionary settlement in Ireland in the next period? By its Ard Fheis Sinn Féin is due to end its internal consultations and its prevarications about the Downing Street Declaration. It is unlikely that they will accept the declaration since the nationalist community in which Sinn Fein and the IRA have their roots sees nothing in them that gives them real hope for a non-sectarian if still-partitioned statelet. Under present conditions for the Adams-McGuiness leadership to proceed with disarming the IRA and being incorporated into some sort of devolved assembly or even administration would risk a split either along the lines of country (Armagh) versus the cities (Belfast and Derry) or with a hard-line IRA faction carrying on the armed struggle.

Sinn Féin will in any case be a fifth wheel on the cart of constitutional nationalism. Without the armed struggle what really separates Gerry Adams from John Hume? Why then should the British organise a de facto amnesty for republican prisoners especially if a fraction of the IRA might carry on with the war. The Adams leadership would be foolish to accept any deal which even a substantial minority of the IRA rejects. What then are the alternatives for the republicans?

Sinn Féin would then have little choice left except to sit out the Major government, resume the military campaign in some form (perhaps with more emphasis on Britain) and wait on the return of a Labour Government. Sinn Féin evidently believes that it can, in the medium term, at least deliver the minimum reform needed to end the campaign; namely, that the British government should actively seek to persuade the Unionists to exercise their "self determination" in the direction of an eventually united Ireland. They would then tell their supporters that this, together with the changing nature of the Irish economy and the "demographic time bomb" ticking away in the North (leading to a turn of the century Catholic majority) could deliver up a united Ireland via the ballot box some time in the new century. In this way history will absolve Sinn Fein of its present surrender.

For its part the British would respond to an outright rejection of the Declaration by measures to isolate and intimidate Sinn Féin and the IRA and bolster the SDLP. They would make good their promises to the Unionists that their co-operation in this process of talks will be rewarded with concrete proposals for a return to a form of devolved government in the Six Counties.

In the longer term can partition be ended by a counter-revolutionary settlement from above? In principle this cannot be excluded. Partition occurred as a result of the acquiescence of the British state in Unionism's determination to remain part of the United Kingdom. At that time it suited the class interests of the Unionist bourgeoisie who had cultivated a cross crass bloc within the Loyalist community for this project. It suited the British Empire to keep the shipyards and the arms factories of the Belfast region firmly in its grip and to dominate the new Free State. These economic and military-strategic reasons have long disappeared. The British are not lying when they state that they have no "selfish or strategic interests" in maintaining partition. All they had to resists was a end to partition imposed by a national-revolutionary war because of the effects this would have had on their interests in the South and indeed around the world. What sort of unification would the British accept?

Partition could be ended in stages; by confederation, or by unity with considerable regional powers devolved to the old six counties. But by whatever route it occurred it would have to mean an end to explicit privileges for the Protestants and would thus involve the break up of the Orange bloc But such a break up would not necessarily be progressive. The only consistently progressive way would be if it was shattered from below by revolutionary democratic struggle that split he Protestant working class and brought over the most class conscious sections to the side of the anti-unionists. A fragmentation from above by the actions of the Unionist bourgeoisie which considered that membership of the UK and non-membership of the Irish republic had become detrimental to its class interests would in all probability leave an embittered and ultra reactionary loyalism.

Resisting a sell-out

What should be the attitude of workers in Ireland and Britain to the peace process? Firstly, we must be clear what "peace" means for British imperialism. It means first and foremost an end to all opposition to its continued and intensified exploitation of Ireland, North and South. It means discrediting and demobilising all forces which challenge its hold and its investments and those of its fellow imperialisms—Germany, US, Japan— in Ireland. It means saving on the security costs of propping up the northern statelet and subsidising the privileges of the Protestants economically. It means strengthening its relations with the Republic as the prime site for exploitation by the multinationals. In short, any peace acceptable to British imperialism will maintain the low wages, massive levels of unemployment and social inequality which are the real social basis of the national question in Ireland. Irish unity, if it ever comes about on this road, would not mean the sovereignty of the people of Ireland but the guaranteeing of the rule of big capital. So what is the alternative to an imperialist peace?

The war weariness of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland is understandable. Twenty five years of heroic but militarily inconclusive conflict have produced the deaths of hundreds of republican fighters and thousands non-combatant members of the nationalist community, killed, maimed, imprisoned or terrorised by the British. This has undoubtedly taken its toll. Moreover, with no end in sight, with the repeated failures of republican strategy, with the crippling of democratic rights it is scarcely surprising that the population of the Six Counties does yearn for peace. Certainly, revolution-

ary socialists do not advocate carrying on with the same bankrupt strategy that the republicans pursued before the Hume-Adams talks. Whilst we have always recognised that the armed guerrilla struggle was a legitimate response to British occupation we never advocated it as the correct strategy. Of course, the nationalist population, faced with 20,000 British troops and the armed RUC and RIR not to speak of the Orange death squads, needs armed self-defence. That is why it will be suicidal for the republican movement to disarm or to renounce "violence". The problem with the guerrilla strategy is not its illegitimacy in democratic, let alone in moral, terms. It is absolutely justified by the forcible and undemocratic division of Ireland by British imperialism and the Orange minority.

Our opposition is quite different to that of the moralists or the fetishisers of bourgeois democracy. Our objection is that it is an ineffective strategy for driving imperialism out of Ireland. The belief in the permanent necessity of guerrilla warfare with the state forces displaces the centrality of mass mobilisations, mass actions and political struggle against partition and all its economic and social consequences. Indeed, such a perspective of mass action is subordinated to the guerrilla strategy to such an extent that the masses today play virtually no role in the direct conflict with the British state. Yet a mass struggle is the only way forward. Armed self-defence could and should be an essential auxiliary to this struggle helping it to deploy the forces which can really win.

Republicanism has always started the other way round, seeing mass campaigns like the H-Block demonstrations as auxiliary to the armed struggle. Marxists have always recognised that the culmination of revolutionary struggle will be an armed insurrection, maybe leading to a prolonged war, but precisely in conditions where the masses are organised and mobilised to participate actively in this.

So why are we opposed to the Adam's offer to end the guerrilla campaign? Quite simply, because it is not a proposal to shift the armed units into a defensive role in relation to a new offensive mass campaign; rather it would mean the disarming of the northern masses and the abandonment of the struggle against partition altogether. It means that the republican movement will become a force for imperialist law and order in Ireland against the inevitable continued eruptions of resistance. The answer to this is not an even smaller scale guerrilla war by die-hard elements of the IRA or republican Sinn Féin.

The answer is a sharp turn to a working class, revolutionary socialist strategy, implemented on an all-Ireland scale. Such a strategy can ultimately relate to the real fears that the Protestant workers have of an imperialist peace deal; that is, the scaling down of the subsidies and economic underpinnings of their privileges. For these privileges are privileges only in relation to the discrimination that exists against the nationalist community.

Jobs for all, decent housing and social services, education and recreation are the right of all whose labour sustains society. But is this not inconsistent with the superprofits of the multinationals? Yes! And for this very reason it is imperialist ownership and control of the whole island that must go.

The unity of Ireland can only be achieved and founded on the unity of the working class, north and south, Protestant and Catholic. This cannot be achieved by reconciliation between "traditions" or churches. The Protestant workers can only really fight for a secure and decent life for themselves and their families when they break the baneful ties that bind them to their own bosses, the first and foremost of which is their defence of the Northern Ireland statelet and their declining, but very real, privileges over the Catholic working class. The declining strength of Orangeism is a testimony to this possibility.

But Protestant workers do not have to pass through the stage of "reconciliation" to Irish nationalism. They can and must be won to a programme of immediate and transitional demands based on building up the organs of workers' democracy in struggle, workers' control of the economy and the fight for a workers' government. An Irish Workers' Republic would be a secular one in which neither priests nor pastors would have any say in what happened in the classroom or the bedroom.

It could even grant to any part of Ireland whatever autonomy the democratic majority living there wished, providing this did not entail privileges for this majority or oppression for the minority. A workers' Ireland would also seek federation with a workers' Britain and a workers' Europe. Its outlook would not be that of narrow nationalism but of the international unity of the working class fighting for a classless, nationless, stateless future for humanity.

- Reject the Major-Reynolds and the Hume-Adams peace deals!
- British Troops Out Now ! Disband the RUC and the Royal Irish Regiment!
- Release all republican militants held in British and Irish jails!
- Scrap the PTA and all bans and censorship on the media!
- Launch a campaign of mass action against repression and exploitation in the six counties!
- Create action councils based on workplace and community delegates with an armed workers' militia subordinate to them! Faced with the loyalist terror campaign workers must create a democratically controlled armed militia to defend the nationalist communities. IRA units who wish to fight for a united Ireland should put their weapons and military skills under the democratic control of the workers' militia.
- Forward to a United Irish Workers' Republic and a socialist United States of Europe
- Build a revolutionary communist party in Ireland, north and south! ■

Georgia and the Caucasus

International Secretariat, LRCI, 20 December 1993

At the same time that Russia was wracked by the confrontation between Yeltsin and the Russian Parliament in September 1993, Georgia was engulfed by civil war. Anti-Georgian separatists captured Sukhumi and the great majority of Abkhazia. Shevernadze's regime and the national army are in a process of disintegration. Tens of thousands of Georgians have left Abkhazia.

Gamsakurdia, the deposed ultra-nationalist Georgian president, was overthrown by a coalition of forces including ex-Stalinist and pro-western liberals led by Shevernadze and forces like the fascistic Georgian Horsemen. Gamsakurdia strengthened his forces in Mingrelia, a region in east Georgia whose people speak different dialect from western Georgia. Initially he offered support to Shevernadze against the Abkhazian army. But now he has started to move his troops against Tblisi. A new civil war is beginning to shake Georgia.

These conflicts are fratricidal, not progressive, wars. Shevernadze and Gamsakurdia both lead pro-capitalist and chauvinist forces. Both aim to repress and deny self-determination to the Ossetians, and they have dispersed the Abkhaz parliament.

We are in favour of the right of self-determination for Abkhazia, Batumi and Ossetia. But this issue must be decided upon democratically by their populations. We are against the smashing of the Abkhaz parliament and we defend the democratic freedoms of the working class and the oppressed against the troops of Georgia. But at the same time we are opposed to any ethnic cleansing of the large Georgian minority (43% of the population) and the manoeuvres of the Russian army, which is manipulating Abkhazia for its own strategic reasons.

We demand the creation of workers' councils and call for a multinational socialist federation of the Caucasus. We argue for the masses to fight the plans of the different local bureaucracies, and to fight against the aspirations of te new bourgeoisie to fragment the region into small micro-states that would only facilitate imperialist penetration and capitalist restoration.

Problems are mounting also in the Armenian-Azeri war and the local mountain wars. Inside the different muslim republics of the Caucasus inter-ethnic clashes are developing (Ingush versus Chechens, for example). Also there is growing conflict between these republics and the Russian Federation. We are against ethnic cleansing, for self-determination, for workers' council republics and regions, and for the unity of the toilers throughout the region to smash their bureaucratic rulers and build a socialist federation.

We defend the right of Nagorno-Karabakh to fuse with Armenia, but we are against any ethnic cleansing of Azeris. We are also against the offensive war of the Armenians in Azeri areas. Armenia is not fighting to protect its national rights, but to expand its frontiers through a reactionary expansion based on ethnic cleansing that is being backed by the emigré Armenian capitalist class. It is an offensive inspired by what Israel did to the muslim population of Palestine.

However, we cannot support Azerbaijan either. This republic has one of the most developed pro-capitalist restoration processes and is extremely closely tied to the Turkish state and capitalist class. Azebaijan is surrendering its rich oil reserves to BP and other multinationals. Turkey is the only NATO muslim country, and all the imperialist powers are backing it as a model for the central Asian former Soviet republics against muslim fundamentalism. The Latin Turkish alphabet is being restored in most of the central Asian, Turkish speaking republics.

But, despite its threats, Turkey was not allowed to invade Armenia to protect Azerbaijan. Turkey did not receive NATO permission for this, and it was fearful of provoking Russia (in whose economy the Turkish capitalists have an even greater interest).

Iran, posing as a counterweight to Turkey, has adopted a more conciliatory approach to Armenia. Economic and diplomatic interests are more important than religious solidarity. In June 1993 a former KGB general, Gaydar Aliyev, carried out a pro-Russian coup against the Pan-Turkish government of Abulfez Elchibey. This government had been severely discredited by the defeats it suffered in the war with Armenia. The new Azeri president was recently elected with more than 90% of the votes in an election that was not genuinely democratic. Now Azerbaijan has entered the CIS.

In all of these conflicts we denounce the reactionary role of the Russian army. In the Armenian-Azerbaijan war the Russian military has provided weapons to both sides with the aim both of making money and exhausting both sides. Now it has achieved the entry of both Azerbaijan and Georgia into the CIS. Shevernadze did not want to affiliate Georgia to the CIS, but he was pressured into doing so as a means of cutting Russian military aid to the Abkhaz rebels. But despite all of his concessions he was defeated and now several important members of his cabinet have broken with him.

Azerbaijan elected the ex- KGB and Brezhnevite, Aliyev as the new president with more than 90% of the votes. We are in favour of ending this reactionary war. We defend every national community against pogroms (at the moment, the Azeris against Armenian pogroms) and we demand that the working class of Armenia, Georgia and the Caucasus unite against their restorationist bureacracies and make a working class political revolution.

We demand that Yeltsin withdraw the Russian army from the area and we oppose any intervention by Turkey, Iran or any bourgeois power in the area. ■

Vladimir Zhirinovsky and the emergence of a Russian fascism

International Secretariat of the LRCI, 18 January 1994

The Russian elections of 12 December 1993 may prove to be yet another a Pyrrhic victory for Boris Yeltsin. Only 54.8% of eligible voters actually took part, a mere 30% approving the constitution. This was enough under the undemocratic rules Yeltsin imposed after his October coup. Nevertheless, this semi-bonapartist constitution will be of great use, if not to him then to his successor, in the months and years ahead. But the fast track restorationist parties who supported Yeltsin were only able to win 164 seats in the 444-seat State Duma. Moreover, these parties are sharply divided, both over policy and by open war between the cliques who run them. On 17 January Yegor Gaidar—the chief architect of reform—resigned. The other reformers, notably Boris Fyodorov and Emma Pamfilova, followed him. The acute government crisis comes at a time when factories, mines, and oil refineries are cutting off supplies to one another, failing to pay workers' wages for months on end or giving workers "paid" holidays because there is no work. The governmental crisis has sent the ruble into free fall against the dollar once again.

For the moment premier Viktor Chernomyrdin, despite the terrible electoral showing of the Civic Union, holds the decisive position. He is desperately trying to draw into the government "reformers" like Gregor Yavlinsky; to get both Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) to give him "responsible opposition" (that is, covert support) in parliament. A sustained wave of hyperinflation could blow all these combinations apart. Certainly, Chernomyrdin and Yeltsin, despite the latter's bluster that radical reform is still on track, will try to avoid the mass closures and bankruptcies which are looming. But "slow-track" restoration is no long term solution either. It will merely prolong the present chaos. It will deepen the social crisis that the December elections revealed.

The elections revealed a powerful polarisation of Russian society. On the extreme right the proto-fascist LDP became the largest single party both in terms of the percentage of the vote received and seats won on the party lists. Only its very poor showing in the individual member constituencies ensured that it gained less seats than Gaidar's party—Russia's Choice. The parties which campaigned on opposition to the whole reform package (though not against capitalist restoration itself) gained 182 seats in the lower house of parliament, some 40% as against the 164 seats, or 35%, for the deeply divided reformers. Indeed, if the whole election had been conducted on the more democratic proportional representation party list system, instead of only half the Duma seats being thus allocated, then the proportion of "reformers" would have been even smaller.

Russia's economic collapse, more severe than the one Germany suffered in the years before Hitler's rise to power, has led to the emergence of a serious proto-fascist force, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's LDP. The LDP gained 15 million votes! This was nearly one quarter of the total votes cast. Zhirinovsky's rapid advance—he got six million votes in the presidential elections of 1991—is not only a result of the economic and political crisis conditions. During the election campaign the Russian media gave Zhirinovsky much more coverage than the CPRF received. Why? Firstly, he actually supported Yeltsin's October coup, though he has since criticised the bloodiness of the repression. Whilst much of this coverage, like the Ostankino TV channel's eve of poll special programme, was very hostile it advertised Zhirinovsky as a hated opponent of the market dominated media and therefore as a suitable protest vote for all those who hate the combination of increased misery with increased pro-western market mania.

Collapse of Russia

But for all the media's hostility Zhirinovsky repeatedly used his appearances to advocate a "yes" vote for Yeltsin's "authoritarian" constitution. He is fond of saying that Russia needs a strong man and not a parliament. He has also claimed that he would ban or crush the Communists and sometimes that he would ban all parties, including his own! He clearly hopes to inherit this bonapartist instrument at the next presidential elections. Zhirinovsky's endorsement may even have been decisive in securing the passage of the constitution for Yeltsin. Yeltsin and his advisers probably calculated that Zhirinovsky would split the protest vote against the economic "reforms", keep the CPRF's vote under control, and also so alarm the West that it would ease up in its pressure on him to go even faster with the shock therapy. As a short term calculation it was not a bad one. In the longer term Yeltsin may have conjured up a genie that he will not be able to return to the bottle. Whilst these manoeuvres by Yeltsin and the media may be part of the reason for Zhirinovsky's success they are not a sufficient explanation for him getting 22.79% of the votes. The collapse of the centre parties indicates a polarisation of Russian society under the impact of the approaching economic catastrophe, classic conditions for the rise of a fascist movement.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, despite his often crazy statements, is no flash in the pan. The growth of his popular vote between the 1991 and 1993 elections is evidence enough of that. Since 1991 his main stock in trade has been ferocious Great Russian chauvinism, with a strong racist component. In the most demagogic language he evidences the humiliation and persecution of the Russian minorities in the other CIS states. He attacks the presence of non-Russian minorities in the cities of central Russia as the cause of all the crime, violence and profiteering of recent years. He stands for the expulsion of millions of non-Russians living in its cities and towns. He declares his "understanding" of the violence against them. He seeks a ban on any of them having the right to trade in Russia. He is for a ban on any non-Russian refugees being allowed into Russia. He calls for the dissolution of the current ethnic republics in the Russian Federation. He openly advocates Great Russian dominance over all other ethnic groups. The main butt of his attacks are the Caucasian and Central Asian small traders in the major cities and the "cosmopolitans intellectuals" who, according to him, dominate the media and fill it with praise for the West and un-Russian lifestyles.

Despite the near certainty that Zhirinovsky's father was Jewish and the fact that he himself was active in a Jewish organisation during 1989/90 as a low grade KGB agent, he has resorted to anti-semitic demagogy, an essential component of Great Russian chauvinism. On his visits to the west he has met and discussed with the Austrian industrialist Edwin Neuwirth, Waffen-SS veteran and holocaust revisionist. He has met with Dr Gerhard Frey's German Peoples Union (DVU) whose publications also proclaim the Nazi regime's innocence. His party the LDP, founded in 1990, was probably originally a front organisation created by the KGB and hardliners like 1991 coup plotter Anatoly Lukyanov to discredit the "democrats" and confuse the electorate. Yet unexpectedly his rabid chauvinist message struck a deep chord with sections of the electorate. Not only was he a chauvinist but he came from outside the circle of the nomenklatura, Thus he was able to denounce it in the most violent terms as corrupt, claiming it looted state property for its own private luxury. Of course, these charges are true and all ordinary Russians have known it for decades. Yeltsin gained his own early popularity by denouncing the nomenklatura's corruption. But Yeltsin, like the leaders of the other parties, "conservative" and "radical" alike, is a man of the nomenklatura. Zhirinovsky is a complete outsider. He presents himself as the champion of the common man against both the old and the new elites. Therein lies his strength.

Russian imperialism?

Zhirinovsky's economic programme, such as it is, includes an end to any aid to the former soviet republics, stopping the closure of armaments factories and opposition to their conversion to civilian use. He also promises the liquidation of the organised gangs which run the extremely violent "black market". This is a populist programme, opposed to profiteers, swindlers, the corrupt, all the effects of rampant restoration process in today's Russia. But it is not an anti-capitalist programme. His fulminations against the "informal economy", which obviously strike a chord with people suffering inflation, are directed more against the non-Russians who in his view dominate it, than against the "market" as such. Zhirinovsky's economic plans include a commitment to preserving a strong state sector especially the military-industrial complex. He has also taken up the demands of the large state enterprise managers for the reintroduction of state orders and restoring inter-enterprise links. The state should also "organise the labour market" to avoid both unemployment and strikes. This programme does not represent any kind of defence of post-capitalist property relations. In Zhirinovsky's case it is a programme for creating a strong Russian capitalism. Zhirinovsky's corporatism is some version of a state-capitalist programme for completing the restoration of capitalism. Its aim is the creation of a Russian imperialism, not a weak semi-colonial country under the domination of foreign multinationals. He shares this programme with a whole range of politicians from the centre to those onthe far right.

His most unique feature is the role he assigns to a strong army and the restoration of the territorial unity of the former USSR as the Russian State. He has threatened not only all the republics of the former USSR with re-absorption but also in his wilder flights of demagogy, Finland and Alaska. The backdrop to his election broadcast showed a map which included all these areas as falling within Russia plus a large slice of eastern Europe thrown in for good measure. He also proposes the seizure of the Middle East and the break up of the Muslim world. His book, The Last Dash to the South, advises the United States and Canada to colonise Central South America, Europe to re-colonise Africa Japan and China to take over South East Asia. Whilst these are, in one sense, wild ravings they indicate the imperialist ambitions Zhirinovsky envisages for Russia. It is thus absolutely no surprise that these policies helped win him disproportionately high vote amongst soldiers and former soldiers.

But his support is by no means restricted to soldiers. Zhirinovsky offers a "third way" to a large section of the electorate which has had its illusions in capitalist democracy shattered by economic reality and yet remembers the stagnation and political repression of Stalinism. Industrial output continues to decline, inflation is rife and massive unemployment is expected when the enterprises are forced into bankruptcy. Whilst some wages have been increased as price controls have been lifted, those on pensions and in low paid work have been affected severely. In January 1992 when price controls were lifted on 90% of goods there was a 250% price increase, virtually overnight. Chaos in the economy is mirrored by social breakdown. Black marketeering and profiteering has become rife. The levels of corruption if anything appear to have increased since the days of the Stalinists. In an opinion poll published in December, 42% described the current state of Russia as one of "increasing anarchy".

Is Vladimir Zhirinovsky a fascist? The sum total of his ideology and his statements are enough to answer this question in the affirmative. He has obviously found strong electoral support and will probably be one of the front runners in the next presidential elections. But we should not conclude that fascism is very close to triumph in

Russia. Firstly, the programme of the party put before the electorate, though a violently chauvinist one, was not overtly fascist. Thus we cannot conclude that the vote for Zhirinovsky was a vote for a fascist dictatorship. As with other fascist leaders like Le Pen in France, Zhirinovsky has to hide his full intentions behind a smokescreen of outbursts, denials and retractions. Certainly, he has likened himself to Hitler, only to then deny that he is a Nazi! Obviously in a country where 20-30 million people died in the war against the Nazis there are distinct limits to the popularity of identifying with Hitler. But such remarks are obviously aimed at a distinct "fascist constituency", such as bitter and disillusioned ex-soldiers and lumpenised youth. At the moment, however, he proclaims that his road to power lies through the electoral process, through the presidential elections which must take place by 1996 at the latest. At the same time he appeals to the army and sections of its high command. Consequently, many in his party, including some of its leaders, are not yet fascists. Zhirinovsky has to combine notoriety with a degree of continued electoral respectability. There are, in contrast to the LDP, open hard core fascists in Russia. Zhirinovsky is wary of their fate. Like most other political forces up to the 1993 elections they have failed to develop a strong, centralised party organisation or a mass base. There are currently six openly fascist groupings in Russia. There are also a number of extreme nationalist groupings which have links with fascism.

Developing fascism

The essential difference between fascism and other far right dictatorial movements is that fascism attempts to mobilise a mass movement capable of crushing working class opposition, indeed smashing all independent organisations of the labour movement. It aims to do this initially separately from, but then as a powerful supplement to, the normal mechanisms of state repression—the police and the army—when the latter have proved insufficient to this task. Trotsky always argued that what distinguished fascism from all other forms of dictatorship and bonapartism was precisely the mobilisation of masses of plebeian classes; the petit bourgeoisie, the non-class conscious sectors of the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat. Russia's restorationists, state capitalists or neo-liberals have not needed to resort to this solution yet. The rise of Zhirinovsky, however, is a sign that they are beginning to consider it and that the economic and social crisis is beginning to create the human material for this. We would be very foolish to give a normative description of fascism, based on Mussolini's or Hitler's parties and militias and then decide that any movement, such as the LDP, which did not posses all of these features, was not a fascist party. Fascist parties or movements have to come into existence, to develop. They have to assemble a mass base before hurling it into street battles. None will be exactly like its famous predecessors since each has to develop on its own national terrain and political culture. Thus Zhirinovsky's movement is precisely at a proto-fascist stage.

There are deep social reasons re-enforcing this proto- or semi-fascist stage. The classes, social strata and castes of a degenerate workers' state are in transition to the classes of a capitalist society. But this process is far from complete. The bureaucratic caste, whilst fragmented is still massive and holds key levers of power and privilege. It is wrestling to transform these into property rights. The "new bourgeoisie" is still weak and semi-criminal, confined in large measure to the sphere of distribution. The petit bourgeoisie is weak and non-Russians are differentially strong in its ranks. The millions of workers for whom there is no work have not yet been driven out of the factories and offices to create a mass lumpenproletariat. Above all, for those sections of the masses facing destitution the immediate past period of social security, is not an idealised patriarchal capitalism (as it was for the middle class of inter-war Germany) but the years of Khruschev and Brezhnev. Capitalism is increasingly a feared future not an idealised past. Russian fascism therefore faces real obstacles in mobilising desperate masses on the street against the working class and against the historic gains of the workers' state. Racism and chauvinism, aimed at the street traders from the Caucasus, or Jews in the media is an important start but will be insufficient by itself.

The decisive assault on the disintegrating planned economy had been repeatedly postponed by the struggles between the factions coming from the former nomenklatura and the new bourgeoisie. This and the continuing political paralysis of the Russian workers' movement, its continued domination by Stalinism (CPRF), means that the working class has not been seen as the principle obstacle to the establishment of a Russian capitalism and imperialism. The Russian working class is just beginning to fight back against the effects of restoration. In November, gas and construction workers were on strike for over a week in Nadym in Siberia. The miners of the Kuzbass and Vorkuta came out on strike in December. Both strikes began with demands for payment of overdue wages. In both cases the demands rapidly moved from the economic to the political, with strikers demanding a say in who should be in the cabinet. These sectors of the working class are the most used to taking action and have, until recently, had the biggest illusions in Yeltsin. Now things are changing.

Today, despite Zhirinovsky's uniformed bodyguard, the LDP is not yet a fully fledged fascist party. It has a relatively small membership of around 20,000, though this is likely to grow rapidly in the wake of the election. But it is funded by "big business" in the form of the aspirant Russian capitalist- bureaucrats of the military industrial complex. Its mass base at the moment is not the solid core of the industrial working class, not even the new poor of the cities. According to opinion polls it appeals differentially to young male voters on average or above average wages who are more concerned about the humiliation of Russia and its army and issues of law and order rather than economic hardship. All these facts show the LDP's potential to become a fascist force and as we have seen the "need" for such a weapon may at last be materialising. With an obvious passive electoral mass base, with big money to back them from sections of the military industrial complex, and with increasing numbers of desperate young unemployed and dismissed soldiers willing and able to be active, there is no objective reason why the Russian fascists should not resolve their

differences and coalesce into a fully fascist party with organised street gangs. Zhirinovsky's high level of support in the army and the easy availability of weapons all indicate that if resistance to the restoration process steps up, then what is at present a semi- or a proto-fascist party can become a fully fledged mass fascist movement.

But the elections are not a sign that the decisive battles have been already lost or that fascism is inevitable in Russia.

Two parties based on the urban and rural workers of Russia, the CPRF and the Agrarian party between them got slightly more votes than Zhirinovsky's party. The CPRF has 600, 000 members and its strength is shown in the fact that it did equally well in the party list and individual member sections. It was correct for revolutionaries to give a highly critical vote for this Stalinist Party which alone opposed both Yeltsin's constitution and the "reformers" attacks on the remains of the planned economy.

But this vote had to be highly critical. Since the election the party's leader Gannadii Zyuganov has been seeking and establishing a de facto block in the Duma with Zhirinovsky. He is on record as saying that there are many sensible people in the LDP.

Many former members of the nomenklatura and the KGB, many former or present friends of his from the now banned National Salvation Front, is what he means. But these swine are no friends of the working class. Russian workers, including the members of, and voters for, the CPRF must demand a total break with the fascist Zhirinovsky. Workers do not need "constructive opposition" to Yeltsin or Chernomyrdin, but the launching by the trade unions and the so-called communist party of an active mass struggle against them all. They must at the same time reject with contempt Gaidar's post-election call for a popular front against fascism. It is Gaidar's "reforms" that gave Zhirinovsky so much support. Only mass direct action, strike action, giving a lead to all who feel helpless faced with the collapse of the economy and the welfare system, can halt the rise of the LDP.

If the working class can rouse itself from its passivity and atomisation then the fascist scum like Zhirinovsky will easily be flushed back down the sewers from which they have crawled. Workers will need to organise their own militia, drawing in the unemployed and the ex-soldiers, to do this. A united front of the working class including those from the oppressed and threatened nationalities can smash both Yeltsin and Zhirinovsky. Russian workers must place no reliance whatsoever on a top-heavy party of bureaucrats like the CPRF to lead such a struggle. Indeed, there is a great danger that this party will try to lock the workers into a "patriotic" pact with Zhirinovsky. Above all the Russian workers need a new revolutionary party to lead the way in these combined struggles, to provide a real alternative to Stalinism, fascism and the unfettered market. ■

South Africa on the eve of the elections: an action programme

International Secretariat, LRCI, 23 March, 1994

South Africa's first elections by universal suffrage are the result of direct action by the trade unions and the township youth, which broke the Apartheid regime's will to resist. But the leadership of the ANC has broken its pledge to see through a democratic revolution in South Africa.

The result of these elections will not be a sovereign Constituent Assembly, with sole control over all the armed forces, which can appoint a government from whatever parties it wishes by simple majority, with no restrictions or reservations based on race or nationality, able to decide on ownership of the factories, mines and land.

Only an Assembly which consists of representatives immediately answerable and recallable to mass meetings of their electors could hope to fulfil the democratic and social needs of the masses.

The ANC leaders' deal with De Klerk places parliament under the guns of a South African Defence Force (SADF) scarcely altered by the addition of the ANC's MK military units, under the same racist commanders who gunned down thousands of fighters for freedom. It secures inequality in political representation, and a powerful role in government for the National Party for a long period ahead. It guarantees the multinational corporations their property and the super-exploitation of the working class.

The ANC's concessions block all serious attempts to solve the land question, to put the unemployed to work, to mobilise the resources needed for education, housing, public health—resources that can only be secured by workers' ownership and control of the mines, factories and fields.

A coalition between the ANC and the former Apartheid parties will inaugurate not a democratic revolution but a democratic counter-revolution. Although this rests on the democratic liberties won by the masses since 1984, it blocks the achievement of the real content of this struggle: jobs, land, decent housing and health care for all.

For this reason, despite the enormous prestige of the ANC leaders, we say to the workers of South Africa and the youth of the townships: do not vote for the ANC or the sell out they are trying to impose.

Real revolutionaries always warned that a revolution which stopped at the "stage" of parliamentary democracy and a market economy (capitalism) would not only obstruct the struggle for socialism but would be an abortion of democracy itself.

The ANC's sell out shows that no "front of democratic forces" can lead the masses to victory, to the uprooting of the social inequality and chronic poverty to which racist capitalism has condemned the great majority of the population. Only a party based on the working class and the township masses, a revolutionary workers' party, can see the struggle through to victory. Such a party should be using these elections to denounce the rotten settlement. The working class, the unions and the mass organisations of the townships must fight to build that party.

• Workers should call on their elected representatives to break the agreement with De Klerk and the National Party and declare themselves a Sovereign Constituent Assembly. They should be answerable to and recallable by mass meetings of their electors and pledge themselves to accept only the wage of a skilled worker, handing over the rest to their constituents.

• Workers should demand of their unions and the SACP that they refuse any and all support for an ANC-NP government. The unions should break their alliance with the ANC, and form a workers party on a revolutionary programme for a socialist South Africa.

• Fight for a workers' government based on the mass organisations of the working class and the townships. Only a workers' government could smash the entire machinery of the Apartheid state and take measures against big capital to enable the urgent needs of the masses to be satisfied.

• Arrest all the High Command and the officer corps of the racist SADF and police. Down with a standing army, armed against the masses! Disarm all the white racist forces. The black soldiers and MK fighters should be employed to train the masses in the use of arms and to provide NCOs and officers for a workers' and people's militia. Transform the local Self Defence Units into real workers' and people's militias. Open the arsenals and arm the workers and the township masses! Smash the AWB, all racist paramilitaries and the Inkatha death squads!

• Dismiss the racist, unelected judiciary. Release all political prisoners and all the victims of racist injustice! The election of popular tribunals from the working people! All the racist criminals and their stooges and informers must be brought to justice! Dismiss the state bureaucrats that have administered apartheid!

• Meet the immediate needs of the unemployed and the homeless! For a massive programme of public works. Build houses, hospitals, nurseries, schools, libraries, sports centres, meeting halls! For electrification, mains water supply, sewerage, road and public transport provision or extension. For the training of teachers, doctors and other health workers.

• End the super-exploitation of black workers. Equal pay at the highest existing rate for the job. Promotion of black workers in proportion to their numbers in the workforce to all the higher scientific, technical and supervisory grades, with special training wherever this is necessary. Employ black men and women in the white-collar jobs and professions up to proportionality within the population. For a national minimum wage at a level set by a congress of COSATU. For a sliding scale of wages fixed to a cost of living index calculated by the unions and women's organisations in the townships.

• "Where will the money come from?" cry the bosses and their lackeys. From the rich, from the South African and multinational corporations! These bloodsuckers must be subjected to a punitive wealth tax, a steeply progressive income tax and the nationalisation without compensation of all the resources and materials needed for the Public Works Programme.

• Stop the lay-offs and dismissals. Nationalise, without compensation, all workplaces declaring retrenchment and redundancies. Establish immediate workers' control in every factory, mine and office. Pay the existing unemployed the average industrial wage. Organise the unemployed into a national movement, allied to the unions. For the immediate reinstatement of all unionists blacklisted and victimised.

• Down with the National Economic Forum! No deals between COSATU and the big corporations! Not a block with the bosses but a remorseless struggle against them! No wage restraint! No austerity programmes dictated by the IMF and the World Bank! Unconditionally renounce the debts accumulated by the racists in defence of Apartheid!

• Land to the landless rural population! Expropriation of all large farms! Modern large scale agriculture should come immediately under the control of the agricultural workers. Other land should be distributed to all who wish to farm it either co-operatively or individually. For councils of land workers and small farmers to carry out the Agrarian Revolution.

• The remaining structure of the homelands must be swept away. It is the will of the great majority that South Africa should become a unitary state. No bastions of white privilege or stooge rulers in the "homelands" can be left by a thoroughgoing revolution. Yet, after the demolition of the last remnants of the Apartheid regime and its system of privileges, a democratic South Africa—let alone a socialist one—could not deny to any formerly oppressed nationality or linguistic group the right to self-determination. This must include the right to secede if they expressed this wish democratically and there was no question of it involving the oppression of others. But workers do not seek to multiply state borders along ethnic or linguistic divisions. Quite the opposite: we are for as large and united a federation of workers' states in Africa as possible.

• Down with the privileges for English and Afrikaans! No state language; equality for all languages to be used in education, state administration and the law! Take newspaper publishing and all broadcasting into the hands of workers' and civic organisations. Freedom of expression for all except the forces of racism and counterrevolution. For an emergency programme to wipe out illiteracy, to make up for the poor quality and under-resourced schooling of Apartheid! Hungry and overworked children cannot study; child allowances and grants for school children and free school meals as a right! For a massive expansion of technical and scientific training at secondary and tertiary levels. More resources for culture, sports and entertainment.

• End the oppression and super-exploitation of women. For the right to work, equal pay, creches and nurseries in the workplace and the communities. For local clinics where free health and maternity care, contraception and abortion facilities, are available on demand. Against domestic violence and rape, women must be organised and refuges provided. A mass movement of working class women linking up and developing the existing workplace and community organisations and allied to the unions and other workers organisations needs to be built. The democratic and social rights of other sections of the oppressed, lesbians and gay men, children, must be championed without equivocation by the working class movement.

• The ANC-National Party Government will not only fail to meet the expectations of the great mass of its supporters but will attempt to solve the problems of the economy at the expense of the working class and township poor. Mass struggle will be necessary from day one. The COSATU officials and the leadership of most of the mass organisations will try to obstruct resistance because of their subordination to the ANC. A militant and democratic renewal of the unions and township organisations is needed to stop the leaders putting the brakes on the struggles of the masses. Shop stewards' committees, township committees must come together as workers' councils. Their delegates must be elected at mass meetings and be instantly recallable. There must be a single mass united trade union federation.

• Workers' councils can be instruments of mass struggle and organs of workers' power, more democratic than any parliament. Workers' council power alone can provide both strong government, able to crush the resistance of the capitalists and the racists, and democratic government, for and by the working masses themselves. The rule of the working class—the dictatorship of the proletariat—is the only road to socialism, because it will mobilise the creativity and initiative of millions of workers and township poor to plan economic transformation.

Workers' councils, backed by an armed workers' and popular militia, will enable the masses to do away with

a state bureaucracy and a standing army, smash this machinery of repression and privilege, and move towards greater and greater equality and prosperity, towards the abolition of classes altogether. Such a socialist transformation of South Africa cannot be undertaken by peaceful means. The bourgeoisie, white and black, will try to stop it by any means necessary. Therefore, the proletarian revolution must involve an armed insurrection of the organised working class and township youth.

• The democratic revolution against racism cannot be fulfilled unless a workers' government goes on immediately to enact socialist measures. Nationalise all large scale industry, mining, business, commerce and banks, putting them under workers' management. Establish a monopoly of foreign trade. For a congress of workers' and township delegates to draft an emergency plan and create a democratic planning apparatus.

• As the experience of the Soviet Union showed, socialism cannot be finally achieved in a single country. It can only be achieved by the mobilisation of the resources of the whole world. These can only come into the hands of the workers by the international proletarian revolution.

A workers' revolution in South Africa will be a mighty summons to action for the working class and poor peasants of Africa and beyond. It could lead rapidly to the creation of a socialist United States first of Southern and then the whole of Africa.

Electoral tactics in the South African elections

International Secretariat, LRCI, 23 March 1994

1. Events in early 1994 have largely confirmed the positions adopted by the LRCI towards the South African elections outlined in the IS Resolution of 13 June 1993 and modified by that of 23 November 1993.1 The ANC's continued concessions to the demands of the centre and right on constitutional issues and its entry into the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) confirm its transition from a petty bourgeois led national liberation movement worthy of critical support into the main agent of bourgeois democratic counter-revolution, preparing to govern in coalition with the National Party. As such workers' organisations cannot vote for this party in the coming elections. However, it retains its "Peoples Front Party" character because of the continued presence of the South African Communist Party (SACP) in its ranks and by virtue of the electoral "Alliance" of ANC/COSATU/SACP.

2. Although the ANC has mass working class support it is not a workers' party of any variety. The connections it presently retains with the workers' organisations are a result of its history as a heavily Stalinist-influenced national liberation movement in an industrial country. They do not result from any attempts by the working class to set up its own party in opposition to the mainstream bourgeois parties. The trade unions are not organised within the ANC structures and have no method of influencing its decisions except through the "Alliance". Increasingly, the ANC is becoming a representative for black business and more importantly for imperialist capital in conjunction with the big South African monopolies.

3. Despite the fact that the SACP is itself a major architect of the reactionary settlement, a critical vote for this party could have been possible if this was combined with a call on it to break with the bourgeoisie and an appeal to its leading worker militants to abandon all collaboration with the bosses' government that the ANC will form. But this was predicated on being able to vote for SACP candidates but not for the bourgeois candidates on the ANC list. But the actual system used, whereby no party or union candidates are distinguishable, makes this impossible. The common list means that workers cannot vote just for the candidates proposed by COSATU. Moreover COSATU will have no mechanism for calling these representatives to account.

4. The call for a workers' party launched at the 1993 NUMSA conference has initiated a serious and protracted debate in the workers' movement. In the period of the recomposition and growth of the SACP (1989-1993) the slogan had no purchase within the workers movement and we rightly did not raise it. But the refusal of the SACP to break with bourgeois forces in the ANC, its role in creating the sell out and the insistence of its leadership on maintaining the Alliance, created conditions in the workers' movement where the slogan became relevant once again. Militants who see the need for working class independence are now faced with the task of building a new party. As we argued in November 1993 the best time for building such a party—a mass workers' party based on the trade unions with rights for factions to struggle within its ranks - was in the pre-election period when the need for workers to have their open

voice and programme, to oppose the sell out to the capitalists, has been paramount.

5. However, the opponents of the workers' party in the unions have succeeded in blocking the project until "after the elections". Within the major unions and in COSATU, SACP supporters were able to argue that while the unions certainly needed to assert their independence after the election, the key task at the elections was defeating the National Party and bringing an ANC government to power.

The left of the SACP has suggested various workers' conferences designed to consider new working class alliances. Pressures will undoubtedly build up within the ranks of the SACP after the elections as fissures develop in the ANC along class lines. Ramaphosa and Niehause would emerge as fully fledged bourgeois politicians while those more closely linked organisationally and ideologically to the working class could look to the formation of a bourgeois workers' party along the lines of the British Labour Party.

6. However, it is no use sitting back and waiting for this to happen as advocated by the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT). The MWT have lined up with the fake lefts in the SACP, and substituted a schema in place of serious analysis. Their call for a "massive vote for the ANC" follows the lines of Militant's old strategic adaptation to the Labour Party in Britain, combined with over-optimistic perspectives for the South African class struggle. Their conclusion is that calls for a workers' party are "premature". The workers need their own party or at the very least their own candidates now.

7. The position of ISSA is equally craven. Terry Bell Bell is able to criticise the variant of the workers' party tactic presented by WOSA (a Mass Workers' Party on the model of the Brazilian Patrido dos Trabhaldores—PT), pointing out that this has a reformist logic. But, by a sleight of hand, he then declares that any call for the building of a mass workers' party must inevitably lead in such a direction. The alternative? The workers will just have to wait for the slow painstaking building of a Leninist party out of the ISSA. Meanwhile, they should—vote for the bourgeois ANC!

8. Any authentic revolutionary communist grouping would in the present circumstances do all it could to present its own list of candidates for the elections. This would present the best possibility for spreading propaganda for an action programme for a proletarian revolution in South Africa. The refusal of these assorted lefts to even contemplate a break with the bourgeoisie in the run up to the election has left the independent forces seriously weakened. There are however two centrist candidacies, one of the tiny Workers Revolutionary Party and the other a "Workers List Party" which includes WOSA and possibly some other working class organisations which we have not yet identified for certain.

9. The WRP does not have any serious working class support and may only be standing in one or two regions. On our current information there is no reason to support it. The "Workers List Party" looks a more serious proposition as it is a national list. Previous information suggested that WOSA was standing on its own and had pulled the plug on the Workers Party attempt. Given its weak roots in the working class and centrist programme there would be no reason to support WOSA on its own. But if it and a number of other organisations have succeeded in winning the support of at least some leaders of the working class vanguard for a workers' party list then we will critically support it on that basis even though its programme is centrist. If this is not the case then we advocate the spoiling of ballot papers (i.e. active abstention). ■

Theses on the United Front Tactic

International Executive Committee, LRCI, January 1994

1. The Nature and Principles of the United Front Tactic

1.1 The basic principles of the united front are simple ones. They apply to all agreements for delimited, practical, common actions which the revolutionary party proposes to, or undertakes with, other organisations based on the proletariat, on other exploited classes or on the socially or nationally oppressed. These principles can be summed up in the military metaphor, "march separately, strike together". This means political and organisational independence of the revolutionary proletarian forces combined with unity of action against a common enemy.

1.2 These are the principles which govern the relations between the revolutionary vanguard and other organisations of the exploited and the oppressed in the struggle against capitalism, imperialism and against all forms of reaction. These principles have various spheres of application which fall into two broad categories: the Workers' United Front, whose purpose is to achieve class unity and independence in a concrete struggle against the bourgeoisie; an alliance or bloc with non-proletarian oppressed classes against reaction, especially, in the present epoch, against imperialism and its agents. The united front, bloc, or alliance can pass through the phases of an appeal, negotiations between organisations, the striking of an agreement, its active operation and then its breaking off or dissolution. Only in a minority of cases is it likely to pass through all of these stages.

1.3 The united front, as a bloc that can be called for, must be distinguished from purely episodic, co-incidental actions, where no agreement on a common immediate goal or co-ordinated tactics is involved. Such coincidental actions, for example a fascist trade union supporting a justified workers' strike, imply no advocacy of a bloc whatsoever. Likewise, the united front must be distinguished from mere participation in a mass demonstration whose political basis and leadership the revolutionary organisation opposes and for which it takes no responsibility. Here, the revolutionary party is not in a bloc with the leaders, gives no support to their slogans, criticises them openly and makes propaganda and agitation for its own slogans. In short, the united front must be struck between those organisations with which it is principled for the revolutionary proletariat to form temporary agreements for common action.

1.4 Another distinction is between political actions and an exclusively military bloc, an agreement simply to co-ordinate fighting forces against a common enemy. Such agreements could be struck with bourgeois forces in a war situation without in any sense constituting a united front. However, in other circumstances, a military bloc—the formation of an anti-fascist workers' militia for example—could have a clear united front character. Mere military means are not the decisive issue since war is the continuation of politics. The question is, what is the bloc for and with whom is it struck? More problematically, in some languages and national traditions, a distinction has been made between the *united front* proper, which is conceived of as a longer term formal agreement involving a campaign, and *common* or *united actions* which are limited to a single event. Whatever the virtues of these terms one thing is clear: the basic principles of the united front apply to each and every one of them.

1.5 At the heart of the united front tactic is the objective of establishing the correct ongoing relationship between the revolutionary party and the working class masses. This relationship must be permanent. Yet it must also pass through constant changes since the class struggle itself is both permanent and changing in its form. The united front is thus a ubiquitous tactic, a tactic that is repeatedly being deployed in one form and in one arena or another. However, no one form of the united front is a permanently deployed part of the revolutionary party's strategy. The united front itself is not a strategy but a tactic. Indeed, it is a whole category of tactics set within the overall strategy of the proletariat. In pursuing any one form of the united front, revolutionaries must keep before their eyes this overall strategy: the seizure of state power by workers' and peasants' councils and militias and the establishment of a world communist society by means of proletarian revolution. To realise this strategy in practice an independent Leninist-Trotskyist revolutionary party is an indispensable necessity. Only such a party can embody full class independence from the bourgeoisie and lead the proletariat in the struggle to establish its own dictatorship.

1.6 In order to arrive at this point, we have to transform initially small revolutionary nuclei into mass parties which have won the confidence of the broadest layers of the exploited masses. Today, the great majority of the workers in the world support non-revolutionary and even counter-revolutionary organisations. Revolutionaries need to expose the nature of these organisations and deprive them of their leadership, or rather misleadership, of the proletariat and the oppressed. On its own, propagandistic exposure of their errors and crimes is insufficient to achieve this. It is necessary to demonstrate in practice that the reformist, or centrist, led organisations cannot adequately defend or fight for working class interests. The revolutionary party has to deploy a range of tactics which prove to the masses in the course of the class struggle itself that it is the only consistent working class party. The party, in turn, must learn how

to lead actual mass struggles, to demonstrate its capacity as an alternative leadership. In this process it must show both its independent initiative and its ability to coordinate its forces loyally with other mass organisations of the working class. The mass of the working class, not yet won to revolutionary leadership, must come to trust the communists in daily battles and compare them favourably with their unreliable present leaders. This is the vital role that the united front tactic plays in the construction of a revolutionary party.

1.7 The lasting gain of a correct united front policy is the exposure of the limitations of reformism, anarchism, syndicalism, centrism and various bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideologies and programmes within the working class and the eventual replacement of all vacillating and inconsistent leaderships with a revolutionary communist one. At every stage, it should strengthen the revolutionary organisation through increased recruitment and deepened roots in the mass organisations.

1.8 The united front, however, is not only and solely a means to build the revolutionary party. It is a tactic in the ongoing class struggle which seeks to establish the broadest possible fighting unity of the exploited and oppressed masses despite their present political differentiation. The purpose of this unity is to repulse the attacks of the bosses and bourgeois governments and to secure better economic, social and political conditions for the working class and its allies in a way that brings nearer the goal of overthrowing capitalism. In this sense, the united front arises in the first place from the needs of the class struggle. For this very reason, the revolutionaries do not simply respond to calls for common action against the class enemy but are the first to initiate the call whenever the class struggle demands united action.

1.9 In consequence, the united front presupposes, on the one hand, the maintenance of an independently organised revolutionary organisation based on a transitional programme for the seizure of state power and the overthrow of capitalism. This party must participate as an independent detachment and not dissolve itself in the united front. On the other hand, the necessity of the united front presupposes the existence of broad non-revolutionary masses under the sway of other political forces.

1.10 The united front cannot be regarded as an uninterrupted series of actions with the same partner up to and including the seizure of power. Its repeated use constitutes only a series of tactics within the framework of the overall strategy of the proletarian vanguard party. This strategy necessarily includes the independent actions of the party. In widely different forms, the united front is constantly being struck and broken. It must never be turned into a systematic subordination of the proletarian vanguard to any limited platform of demands which are acceptable to various non-revolutionary leaders of mass organisations. This would be to relegate the revolutionary programme itself to passive propaganda and to restrict agitation solely to immediate or at best, transitional, demands.

1.11 The united front is a differentiated unity. It is common action for clearly limited and prescribed goals; it also entails the sharpest criticism of the united front partners. Without the first, the capitalist attacks cannot be repelled or new gains won; without the second, the gains cannot be maintained nor the revolution advanced. All mistakes in the application of the united front begin when this differentiated unity is replaced by a formal identity between the tasks of the revolutionary organisation and the limited and immediate needs of the class.

1.12 Ultra-leftism in united front tactics invariably begins when the revolutionary programme is advanced in counterposition to the demands essential to the immediate tasks facing the mass of the working class. For the ultra-leftist, the united front is posed as an ultimatum to deliberately court its rejection by reformist and centrist leaders in the vain belief that this exposes them. Such "exposure" has a purely literary character. The reformist leaders are never exposed because they fail to carry out revolutionary tactics or strategy but rather because they fail to fight for the immediate interests of the masses. The sectarian avoids being measured on the practical terrain of the class struggle, fearing that they will succumb to opportunist temptations.

1.13 The opportunist starts not from the platform of struggle, or even a single demand dictated by the objective needs of the class struggle, but rather by what the present consciousness of the masses is deemed to be. Worse, the opportunists frequently base their united front policy on what the leaders of the non-revolutionary masses can be expected to accept. Against this, the scope of the proposals put forward by revolutionaries for a united front, while likely to be less than the "full programme", is also likely to be considerably in advance of the timid proposals of the reformist leaders and even ahead of the general consciousness of the masses. The aim of the united front must be to link the present consciousness of the masses (and especially the advanced sections) to the urgent tasks of the day as dictated by the nature of the enemy's attacks.

1.14 Because the united front is not a strateg,y there is no such thing as a "united front programme" that goes seamlessly from today's struggles to the seizure of power. The revolutionary organisation advances those parts of its programme that appear necessary to unite broader forces in a practical fight. Having determined the nature of the attack and the balance of class forces, the revolutionary organisation raises concrete demands that, taken together, amount to a fighting unity to repel the particular attack or secure a new advance.

1.15 The character of the demands to be fought for in the united front does not fall into any schematic categorisation. The demands must be specific, precise and avoid all extraneous and artificial demands or ideological dressing that do not bear upon the achievement of the common goal. Any concrete united front proposal could consist of only one type of demand; e.g. immediate economic demands, democratic demands, transitional demands. Or, it can be offered, or struck, on a platform of several demands which are tied together as a combined series of actions to meet a particular crisis. It can even consist of a single demand. A united front can thus be a single action—a strike, an armed action—or it can be a longer campaign of actions. Valid criticism of a united front proposal can only be that it excluded an essential demand for an action to which it would be possible to win

the masses and expose their leaders if it was refused. The absence of many revolutionary demands from a united front platform cannot be taken as a valid criticism. The presence of such demands in a non-revolutionary situation is a sure sign of passive propagandism, scholasticism and sectarianism. On the other hand, in conditions of mass upsurge in the class struggle it becomes indispensable to fight for such revolutionary demands as the best expression of the united front.

1.16 The demands must be associated with clear and precise methods of struggle (e.g. demonstrations, strikes, defence squads, armed militias) and forms of organisation (e.g. strike committees, mobilisation committees, soviets). The united front can vary in form and durability according to the nature of the attack. Committees which exist to co-ordinate a series of diverse or repeated actions aimed at achieving the objective are united front organisations; in this sense the united front is more than the action itself (e.g. a demonstration) but embraces its preparation and post festum evaluation.

1.17 With what forces may a united front, or a bloc based on united front principles, be made? There is no timeless answer to this question. It depends on the epoch, the type of country (imperialist, semi-colony or degenerated workers' state), the objectives of the struggle, the class forces involved and the degree of class differentiation. For example, in an imperialist country a "united front" with a bourgeois party is impermissible because no section of the bourgeoisie has a fundamental difference of interest with the rest of its class that would bind it to an effective fighting alliance with the proletariat. Nor would it form such an alliance without demanding as a pre-condition that the proletariat subordinate its class struggle (both for immediate demands and its struggle for power) to the limited objectives of the alliance. In short, it would be a popular front.

1.18 The popular front is a bloc between bourgeois forces and workers' organisations in which the latter accept programmes that restrict the workers within the limits set by private property and which protect the bourgeois state. What distinguishes a united front from a popular front is not the participation of open bourgeois or petit bourgeois forces in itself, but the political subordination by the proletariat to the platform of the bourgeoisie.

Such a bloc can be just as dangerous when it involves very weak bourgeois forces (the "shadow of the bourgeoisie"). The workers' parties that have undertaken these false united fronts "in defence of democracy" end up defending the bourgeoisie and capitalism against the proletariat (e.g. Spain 1936, Chile 1973). The popular front is, as Trotsky said, a noose around the neck of the proletariat.

No popular front ever opened the road to socialism. On the contrary, they have repeatedly opened the road to an anti-working class counter-revolution. Genuine Trotskyists always fight against popular fronts. They are in favour of working class unity, and for independence from not with the bourgeoisie. We place demands on all the workers' parties and unions, whose leaders have taken them down the road of class collaboration and the popular front, to break with the capitalist parties, to defend the workers' rights and to take up the fight for workers' power.

1.19 Nevertheless, different conditions sometimes exist in a colony or a semi-colony. The national bourgeoisie can find itself crushed and exploited by imperialist big capital, oppressed by imperialist armed intervention or by local military forces acting for imperialism. Under such pressure bourgeois nationalist parties not only resort to anti-imperialist rhetoric but, on rare occasions, may also enter into a real struggle with the imperialists or their local agents.

Normally, in such conditions it is the radical petit-bourgeoisie which engage inconsistently in such struggles and with whom the proletariat can form an Anti-Imperialist United Front (AIUF). But it cannot be excluded that a bourgeois party, with a mass plebeian following, might do so. In these conditions it too could be included in the proposal for an AIUF. Providing there was no tying of the proletariat's hands, no renunciation of the struggle for power—let alone any promised support for a bourgeois government—such an AIUF would not be a popular front.

1.20 In semi-colonies (and even in certain very particular circumstances in imperialist countries and degenerated workers' states) politically bourgeois forces, which have a mass plebeian and even a working class following and which are suffering a systematic social oppression (e.g. racial and national minorities, women) could participate in actions based on united front principles without such a bloc thereby becoming a popular front. Clearly, the issues would be defensive and limited both in scope and duration.

The key question would be whether the demands which such forces would fight for would be either sufficient for, or necessary to, the workers' own struggle at that particular conjuncture. Bourgeois parties of the racially or nationally oppressed or bourgeois women's organisations could be drawn into united actions or campaigns, especially where their leaders hold the allegiance of large sectors of the oppressed, particularly of the oppressed workers. For the revolutionary party, the aim of such united action, besides maximising the forces against bourgeois reaction, would be the breaking of the proletarian base from the bourgeois leaders of the oppressed. Joint action would submit these leaders to exposure in struggle.

1.21 The permissibility or non-permissibility of any united front does not depend upon the past record of the leaders of the other parties in the bloc. If the united front was necessary with mass workers' organisations led by Kerensky, Noske, Zorgiebel or Stalin—who were responsible for the murder of revolutionary workers—we cannot rule out the united front with today's leaders. The united front with counter-revolutionary leaders is a necessary evil, hence the famous dictum that the united front could be struck "with the devil and his grandmother". The offer of the united front is not a vote of confidence in this leadership.

1.22 The freedom to criticise these leaders throughout the common action is an essential principle of the united front. Such criticism must be directed at the vacillations of the bloc partners in carrying out the objectives of the united front as well as at their broader political failings. There should be no common propaganda, which can only be made at the cost of leaving aside important—even

decisive—differences between revolution and reform. The only allowable materials are common publications associated with the united front (e.g. strike committee bulletins, mobilising leaflets for demonstrations). The precise balance between common action and criticism cannot be laid down according to pre-ordained formulae. We reserve the right to criticise our partners before, during and after the common action. When, and in what form, we exercise that right depends on concrete judgement made in the given circumstances. But that criticism should be made is obligatory.

1.23 The united front must be addressed to the rank and file and the leadership. We reject the idea of the united front from below only as a self-defeating and ultra-left trap. If the workers could be persuaded to abandon their leaders by such a direct and unilateral appeal there would be no need for the united front at all. The purpose of directing the united front appeal at the leaders is to draw them into action. Through this experience, rather than declamatory exposures, we can prove to the masses that the limitations of their leaders are fatal.
In the great majority of cases, the united front will remain at the stage of a proposal, rather than an agreement formally struck with reformist leaders. In these conditions, it remains at the level of an agitational and popular propaganda campaign aimed at the rank and file of the reformist organisations.

1.24 Even where some success is achieved in breaking off radicalised workers from their leaders, the united front retains its full validity and force for those who remain behind. The united front from below directed overwhelmingly at the rank and file may sometimes be necessary where the leaders have refused to act in concert with the revolutionaries. Here it is necessary to combine denunciations of the leaders with proposals for action aimed at the rank and file to be carried out under revolutionary leadership. However, even here, part of the tactic is to generate pressure upon the leaders to act which, if successful, can only have the effect of drawing even more layers into action.

1.25 Breaking the united front can be as important as making it. Where the united front has served its purpose, the goal achieved or not attained, the united front needs to be redefined or broken and the lessons drawn. The following circumstances may necessitate the breaking of the united front: where the united front is maintained only as diplomatic or literary exercise and entails no obligation to act; where the bloc partners are sabotaging or undermining the aims of the united front by non-implementation or compromises with the class enemy; where the united front partners refuse to take seriously the extension of the united front to other mass forces but restrict the bloc to sect-like proportions. But at the same time revolutionaries must attempt to continue the united struggle with the rank and file leadership, establishing their own leadership and winning to their ranks the best elements from the non-revolutionary organisations.

1.26 Observing the foregoing considerations is essential if the united front is to be principled. However, alone this does not guarantee either that it will be principled or successful. A concrete analysis of a concrete situation alone can reveal what is the correct basis for a united front proposal. Leadership and experience is required, accumulated over years while intervening in the class struggle, in order to determine what united front demands are permissible and necessary and to what forces these demands should be addressed. However, by understanding the basic purpose and principles of the united front, revolutionaries can prevent many unnecessary and elementary errors.

2. *The Workers' United Front*

2.1 The workers' united front tactic was first codified at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (CI). At this time, the post-war revolutionary tide had ebbed. The capitalist class were on the offensive throughout the world and the young Communist Parties had failed to win a majority of the working class in most countries. With the United Front tactic the Communist Parties were to place demands on the reformists and the centrists to defend the workers' interests and organisations against the capitalist offensive. The CI raised the slogan, "march separately, strike together". The communists also demanded that the non-communist organisations of the working class, trade unions as well as parties, break with the bourgeoisie and take up the struggle to create workers' councils and militias.

2.2 The objective of the workers' united front is to achieve the maximum unity in action for the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. At its heart, is the assertion of class independence. Its guiding principle is the challenge addressed by the revolutionary organisation to the reformist and centrist leaders of serious or mass workers' organisations; "Break with the bourgeoisie!". Unity of the workers means a split with the bourgeoisie, its state and its parties. The principles of the workers' united front are those stated above, applied to united proletarian class struggle, whether of a defensive or offensive kind. It can be applied to both the most limited and defensive of actions or action as well as to an offensive against the entire bourgeois order. In pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations it can be developed into the challenge: "Break with the bourgeoisie; take the road of struggle for a workers' government!"

2.3 Workers' united front principles find a wide sphere of application in the trade unions. Indeed, the trade unions are themselves in an important sense "united fronts" for the defence of the workers' economic social and political interests within capitalism. United fronts, by their very nature, embrace the broadest possible strata of the wage earners. Hence, communists are against sticking party labels on the unions, against subordinating them mechanically to party leadership. The unions are, and must remain, organisationally autonomous bodies. Only thus can they be "schools for socialism" for the less class conscious workers. But this principled attitude has nothing in common with the attempt to keep the unions "unpolitical". The revolutionary party openly and honestly fights for leadership by gaining the confidence of the union membership.

2.4 On the road to winning leadership in the unions, the revolutionary nucleus will have to form temporary alliances—united fronts—with non-revolutionary but militant and democratic forces with the object of commit-

ting the unions to class struggle and establishing ever more democratic control by the rank and file over the bureaucracy, ultimately eliminating it as an agency of the bosses altogether. Such united fronts may be only episodic, related to important conjunctural battles. But it is also necessary to build a more systematic campaign for the democratisation of the unions and the triumph of more militant and, indeed, revolutionary tactics. For this "Rank and File Movement" it is not possible to stipulate in advance, and for all circumstances, a fixed platform of demands but revolutionaries do propose a revolutionary, transitional action programme because such a movement is an instrument for winning leadership of the unions. Should we not succeed in winning this, but remain the minority, we would not break the united front as long as the rank and file movement really fights the trade union bureaucracy and pursues a militant policy.

2.5 The revolutionary party must fight for its own programme—for the transformation of the trade unions into instruments of the revolution (alongside factory councils, soviets, workers' militia). By contrast, a rank and file movement has the character of a united front even where the revolutionary party is a major influence. Accordingly, the specific action programme of such a movement will depend on the level of development of the consciousness of the most militant sectors of the masses, the political character of their present leadership and the independent strength of the revolutionary vanguard. The aim of the party is to win the militant rank and file for its programme even if, on the road to this, it will undoubtedly have to accept more limited platforms of immediate action and even put them forward itself. The party's trade union policy must never become identical with the actions of a united front. The united front must never become confused with the party's trade union fractions. These are made up of party members and all those who accept the party's entire programme for the trade unions and act under its discipline.

2.6 The urge for unity is strongest in the unions. Revolutionaries must not only respect this but be the foremost fighters for it. The trade union bureaucracy emphasises unity in inaction and unity with the employers and the bourgeoisie. This is the unity of the graveyard. On the road to fighting unity it is necessary for the vanguard of the class to take the initiative. Revolutionaries must also point out that a united workers' struggle for victory will necessitate "disunity" with the bureaucracy when it sells out or betrays the struggle. The necessary disunity with the traitorous leaders may even lead to a split in the trade unions themselves. Communists are not in favour of splitting the unions, and certainly do not seek to do so in order to achieve political dominance over small, ineffective "red unions". But, on the other hand, no class conscious trade unionist should accept catastrophic betrayals or a regime of terror and expulsions from the unions when substantial sections of the rank and file stand behind them. In such conditions, they should not flinch from breaking the united front of the reformist unions themselves, creating new unions.

2.7 However, the following conditions must exist for this exceptional step to be taken. First, the willingness of substantial sectors of the old union to form a new union must be proven. Secondly, clear evidence must be put to the entire class that the responsibility for the split rests with the reformist bureaucrats because of their betrayals. Thirdly, the eagerness of the new union to form united fronts with the other unions in every workers' struggle must be emphasised. Fourthly, the willingness of the revolutionary led unions to re-unite the unions on the basis of internal workers' democracy and an active defence of workers' interests. Finally, a policy for the new unions which transcends purely economic concerns. The broader political aspects of the class struggle—the organisation of non-unionised strata, the super-exploited and the nationally, racially, or sexually oppressed—must form a central aspect of reunified trade unions.

2.8 The communist united front policy in the unions should aim at the qualitative transformation of the unions. Presently, they act as safety valves for capitalism, policed by a bureaucracy on behalf of the bosses and their state. Moreover, trade union membership is dominated by, or largely restricted to, the labour aristocracy. Unions have to become organisations which embrace the class conscious majority of the proletariat. The unions can then assist in transforming sectional, or even generalised, economic class consciousness into political and indeed revolutionary class consciousness. For this, the intervention of a revolutionary party is needed to organise the vanguard fighters. This party must utilise various forms of the united front in the unions to transform them into schools for socialist consciousness and instruments of the revolutionary class struggle.

2.9 When general strikes occur we should demand the constitution of rank and file strike committees through which the masses can control the direction of their struggles and prevent bureaucratic betrayals. In times of intense class struggle, communists try to develop more democratic, combative and broader mass organisations—workers' councils. In these, we fight for representatives to be elected and recallable by mass assemblies. The councils should be built throughout the country yet centralised nationally. They must aim to arm themselves and win over the soldiers.

2.10 The workers' united front cannot be restricted to the trade unions as the Bordigists sought to do. It applies with equal force—and at time of heightened class struggle with even greater force—to the political parties that claim to be workers' parties and which actually organise substantial sections of the proletariat. Its purpose is to drag the reformist leaders from their parliamentary chambers, their banquets and their secret meetings with the class enemy onto the streets, onto the picket lines, even onto the barricades in revolutionary conditions. The fact that these leaders may be proven agents of the bourgeoisie can be no argument against proposing the united front to them. What is decisive is that these traitors still retain, if not the confidence then the control, over large masses of the proletariat and that the revolutionary party has not yet won the confidence or the organised leadership of these masses.

2.11 The workers' united front is counterposed to all blocs with the parties or individual representatives of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat does not refuse the support of sympathetic individuals or even organised forces from other classes. Work with bourgeois forces within racially or nationally oppressed sectors is permissible (

e.g. against state repression, for full and equal rights, or against fascist attacks). Such common actions, however, do not necessitate "reserving a place" for the Jewish or black bourgeoisie in the workers' anti-fascist united front. Still less should revolutionaries subordinate or curtail their own demands to winning uncertain allies from the petit bourgeoisie or from maverick bourgeois notables. In the imperialist countries, the bourgeois parties are incapable of any systematic progressive actions and revolutionaries must oppose their participation in common fronts with the workers' organisations. They reject any support for a government of the reformist workers' parties with the parties of the bourgeoisie, a "Left" coalition or Popular Front. If an organised pseudo-united front or popular front is formed between the mass workers' organisations and bourgeois parties, revolutionaries must seek to develop tactics to expel the bourgeois parties by demonstrating to the workers that the latter are incapable of mass struggle, that they obstruct and betray such struggles, that the reformist leaders constantly use the need to retain their support as a pretext to avoid struggles.

2.12 The workers' united front tactic also extends to the demand on the reformist parties to break with the bourgeoisie and to struggle for a workers' government. In moments of acute political crisis, this can become the major slogan of the day. What is a real workers' government? One that takes decisive actions to disarm the bourgeoisie and arm the workers; one that aids the workers in the struggle to seize the key vantage points of capitalist power—the banks and the big industrial monopolies. Clearly, such measures cannot be carried through on the terrain of electoral and parliamentary politics. To reformist workers who have illusions in parliamentarism, we say, "elect your parties to office, force them to attempt such measures, but you must mobilise your unions and your parties for the inevitable bourgeois declaration of civil war if your leaders take any serious measures which threaten private property. We will critically support your parties' election victory and defend them against bourgeois attack." To centrist workers who believe that a combination of a parliamentary victory and independent mass mobilisation is sufficient we say; "it is suicidal to tie the workers' mass actions to electoral timetables, to respecting majorities and minorities and to fail to attack the armed forces in the name of respecting the constitution". A "workers' government" that does not win the soldiers to its side and take the weapons out of the hands of the officer corps, that does not create a workers' militia and dissolve the police force, will have a very short life.

2.13 For the communists to support any non-revolutionary political force taking power two main conditions must prevail. First, it must be a working class organisation. Secondly, the communists must make it clear that they will remain in political opposition to it. In certain exceptional circumstances the communists can themselves form a common government with non-revolutionary forces drawn from the workers and peasants. Such a government would not yet constitute the proletarian dictatorship. But, as the Communist International made clear, with strict conditions attached, communists could offer their backing to this government. Such a government must be based on workers' and peasants' councils and militias. It should at once attack and disarm the bourgeoisie as a class. It should impose workers' control of production and allow full freedom of criticism of the government's actions by the communists. In such a government the communists might be a minority. In short, such governments are revolutionary workers' governments, transitional to the proletarian dictatorship itself. The communists would seek to use these new positions to complete the overthrow of the capitalist class and to install a new revolutionary dictatorship.

2.14 Several centrist currents calling themselves Trotskyist have repeatedly fought for united front governments. The Lambertists, Morenoites and Mandelites on different occasions have called for a purely parliamentary government of the CP-SP in France, a government of a bourgeois nationalist led trade union like Walesa's Solidarnosc, or even governments of outright bourgeois nationalist fronts or parties (e.g. FSLN, ANC, MNR) and described them as "transitional" or revolutionary workers' governments . In fact, it would be utterly false to believe that revolutionaries have to fight for governments of the reformist parties as a necessary and unavoidable stage. In certain cases we can help them to take power, but we will always warn the working class that in office they will maintain and reinforce the capitalist state. We can never call for a government of bourgeois forces nor for a coalition between the workers' parties and such forces.

2.15 We can also apply the workers' united front tactic during elections. This means that when it is not possible for revolutionary communist candidates to stand, we can give electoral backing to the candidates of the mass working class organisations—those that have the support of the most militant sections of our class. This critical electoral support will be given whilst simultaneously denouncing their reformist or centrist programmes and challenging them to break with the capitalists and fight them not only in words but also in deeds. It is never possible to call for a vote for a bourgeois candidate. We should demand of all the workers' parties that they break with any bourgeois candidates that they have enrolled on their lists, or to break from a popular front list. In certain circumstances we might still vote for the workers' party candidates on a popular front list by not voting for, or crossing off the list, the bourgeois candidates.

3. The United Front and fighting propaganda groups

3.1 Can blocs between small organisations which have not themselves developed beyond the level of propaganda societies really be regarded as "workers' united fronts"? Yes, but only to the extent that they prioritise the winning of the mass workers' organisations to the given objectives of struggle. Of course, it is likely that it will be the militant rank and file or left elements of the mass organisations that will be won over. Propaganda groups must always be aware that these small scale combinations are only a tiny embryo of a united front and should not be counterposed to continued demands on the leaders of the mass organisations to unite in action. There are temptations, both sectarian and opportunist, involved in creating miniature imitations of the united front. The danger of opportunism lies in the weakening

of the revolutionary group's independent voice and action. The sectarian danger lies in the counterposition of these weak "united fronts" to a real struggle within the mass reformist or centrist mass organisations even if for more limited, or even episodic, unity in action.

3.2 The communists should reject the "revolutionary united front", the "workers' alliance" or any other kind of strategic bloc around confused programmes with centrists or left reformists. The "revolutionary united front" is a substitute for the revolutionary party and, thereby, at the same time, prevents the building of a genuine united front. We should also reject the "revolutionary anti-imperialist front" in which there is an attempt to convince both Stalinists and nationalists to adopt a "Trotskyist" programme. In the end, this results in a programmatic compromise in which so-called Trotskyists support a bourgeois nationalist programme using left phraseology. Inside the trade unions and student organisations we aim to create communist fractions under party discipline. We do not build loose, amorphous organisations that are not committed to communist politics and into which the communists dissolve themselves. Such propaganda blocs create confusion and actually constitute obstacles to the construction of the revolutionary party.

3.3 Trotsky denounced the idea of a "revolutionary" united front between propaganda groups, whether in the form of permanently allied organisations, joint-newspapers, or electoral blocs. They invariably hide or downplay the independent line of the revolutionary organisation and boost the revolutionary credentials of centrist bloc partners. Propaganda group existence means that the life of these organisations is largely devoted to propaganda tasks combined with participation in the mass struggles of the class as a very weak minority, unable to make a practical challenge for leadership. It is an enormous temptation in these conditions to form long-lasting or semi-permanent blocs, fronts, or campaigns with centrist organisations or reformist individuals or the non-aligned, non-party elements. The temptation is a product of relative isolation from the proletarian masses, a feeling of despair at this and a consequent desire to leap over obstacles by opportunist concessions. The temptation arises to shed the "ballast" of the revolutionary programme and abandon the need to "patiently explain" it to the vanguard.

3.4 When a tiny group is marginalised it seems easier to seek substitutes for its own mass propaganda and agitation, its own election campaigns and for its own independent interventions into the class struggle. Insensibly, this develops into a view that a large proportion of the revolutionary groups' political activity, especially in the sphere of immediate, limited demands, should be conducted in common with centrists and militant trade unionists. Bit by bit, the "rest" of the programme comes to be regarded as long term, abstract. To insist upon it is regarded as passive propagandist and even sectarian. With this method, the independent revolutionary viewpoint is not addressed to the masses in the here and now. Rather, by participating in propaganda blocs with centrist groups the lowest common denominator triumphs. The most right wing organisation of the propaganda bloc will either have a veto, or will engineer a "compromise" between revolutionary positions and reformist/centrist ones as the price for maintaining the bloc. It is no compensation that the revolutionaries put out a small amount of their own propaganda if, at the same time, they put out a much larger volume of centrist propaganda.

3.5 Nowhere are the dangers greater, and the dire consequences clearer, than in the trade unions and in the election campaigns. It is here where the propaganda group feels its limitations most keenly in the face of big tasks. In the unions there will be a natural pressure to form a bloc with any oppositional elements against the common enemy, the ruling fraction of the union bureaucracy whether it be Stalinist, Social Democratic or bourgeois or petit bourgeois nationalist. We can critically support and unite with such oppositionists when they stand for a more militant class struggle position or a fight for greater workers' democracy. However, such temporary blocs must be operated on strict united front principles, including no defence of our bloc partners' political and organisational errors.

3.6 There should be avoidance of any suggestion of an undifferentiated unity with centrist or reformist allies. The anarcho-syndicalists, or "pure" trade unionists, appeal for just such a programme-less, amorphous bloc under the claim that all that is necessary is to unite the rank and file against the leaders. As Trotsky pointed out, these anarchists in fact conceal their political organisations behind a trade union facade. The mass of union members do not always spontaneously find the right course of action and every trade union needs leaders (and accountable officials). Our aim is to win leadership of the unions, openly and honestly, as undisguised revolutionaries whilst submitting our leadership to democratic control by the union membership.

3.7 We should not suggest that the need to organise the rank and file in an anti-bureaucratic movement represents the totality of the revolutionary organisation's work in the trade unions. Independent work is carried out by the party's trade union fractions. When it comes to putting forward a common slate for workplace committees, or national union elections, it should be clear what the limits are of any common platform. The centrist candidates are to be put to the test not given an uncritical recommendation by the revolutionaries. Normally, this can only be firmly established by building the revolutionary fraction within the union, consisting of the organisation and the supporters of its union or workplace action programme.

3.8 In elections to municipal councils or parliamentary assemblies, strategic questions are posed to revolutionary candidates, that is, questions of power. Here we must stand upon a full revolutionary position focused to the immediate situation (i.e. an action programme). However, in certain circumstances, undemocratic laws or regulations may preclude small revolutionary groups standing unless they combine with centrist or even reformist groups or parties. Wherever possible, complete separation of revolutionary platforms should be maintained. Where some sort of common platform is necessary, revolutionaries must not exaggerate their sufficiency. They must put forward their own full revolutionary platform on which they will act if elected. They must fully criticise their bloc partners even when calling for a vote for them. They must make it clear that they will

follow the discipline of their party not that of a "united front' on all important issues whilst holding themselves accountable to their working class electors. The overall principle is never to allow the temporary bloc for a limited action to obscure the overall profile of the revolutionary organisation.

4. The United Front in the degenerated workers' states

4.1 In the degenerated workers' states, Trotskyists have always been willing to act in a united front with the Stalinist bureaucracy for the military defence of these states against attacks by capitalist and imperialist powers or against a counter-revolutionary uprising. This possibility did not rest upon any strategic or inevitable commitment by this bureaucracy to defend the planned property relations. Quite the reverse. Rather, for contingent and tactical reasons, this bureaucracy (e.g. in 1940-5 in Russia) defended the planned property relations in order to defend itself and its privileges. The Trotskyists' defencism towards the workers' state is strategic, the united front with the Stalinists is tactical. It was obligatory to offer this united front as long as the workers' states were under threat and would have been dependent for its actual formation on the Stalinists ceasing their bloody repression of the Trotskyists. For the duration of the operation of this defencist united front, the Trotskyists would have temporarily suspended, or rather, subordinated, their immmediate activity for the political revolution.

4.2 During the political-revolutionary crises which have marked the last forty years of Stalinism, it was necessary to undertake various united fronts with anti-bureaucratic forces opposed to Stalinism. Often these forces had developed substantial influence over the masses but their programme was not a revolutionary communist one. The forum for these united fronts would have been the workers' councils, factory councils and the independent trade unions. The political forces which led these revolts ranged from right-Stalinist and Social Democratic ones to those of a religious and/or nationalist character. All had more or less disguised programmes of concessions to, or restoration of, capitalism. All had illusions in the superiority of bourgeois democratic rights. However, as long as these forces organised and led a large majority, or even the politically active minority, of the working class, it was necessary to seek united action with them to break the political dictatorship of the bureaucracy and establish democratic rights for all those not directly or immediately seeking the overthrow of the planned property relations.

4.3 The period of the final death agony of Stalinism opened in 1989 and is not yet complete. During this period, counter-revolutionary bourgeois governments have established themselves and a more swiftly changing and episodic application of united front tactics has become necessary. It was, and remains, necessary to defend the democratic rights of the workers, peasants and the intelligentsia against either Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship or against bonapartist restorationist regimes. No strategic bloc for this entire period is possible. On the one hand, it was, and is, possible to form temporary limited united fronts with the reformist wing of the bureaucracy in defence of the democratic rights of the workers. On the other hand, blocs are possible with the conservative wing of the Stalinist caste to protect the historic gains.

4.4 The workers' united front can be applied with full force to all the trade unions which are, in reality, restorationist. More limited common actions, conducted on united front principles are possible with other "democratic" or "national liberation" forces, providing their immediate aims and objectives are justified and acceptable to the proletarian vanguard. It was permissible, and necessary, to seek a defensive military bloc with the forces led by Yeltsin during the Stalinist hardliners' putsch of 18-20 August 1991. It would likewise have been principled and necessary to form a military defensive bloc with the nationalists against a Soviet army takeover in the Baltic States in 1990/91.

5. The united front and blocs with non-proletarian forces

5.1 The revolutionary proletariat, in its struggle with capitalism, puts itself at the head of all the exploited and the oppressed, pledging to end their political oppression as soon as it takes power. It further commits itself to use the construction of a planned economy and the building of socialism to abolish the last remnants of social oppression. These oppressed nations, races and classes are not simply made up of proletarians. Nationally, racially or sexually oppressed proletarians have an integral part in both the revolutionary party and the united fronts within the labour movement. Special party or united front campaigns may be necessary to promote this integration. But large numbers of oppressed from other classes are also involved in struggle. Moreover, privileged, and even exploiting classes can exercise political leadership, over the working class and plebeian classes. Then, the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard may have to establish alliances, common actions, defensive and offensive military blocs with them, according to the principles of the united front.

5.2 How important such class alliances are, will depend on the relative size and class consciousness of the proletariat. The fundamental principles involved are that the proletariat must first and foremost establish its class independence and unity and then its hegemony over its allies. In addition, the necessity of a strategic alliance with the poor peasantry, the urban poor or the racially oppressed does not, in and of itself, dictate a strategic bloc with any specific organisation of the oppressed. Blocs, alliances or fully formed united fronts must obey united front principles. Where the proletariat is the predominant class in society, and the workers' movement is at least organisationally distinct, such blocs will be episodic at best. In the imperialist countries the bourgeois strata of the oppressed are the main force for compromise and surrender of the interests of the oppressed. The proletariat must seek to break their hegemony, disintegrate their "popular fronts" and replace them with working class led movements of a united front character. However, it may be necessary to organise common actions with, and even participate in, existing popular front campaigns with the aim of breaking bourgeois hegemony.

5.3 In the semi-colonial world, especially where the proletariat is a minority of the population, the proletariat faces the dual task of establishing its class independence whilst winning a majority of the peasantry and the urban poor to its side. The soviet form will in these conditions be the highest expression of a united front between the proletariat and the exploited and oppressed masses.
On the road to this, however, various co-ordinated common actions, alliances, and united fronts will be necessary. The starting point for these will be the social and economic needs of the masses and their political and democratic rights.The foundation stone of all such struggles will be the united front of the workers' organisations to which all other alliances, no matter how important take on an auxiliary character.

6 *The anti-imperialist united front*

6.1 The Fourth Congress of the Communist International (1922) launched a new version of the united front, applicable to capitalistically underdeveloped Asian countries. In these regions there were no massive independent working class organisations. Yet there were many unfulfilled minimum democratic tasks (e.g. anti-feudal agrarian reform, national independence, ending colonial status, establishing a republic, implementing an 8 hour day) and the fighting movements were headed by revolutionary nationalist movements led by sections of the local bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie.

6.2 The anti-imperialist united front was developed with the aim of pressing these nationalists to mobilise the toilers for a break with imperialism. The conditions for such an anti-imperialist united front were that the nationalists should respect the rights of the workers' organisations including the communists. They should be forced to fight with revolutionary methods and defend the soviet workers' state against imperialism. If these conditions were not fulfilled it was not possible to form an anti-imperialist united front.

6.3 The anti-imperialist united front is, thus, one specific form of the united front in the semi-colonial world. The Communist International, in 1920-22, outlined the tactics of communists in relation to oppressed sections of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie in semi-colonial and colonial countries. The same principles apply to this variant of the united front as with the workers' united front; namely, to bring about maximum unity within the plebeian masses in the fight for progressive goals and to overthrow the influence of non-revolutionary ideas and leaderships over the proletarian movement. However, certain features flow out of semi-colonial condition that give this united front unique aspects.

6.4 In the early part of the imperialist epoch, finance capital sought to obstruct the development of native capitalism by supporting the backward semi-feudal classes on the land. Here, the working class had an interest in the fullest development of capitalism (and thereby itself) over pre-capitalist forms, and of the widest possible operation of bourgeois democratic rights with which to develop its own organisations of struggle. However, continued imperialist domination inevitably promoted industrial development in the imperialised countries in a stunted and lopsided form. The imperialist banks and monopolies dominate these economies, extracting superprofits from them. The IMF and the World Bank today are among the imperialist agencies that impose restrictions on semi-colonial economies. The near impossibility of ensuring this continued regime of super-exploitation through democratic forms means that imperialism has always sought to maintain itself in alliance with the most reactionary sections tied to imperialism—the landed oligarchy, the military. The demand for "independent" economic development, for relief from the burden of debt, for state industrialisation, protective barriers, land reform and sovereign political institutions, reflects the needs of sections of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie who suffer most from the strait-jacket of imperialist domination. This gives rise to the possibility and need for a united front between workers and non proletarian classes in society.

6.5 In the first place, the anti-imperialist united front is with the peasantry and the urban petit bourgeois. The goals of this united front are agrarian revolution, literacy and education reforms, the adoption of social and labour legislation, the extension of the franchise. But, episodic clashes can occur between sections of the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. Since the petit-bourgeoisie and the infant proletarian movements can be led, or heavily influenced by, national bourgeois classes then the united front is possible between the working class and sections of the national bourgeoisie, on two conditions. First, that they are in practice, actually fighting against imperialism and its national agents; secondly, that the bourgeoisie does not obstruct revolutionary methods of struggle and places no restrictions on communists' independent activity aimed at organising the workers.

6.6 This freedom of operation is essential since the bourgeoisie was, and today is even more so, only a vacillating ally and cannot pursue the fight against imperialism to the end. Even those sections of the national bourgeoisie that clash with imperialism are economically tied to it. More importantly, the national bourgeoisie fear the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses against imperialism since this threatens their own class rule as well as that of the imperialists.
Therefore, no place is reserved in the united front for the bourgeoisie, whereas revolutionaries actively seek the participation of the plebeian and poorer sectors of the petit bourgeoisie. At no time may the working class sacrifice its struggle for independent class demands against native capitalism and the national bourgeoisie in order to secure a united front with the national bourgeoisie. This would be a popular front.

6.7 In the post-second world war period, the scope for united fronts with non-proletarian forces has been modified further by the changing nature of imperialist domination and the changes within the semi-colonies themselves. Today, there is an absence of significant semi feudal elements on the land; the struggle for national independence and self-determination rarely takes place as a struggle against imperialist occupation. Moreover, imperialism dominates the semi-colonies through alliances with national, neo liberal bourgeoisies rather than semi-feudal landed interests. The scope for a section of bourgeoisie to collide with imperialism is much reduced due to changes in nature of the interests of the national

bourgeoisie. Increasingly, it is only access to the spoils of political patronage that motivates the struggle of sections of the national bourgeoisie against bonapartism and militarism. Therefore, the likelihood of a section of the bourgeoisie actually fighting against imperialism or for democratic rights is reduced daily. That is why in many countries in the twentieth century the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle has often fallen to the petit bourgeoisie.

6.8 The anti-imperialist united front develops on the terrain of minimum or democratic demands. These can be defensive in periods of retreat or defeat where the masses are emerging from long periods of dictatorship when the demands may centre on the rights of free speech and the release of all political prisoners. The anti-imperialist united front can also centre on demands for a constituent assembly. However, it is not possible to give the anti-imperialist united front a governmental form. The fight by communists to win the workers, poor peasants and urban petit bourgeoisie to the socialist revolution must, by its progress, break up the anti-imperialist united front. The fight for a workers' and peasants' government must be for a government where the peasants have broken from their bourgeois and petit bourgeois leaders and been won to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even while we can join in a common struggle for the convening of a constituent assembly along with bourgeois forces, our slogan remains for a workers' and peasants' government, one based on the armed councils of the masses—something no bourgeoisie can tolerate.

6.9 The anti-imperialist united front in no way implies giving support to so-called "anti-imperialist governments". Communists can in no circumstances give support to a bourgeois government, to a government of their own exploiters. Any government that claims to be "above classes" or which represents "the people as a whole" is a deception. We support any serious action of such governments taken against imperialism (e.g. the nationalisation or expropriation of imperialist assets). The working class can lend its support to the fight for democratic rights insofar as they help the workers to organise and develop their revolutionary struggle. But such struggles and slogans should never be erected into a self-contained or self-limiting stage. Soviets must replace the freest parliaments and the workers' dictatorship supercede the democratic republic.

6.10 Communists would support and participate in military actions taken against imperialism (e.g. in Nicaragua against the contras, with Argentina against Britain in the Malvinas war), fighting in such a struggle for the arming of the workers, for democratically controlled workers' militias. Similarly, in a civil war against a dictatorship, communists may enter a military united front—whenever possible as an independent armed force—accepting a common discipline in battle. We recognise that military united fronts are one form of the united front—a form not qualitatively different from united action for political goals. When we call for the military victory of such movements that fight imperialism or its agents, we are not endorsing the victory of their political programme. Within such a united front, we struggle for our programme and fight to break the workers and poor peasants from the bourgeoisie and to enter onto the road of the workers' and peasants' government.

6.11 In some backward or oppressed countries or regions the masses are mobilised under nationalist or regionalist bourgeois or petit bourgeoisie leaderships. The discontent of the masses is highjacked by regionalist or nationalist forces. We can participate in, or even support, these mobilisations if they express the desire of these oppressed peoples to end their regional or national discrimination and oppression. But, during these common actions, we must fight for social and class demands. We could defend demands for autonomy or even complete state independence but we will also fight against nationalism, regionalism and any manifestation of chauvinism or cross-class blocs. When mass demonstrations are led by civic committees, national liberation fronts or defence fronts, we should participate critically. We denounce the limitations of the leaderships and try to open the road to the creation of soviets and militias. We demand of the workers' and the peasants' movement that it should split with the bourgeoisie and open the road to a workers' and peasants' government. ■

The April strike wave in Bolivia

PODER OBRERO (Bolivia), Special edition, 14 April 1994

The majority of the COB[1] have decided to launch an indefinite general strike from Friday, 15 April. Every student and worker should fully support this measure and make sure that the leadership actively carries it out. The hunger strike movement, alongside mobilisations by students and teachers, is beginning to grow. The university sector is now in the forefront of this conflict. However, the movement is beginning to extend to other sectors. The hunger strikes, which started two weeks ago, have continued to spread, until by 11 April they involved more than one hundred people in almost all the departmental capitals. Thirty five miners on hunger strike, demanding the right to return to their workplaces, organised a special protest picket in the form of a "crucifixion" on top of the UMSA[2] building; amongst them is a mother with her baby. On the afternoon of 11 April rural teachers called for mobilisations throughout the country. In La Paz more than 8,000 of them arrived for the march from the 19 provinces of the department. In Oruro more than 3,000 rural and urban teachers and students marched together to the central square on 10 February. At the end of the rally the students burnt the pink flags of the MNR[3] which were flying from the prefecture building.

The rural teachers' confederation was the first to declare an indefinite strike last week. The majority of the rank and file are joining the strike. On Wednesday 13 April the teachers of the city of La Paz went on strike. Two days later an indefinite general strike started in the health sector. On Tuesday 12 April, 1,500 to 2,000 students, together with the teaching and administrative staff of the University of Cochabamba[4], began a mass hunger strike. The aim is that in the following days 4,000 people from La Paz alone will join the hunger strike. In Santa Cruz, Potosi, Cochabamba and La Paz sharp clashes have occurred between students and the forces of repression. The marches on Monday (11 April) proved bigger and more radical than the marches called by the COB for either the 30 March national stoppage or that of 7 April in La Paz.

There are other sectors on hunger strike besides education. These involve leaders of the COB and all the departmental and regional union congresses, the miners, the factory workers, Lloyd Aero Boliviano workers, and others. The CSUTCB[5] has called a national peasant blockade of the highways for 28 April. But this date is more than two weeks away. It would be far better to bring it forward so that it can link up and add to the pressure of the developing mass movement. On Tuesday, 12 April, in Potosi, the miners of the private firm Goni-Patiño took part in a radical mass demonstration to the central square. The university students not only went on to block the streets but occupied various public buildings and private offices in order to prevent staff from entering. These events highlight two tendencies that it is important to draw attention to: one is the involvement of private sector workers and the other is the tactic of mass occupations. In every city students, teachers and the other strikers should occupy, en masse, both private firms and public institutions in order to stop staff working and to bring workers together in the struggle.

In Potosi the police have begun to arrest university students and on Wednesday morning the forces of repression surrounded the university. The students tried to break the encirclement. The police were forced to release twenty detainees for fear of a popular explosion. In the old colonial city the fear was that students and other residents might burn down the police station for a third time, just as they did in 1987 and 1993. The national stoppage of the COB on 30 March was weak. During that day's march in Oruro, municipal workers, health workers, students and some peasants participated. However, the miners, the factory workers, rail workers, or the other powerful and combative workers of ENAF were not present.

Immediate Tasks.

It is essential that the present protests escalate. In order to create a powerful, indefinite general strike the industrial proletariat (the miners, the factory workers, the oil workers, the metal workers, the agro-industrial workers and the railworkers) must be drawn into full scale action. These key sectors produce the nation's wealth and they also form the historic vanguard of the oppressed. But they have been badly hit by neo-liberalism. Today the majority of industrial workers work in the private sector and it is more difficult for them to strike due to the laws imposed by the neo-liberalists that undermine their job security. But neither the workers in education and health nor the students can paralyse the national economy. Their strength consists in the fact that they can mobilise tens of thousands onto the streets and thereby influence the rest of the country's workers. In every Bolivian village there are teachers and students. The teachers must realise how crucial it is for them to march every day and pull out alongside them students and their parents. It is essential to unite the whole educational community against the plan to municipalise education which would mean the end of free state education. The universities are the cultural centres of the main cities and their members number more than 100,000 people. Their potential for calling action is enormous. The schools and universities can mobilise tens of thousands of students, teachers, parents and ordinary people. They can be backed by peasant communities and civil and neighbourhood organisations. If we organise large-scale mobilisations and blockades on a daily basis we will be certain to have an enormous impact on the majority and embolden the workers, peasants and all

trade unionists.

We must stop the destruction of free state education in the schools, colleges and public universities now. With the new laws the government will decentralise education and health-care[6] and then they will privatise them. This will mean that only those with money will be able to study and have the right to medical treatment. The government has only offered a pay rise of 7.5% and will only guarantee security of employment in public sector companies. This increase is totally inadequate and will not even cover a quarter of the cost of living for a family. On the other hand, the majority of today's workers are employed by private outfits. There are tens of thousands of casual workers and workers that can be easily sacked. We have to demand job security for all these sectors and a minimum living wage that covers the family's basic monthly outgoings (Bs. 1860)[7] and see that is adjusted in accordance with the rise in a cost of living. To give incentives to industry the buying power of workers must be raised.

The betrayal by the leadership.

Like a fire brigade the COB acts to put out the struggles. The trade union bureaucracy hardly tried to convince the government to even give it a few crumbs. Jerjes Justiniano, the MP of the Salas party[8] refused to defend the teachers who were thrown out by the police when they wanted to enter the Congress to carry out their hunger strike. Thousands could see how this deputy insulted the strikers in front of the television cameras. On Thursday, 7 April, the national majority of the COB had called for an indefinite general stoppage. But only a few hours before it was due to begin the bureaucracy, without consultation, withdrew the call. The bureaucracy did nothing to make it happen. The leadership of the FSTMB[9] seemed to be centred in the COMIBOL mines (which today employ less than 2,000 miners, less than the number of miners in COMSUR, the Goni-Patiño company). Before the 7th the bureaucracy did not go to the rank and file (mainly from the private mines which involves more than three times the workforce of the public sector) to explain the reasons for the strike and to prepare it. The bureaucracy of the COB and the CSUCTB is packed full people who are officials in the MBL, MRTKL and even the MNR and UCS or if not from "left" parties who were until recently on the coat tails of today's Finance Minister, Aranibar.

This so-called left is in reality more and more right-wing. Now it agrees with privatisation and advocates following IMF guidelines. It merely pleads for less cruelty in the application of the neo-liberal measures. This reformist "left" only joins the mobilisations in order to negotiate themselves soft jobs and prepare their way into a ministarial post or secretaryship in a future government (as is shown by the example of the renegades Cardenas, Motete Zamora, Aranibar and the various leaders of PS-1 that today trails behind the MNR or the MIR). Their future path is one already taken by the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) over the last twenty years or so, when it went from an adventurist guerrilla foco-ism and an ultra-left attitude to revolution, to an unscrupulous search for money. It ended up transforming itself into an anti-working class, pro-repression and pro-drug-traffickers' party.

Lora's POR has the merit of having campaigned for and inspired many hunger strikes and teachers' marches in the city of La Paz. But this selfless militancy remains a prisoner of the party's adventurist logic. For the Lorists we are on the verge of taking power and the conditions are maturing to the point where they call for an insurrectional general strike. They fail to appreciate the long term defeat which the working class has suffered since 1986 and that the period since then has been one of a democratic-liberal reactionary offensive. They believe that the mobilisation of the masses can be substituted for by a few heroic individuals. The hunger strike is a good tactic for politicians, for sacked workers seeking reinstatement or to open a breach in a dictatorship. But hunger strikes can also have a demobilising effect if happens in the context of a mobilisation where state repression is not strong. It is better if thousands march through the streets, blocking the main routes, the squares and streets. It is preferable that they march to different town-halls, to markets and the mines and factory gates to organise meetings there and encourage the people to form support committees and to mobilise alongside those already on strike. The bureaucracy actually prefers hunger strikes, with only a few people on the streets. The Lorist centrists call for all-out, "hard" hunger strikes. We, in contrast, put the main emphasis on encouraging combative marches and blockades. The latter in particular radicalises the masses the most, gains the maximum support and intimidates the government best.

The leadership of the COB is sabotaging the strike before it has even begun. The majority of the universities are finalising negotiations with the government on their own. What the bureaucracy wants is to look consistent before the opening of the badly organised COB congress which takes place in two weeks time.[10] Their radicalism is a pose struck for the new COB leadership elections. On the other hand, it shouldn't surprise anyone that many rank and file members demand an indefinite strike. In the universities a good tactic would be to force the rectors and the University and Faculty Councils to put themselves at the head of the demonstrations and daily blockades or join a long hunger strike.

Win the other sectors!

At this very moment the XIII Congress of the Federation of Co-operative Mines (FEN-COMIN) is taking place. While the number of COMIBOL miners has been reduced from 30,000 to less than 2,000 the number of co-operative miners has been doubled from 28,000, a short time ago, to 56,000. This sector is super-exploited and their minimum income is less than 400 to 500 Bolivianos[11]. They work more than eight hours a day, with no social security, without technology and with a much higher chance of contracting disease and being injured. It is essential to convince this sector to participate in the struggle. We must demand social security for the co-operative miners, that they are put on COMIBOL contracts and that they enjoy full social security benefits. We demand a 6 hour day, early retirement and the reactivation of these mines with modern high technology from the State under the control the miners. An alliance between waged and co-operative miners must be built in the mines to encourage mobilisations, marches and blockades. The private mines and metalworks are expanding. Inti Raymi and COMSUR are models that are attracting a lot of multinational investment. There are many mines, particularly those that are not on the altiplano (high plateau), whose workers are not unionised. To unite the

movement we must also urge them to organise or strengthen their own unions

In the private companies and the many public companies (e.g. ENAF, YPFB) the unions are weak and afraid to join in the struggle. Many workers are frightened of losing their jobs or special preferential concessions granted by their bosses if they join in some form of low-level, cautious struggle that in the end will be sold out by the COB bureaucracy. The recent voluntary redundancy of half the COMIBOL workforce in exchange for $1,000 compensation shows the lack of confidence which the rank and file has in the leadership and which leads to demoralisation. To motivate these sectors to join the struggle a campaign within the rank and file is needed, encouraging them with a more daring means of struggle. Recallable delegates chosen by mass meetings of the rank and file must lead the strike movement, the blockades and the mass demonstrations.

The national meeting of the COB must elect a united mobilising committee whose members can be replaced by a mass assembly. This rank and file committee must taek charge of the struggle and be superior in authority to the COB's bureaucratic leaders. The demands of every sector must be drawn together into a single joint claim so that the demands of the peasants, the smallholders, the private manufacturing workers and the ministries, the oppressed nationalities and the poor neighbourhoods can be unified. The abolition of VAT, and all the indirect taxation which penalises the poor, must be a key goal of struggle. These taxes must be replaced by taxes on the multinationals and the rich. The state must guarantee social security, the minimum wage and the provision of cheap supplies for the smallholders and co-operatives. We demand the direct commercialisation of rural produce sold in the cities. Committees of poor peasants and urban workers can then exchange the goods they make themselves without middle men and obtain better prices.

The water and electricity supplies, sewerage, roads, posts, as well as schools and colleges for the hamlets and villages must be greatly improved by increasing the resources from the State. Money for all this can be raised through a tax on the property of the rich and by not paying the foreign debt. All public investment must be controlled by committees elected and recallable by rank and file assemblies. All anti-imperialist political prisoners must be freed. In the unified claim the demands of the rank and file soldiers must also be represented: better wages, the right to organise trade-unions, the election of officers, the right to veto reactionary orders. The aim is to win them, as in April 1942, to the side of the revolution. We must oppose the laws of capitalisation and "popular participation". They plan to privatise the public companies and go on to break up the free state education system. With the law of "popular participation" they are trying to by-pass the unions and make the communities and villages beg for investment from private companies and themselves act as the bosses who sack and force down the wages of the public sector workers and teachers.

This Friday, 14 April, we must try to transform the stoppage called by the COB into an active strike full of demonstrations and blockades. Instead of putting the accent on increasing the numbers of those on hunger strike the emphasis must be put on the producing daily papers and organising combative marches and blockades. We must make the miners come into to the cities and make them tremble and encourage the peasants to block the main highways. We need to mobilise the students, teachers, parents and other workers to occupy the public offices and companies and paralyse the inter-city and inter-departmental traffic.

The government has said it is a "democratic" one and that under no circumstances will it declare a state of siege. We must not forget that the MNR, when it came to power more than half a century ago, massacred peasants, students and teachers, that its hands are stained with the blood of the people, that it decreed several states of siege to impose its neo-liberal model in 1985 and 1986 and unleashed the army on us during the March for Life. In the last few days the police have repressed many hunger strike pickets in Potosi, Cochabamba and Oruro. When faced by any repression the masses must flood into the streets to free those arrested. To prepare for the possibility of a state of emergency organised resistance must be put in train now. The government will try to pour scorn on the general strike comparing it to more radical strikes that brought down the governments of Tejada (1936), that struck blows to Ovando (1970) and Natush (1979) and that made Bolivia tremble between 1982 and 1985.

We must remain conscious of the fact that the workers and popular movements have suffered a serious defeat since 1986. We are in a period of defensive struggles. Our objective must be to stop the neo-liberal offensive, to blow holes in the government's plans and prepare the conditions for a workers' and people's counter-offensive. Our struggle must be political. Not only must we fight whatever measures this government imposes, against this government itself, but we must struggle against the whole neo-liberal model which is sponsored by all the parliamentary parties and indeed against capitalism itself. Our strategy must be to turn the working class into a class capable of taking and holding power, create the conditions for a socialist revolution and the impose a workers' and peasants' government. Such a government will give bread, land, work, education and health to the masses, will expropriate the bourgeoisie and organise a collectivised, planned economy under the control of the workers.

Fight for wage rises that cover the family cost of living!
For an adequate university budget!
For a national mobilising committee made up of delegates elected and revocable by rank and file assemblies!
For an indefinite fighting General Strike with blockades and mass mobilisations!

Notes

1 Bolivian Workers Central (COB) is the trade union federation.
2 UMSA is the main university building in the centre of la Paz.
3 MNR is the main party in the government coalition.
4 Led by the University Council and the leadership of the degree courses and centres
5 The national airline
6 CSUTCB is the peasants' federation in Bolivia.
7 For these sectors onto underfunded municipal governments.
8 About $400 at the current exchange rate.
9 Oscar Salas was elected head of the COB executive in 1993.
10 The Congress was later postponed until June.
11 The COB Congress was postponed one month until early June.
12 Around $100 a month.

Fight racism and fascism - fight for socialism!

LRCI International Action Programme for Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE)

The YRE aims to build a mass anti-racist and anti-fascist youth movement across Europe.

We campaign against the rise of fascism and against racism in all its forms. Racism and fascism are products of the capitalist system, a system based on inequality, economic chaos, exploitation and despair. They cannot be fought effectively unless our struggle is linked at every step to the fight to overthrow capitalism and for socialist answers to the deep-seated problems in our society. Only socialist revolution can lay the basis for a society free from injustice, national divisions and racial hatred.

Time and again, capitalism passes through periods of deep economic stagnation and recession. The capitalists try to make working class people pay the price for the failure of their system. That is why today millions face unemployment, the destruction of basic social services, poor housing and the running down of schools and colleges. Capitalism is creating a mass of angry and frustrated youth. They are desparately seeking a way out.

But the Social Democratic and Labour Parties and the trade union federations have abandoned any serious struggle against capitalism as a system. They offer no hope or vision of an alternative society that can put an end to this suffering. The millions who today are being ignored and neglected by the official labour movement face a choice. They can either unite and become fierce fighters against the whole rotten system, or they will be dragged into the dead end of racism, diverted into blaming their fellow victims - immigrants and ethnic minorities - for the suffering that capitalism has created.

Scrap all immigration controls

The millionaires' media keeps up a barrage of propaganda blaming African, Asian or Eastern European immigrants for bad housing, the decay of the welfare state, drugs and rising crime. The European states fuel this by throwing up restrictions on immigration and discriminating against 'aliens' living and working within their borders. We have to fight these lies by exposing the real cause of these social problems - the capitalist profit system. A united struggle by youth and all working class people can only be built if we defend the rights of immigrants against discrimination by employers, persecution by the state and harassment by the racist and fascist parties that are growing across Europe.

•For the right of all working class people to live and work where they choose. Open the borders: abolish all immigration controls. No compulsory certification of employment for immigrants. All restrictions on the employment of immigrants and all special laws regulating immigrants should be scrapped. Repeal all legislation which limits or restricts the right to political asylum. No to special identity-cards for immigrants. For the immediate disbandment of all special immigration police units. The YRE will campaign against deportations in all countries. It will fight all EC regulations aimed at creating a Fortress Europe.

Fight Racist Discrimination

Immigrants and ethnic minorities face discrimination in jobs, education and housing. The YRE will fight all instances of racist discrimination and will campaign for decent jobs, better housing and full rights to education for all.

Democratic and Social Rights

For full citizenship rights for all immigrants. For full and equal access of immigrants to the welfare system. For the right of immigrants to vote and to stand for election at every level; municipal, parliamentary as well as in the trade unions and all other organisations of the workers' movement.

Jobs

The YRE will campaign for the trade unions to take direct action including, where necessary, all-out indefinite strikes and occupations, against discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities in job recruitment, promotion rights, pay and conditions, and disciplinary action. Against the lies of the racists who blame immigrants for unemployment, we will campaign for jobs for all. We fight for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay. To eliminate unemployment, all work should be shared out among the entire workforce - under workers' control. A massive programme of state spending on industry, services, homes, schools and hospitals could put millions - native and foreign, black and white - back to work. The money for this should come from those who have got rich from the fruits of our labour - the bosses! The unemployed should be organised into a movement to fight for jobs for all or benefits at full rates of pay.

Housing

Immigrants and ethnic minorities are not to blame for the lack of decent housing; they are amongst the worst

victims of it. The YRE must fight against racist discrimination by local councils in the allocation of housing. On housing estates we must fight to build well-rooted organised defence of victims of racial harassment. We fight for an end to cuts in housing budgets and for a massive programme of new council house building. Municipal authorities with a social-democratic, Communist or Labour majority should set emergency budgets based on local needs and break central government spending limits. Local committees of tenants, workers and youth should meet to organise the struggle and plan the rebuilding of our run-down estates to meet the needs of the residents, not of the private speculators or house-owners. But we will not wait for such a public plan - we should occupy and take over empty housing now.

Education

Fight all racial discrimination in schools and colleges. Full grants for all foreign students and for all students over 16. Where no independent student unions exist we campaign to build fighting mass unions. Where student unions already exist we fight against their control by unaccountable bureaucrats and for a fighting leadership under rank and file control. We are for building school students' unions and their fusion with the existing student unions. They must wage a war against education cuts and for the right of all to a decent education. For nationalisation of all schools and colleges under the control of the students and teachers and education workers themselves.

For free language courses for immigrants to help the process of integration into the workforce and the workers' movement, and for full funding for education for immigrant communities in their own languages and dealing with their own cultural concerns.

Fight Police Harassment

The police are racist to the core. They harass immigrants and ethnic minorities - especially youth - and are used to attack anti-racist and anti-fascist demonstrations as well as workers' picket lines. We oppose every measure to strengthen the powers of the police. The YRE refuses to rely on the racist police to defend minorities from racist and fascist attack. We reject the idea that the police force - which is an arm of the racist capitalist state - can be reformed or made accountable.

Instead, we must rely on our own strength: we must organise self-defence units to protect communities from police, racist and fascist attack. These groups must be properly trained and based in the community and the labour and trade union movement. The YRE will fight for the labour and trade union movement to actively support and assist self-defence units. We demand the release of all prisoners held for fighting back against racist violence and harassment.

Smash Fascism

The fascists in Europe are at war with immigrants and ethnic minorities, the left, lesbians, gay men and Jews. Their aim is not only the liquidation of these scapegoat minorities but the destruction of the working class movement and all democratic rights. They organise their own street gangs to terrorise their opponents and victims. They have to be stopped by all means necessary; their force must be met by greater effective force.

No Platform for Fascists

The YRE fights for mass mobilisations to physically confront the fascists and prevent them from holding their rallies, street marches, concerts, paper sales or electoral canvassing. Our purpose is to demoralise and smash their organisations. We do not call on the racist state to do this for us; state bans and repression have always been directed at those fighting back against racism and fascism.

Organise anti-fascist defence squads

The fascists have their own trained gangs. We need well prepared defence units, linked to mass organisations. It is criminal to leave our demonstrations unstewarded and unguarded.

Boycott all work with fascist councillors or MPs

Wherever fascists are elected as councillors, MPs or MEPs, we campaign for trade unionists and social democratic and Communist councillors to refuse to work with them and to physically prevent them getting into council meetings and committees. We fight for indefinite strikes to drive them from power.

Drive the fascists out of the unions.

Fascism is a direct, immediate and physical threat for the workers' movement. It is the complete negation of workers' organisation. Therefore, we must drive fascists out of the unions to prevent them attacking us and trying to divide us by spreading their lies.

For a workers' united front against fascism

We need unity in action to smash the fascists. This is being hampered by the passive as well as the pacifist leaderships of several liberal anti-fascist movements like SOS Racisme in France, the ANL and ARA in Britain, the Lichtermeer movement in Germany and Austria who want to prevent physical confrontation with the fascists. It is also hampered by the anarchist and autonomist movements, particularly in Germany, who concentrate on isolated adventures such as provoking tactically unnecessary street battles with the police, and who reject any united action with the working class movement on principle.

The YRE will maintain its character as a revolutionary socialist anti-racist and anti-fascist youth movement, but it calls on all labour movement, anti-racist, anti-fascist and immigrant/ethnic minority organisations to unite in action to deny the Nazis any platform. To this end we will call for, and initiate, joint committees to coordinate direct action.

Fight racism within the working class movement

The "socialist", "communist" and trade union leaders have done next to nothing to fight racism and have even used racist and chauvinist arguments themselves. The YRE fights for the removal of all racist officials within

the workers' movement and against all chauvinist policies like support for immigration controls or import controls. Immigrant and ethnic minority members within the trade unions and the reformist parties must have the right to organise their own caucuses and sections, to identify and challenge racism and chauvinism and to help build unity in action with 'white' workers. At the same time we are committed to the maximum possible integration of the working class in struggle. This demands a patient but unwavering struggle against all forms of separatism, which further split the working class and thus weaken the basis for a strong and united struggle against racism.

Fight oppression - for working class unity

Racism is just one of the ways in which the bosses and the fascists try to divide working class people. The YRE will oppose all discrimination against youth, against women, and against lesbians and gay men. Women must get equal pay for work of equal value and have free 24-hour child care to enable them to work. Contraception and abortion should be freely available to all women on demand without any age limitation. All laws that discriminate against lesbians and gay men should be abolished and we should support and promote efforts by lesbians and gay men to organise their own defence against physical attacks. We fight for full benefits and legal rights for all over the age of 16, including the right to vote, the right to housing and the right to decent leisure facilities. We oppose all state limitations on consensual sex and are for the abolition of state-imposed age of consent laws.

We fight all manifestations of sexism and homophobia in society - including within the working class movement. For the right of women, lesbians and gay men to organise their own caucuses within the movement in order to identify and challenge all instances of oppression and disrimination. Child care must be provided to enable women to participate fully in the movement.

Fight imperialism - the root of racism

Racism and chauvinism are used to justify the super-exploitation of the 'third world' by the bosses of the advanced imperialist countries, and the use of ethnic minorities in the imperialist countries as cheap, second class and dispensable labour. Today, the 'third world' is held in terrible backwardness and is enslaved by the control of Western multinationals and banks, who make untold billions from low wages, cash crop farming and massive debt repayments. It is this lack of development, and the economic disasters that flow from it, which drives hundreds of thousands to emigrate to the imperialist countries.

Whilst all borders should be open, and whilst we should welcome our brothers and sisters from the Third World and elsewhere with open arms, we must also help the working class to win the fight for a decent life in their countries of origin. Only then will all workers have a really free choice as to where we want to live and work, rather than having to decide under the pressure and coercion of economic hardship. The fight against racism must therefore be a fight against imperialism in all its manifestations.

The YRE opposes this global system of exploitation and calls for the cancellation of the 'third world' debt. We fight for the withdrawal of all imperialist troops from foreign countries (even if their military presence is in the name of UN). We demand the immediate withdrawal of the British troops from Ireland and Bosnia, the French from Bosnia and Africa, the Belgian troops from Africa, and Austrian troops from the Middle East and Cyprus. We oppose any change in the German constitution to allow foreign military intervention. We demand the right of national self-determination for the Irish peiople as a whole, and for Kurdish people in Turkey. We call for the withdrawal of the Turkish army from the Kurdish areas.

We solidarise with all forces in struggle against imperialism or national oppression: this includes the IRA and the PKK. The YRE also defends the democratic rights of these organisations in the imperialist countries. No to the banning of the PKK in Germany or France! No to media censorship and travel restrictions for Sinn Féin in Britain! Smash the reactionary British Prevention of Terrorism Act and all similar laws in Europe!

Down with chauvinism and war in Eastern Europe and Russia

The combined evils of the disintegrating Stalinist dictatorship and the restoration of the brutal capitalist system have created a wave of chauvinism against national minorities in Eastern Europe: in Serbia, Croatia, Russia, Lithuania, Romania and beyond. The war in Bosnia is simply the sharpest expression of this tendency to date. We stand for the defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia from ethnic cleansing and genocide, the sharpest and most bloody expression of national chauvinist violence on the European continent since the Second World War. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all UN troops from Bosnia and oppose the UN's attempt to ratify ethnic partition through imposed "peace deals". We are for the immediate lifting of all imperialist-backed sanctions, including the arms embargo which impedes the Bosnians' efforts to organise their own justified defence.

We defend the rights of all oppressed national minorities to self-determination up to and including secession from the states that oppress them. At the same time we recognise that to wipe out racism and chauvinism, the working class in the East must stop capitalist restoration, overthrow the old bureaucrats and the new bourgeois class and establish an international federation of workers' states.

For a socialist revolution

Racism and fascism will never be defeated unless the capitalist profit system is overthrown and replaced with a system that can overcome all national divisions, end the exploitation of the 'third world' and remove the power of the tiny class of capitalists who use racism and fascism to divide working people and stop us fighting back. In short, we must expropriate once and for all those who expropriate us throughout our whole lives: For the immediate nationalisation under the control of the work-

ers of all large scale industry, the banks and other financial institutions!

There can be neither a peaceful nor a parliamentary road to socialism. There is one fundamental reason for this. The ruling class will never voluntarily hand over its power and property. They will defend them savagely as they have always done throughout history. The army, the police force and the state bureaucracy are not the servants and defenders of the nation as a whole. Nor are they neutral in the struggle between the classes. The state is an instrument of class rule. Breaking the hold of the bourgeoisie will take an armed revolution to smash their state power.

To carry this out, the working class must organise itself in democratic workers' councils which reflect the will of the majority class in society and which will become the basis of the future workers' state. As the class struggle sharpens, the working class must organise itself in workers' militias to defend itself against the army and police, and go on to acquire the arms to make the socialist revolution.

For an internationalist YRE

The YRE should be more than simply a federation of different national movements. A Europe-wide conference should be organised at least every two years, starting in 1995, made up of voting delegates from every national section of the YRE. A European leadership should be elected including members of each of section. Different political tendencies within the YRE should be represented on its leadership in proportion to the votes cast for their candidates. The conference should adopt a European programme to ensure that the national sections of the YRE are fighting for common aims, principles and policies. ■

No to Nato airstrikes in Bosnia!

International Secretariat, LRCI, 14 April 1994

We condemn the NATO air strikes against Serbian troops at Gorazde on the 10th and 11th April. They are one more element in the policy of the United States, the European Union and the United Nations aimed at imposing a reactionary imperialist 'peace' based on a partition of Bosnia-Herzogovina on their terms. These attacks re-enforce imperialist interference in Bosnia and, therefore, violate the real interests of all its peoples. We demand the immediate and total withdrawal of all the UN armed forces and the lifting of UN sanctions against the Serbian people. At the same time, we demand the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia to enable the Bosnian people to defend themselves in their justified struggle against national oppression and partition at the hands of the Serbian and Croatian regimes and imperialism. ■

Bosnia: strangled by nationalism and imperialism

International Secretariat, LRCI, 22 March 1994

The latest attempt by the USA and Russia to impose a settlement on Bosnia-Herzegovina has turned the attention of the world to the Balkans once again. The NATO ultimatum, the "pacification" of Sarajevo, the shooting down of four Serbian bombers and the US brokered agreement between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats and Croatia itself; all these factors could radically change the situation. Were their plans to succeed we could see a new carve up by the Great Powers similar to the Congress of Berlin in 1878. What are the possibilities of an imperialist settlement in Bosnia?

The balance of forces after 20 months of war.

On the outbreak of war in Bosnia the situation was marked by several factors. A mass multi-ethnic anti-war movement was being totally misled by bourgeois forces and doomed to failure. Ranged against them were chauvinist Serbian forces, intent on carving out a "Greater Serbia" with the co-operation of the Milosevic government in Belgrade. The Itzetbegovic government of the Bosnian Republic meanwhile sought to create a bourgeois Bosnia which, whilst remaining multi-ethnic, would be dominated by the Bosnian Muslims.

To achieve these objectives the Bosnian government, with the encouragement of the west, pushed through a referendum on independence despite the alarm this raised in the minds of many Bosnian Serbs. In Croatia one part of the political elite wanted to carve it up, thereby uniting Western-Herzegovina and the Posavina region in the north with the Croatian republic. After the overthrow of HDZ-leader Stepan Klujic this West Herzegovina lobby seized the leadership and the political initiative.

In the late summer of 1992 the disagreements between the imperialist powers over what type of military action to take were finally resolved in favour of the non-interventionists. This was clear form the outcome of the London Conference of August 1992. Thereafter, Tudjman and the Herzegovina lobby could go ahead with the carve up of Bosnia without fearing reprisals from the US and EC.

The results of were disastrous. Serbian nationalists conquered the greater part of Eastern Bosnia and ruthlessly drove out its Muslim population. They besieged Sarajevo or nearly two years and terrorised its multi-ethnic population with artillery shells and sniper fire. In west-central Bosnia, Croatian HVO militias betrayed the city of Jajce,—symbol of multi-ethnicity during the second world war—by cedeing it to the Serbians. Later they did the same to Brosanski Brod in the north. In the central regions and the western Herzegovina the Croatian nationalists drove the Muslims from their homes in large numbers and besieged them in Mostar.

The character of the war thus changed. What had hitherto been a reactionary nationalist war on all sides was transformed into a just war of the Bosnian Muslims and their allies against the threat of genocide by Serbian and Croatian chauvinist forces. The new de facto alliance between Croats and Serbs directly threatened the survival of the Bosnian Muslims as an ethnic community.

During April and May 1993 a new wave "ethnic cleansing" against the Muslims in central Bosnia erupted. After early defeats the Bosnian army was able to liberate significant parts of the region such as Varez and open a corridor to Mostar. Reactionary Islamist forces such as the el-Jihad brigade committed dreadful crimes against local Croats in the process. Whilst Bosnian government forces in Sarajevo suffered serious defeats throughout July and August 1993 and Maglaj was besieged they were able to successfully defend the Tuzla region, particularly Olovo. They threatened, and even managed on several occasions to sever, the Posavina corridor at Brcko—the vital link between the Krajna and northern Bosnian regions and Serbia proper. It is in effect the jugular vein of the entire Serbian war effort aimed at the creation of a "Greater Serbia".

The second most important front is in the Olovo and the Doboj-Maglaj regions. Firstly, because Doboj is a road and railway centre and, secondly, because the Serbian nationalists are trying to cut off Tuzla from central Bosnia and thus create a second corridor to compensate for the vulnerability of Brcko. The third vital area is obviously Sarajevo because it is the republic's capital. The war between the Bosnian government and the Croatian nationalists focused first on Mostar because the Croats claim it as their capital city, despite its Muslim majority. Secondly, it involved several Croatian enclaves in central Bosnia such as Vitez and Kiseljak. It is here that reactionary actions have been taken by the Bosnian Muslim forces to drive the Croatian population out of their homes.

Meanwhile in the Bihac region, Fikret Abdic, a criminal and former higher managerial bureaucrat (in Agrokomerz), seized power and betrayed the regions's defence against Croatian and Serbian forces He signed agreements with both Boban and Karadjic in October 1993 and has even received arms from them. The reports differ but it seems he controls now 10-30% of the region.

Revolutionary communists who defend the Bosnian Muslims and their ethnic allies would thus form a military bloc with the government forces against Abdic's treachery.

The three camps; a military view

The Bosnian army has managed to improve its fighting capacity over recent months. Between October and December 1993 the army was put more under central control and the morale of the soldiers improved in the wake of a number of successes. They rebuilt an arms factory, improving the supply of infantry weaponry. But they have also purchased a considerable quantity from Serbian units and some have been brought in by light aircraft.

According to reports in the bourgeois press over the last months the army has now 200, 000 soldiers and a substantial quantity of weapons. The government is said to dispose of a budget of $200 million. It is difficult to ascertain the truth of these reports since the Bosnian government is obviously interested in impressing its enemies. At the same time, several imperialist newspapers, opposed to any western intervention, are keen to portray all three groups as equally mad and destructive. Other sources indicate that the Bosnian Army has only 60, 000 soldiers. In either case the Muslims are certainly still greatly hampered in their fightback by their near total lack of heavy weapons artillery, (e.g. tanks) which is a direct result of the reactionary imperialist arms embargo.

The Serbian nationalists face their own difficulties for all their superiority in weaponry and the huge territorial gains they made in the first phases of the war. Indeed, that early success is a cause of their present problem. They need more than their 90, 000 soldiers to occupy such a large part of the country. Another problem is the declining morale of the troops.

This is caused in part because of chronic supply problems and in part by the yawning gulf between the conditions faced by the soldiers and the brazen corruption and war profiteering by the nascent Serbian bourgeoisie. This has resulted in several mutinies and general unrest last autumn. Their remaining massive superiority lies in their heavy and sophisticated weapons as well as in the backing Belgrade provides. This has even increased over the recent period. It is reported that during difficult military situations Belgrade sent several units of it's own army (JNA) and even elite troops from the Interior Ministry.

The Croatian nationalist camp faces similar problems. It is short of soldiers against the numerically superior Muslims. For this reason they declared a general mobilisation several months ago. They also rely heavily on support from Zagreb, approximately three to five thousand of whose soldiers are engaged in the war in Bosnia.

The conclusion to be drawn is that under the present internal and international conditions, the war to prevent a genocide of the Bosnian Muslims cannot be won by military means alone. Victory necessitates a new political basis, one that reconstruct a multi-ethnic workers' Bosnian Republic. Such a basis can only found in revolutionary communist politics.

The strategies of the warring parties

The nature of any settlement depends in part on the different political and military strategies being pursued by the Bosnian government and the Serbian and Croatian camps. The hegemonic political force in the Bosnian Muslim camp is obviously the SDA (Democratic Party for Action). Founded in 1990 by Itzetbegovic it is a bourgeois Muslim party which set out to transform the Bosnian (degenerated) workers' state into a capitalist one. It clearly understood that this could only be done with the help of imperialism, particularly the EC. The SDA aimed at rebuilding Muslim hegemony without destroying the multi-ethnic communities. The bourgeois Muslim leaders knew that anything other than a multi-ethnic Bosnia would mean mass persecution and genocide for the Muslims themselves.

But what they did not realise is that such a perspective was a complete utopia. The very prospect of restoring capitalism re-invigorated ethnic hatreds and oppression. As long as the great majority of the working class and peasantry is not won over and led by an authentic internationalist party class antagonisms will be translated into national hatred.

The Itzetbegovic party therefore provoked profound mistrust in the other communities by its purging of other ethnic groups from the top administrative positions and by promoting "their" people in the areas where they held the majority after their election victory. At the same time their naive illusions in bourgeois multi-ethnicity and in the support of "democratic" imperialists rendered them completely unprepared for the subsequent war.

These foolish hopes paralysed the Izetbegovic-government. There is evidence, for example, that the SDA leadership deliberately rejected breaking the siege of Sarajevo when they could have done so because they hoped to provoke a NATO military intervention. Their bourgeois class character also laid them open to permeation by war-lordism, localism and corruption. All these failures contributed to the terrible present situation.

But what is far more important is their political bankruptcy. Many Serbs and Croats fought, and continue to fight, with the Muslims against the Serbian and Croatian pogromists. They fight with them because they want to continue their neighbourly relations and friendships. And there was strong support in the Muslim population, particularly in the cities, for multi-ethnicity. But the SDA leadership was absolutely incapable of extending this base of support into an authentic internationalist political programme and so attract the mass of the Serbian and Croatian population to its side.

Quite the contrary. Itzetbegovic's policy of subordination to imperialism resulted in the acceptance of partition in the autumn of 1993. On 15 September he signed a secret agreement with the Serbian nationalists allowing the Bosnian Serbs and Croats to unite with their "motherlands". After this he proposed the acceptance of the Owen-Stoltenberg partition plan.

The policy of the Izetbegovic/Silajdzic group can be described as a relatively secular, bourgeois, pro-imperialist one. Even now, despite accepting partition, they still regularly use the language of multi-ethnicity.

Izetbegovic appeals in public speeches to the multi-national partisan traditions of the second world war and openly condemns massacres perpetrated against Croats and Serbs. Still, all his plans are fitted into the peace terms offered by imperialism. Izetbegovic has always hoped for a renewal of the alliance with the Croats precisely because they are the group most willing to accept the Vance-Owen and then the Owen-Stoltenberg plans.

The contradictions within this policy are obvious. Firstly, in the medium term, even a miniature copy of a multi-national Bosnia is a complete utopia. The destruction and partition of Bosnia produces an inherent dynamic of persecution and migration of hundreds of thousands of people and inevitabley spawns chauvinism. Secondly, the dominant factions in the imperialist camp are up to now unwilling to back Bosnia against Serbia and Croatia.

These contradictions led to increasing pressure on the Itzetbegovic group. The right-wing in the SDA is becoming stronger. This fundamentalist group dominates the influential Muslim assembly and has its main regional stronghold in the central Bosnian Zenica region The military forces under their influence, like the el-Jihad brigade, are relatively small at the moment but, nevertheless, it is they who are responsible for a reactionary "ethnic cleansing" campaign. Their immediate goal is to continue the struggle and to reconquer all Muslim regions. But their ultimate perspective is one of creating an Islamic state in these parts of Bosnia. They rely much less on western imperialism and seek material support from the Islamic states in the Middle and Far East. Their strength depends on the material support actually being given by these states as well as the growing disillusion, particularly amongst Muslim refugees and peasants in central Bosnia, with the policy of the government.

But their major weakness is the remaining strongly secular and multi-ethnic feelings particularly in the urban Muslim population. A second weakness is their lack of roots in the army whose officer corps tradition is secular and often multi-national. Finally, the Islamic project faces enormous geo-strategic problems because any Islamic state in a truncated Bosnia would be encircled by a hostile Serbia and Croatia. So, today the Islamic fundamentalist movement is relatively weak. But in the aftermath of a capitulatory settlement this could rapidly change.

Obviously, the most progressive current in the Bosnian camp are the multi-ethnic secular forces who are still fighting against pogroms and partition. They are particularly strong in the working class strongholds in and around Tuzla and in Sarajevo where such mixed communities still exist. In Tuzla, for example, there are still workers' brigades, like the miners' brigade, fighting against the Serbian nationalists. Unfortunately, they are badly misled by bourgeois forces such as the Reformist Party (led by the ex-Yugoslav Prime Minister Markovic) and the Social Democratic Party (ex-Stalinist). They control the local council in Tuzla and have significant influence in the Second.Army corps. But their bourgeois character leads them into opportunism and passivity towards the Izetbegovic government. They make no open political criticisms of it and in the last period have become even closer to the regime. While their strength lies in their significant support in the urban population and the commitment of major parts of the army corps to a multi-ethnic Bosnia, their policy is a rotten and opportunistic one. They pin their hopes on a faction within US imperialism which is ready to support a Bosnian state as buffer against Serbia; but today this faction is in a clear minority. All hopes pinned on Washington are bound to be disappointed.

The strength of these two minority currents in the Bosnian camp was enough to stop Itzetbegovic's capitulation to the Owen-Stoltenberg plan in September 1993. But the political weakness of the bourgeois multi-ethnic faction and the fundamentalists' lack of roots in the army enabled the Izetbegovic group to organise a counterblow in the last months of 1993. He appointed Silajdzic as the new prime minister, sacked the army chief Halilovic and purged the army, replacing them with his own loyalists. These forces accept in principle a partition and the creation of a (secular) rump Bosnia. Silajdzic supported the German-French proposal for a partition deal with Serbia at the beginning of December. This would have given the Bosnian government some more land in return for lifting the embargo on Serbia.

The contradictions of Serbian and Croatian policy

The strategy of the Serbian nationalists is clear and single-minded. They want a "Greater Serbia" comprising rump Yugoslavia, Eastern Bosnia and both the Bosnian Krajina and the Serbian Krajina. They have largely succeeded in putting this territory under their control. But they still face serious obstacles in consolidating these gains and getting international recognition for them. First, the northern corridor linking much of their newly conquered territories to Serbia itself is not secure. Secondly, the catastrophic economic situation in Serbia caused by the UN-embargo saps the will of Milosevic.

All this creates serious problems of morale and difficulties in maintaining war supplies. Milosevic is therefore looking for a deal with imperialism to lift the embargo. He accepted the Owen-Stoltenberg partition plan and pressed Karadjic to do the same. He managed to ensure the victory of Milan Martic in the presidential elections in the Croatian Krajina against the "hardliner" Milan Babic. He is trying to create the conditions for a settlement with Bosnia and Croatia as soon as possible. He has managed to hold onto political power in Serbia despite the near collapse of the economy and a wave of strikes (particularly in the transport sector) in the last few months.

But to gain Serbia's consent, any settlement that must guarantee secure links to both Bosnian and the Croatian Krajina. Probably, Milosevic would be ready to give back parts of the territory seized in the Serb-Croat war from the Croatian republic. Any lasting settlement with Croatia is simply impossible without at least giving back terrritory in the Zadar-Split region. Milosevic has offered Croatia about 20% of the Serbian conquered territory in Bosnia.

After the rejection of the Vance-Owen plan by the Bosnian Serbs Milosevic has strengthened his efforts to regain control over them. Their increasing reliance on his material and military support seems to be giving

Belgrade the upper hand over Pale.

So the key to Bosnian Serb policy lies in the end in the hands of Belgrade. The Milosevic regime has become relatively stable because of the weakness of the bourgeois opposition parties and the control of the SPS over the main trade union.

As a material base for the bourgeois opposition the middle class no longer exists. It has been crushed by the economic collapse and the most desperate part is going over to the fascist camp of Seselj. The independent trade union Nezavisimost suffers systematic persecution by the regime but it also lack any clear political understanding of what constitutes the interests of the working class.

It is influenced by a confused mish-mash of militant syndicalism and a free-market, pro-SPO (Serbian Renewal Movement) orientation. So Milosevic's enemies remain weak and and divided and his regime is relatively stable for the time being.

But the collapse of the economy, the pressure to carry through a restructuring and privatisation programme—with all its inevitable social trauma—could well change the situation and lead quite suddenly to an open revolutionary crisis.

Croatia

The Tudjman government faces less serious economic obstacles but more difficult political ones. Until recently the whole policy of Tudjman was built on an alliance with the ultra-reactionary "Herzegovina lobby" around Defence Minister General Susak and Prime Minister Seks. Their strategy is to carve up Bosnia and annex significant parts of Herzegovina and central Bosnia.

This goal was agreed several times in secret deals with the Serbian nationalists. But this strategy depends for success on a settlement with the Serbs. But in the medium term this is impossible so long as the Serbs of the Krajina continue to demand the inclusion of their region into Serbia or its virtual independence from Zagreb. Today, their victories have effectively cut off the land connection to the economically important Dalmatian coast in Croatia.

This strategy suffered further serious blows as a result of military defeat in the war against the Muslims. For all of these reasons there is a strong opposition in Croatia to a deal with the Serbs. The alternative strategy, an alliance with the Muslims to fight the Serbs and if possible to reconquer the occupied territories in Croatia, is shared by all opposition forces. These include the Church, the trade unions and probably even the majority of the military hierarchy.

The strength of this strategy is the recognition that an alliance with the Muslims could offset the the numerical inferiority of the Croats. In addition, it could overcome the geo-strategic weakness of Croatia in the central Karlovac-Pakrac region which endangers the whole state. Lastly, such an alliance would inevitably be dominated by the Croats.

But until now Tudjman was able to fend off his opponents by use of his bonapartist powers. But these contradictions within Croataian strategy are very sharp and must be resolved in one direction or another, probably with serious clashes.

The colliding ambitions of the US, Russia and Europe

From before the outbreak of the war there was no unified imperialist policy towards ex-Yugoslavia. The USA as well as Britain and France at first hoped to preserve Yugoslavia. The USA, in particular, changed its attitude and imposed an embargo against Serbia after the war in Bosnia started. Their main concern was to bring stability to the Balkans. They want stability in Europe and stability for Yeltsin in the Russian Republic. Likewise, they do not want to jeapordise Turkey's relations with its Balkan neighbours or inflame relations with the conservative Islamic powers.

Therefore, they have tried to contain the strongest and most expansionist power—Serbia. The limited, largely verbal, support given to the Bosnian Muslims serves, on one hand, to obstruct the "Greater Serbia" project and, on the other hand, to create a potential regional satellite. Hence their sharp criticism of the Vance-Owen plan in spring 1993. It does not mean that that the US is opposed to partition. Quite the contrary! Whilst they may have hoped at the beginning of the war to preserve Bosnia as a buffer between Serbia and Croatia developments during the war gave these plans a death blow. Today the Clinton administration clearly supports pacification by means of the partition of Bosnia. The present tug of war is solely about the size of the territory Bosnia needs if it is to stave off immediate collapse.

What worries the United States far more than the break-up of Bosnia is a war in Macedonia which could draw in Greece and Turkey on opposite sides, both of them NATO-members. Also there is a serious danger that various bureaucratic factions and nascent bourgeoisies in the Balkans could follow the Serbian example and, to avoid political catastrophe internally, launch a struggle for a "Greater X". This could obviously result in the wholesale destabilisation of Eastern Europe and the CIS by national wars, wars that could eventually involve nuclear powers.

The Bosnian war did threaten any acute US national or economic interests. Despite the wider geo-strategic repercussions of the conflict they did not try to impose their policy against the will of the European powers. Despite several shifts in Clinton's foreign policy his underlying idea remained to focus more on the USA's domestic economic and social problems and to select only a few world conflicts within which to intervene. A minority of leading politicians such as Kirkpatrick, Brezhinzki and Schultz are still arguing for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. But even they are not in favour of a full-scale military intervention.

The latest intervention of imperialism during February and March 1994 seems to be motivated by several factors. Two years of war in Bosnia have underscored the absence of a common EC foreign policy. The present initiative of Clinton could be important in re-establishing, at least for the next couple of years, a political and military US leadership in Europe. Furthermore, there are signs that the Serbs are now militarily in a weaker position than before and that Serbia itself is in such an economic mess that it is at last prepared to accept a settlement dictated by the US and the EU, especially if it is underwritten by Yeltsin's Russia. The Great Powers hope to force Serbia into offering a rather more favour-

able settlement to the Bosnians.

To do this they have adopted a stick and carrot approach, not without its mishaps. This was the purpose of the NATO ultimatum over the siege of Sarajevo and the shooting down of four Serbian bombers. The Clinton administration would, in exchange for a Serbian signed peace settlement, lift the embargo on the rump Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, USA tries to make the Bosnian government even more dependent on their good will. This was the main purpose of the forced hand over of the Bosnian artillery in Sarajevo and the opening of Tuzla airport. Lastly, they are putting enormous pressure on both Izetbegovic-Silajzic and on Tudjman to rebuild an alliance of Croats and Muslims as a regional counterweight to the Serbs. They brazenly blackmailed both:

"The Muslim government was told that if it refused to sign the Washington deal America would not intervene to stop the remains of its country being destroyed. For their part, the Croats knew that the price of failure was sanctions." (The Economist 5.3.1994)

Russia enters the scene

With the intervention of Russia, the whole regional conflict in Bosnia acquired a new and important element. It became the focus of the changing foreign policy of US-imperialism. The US bourgeoisie have still not overcome their own leadership crisis and the fundamentals of their foreign policy are still in total flux. Nevertheless, the presently dominant viewpoint is strongly influenced by the newly appointed Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott. He advocates a strong pro-Yeltsin and, therefore, pro-Russian, foreign policy. That means accepting Russia as a Great Power, with its own regional 'sphere of influence'. Therefore, he has pushed through the replacement of policy of NATO-extension to Eastern Europe with the much vaguer Partnership for Peace. The former policy excluded the Russians, whereas the latter has explicitly drawn them in. The Clinton administration probably did not seek a stronger Russian involvement in Bosnia but, once he realised that Yeltsin was compelled by domestic forces, such as Zhirinovsky and the military, to take a stronger pro-Serb line, Clinton sought to use the Russians in the settlement of the Bosnian war.

Of course, the result of drawing in the Russians could end up in a local 'Cold War' between Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. And, while both Russia and the US-EU would consolidate their influence on 'their' local satellites they would try to block a new outbreak of war. Another advantage would be the re-consolidation of political-military US-leadership over European imperialism.

However, the Clinton administration faces huge problems with this strategy. Firstly, Yeltsin's motivation for intervention in Bosnia (and for the whole shift in Russia's foreign policy in the last period) was primarily the increasing pressure by the chauvinist military and state apparatus, manifested in the victory of Zhirinovsky in December elections. Yeltsin had to give in to this pressure because of his increasing reliance on the military after losing popular support, and in recognition of the decisive role of the Army in the crushing of Parliament in October 1993. So, Russia's appetite for more and bigger 'spheres of influence' could further increase. Secondly, because of this uncertainty about Russia's whole political future, there is a significant and growing opposition within the American political elite which advocates stopping Russia now from playing the 'Great Power' once more. According to this faction, Russia should at the very maximum be allowed to intervene in its 'near abroad', i.e. in the Caucasian and Central Asian republics but it should not be allowed any say in Eastern Europe or the Balkans.

The third problem is the continuing ambiguity in Clinton's policy as to whether the Balkans, or Bosnia-Herzegovina, should be considered as involving the 'national interest' of the USA or not. Until now, the administration did not regard the war in this light and so rejected sending US troops to enforce any settlement as long as all parties had not accepted it. Clinton fears becoming involved in a 'Cold Peace' which could then result in unpopular losses of American lives, as in Somalia. The counter-argument put by several foreign affairs pundits is that a laissez faire approach holds the danger of a Greece-Turkey conflict.

Russia's interests are, as explained above, orientated to the rebuilding of Russia as an independent 'Great Power' - albeit in the first stage as an independent 'Great Power' which is a 'reasonable' ally for US/EC-Imperialism. It, therefore, tries to find regional allies or satellites with whom it could build a 'Pan-Slavic bloc'. Its first choice of partner is obviously Serbia, both for political ('anti-western') and historical reasons. This project has its direct material roots in the interests of the army and state apparatus, but these could, and, indeed, will be, shared by significant parts of the nascent bourgeoisie which could profit by increasing trade with countries under Russia's hegemony.

Although the Russian restorationist bureaucracy is attempting to build its own 'sphere of influence', its principal concern, at the moment, does not lead it onto a collision course with imperialism. Quite the contrary, it is willing to cooperate with the imperialist bourgeoisies because it desperately wants financial aid from them. Moscow, therefore, has an interest in pressing Karadjic to make concessions and to reach a settlement. In the short term, the nationalist wing of the Russian bureaucracy, which is actually the driving force in Russia's foreign policy at present, could favour supporting the Serbian nationalists in trying to block too far reaching concessions, in the longer run, however, the material basis of their power is disintegrating.

The collapsing state of Russia's economy and social structures present insuperable obstacles to a consistent and aggressive foreign policy. Precisely because Russia is not an imperialist power, but still a disintegrating degenerated workers' state, it lacks the (relatively) stable class foundation necessary for an expansionist policy. Therefore, a retreat from Russia's new interventionism, outside the 'near abroad', as a result of the probable collapse of the economy, is quite likely in the medium term.

European imperialism

At the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia, the EC recognised that the conflict was a tremendous opportu-

nity to intervene for the first time as a bloc and, thus, to further the Maastricht project of a unified European imperialism. At first, it even repulsed US involvement. Furthermore, the western European bourgeoisies understood the risks to themselves of the Bosnian war. Firstly, there was the danger of a mass wave of refugees heading mainly for Austria and Germany. Secondly, there was the danger of the destabilization of the whole Balkan region which could threaten the establishment there of stable and exploitable semi-colonies. Finally, in the the medium term, there was a real danger of this spilling over into Eastern Europe and CIS.

The results, however, have been a complete fiasco for the pretensions to a unified "European imperialism" and a serious set back for the Maastricht project itself. Germany tried to utilize the war from the beginning to build local satellites, particularly Croatia and Slovenia and pressured the EC into recognising them as independent republics. But, whilst Germany is obviously the economic giant, its effective military capacity is puny. The crippling strategic shortcoming of German imperialism remains its constitutional barriers (which, moreover, express strong political opposition within German society) to any military intervention abroad. Therefore, it is not able to back up its political projects by military force and is obliged to go cap in hand to British and French imperialism (and, indeed, the US). These problems resulted in a clear, if temporary, eclipse of German influence in European and international diplomacy from the summer of 1992. Today, Germany has to support all efforts to pacify Bosnia and actively supports Russia's involvement.

Britain and France have no interest in serving as the hired guns of an expansionist German economic power. British imperialism, in particular, fears a strong Germany and did everything it could to thwart Kohl's plans. Britain regards the Balkans as, at least historically, its sphere of influence and remembers the Serbs as allies in two world wars. Britain's interest is a rapid pacification of the Balkan region with a minimum of remaining German influence. From the outset, therefore, they rejected any military intervention on the Bosnian/Croatian side which they regarded as supporting German satellites. Their present commitment to sending more troops is motivated by hopes of ending the war by enforcing a carve up which is satisfactory to Serbia. This also explains Major's enthusiastic support for Yeltsin's decision to send more troops.

French imperialism also had no direct interest in supporting Germany's project. While there existed in the first period of the war a significant pro-interventionist, anti-Serbian wing in the Gaullist party, the main stream shared the British suspicions of growing German influence in the region and favoured a pacification of the area at the expense of the Muslims.

Nevertheless, the underlying attitude of the French bourgeoisie was different from that of the British. Perfidious Albion was pursuing its centuries old policy of thwarting the emergence of any hegemonic power on the "mainland". This is how Whitehall sees the "federal Europe" project of Delors, Mitterand and Kohl. Thus, it did not mind in the least if the EU's attempts at a concerted foreign policy ended in farce. The French, however, whatever the differences with over the Balkans, did not want to wreck their strategic alliance with the Germans or make a common EU foreign policy impossible. They were in a cleft stick and, realising the danger of destabilization in the Balkans, called for a stronger UN intervention as a way out. However, they could not find serious support for their position and were faced with the unhappy alternatives of abject withdrawal or of calling for US-intervention. In the end they opted for the latter which is a heavy blow for France's project of building a European military force, independent of the US

The result of this fiasco for the leading Western-European powers was the desperate attempt to resolve the war by the diplomatic means of the Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg plans, both of which failed. As a consequence, the imperialist powers were, and remain, determined to enforce a partition of Bosnia. British and French support for the deployment of UN-troops, and their cynical propaganda about humanitarian aid, served to cover their resistance to any pro-Bosnian full-scale military intervention They could use the risk to their "peace keeping" troops as an excuse. Meanwhile, they maintained the arms embargo on the Bosnians and the savage economic blockade on Serbia to bend both sides to their will, thereby prolonging the agony of the Bosnian people as a whole.

Prospects for an imposed settlement

The stronger involvement of US and Russia since February 1994, the NATO enforced cease-fire in Sarajevo, the negotiations for a renewed Muslim-Croat alliance or federation and the plans for UN-administration of Sarajevo and other cities, all put the question of a final partition and settlement on the agenda. Several factors will decide the outcome.

Firstly, the reaction of the multi-national Bosnian working class. Has the war so atomised and demoralised them that they will reluctantly accept any settlement? It is quite clear that the various bourgeois parties have utilised the war to destroy as far as they can any class consciousness. No one could be surprised if the first reaction of many Bosnians is relief at a cease-fire on almost any terms whatever. But class organizations do still exist. The trade unions and workers' brigades in Tuzla are still fighting for a multi-national Bosnia. The Serbian soldiers' uprisings in Banja Luka and Prijedor reflected an opposition to what they called the 'Chetnik-fascist Karadjic' and support for multinationality. The decisive obstacles for internationalist class resistance were, and are, the fake-leaders of the working class, both the bourgeois-liberal and the ex-stalinist parties. They are certainly ready to accept 'critically' any partition plans, as their reaction to the purges in the Bosnian government and army proved.

The second question is the reaction of the different sections in Bosnia and Croatia to the new federation/confederation plan. On Croatia's side, the adoption of the Federation plan would obviously mean a fundamental change in Tudjman's strategy over the last two years. His bloc with the Herzegovina lobby would be broken. Tudjman would have accepted the criticism of the opposition. Such a bonapartist turn is not excluded because

Tudjman's strategy for partition resulted in a terrible defeat for the Bosnian Croats (they lost 40% of the country they conquered up to spring 1993) and because of the strong pressure from the US. In reality, however, it is more likely that Tudjman signed the treaty in order to win time and that he calculates that the current engagement of NATO and Russia is just a temporary phenomenon and that he will be able to break the alliance again once the pressure is off. Another real possibility is the overthrow of Tudjman and his replacement by a bloc of sections of the army officer corps and the bourgeois opposition. These forces have a genuine interest in an alliance with the Muslims because for them the Serbs are the main enemy.

However, if a Muslim-Croat alliance could be rebuilt, that would not automatically mean the pacification for which imperialism is hoping. Both Croatia, because they lost 1/3 of their country to the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims, who lost over two thirds, have every reason to renew a full scale war against the Serbs at the first opportunity.

The Bosnian government is quite ready to renew the alliance with the Croats, despite the fact that a confederation with Croatia means inevitable subordination to Croatia. One could see this in the Bosnian propaganda where they repeatedly characterized the Serbs as the main enemy. There are also strategic and historical reasons for such an alliance: they can only construct a better relationship of forces against the Serbs together. This fact is one of the strongest reasons for the historical links between them.

At the same time, the Izetbegovic-Silajzic government faces several obstacles to this capitulation. One is the resistance of the working class and the progressive sections of the army. Secondly, the refugees who have a genuine interest in reconquering their homes and farmland. Thirdly, the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist current which rejects a sell out to Croatia and wants to create a religiously, Muslim country. The latter hope for economic as well as military support from the Islamic countries. Taken together, this all means that, despite some progress in consolidating their power, the government could face very hard times. Their overthrow, if not immediately, then in the medium term, is quite possible.

The third problem is the position of the Serbs. Milosevic must overcome the resistance of the victorious Serb forces in both Croatia and Bosnia to the compromise he seeks. He could succeed, but he would immediately have to face up to the disastrous state of Serbia's economy, and without the excuse of a, "national war for survival". The threat of economic collapse was the original reason for the aggressive Serbian expansionist policy. Its aim was to divert the classstruggle against the bureaucracy into the defence of, "threatened" Serbian interests in Kosovo, in Croatia and then in Bosnia. So, a renewal of the war in Bosnia, or against Croatia, or in the South against Macedonia, is also quite possible. It depends on the development of the class struggle and the political struggle of the bourgeois opposition against the SPS. The stronger these antagonisms become, the more Milosevic will have to beat the war drum.

The fourth, and no less important, factor will be the concrete plans of imperialism and Russia itself. The imperialists face two alternatives; the more they become engaged both politically and militarily in Bosnia, the more the danger arises of being drawn into a new explosion of the war which could itself sharpen tensions between US and Russia; however, the less they are engaged, the bigger the threat of a total breakdown of the settlement negotiations. As in Lebanon, where the full-scale intervention of Syria was necessary to bring an end to the war, such an intervention from outside also seems necessary. So, while a short term pacification of the war is possible, the explosive effects of national oppression and antagonism, and the huge quantities of weapons, suggest a continuation and even a major new explosion of the war. Unless, that is, there is massive intervention from outside or the working classes of all the nations are able to enforce an internationalist solution based on workers' council power in all the former republics of Yugoslavia.

Tasks and tactics of the working class

As long as the war retains the predominant character of an attempted genocide against the Muslims, revolutionary Marxists should take a defencist position towards their struggle. In the current situation, the fight remains one against a reactionary partition enforced by imperialism and Russia. Defence of the Bosnian Muslims and those Serbs, Croats etc who are fighting with them, is one of the most important tasks of the international labour movement. The Bosnian and the international working class has no interest in a peace which is built on national oppression and will, therefore, inevitably result in new wars. The plans for a UN-administration of Sarajevo, the UN/Russian conditions for the opening of Tuzla airport etc. are completely reactionary because they increase the power of imperialism and Russia to enforce any settlement and deprive the Bosnians of their power to defend themselves.

In the current situation, we do not, in the name of the self-determination of an oppressed people advocate the creation of a separate state based on Bosnian Muslim ethnicity. We believe that the basis for a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina still exists, so long as its workers and all its progressive social elements fight for such a solution. Therefore, the fight for a workers' republic on this basis remains our goal. However, we do recognize that the basis for a multi-national Bosnia is being undermined, month by month. Cruel oppression, as is so often the case, has commenced a nation building process amongst the Bosnian Muslims. Should this process be completed we would have to change our tactic and raise the slogan for the right of self-determination for the Muslims in the form of a secular workers' republic with equal rights for all ethnic groups.

In Western Europe, we are participating in the work of the International Workers' Aid campaign because we support every material aid for the Bosnian working class. At the same time, we criticise its pacifist/humanist platform imposed by the the centrists of United Secretariat and their pacifist allies. We fight for a clear, anti-imperialist and pro-Bosnian defencist position in its platform. We also demand, particularly in the present situation of an impending imperialist settlement, a focus on mobilizing the labour movement in the imperialist me-

tropolises against "their own " exploiters' policies. We also support the campaign for material aid for Tuzla, the proletarian centre of Bosnia.

As the demonstration of 700 refugees on 6th March in Sarajevo showed, the fight against a UN-sponsored deal becomes ever more important, particularly because it focuses the struggle against partition and, thus, against concrete imperialist intervention, whatever the initial false consciousness of its participants with regard to imperialism.

The just struggle of the Bosnian Muslims does not stop at the borders of the federation. While Communists support, in principle, every step to overcome ethnic tensions and for national fraternisation, they denounce the Washington agreement between the Bosnian and the Croatian government because it means a clear subordination and, therefore, ethnic oppression of the Muslims. Furthermore, it could be a fraternisation for an increased national war against the Serbs.

The struggle against the Serbian occupation of the Muslim and Croatian parts of Bosnia is a just war and this would not be changed by Croatian military support for the Muslim war effort. However, should the struggle to regain territory become subordinated to a full scale war between Croatia and Serbia, then the reactionary character of that war would lead us to return to a defeatist position.

Moreover, the entire situation would be changed if imperialism launched a full scale war against one side. Such a war would automatically be one of national oppression and we would unconditionally support the side under imperialist attack

In such circumstances, however, communists would maintain their policy of defending all local communities against pogroms. The uprisings of the Serbian soldiers in September 1993, and growing unrest in Bosnian cities, shows both the possibility and the necessity of mobilising workers against the war profiteers and corruption.

Communists fight for the building of committees for price-control, for workers' control of both production and services and also workers' and small farmers' control of all local, municipal and state institutions. Only workers' and small farmers' councils can mobilise for this fight and provide the organs of power needed to solve the political as well as the economic problems of war and capitalist restoration.

The danger of a sell out by the Izetbegovic regime must make the struggle against it a focus of working class resistance. This rotten regime must be overthrown and replaced by a workers' government based on militias and councils of the multi-national working class. We will support every single step of multi-national and class resistance against these fakers in Sarajevo.

A workers' government would immediately fight against any form of imperialist intervention. It would fight against Serbian and Croatian nationalists but not with a Muslim-'national' programme, let alone with a reactionary Islamic one. Its programme must be internationalist, socialist, and secular.

It would try at once to undermine the Serb and Croat support for Karadjic and the HDZ by offering the hand of reconciliation to these communities, promising them full national or cultural rights, pledging to bring before multi-ethnic workers' tribunals all the perpetrators of pogroms or ethnic cleansing, irrespective of which side they fought on.

Communists would appeal to the multi-ethnic tradition and put forward the plan for a multi-national workers' republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina within a Socialist Federation of the Balkans. ■