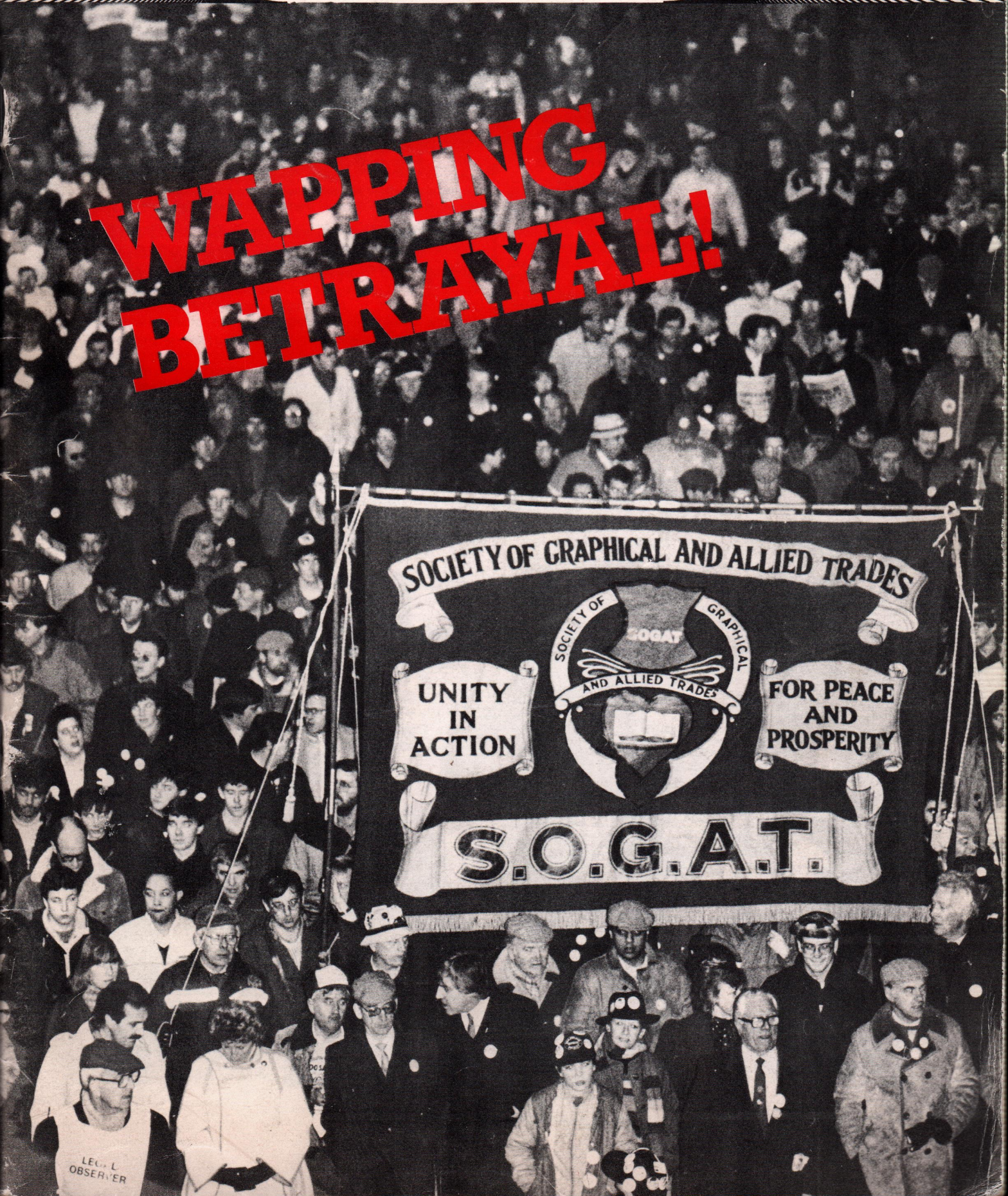


SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 15. February 1987. 70p

**WAPPING
BETRAYAL!**



About Socialist Viewpoint

Socialist Viewpoint is a magazine committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through banner-waving ultimatums, introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, or as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary. Rather it must be a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and

programme.

We are sure our readers will welcome the fact that this magazine is the third to be expanded to include more authors and wider coverage. If you feel — as we do — that it offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

Take a few copies to sell in your workplace, trade union, Labour Party or campaign work. Send us your news and information, articles, cartoons, photos, and letters. Ensure your local activities are publicised on our pages. Check with your local seller or drop us a line for further details.

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Cover Photo: Wapping Anniversary demonstration
(PHOTO: Andrew Wiard, Report)

PHOTO: Andrea Campbell



Would Labour reverse Tory attacks?

THE LABOUR Party has never been an anti-capitalist party.

From its early formation by a wing of the trade union bureaucracy, as a device to protect the unions through Parliamentary legislation, it has sought to achieve more or less ambitious reforms *within* the existing system, using the established institutions of bourgeois democracy.

Many Marxists in Britain have responded impatiently to this situation, either with frustrated denunciations of the limitations of Labour's programme and premature announcements of the "death" of social democracy, or by fostering illusions that a Labour leadership could be pressured by Conference votes or rank and file action into far-reaching anti-capitalist measures.

Others — adapting to the reformist pressures inside the labour movement — have even attempted to paint up the "progressive" aspects of Labour policies to make even the Kinnock leadership appear quite daringly radical, while ignoring Roy Hattersley's grovelling to business leaders or Kinnock's rejection of both renationalisation and any new nationalisation.

But for many sections of the workers' movement, the question at the forefront of their minds is not whether Labour will carry out revolutionary socialist attacks on the bastions of capital — but whether a Labour government would halt and roll back the attacks which Thatcher has made on the working class.

The bare minimum that its supporters could expect of a reformist government is that it **makes no new attacks** on the trade unions, democratic rights and living standards that have been so savagely treated by Thatcher.

Yet the experience of previous Labour governments and the pronouncements of the Kinnock leadership suggest that even this minimal demand could result in serious confrontations between the working class and Labour in office.

Under Wilson and Callaghan, and under Attlee's post-war government, Labour leaders sided unambiguously with employers against trade union struggles, implementing reactionary policies at home and abroad, and tailoring their actions to the demands of the bankers.

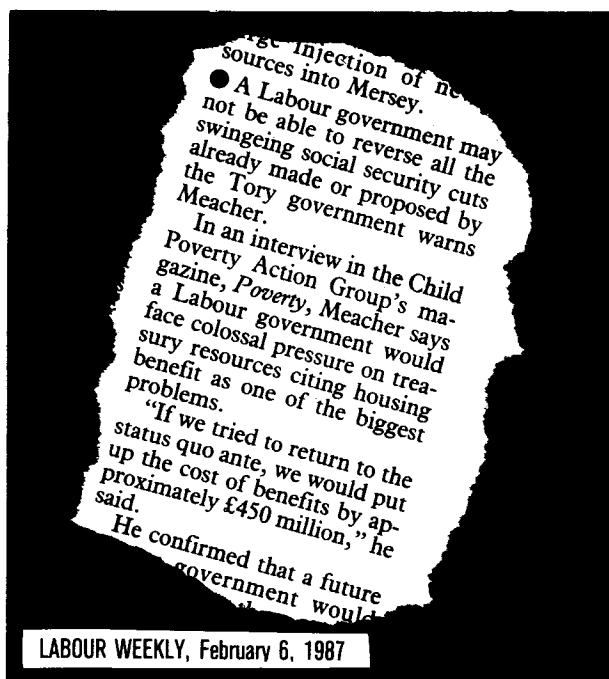
It is clear that one likely sharp confrontation will be on the need to repeal all of the Tory anti-union laws enacted since 1979, thus simply restoring the rights that have been swept away. Kinnock's supporters reject this approach, offering instead to legislate certain limited "rights" for union members, while

intending that whole sections of Thatcher's laws will remain on the statute book, backed up by all of the blatantly anti-union rulings handed down by the High Court.

Another issue is the restoration in full of the cash cut from health, housing, education and social service spending by nearly 8 years of Tory attacks. Instead, Michael Meacher offers a pitiful sop to the NHS, while Roy Hattersley is adamant that even the councils that have attempted to cushion the blow of Tory cuts by incurring debts will receive "no blank cheque" from a Labour government.

While Harold Wilson's government refused to assist the surcharged Clay Cross councillors or free the jailed Shrewsbury building strike pickets, Kinnock has always made clear his opposition to any amnesty for jailed miners or reinstatement for those victimised in the strike — and will make no move to life disqualification or surcharges from Lambeth or Liverpool councillors — or any others penalised for fight Tory attacks.

Who now believes that a Labour leadership so ready to join the Tories in denouncing anti-racist councils as "loony left" will brave the vicious racist hysteria from the media, and repeal the Immigration Acts which



provide much of the legal facade of institutionalised state racism?

Will Kinnock, busily using party political broadcasts, based on "law and order" and mythical friendly bobbies, do anything to combat the brutality and arbitrary powers of the police — and repeal Thatcher's Police Act and "public order" legislation?

Having promised a "minimum wage" but refused to put any figure upon it (many believe a pathetic £80 could be the Labour target), Kinnock and Hattersley have focussed much more consistently upon the need to hold down wages in the hopes of creating more jobs. A new Labour government committed to wage controls could rapidly run into collision with whole sections of workers — not least in the public sector — seeking redress from years of declining living standards under Thatcher.

Among many other issues where the bare minimum demand on Labour is that they halt and reverse Tory attacks, the glaring difficulty for Kinnock is how to handle the industries that have been privatised to provide cheap votes for Thatcher and to fund tax-breaks for the wealthy. The astronomic costs of repurchasing the shares that have been sold would profit Labour's traditional genteel approach to nationalisation: but Kinnock has no intention of challenging the power and wealth of the City. The

vague "social ownership" line now adopted would be enough to trigger a media backlash but nowhere near a serious attempt to renationalise these key monopolies.

On each of these issues, Marxists favour and argue for particular demands and policies — designed to mobilise mass action, organise workers at each level to challenge and confront the power and the "rights" of the employers and their state machinery, and expose the profiteering and exploitation that is central to the capitalist system.

However, no programme — no matter how complete and perfect it may seem — can in itself hope to mobilise the action of millions across the country.

The best conditions to raise more advanced political demands, and fight for their implementation, are conditions for class struggle in which the political thinking of whole sections of workers is shaken up and masses come into conflict with the limitations of their existing trade union and political leaders.

This is why — for all the treachery of the Labour leadership we call clearly for re-election of a new Labour government to defeat the vicious Thatcher leadership and create the best conditions to encourage workers to take militant action to defend their interests.

Vote Labour — and fight for socialist policies!



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

Still fighting on: sacked trade unionists at Hangers the limbfiters have been strengthened by the formation of a vocal Women's Support Group

WAPPING BETRAYAL

Last Thursday February 5th saw the spectacular sell out of the 4,500 News International printers still on strike after more than a year of struggle.

The General Executive Council of SOGAT 82 surrendered in the face of fresh moves by Rupert Murdoch, through the courts, to have the union's funds seized as a result of the continuing demonstrations and picketing at Wapping.

Printers lobbying the SOGAT Executive meeting were angry and bitter when they heard the result. The Executive had voted 23 to 9 to call off the struggle.

The decision could only be seen as the SOGAT leaderships reply to a call a few days earlier, from a meeting of all News International SOGAT and NGA chapel leaderships for a 24 hour stoppage throughout Fleet Street in a belated effort to spread the fight.

Brenda Dean, the main architect of the sellout, went on to television to say that the decision had been taken, that it was final and that it would not be subjected to a vote of the members involved: there would be no secret ballot, no show of hands, not even a vote at chapel meetings. Yet the right of the members to make a final decision before the strike ended had been repeatedly promised by Dean.

From all accounts the London EC members, who had all voted to continue the strike, had battled all day against the recommendation which came from the national officials of the union. They were backed by three others from Scotland, Manchester and the South East Midlands.

Within hours of the decision Murdoch announced that he would not pursue further legal action against SOGAT, but would seek court action against the NGA if they did not follow suit by noon on Friday. By Friday afternoon the NGA executive had followed SOGAT's lead and also betrayed the struggle. The ability of Dean and Dubbins to betray News International workers in this way, while Executive member Mike Hicks and other print workers

By **ALAN THORNETT**

are still in prison, has been helped by the unresolved problems of the leadership of the strike at branch level and in particular the role of the Communist Party.

Brenda Dean was at pains to stress that the Executive Council decision was in line with the unanimous vote at the SOGAT conference last year not to take any action which would put the funds of the union at risk by breaking the law.

This policy was supported by the leaders of branches involved in the Wapping dispute - some of them Communist Party members - in return for a general resolution of support for the strike. Yet it could hardly have been more clear that the strike was a political strike and could not be won without breaking the law!

At the same time, the SOGAT conference voted unanimously to place the conduct of the strike in the hands of the National Executive.

These decisions have now been used by Brenda Dean not only to end the strike without a vote but also to threaten anyone who may defy the decision, and continue the action, with disciplinary action from the union.

At first Dean and Dubbins boasted about the democracy of the strike - that they have had ballots of the members behind them. They gradually lost their enthusiasm for ballots, however, when each one resulted in a rejection of Murdoch's attempts to persuade the strikers to sell their jobs for a cash payment, and instead endorsed the continuation of the strike.

They, like many others, are only interested in democracy if the votes go the right way.

As we go to press it is not clear whether the branches and chapels involved in either SOGAT or the NGA will continue the struggle or follow the instruction of their Executives. We hope they will continue the struggle and appeal to the labour movement for support.

We will certainly stand with them. Early indications, however, are that the branch leaderships are likely to argue that the struggle is too difficult in the face of the Executive decisions.

An additional problem in this is that those leaderships don't have a viable strategy themselves. They have been unable to solve the crippling problem of developing a strategy for the strike capable of winning. They have raised important demands such as the expulsion of the scab EETPU from the TUC. At the same time, however, they have based themselves on the same boycott campaign promoted by Brenda Dean, and refused to address the key problem of the isolation of the strike. Every excuse has been made to avoid the problem of getting Fleet Street out in support, while every Fleet Street owner has used the situation to force through deals along the same lines as Murdoch.

A part of the sellout formula, which had all the signs of having been planned for some time, was an agreement by Murdoch that his redundancy 'offer' will be reopened for a month and in return there has been an agreement by the unions not to take any action against members who scabbed.

The 4,500 print workers who stood in solidarity and fought on the picket lines throughout the first year of this remarkable struggle demonstrated a tenacity and organisational ability which is unsurpassed in the trade union movement. It is matched only by the rank and file miners in the great strike of 1984/85.

The movement should salute their struggle if these events prove to be the end of the strike against Murdoch. But the movement must do much more than that. The 4,500 victimised printers would be joining the 450 miners who remain sacked by the NCB, and the workers at Silentnight who remain sacked, as well as 300 workers sacked at Hangers, limb fitters.

It is not possible to organise the fight back which is needed against this government if these victimised workers are forgotten.

Telecom workers exchange information

Fighting monopolies and multinationals

AS WE go to press, the first-ever national strike by the Telecom engineers' union, the NCU, has just begun. Already it is clear that the scale of the management attack on working conditions — aimed at slashing as many as 24,000 jobs — has been the key factor in unifying the resistance of this craft union.

The main outlines of the management's onslaught will be familiar to countless thousands of workers in manufacturing industry and elsewhere. The success of the NCU in defending the conditions they have fought to achieve will be of concern to the engineering staff of the more recently privatised British Gas who are next in line for the chopping block if British Telecom management prevails.

The start of a new national strike will also improve the chances of the striking printers at News International, whose struggle had been left isolated by their own leaders and the "new realism" of the TUC.

This issue of *Socialist Viewpoint* also helps underline the international significance of the dispute and of the industry itself, with extensive reports from a recent international rank and file conference of telecom workers.

IN A historic meeting, rank and file telecom workers from throughout the world converged on Amsterdam from December 4 to 7.

Delegates from Japan, Brazil, Chile, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Nicaragua, the USA, Belgium, Britain, Germany, Denmark, Malaysia and the Philippines discussed their own trade union and political situations as workers in the vast and hugely profitable multinational telecoms' industry.

The Conference, organised by the Dutch-based Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE), was a tremendous experience in developing working class internationalism.

Ohyama Kiyomi, a clerical worker at NEC in Kawasaki, spoke of the tremendous exploitation of Japanese workers. She is a supporter of the Rodo Joho group of militant workers, opposed to the yellow company unions which dominate industry in Japan.

In NEC the normal working week is

**By RICHARD PAINE
Delegate, GEC Joint Shop
Staffs Unions (in a personal
capacity)**

50 hours. There is a management-imposed paid overtime limit of 120 hours per month, but engineers in particular are pushed to work beyond this on an unpaid basis. Some average 200 hours per month — in effect a 13½ hour working day 7 days a week.

NEC has a medical unit on site which not surprisingly specialises in dealing with the breakdowns and other mental problems which inevitably result. Kiyomi pointed out other developments, in particular women workers increasingly being placed on VDU (Visual Display Unit) terminals in remote "satellite" stations. This could easily lead into a new form of home-working.

Oliveira, a Brazilian metalworkers organiser, covers a telecoms plant near Sao Paulo, belonging to Ericssons of Sweden. He told how he

had to get permission from the Brazilian police to leave the country to come to the conference.

Both he and shop steward Lucas dos Santos Filho, members of the left-wing union federation CUT, were returning to Brazil in the midst of preparations for a General Strike on December 12 against the government.

The common and central thrust of all the contributions from the Latin American delegates was the demand being raised for the non-payment of the foreign debt.

Juan-Carlos Contreras from the Chilean telecoms workers union argued that (short of direct military intervention) "the burden of foreign debt is the last card the capitalist class can play in Latin America."

The demand for non-payment was welcomed by other delegates as a positive step towards destroying international finance capital. And a statement linking the demand to opposition to the US government's support for the Contras was approved.

Telecoms is now, linked with computers in the Information Technology boom, the most dynamic industrial force in world capitalism. As the Conference discussions progressed, it became clear that the increasingly rapid development of telecom technologies controlled by the multinationals results in the same problems for workers worldwide.

Attacks on Trade Unionism

Intensified exploitation of workers as evidenced in Japan is coupled with an anti-trade union offensive by telecoms' bosses. The National Communications Union (NCU, previously POEU) in Britain is a good example of this.

Dave Ward, who until last year's right wing takeover was a member of the NCU Executive, reported that 15,000 jobs had been lost since the privatisation of BT. Unprecedented overtime is now being worked, and

the previous national bargaining unit has been broken up.

BT has bought the non-union Canadian-based telecoms manufacturer Mitel, which has a factory at Newport in South Wales. Mitel management's response to the NCU's repeated requests to discuss recognition was, quite literally, "piss off".

At another existing BT manufacturing plant in South Wales, workers have been told to accept a £56 per week pay out in order to compete with another supplier, or face closure. "Like a roundabout, cuts in wages only force the competing companies to do the same. New technology has forced our members to become political," Dave reported.

This anti-union drive in existing unionised companies is matched by the increasing number of non-union companies entering the market.

The US computer giant IBM is using the natural link between digitalised telecoms equipment and computers to join the race. IBM is totally non-union.

Perhaps the most startling development though is the rise of Electronic Data Services (EDS). Bought in 1984 for \$2½ billion by General Motors (GM), EDS is again totally anti-union. In EDS a "Code of Conduct" discourages beards, cohabiting unmarried, and prescribes skirts for women, ties for men!...

EDS is devising and running General Motors' worldwide data communications system, the "Saturn Project". It is designed to give GM management knowledge of what is happening anywhere in any of its operations within a few moments — making existing national GM computer networks obsolete, encouraging competition between each local GM "profit centre", and being able to move production elsewhere at the slightest sign of workers' militancy.

Outside of GM, the US government is already EDS's second largest customer, EDS has taken over Unilever's in-house computer network, and is fast developing into a computer and communication systems provider to companies and governments worldwide. It is currently front-runner for a £200m contract with the British government for a new computer network.

Attacks on public and private monopolies

Liberalisation and privatisation of the telecoms networks is taking place in country after country worldwide.

Laura Unger, a supporter of the "Bell Winger" rank-and-file paper in Communications Workers of America (CWA) local 1150, works for AT&T in New York. AT&T is the world's largest telecoms company, with current annual sales of over \$10 billion.

Laura outlined to delegates the first move on liberalisation worldwide — the "divestiture" of AT&T. AT&T was



PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

British Telecom engineers on their first national strike.

until 1982 a private, regulated monopoly controlling all aspects of telecoms in the USA from manufacture to supply. In 1980 it had over 1 million employees.

Swiftly following its own move into computers in 1980, AT&T was forced in 1982 to divest its 22 area operating companies. These are now formed into 7 regional "baby Bell" holding companies, each independent and in direct competition with each other for yellow paging and other services. Each one is as big as BT.

AT&T retained manufacturing, equipment sales and long-distance calls. But long-distance was deregulated and now other companies — MCI and GTE Sprint in particular — are in direct competition with non-interchangeable parallel long-distance networks.

Twenty-seven thousand jobs were lost immediately upon divestiture. The CWA's response was weak, spending

\$2 million on a campaign for the public to select AT&T for their long-distance calls!

In 1986 the union accepted AT&T's proposal to move their contract date to May, leaving the contracts for the 7 "baby Bells" in August. This led to separate strikes and the worst contracts in 20 years. As Laura pointed out:

"It's a public catastrophe — not all long-distance companies have links to all cities, repairs are almost impossible (the 'baby Bells' control the line, AT&T the equipment). Local call prices have risen for domestic consumers and fewer people can afford telephones."

Clearly the Thatcher government had learnt a few lessons from some of the more stupid blunders of the AT&T divestiture when it came to the next major move worldwide — the privatisation of BT.

For instance, BT's rival, the Mer-

cury network linking business users in Britain's major cities, is linked in to the BT network to avoid the sort of problems of the US long-distance competing systems. But the principle is exactly the same — open a growing market up to competition, and break existing union organisation in the process.

Liberalisation of the market is now taking place in virtually every capitalist country in the world. Privatisation is underway or planned in Spain (by Gonzales' "socialist" government), Chile, Japan, Malaysia (with the advice of BT), Sri Lanka, Australia and others.

The Bosses' International

The drive for profits spearheaded by new technology (digital systems) and privatisation/liberalisation, hand in hand with an offensive on workers in the industry, has resulted in the internationalism of manufacturing and the market.

The vast sums required for developing the new systems — estimated at between £500m-£1,000m for a new digital switch — are forcing through a sweeping rationalisation of operations worldwide.

The recent takeover bid by GEC (10th largest manufacturer in the world with a telecoms turnover of £746m in 1984) for Plessey (12th with £677m) was turned down by the British government. Looking at world competition, it was a decision British capitalism is likely to regret.

The American multinational ITT has just sold its entire telecoms operations in over 75 countries (the largest in the world after AT&T, with £3,500m turnover in 1984) to the Alcatel-Thomson (7th at £2,010m)

telecoms subsidiary of the French nationalised electronics group CGE.

Uli Gross from the ITT German telecoms subsidiary SEL in Frankfurt told the Conference "in 20 days time we will be part of CGE. We've been told nothing and we don't know what will happen."

The German giant Siemens (3rd at £2,530m) has just bought the US company GTE's (8th at £1,710m) European operations, and followed that up with a takeover of CGCT (France).

DEFEND ASTTEL IN EL SALVADOR

One of the most savage examples of trade unionists under attack was given by Ilene Winkler from Local 1101 of the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

A worker at Nynetex (the New York Telephone Company, one of the "baby Bells") and active in the "Bell Wringer", Ilene spoke on behalf of the Labour Campaign to save ASTTEL union in El Salvador.

Duarte's regime has been systematically attacking ASTTEL, the Union of Telecoms Workers, which has responded with a series of strikes.

- In November 1985 ASTTEL leader Humberto Centeno and his two sons were kidnapped by the Treasury police. He was later released but his sons were tortured and are still in jail.

- In January 1986 ASTTEL General Secretary Raphael Souchez was illegally fired from his job, union offices ransacked, and ASTTEL prevented from holding union meetings.

- All worksites have been militarised, and the telecoms Company ANTEL has broken 3 successive contracts.

All this might be expected. The most scandalous thing of all however is that the PTTI, the international federation of public telecoms workers unions (to which the NCU is affiliated) recognises the ANTEL Company Union (with 35 members!) as its section in El Salvador, rather than ASTTEL.

September 1982



Local Spirit

Local 1150
Communications Workers of America

September 1982

We Tried to Fight for Justice

THE BELL WRINGER

an open forum for TELEPHONE WORKERS

ISSUE 14
APRIL 1982

WHAT THE AT&T SPLIT MEANS

RODO JOHO

1986 NO. 13

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NEWS FROM MILITANT JAPANESE WORKERS

If a direct takeover isn't possible, then joint ventures will do: AT&T now has Philips (Netherlands, 9th, £1710m) making its digital switches, Telefonica (Spain) producing its semiconductors, has taken over Teletron (Ireland) and has just taken a 25% share in Olivetti (Italy).

The pace of change in a business expanding at 8% a year (well above the average) is staggering. Rationalisations and plant closures will follow. The control exerted by the multinationals over the communication and information systems of the world is obscene.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the "Third World". Telecoms industries in Latin America provide the operating service and sometimes manufacture too, but design (other



than local adaptations) is exclusively the prerogative of the controlling US or European multinationals' headquarters. Juan-Carlos from Chile described how

"The Chilean company buys in machinery which simply requires operating. With Alcatel-Thomson equipment in 1980, that required only a knowledge of French for reading the instructions. The exchanges that were bought had not been tested anywhere in the world. Then we had Porta Systems (USA) which were even worse. The exchanges didn't work — they were not beyond the prototype stage."

Martin Gaticales, a KMU supporter in the Filipino Free Telephone Workers Union, described the impact of the Siemens digital exchanges installed there:

"When we went on strike in March 1986, the offices all closed down, but the telephones continued to work. Next time sabotage of the cables and blockade of international calls will be the only answer."

Telecoms Workers' Response

The capitalists operate internationally. Delegates at the Conference, coming from a range of different backgrounds, see clearly that the working class must do the same.

It was understood that no reliance could be placed on any of the existing international trade union federations, who reproduce the self-interest and bureaucracy of their national affiliates tenfold.

Rank and file links and activities were seen as the answer. Despite the

experimental nature of the meeting, there was enthusiasm and agreement for a number of important steps:

- the exchange of information and agitational material on a regular basis between participating delegates;

- the production of a quarterly international newsletter for reproduction in the various countries;

- the immediate creation of links between workers in associated companies (e.g. the delegates from AT&T and Olivetti);

- the potential for a further conference in 12 months' time, the responsibility for which was taken by the British workers present, from GEC, Plessey and BT.

The conference was a major step forward for telecoms' workers internationally. It must be built on.

Telecom workers' union Helping Sandinistas ring the changes

THE most moving and impressive of all the contributions at the Conference came in a special session on Nicaragua.

Jose Castillo, leader of the Nicaraguan telecoms workers union TELCOR, spoke in depth about the problems and needs of the industry and his country. Here is his speech.

"Before the Sandinista Revolution we had a network of just 30,000 telephones, assigned to Somoza and the multinationals. There was no access for the general population. On the Atlantic coast, they had never seen a phone.

The first aim of the new government was to link together the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, 450km of line. We lost 36 comrades in achieving this, shot by the Contras. Similar projects are being carried out in the mountains. We now have 50,000 telephones throughout Nicaragua.

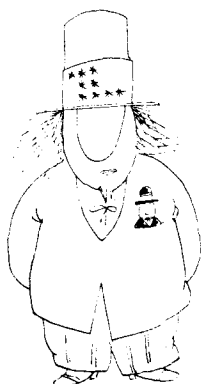
We are not in a position to change our technology. But with the help of the French government we are building a new 30,000-line exchange for January 1987.

Our priority is maintaining the service and putting phones into the community. Spare parts are a real problem. In 1984 a whole exchange

went down because we didn't have a fuse costing 50p. This was eventually supplied by Siemens workers in Frankfurt.

We also had 300 telephone sets from them. Next year we are getting 2 free telephone exchanges from comrades in Italy — but this is only to maintain the system.

All the workers extending the network in the mountains are voluntary brigades. Our union was approached for the volunteers — this is possible because of the political understanding of the workers. The minister of communications, Enrique Smith, was actually killed by Contras while working with us in the mountains. Telecoms workers are in the vanguard of the revolution.



Coffee is absolutely key to our development. That is why we call it the "golden grain". We can get oil with it, spare parts...

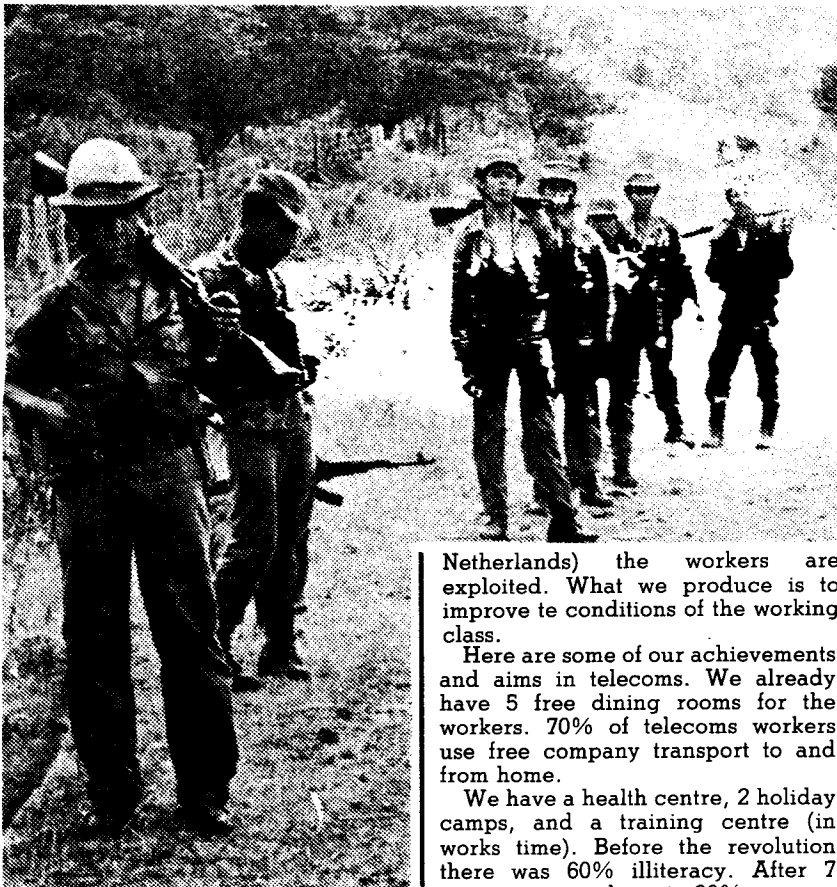
We are bankrupt, our economic policy at the moment is survival. We are mainly agricultural, but are not able to grow crops in the usual areas which have become battlefronts.

The US economic blockade, their mining of our ports, their support for the ex-Somoza guards, is crippling our economy. They think we are going to go in front of them and kneel.

If we do that we will be betraying the principles of the international working class, of the 50,000 who gave their lives in the revolution. It has no price. When workers have the power, the Americans and their allies start to worry.

The telecoms industry in Nicaragua has a minister, a vice-minister and 3 director-managers, one each for the Post Office, finance and technical. These 5 comrades, together with Telcor's General Secretary, make up the direction of the industry.

The workers have the right to object and we talk to them about proposals in an assembly. If for example the administration says 2 people must maintain 20 lines they do not realise there are not enough tools for this to be done. So we ask the



workers if it is possible. The union also participates in lower levels of administration.

In our system, capitalist or socialist, the union has a role. We haven't educated our managers in revolutionary ideas yet. They still work as in Somoza's time. They are mentally sick!

So the union 'helps' the manager who is confused — and we have the power! In Cuba too they have had 27 years of revolution, but still haven't eradicated the bureaucrats.

All Nicaraguan unions meet with President and ministers every 3 months to discuss our problems — particularly bureaucracy.

Completely undeveloped, we cannot have luxuries like losing 20,000lbs of meat by a bureaucratic mistake. Six months ago one manager lost this. In one of our assemblies we asked the President to have him replaced. He was sacked and a memo circulated in all the ministries and state companies saying that he could not be given a job for a period of time. That is the only way he will understand his responsibilities in the revolution.

Our normal working hours are 44. But we want to work more than that. This demand came from the rank and file. We do it with a voluntary spirit, to give those hours to the revolution.

Why do the unions accept this?

In this conference we are talking about reducing hours. But for us there is no contradiction. Here (the

Netherlands) the workers are exploited. What we produce is to improve the conditions of the working class.

Here are some of our achievements and aims in telecoms. We already have 5 free dining rooms for the workers. 70% of telecoms workers use free company transport to and from home.

We have a health centre, 2 holiday camps, and a training centre (in work time). Before the revolution there was 60% illiteracy. After 7 years it is now down to 20%.

Workers have 3 hours a week off to complete their primary education. We have a collective insurance system; if someone dies it at least buys the coffin.

Nationally the Contras have destroyed 2,270 houses in rural areas and 7,000 Nicaraguans have died. 58 schools, 11 nurseries (where parents leave their children whilst they work), 291 vehicles, 30 health centres and 565 other buildings have been destroyed by the Contras.

What danger is it that kids in Nicaragua have schools? What danger is it that international brigades come and work with us? Recently a worker from Belgium was killed. Five months ago 8 German friends were kidnapped by the Contras; they were building workers.

Our policy is anti-imperialist, anti-racist; to keep political pluralism and a mixed economy; to have solidarity with movements internationally. We are not guilty that we are free. They are the guilty people.

The US government is really abusive. They bombed Managua airport. They constantly violate our airspace, but they have suffered losses too. We shot down 4 of their planes.

We caught 3 Americans, 1 alive. Were they tourists? He didn't know the CIA had contracted him! He didn't know that the plane was full of guns! The US government offered to exchange 15 Nicaraguans in jail in the USA for criminal activities for

him. Why on earth do they think we should want them?

The USA rejected the peace treaty we offered them. They think they can impose conditions on us, but not us on them. The US told us to get rid of our Cuban friends. We said yes, if you stop financing the Contras and their camps in Honduras and Costa Rica. They refused!

We want international working class solidarity. The support you have shown has stopped the USA invading us. Comrades, trade unionists, we consider you have a most important role. You must talk to your fellow workers, to show them the American aggression against our people.

The US government has worked out how many Nicaraguans would die in an invasion. But they haven't counted how many Americans would die. We have the strongest weapon — we are fighting for a free Nicaragua, not for money but for nothing. We don't want war; we want to solve our own problems.

The comrades from N. America have a most important role. We do not have any money to overcome the disinformation of the US government. Those who support us are our best means of communication.

We have the methods of the international working class on our side, because we want to be free. They don't like our freedom, and that is why they are attacking us.

We need political solidarity to prevent a US invasion. We need technical help in telecoms, health... anything that will help develop our country.

I will make some self-criticisms. I have not mentioned the role of our women comrades. They are emancipated. They are free, though not completely from male chauvinism. They have organised themselves, we have women ministers, women police leaders, equal pay for equal skills; they are learning how to fight.

Capitalist regimes use women, paying them less. In Nicaragua women workers have equal opportunities. We have childcare centres. Alongside all our problems, our biggest project as a union is to build a childcare centre for our women members.

We have asked for support for our project from comrades in Canada and Germany.

We need whatever help can be offered. We must prepare the workers, because they must be prepared to take over."

The Conference agreed to launch a workplace campaign on Nicaragua, with both political solidarity and practical support for the telecoms industry.

A collection was also taken from the 40 or so present, raising over \$500 for the delegates from Nicaragua and the Philippines.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

The things Botha wants to hide

SWINGEING new police powers to muzzle press coverage of the scale of the black revolt are by no means a sign of self-confidence from South Africa's apartheid regime.

Similarly President Botha has deliberately decided to call for a "white only" election this spring (April Fools' Day?), rather than witness the near certain humiliation of the stooge "representatives" of the Indian and coloured population in what would be an even more massive boycott than during the last elections in 1984.

There is no doubt that the apartheid rulers can still unleash a substantial weight of military and police repression: but the extent to which they feel obliged to gag all opponents, including the white "liberal" press, confirms that they do not feel themselves to be in complete charge.

A further symptom of this can be seen in some of the targets singled out for press censorship, among which is any reporting on the functioning of alternative local government structures — street committees and other such bodies — in the black townships. Also banned are coverage of "restricted" gatherings and any speeches made at them, and reports on consumer, rent and education boycotts.

One of the main reasons for the press clamp down was to prevent further embarrassing disclosures of the torture, detention without trial and mass imprisonment of youth and children following waves of arrests last year.

The vocal Detainee Parents' Support Committee had claimed as many as 1,600 children were in detention, or up to 4,000 if those as old as 18 were

included. The regime claimed that only 256 children aged 11-15 were in jail.

Press criticism of army conscription has also been outlawed following the growing impact up to December of the End Conscription Campaign, which focussed on the use of troop concentrations in the townships.

Meanwhile on the solidarity front in Britain, the positive lead given by December's Birmingham conference campaigning for trade union sanctions to halt trade with the apartheid regime was not matched by the debate or decisions of the Anti-Apartheid

Movement at its Annual General Meeting.

There, even sections of the left opposition to the platform, led by supporters of the City of London AA group, failed to focus on the necessity for the AAM to wage a campaign in the trade union and labour movement.

The AAM leadership have always resisted this — and any policies which might bring them into conflict with their pals in the trade union bureaucracy. Once again they were allowed to evade the sharp issue.

With another round of trade union conferences taking shape, movers of motions and amendments should look for ways of focussing the fight for practical solidarity, while at workplace level, militants should seek trade union action which can begin to shut the doors to apartheid.

Why Hu had to go

IN Hungary 1956 it was Russian tanks that crushed a political challenge to the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy; they did the same to repress what appeared to be a bureaucracy of the rails and out of control in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In Poland 1982, the implicit recognition that Soviet armour could again be deployed helped General Jaruzelski's crackdown which gagged the 10-million strong Solidarnosc.

But the Chinese Stalinist leadership has expended great resources and energy in preventing any Russian tanks — and must find its own ways of controlling events.

The recent overthrow of Chinese CP General Secretary Hu Yaobang in the aftermath of December's mass student protests offers us a further reminder of the

fact that Chinese Stalinism, like its European counterparts, represents a bureaucratic balancing act.

Though it suits Reagan, Thatcher and Japanese Premier Nakasone to convey the impression that China is on the verge of a wholesale capitalist restoration, the inroads of the multinationals into the Chinese economy are relatively small and marginal. The power of the ruling bureaucracy rests not upon its collaboration with imperialist governments or multinationals but upon its monopoly of political power within the nationalised Chinese economy.

While some capitalist methods and limited inroads by private industry may be seen by Deng Xiaoping and other "reformers" as a way to spur on a flagging Chinese economy, any full-scale restoration would render droves of party functionaries and the state bureaucracy irrelevant and ultimately redundant.



South African repression seeking to put a lid on the revolt

And while Deng and his gang may have chosen on occasion to invoke certain "liberal" arguments to strengthen the hand of economic reformers against old Party routinists, they have no intention of allowing students — let alone Chinese workers — to achieve democratic rights which might challenge their own monopoly of political control.

Hence Deng's horror at the failure of Hu Yaobang to stamp on the student demonstrations, and his attempts, through the exemplary sacking of Hu, to pull the bureaucracy into line, upholding the unchallengeable authority of the Communist Party.

The revolutionary victory of Mao's peasant-based Red Army over the imperialist-sponsored nationalist regime of Chiang Kai Shek in 1949 created very different circumstances from those in Eastern Europe following the arrival of Stalin's Red Army liberation forces. But one common feature between the Chinese Communist Party and its East European equivalents has remained its hostility to any independent movement by the working class: the result has been a so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat" in China in which the organised proletariat has never held real power in its own hands. Deng and his cronies share a determination to keep it that way.

Reagan turns the screw

RONALD Reagan's crisis-hit administration has been relentlessly increasing its pressure on Nicaragua.

A new round of military manoeuvres hard by the Honduran border will gradually grow in scope to involve as many as 7,000 US troops. Early in January the first contingents of 200 paratroopers arrived — and under cover of the "exercises" roads, airfields, and other military construction projects will be carried on, creating the conditions for a more sustained military offensive.

Meanwhile new evidence has emerged of the arm-twisting exerted by the US State Department to compel its Honduran and Costa Rica "allies" to assist its covert war effort against Nicaragua.

The former US ambassador to Honduras has revealed that the USA forced the Hondurans to accept £210m military aid in March 1986, while economic blackmail to keep Costa Rica in line has included US

veto on a World bank loan and obstacles to the rescheduling of \$4,000 in debts.

Costa Rica's President Oscar Sanchez has put Washington's nose out of joint by expelling a few contras, closing some of their barely concealed military bases in Costa Rica, and sticking with the reformist Contadora process, seeking a negotiated settlement in Central America.

In Nicaragua itself, the Sandinistas have been forced to contend both on the borders and central districts of the country with intensified Contra tension.

This has been fuelled by Reagan's \$100m aid package last autumn, and urged on by the need for Washington to find a diversion from the squalid revelations of the "Contragate" scandals.

A new Constitution has just been adopted in Nicaragua which repeats the Sandinistas' commitment to a "mixed" economy, non-alignment and political pluralism, though Interior Minister Tomas Borge declared rather ambiguously that

"We accept the mixed economy and pluralism like Norway accepts the cold."

After students break stalemate French workers show their teeth

By JACK GOLDBERG

LAST October 30, the French senate gave a quiet approval to the "Devaquet law" proposing a "restructuring of the universities". The debate went on so smoothly that no squeak of opposition was to be heard.

A few days later, the main student union UNEF-ID (independent and democratic) — close to the Socialist Party — kicked off a half-hearted campaign to inform students of the dangers of the so-called university reforms. The pessimism of the union was echoed by a meeting of its executive as late as November 15th, which estimated the situation as hopeless and decided that any hope for action was pure fiction.

As for Prime Minister Chirac and his right wing coalition, the sky was the limit. Their electoral success, last March 16, gave them a not uncomfortable working majority. The early teething troubles of the coalition had



been momentarily swept under the mat and Chirac sailed through arrogantly with a whole battery of anti-working class legislation.

His master project was precise and lucid, and commanded strong support from his class. Despite strong divisions and, at times, labyrinthine antagonisms between the different

factions of the Right, Chirac was determined to balance between the different factional interest and emerge as the charismatic pacemaker, outdistancing all his competitors to become President of France in 1988.

So the first round of legislation was



Students rocked Chirac government's complacency

carefully packaged to start, almost surreptitiously, eating away at all the gains that the French working class has made during the last decade: the laws on Education were to be followed by a new racist nationality law, privatisation of the prisons, and abolition of social security reimbursement for abortion charges. Privatisation of the national assets was the next major project.

At the same time, his economic strategy would be no more than a scrap of paper if it did not set out from the start to bleed the working class. And it was on the assumption that workers would not fight back that, having successively achieved a wage freeze in 1986, Chirac undertook to limit wages to 3% in 1987.

In the face of this well-planned onslaught, the traditional workers' parties — SP and CP — did, not surprisingly, very little to organise the working class to fight back. Their bitter divisions, since the electoral defeat of last March, have grown deeper.

The Socialist Party is now busy carving up a bigger niche in the French electoral landscape in its hope to win the biggest share of the electorate. In the preparation for their next Congress in Lille, several currents' leaders are already jockeying for positions in the race to succeed Mitterrand.

As for the CP, their humiliation at the last election is still working its way through, throwing thousands of activists into despair and demoralisation.

The trade unions didn't fare any better. The new political ordeal put them in a situation they rarely faced. Not only are the main trade unions CGT and CFDT further apart, but the

Communist-Party controlled CGT has also lost massive membership (from 2.1 million in 1968 to 1.6 million in 1983).

This contraction and the absence of a wider political project was seized upon by these leaderships to rationalise their reluctance to engage in any action, however defensive, in the fear that their members wouldn't fight.

Even revolutionaries started raising doubts about the potential combativity of the working class. For many, the picture was of doom and despair with nothing moving at least in the foreseeable future.

And this despite a one-day public sector strike and important demonstrations whose size surprised even their most optimistic organisers. The CGT organised a demonstration of its section in Paris, drawing some 25,000 members on October 24th. The Public sector unions demonstration (in fact 4 separate marches of the rival confederations CGT, CFDT, FO and FEN) totalled 35,000 on October 21st; and finally the FEN (Education trade union) demonstration gathered 200,000 people on November 23.

This was, in general terms, the political climate and line up on November 17, when a mutiny of students at Villateneuse university voted for an all-out strike. The movement suddenly snowballed, throwing Chirac and his cronies into total disarray.

In less than 2 weeks, it grew from strength to strength. Soon universities throughout the country were ripped by strikes, quickly to be followed by students from higher education.

From the FEN demonstration of

November 23, students unions from Paris universities who were already on strike, called for a general strike of all students as from November 27, to coincide with the beginning of the debate on the Devaquet law at the National Assembly.

On November 27, 200,000 students took to the streets from the Sorbonne to the Assembly, while some 400,000 took action throughout France — the biggest mobilisation of youth since May 1968.

An elected strike committee was by then sitting permanently to co-ordinate action and negotiations. After the success of this demonstration, another was called for December 4.

Shocked by the swirl of this gigantic movement, Chirac started indicating his willingness to compromise. Sandwiched between his hardliners (who tried to make capital out of his demist) Chirac played for time in very uncertain terms.

He then made vague promises of redrafting sections of the legislation that were most unpopular — to show some degree of flexibility, but also hoping to confuse wider layers of the movement.

At the same time, he asked his Education Minister Rene Monory to take charge of negotiating with the students. He also nudged his Interior Minister Charles Pasqua to sharpen up the intervention by the CRS (riot police).

The demonstration of December 5th confounded the wildest estimates. Some 500,000 people marched and as they approached the rally in Place des Invalides were savagely attacked by the CRS. This provocation, and the breakdown of negotiations (in fact

there were no real negotiations, only Monory putting the government's case to a student delegation) were an important turning point, as some students' hopes for a smooth settlement were dashed.

By December 5, the movement had become openly anti-government, and a big Paris demonstration occupied the Sorbonne. Not far from there, the CRS made a push to clear the streets and it is then that a young student Malik Ousseki was murdered in cold blood by the police.

The news of the murder spread like wildfire and transformed the movement. A swift and costly escalation was looming dangerously and the government position crumbled.

Devaquet resigned. The strike committee called for a general strike on December 10. The labour movement was divided over it: CGT (in favour of a one hour stoppage!) and FEN were in support; the FO, CFTC and CGC were against, while the CFDT preferred to wait and see.

This was the final straw. On December 8, Chirac capitulated and withdrew the legislation. Never in the history of the French student movement has a victory been so swift and so decisive. And it was a victory against all odds.

The new generation of students was written off by many from the start as hopelessly apolitical, as motivated by greed, individualism and self-satisfaction. Well, the sons and daughters of the rebels of '68 have confounded all the doubters and put their hallmark in the course of French history.

While it is still too early to measure the future of such a movement, its success in changing the relationship of forces is beyond doubt. This explains the awakening of the French labour movement that quickly ensued.

To realise suddenly that an invincible government can be defeated was enough for workers to start to fight back.

The initial disillusion with the ability of students to fight had not been entirely unfounded. But what started perhaps as an apolitical movement soon learned its political lessons. It soon experienced police brutality, it soon pushed to the limit the non-political balanced approach and at the end of the day, it matured.

Two important aspects of the movement need highlighting: firstly the strike committee gave leadership throughout; and what kept it united and at the same time authoritative was its exceptional level of democracy. Never have so many issues been so precisely and exhaustively debated and the broad movement allowed every current its say with the majority view prevailing. Mandates were scrupulously respected.



Chirac and Devaquet

The second aspect was the role played by the Trotskyists who, at times led from the front, at others led from the back, but in all instances gave the movement a precise political target.

There was important involvement of the JCR (LCR youth), Lutte Ouvriere, and the LOR (splinter group from the Vargists) through David Assouline, who earned wide respect for his ability to chair and officiate over extremely difficult meetings of the strike co-ordinating committee, and at one stage led the students' delegation that met Education Minister Monory.

The weight of the UNEF-ID has always been of paramount importance and its leaders played at times a crucial role: Isabelle Thomas — SP youth member — vice president of UNEF-ID and most importantly its president Philippe Dariulat — a former member of Lambert's PCI, but now close to the SP.

Despite claims by the French media that the movement was leaderless, the Trotskyists steered the movement towards a confrontation with the government. Looking back at May '68, the students then never achieved the same degree of

democracy and, in fact, in the early stages had no clear political strategy. The movement was more anarchistic and more sectarian (one of its main slogans was "election, piège à couss" — "elections? con-trick!") and it was only when the movement matured that the students made a turn towards workers. The 1986 movement, despite a certain naivety — marched on the National Assembly from day one.

This not only polarised the situation, but was a constant marker for all workers to emulate. And they were quick to act.

No sooner had the dust settled, than workers in transport, railways, gas, harbours and aviation took up the relay baton almost spontaneously. The movement at that time couldn't have been other than spontaneous.

Of course this doesn't mean that tens of thousands of workers woke up one morning with the sudden urge to set up picket lines. Preparatory work had already been done in some depots, culminating in wild-cat strikes that spread to certain areas.

The Gare du Nord in Paris, in particular, had been for some time the seat of growing unrest which culminated in a work-to-rule by clerical sections. But what stirred workers most was the sight of a defeated government forced to postpone most of its legislation programme.

Why should they end endure any longer a wage freeze which had been forced on them since November 1985 (by the previous socialist government)? Why should they accept the SNCF's (French railways) survival plans which were formulated under order from Chirac to balance its books and which introduced a new wage structure based on merit and transformed their working conditions? The time was ripe for action and railway workers had no hesitation in taking up the cudgels.

From the start they had to fight with one hand tied behind their backs. By the time the strike started to spread, the minority trade unions (FMC, CFTC and CGC) had already agreed the new conditions on December 23. The company, having established a constituency for its new working practices, had hopes that the remaining unions would come to their senses and follow suit.

But the determination of the pickets, which involved initially only engineers — a total of 18,000 out of the 250,00 railworkers — brought to a halt the national network in a matter of days despite vicious attacks by the CRS. Trade union officials made some timid efforts to limit the action but it was too late, and soon all railworkers were on strike.

SNCF management, caught wrongfooted, started looking for a way out, and offered independent arbitration to work out a compromise.

By then, the movement was so strong that trade union officials did not dare to interfere. The emergence of rank and file strike committees had become a new factor in the situation.

Railworkers — emulating the student strike — understood the necessity not only of keeping control of the national co-ordination but also of being involved in any negotiations that might take place.

This provided a formidable cement that united an important core of activists not just across the different sectors of the railway but also across the divide of different unions. Nevertheless the movement experienced real difficulties.

Firstly, the demands for improvement in working conditions never crystallised properly. This was the understandable result of the impatience of workers eager to reverse at once all of the changes that had been inflicted on them. Furthermore, the level of democracy and participation of workers in determining their own fate was reflected in the explosion of grievances: while they all pointed in the right direction, the shopping list appeared untidy and confusing. This was to be a determining factor in the return to work as workers were also confused about what was on the table.

Secondly, the relationship between the strike co-ordinating committees and the trade unions was problematic: the weight of non-unionised strikers inside the committees was not insignificant. In some cases, they opposed the involvement of officials from an opposite point of view.

This, and a naive rank and file created divisions. One of the "co-ordination" — representing a minority of workplaces — wanted rank and file representatives to participate in their own right in the negotiations. The other "national co-ordination" was in favour of officials negotiating alone.

The SNCF exploited these differences, and kept topping up the offer until conditions were created for acceptance. The FGAAC (independent), FO and CFDT wanted to make a deal, while the CGT, fearing the strength of the strike committees, chose to make no recommendations.

On the wage front, the contentious new salary scale was withdrawn by the SNCF. There was also an offer to consolidate certain bonuses in the wage packet and improve others, and increase the number of promotions from 5,000 to 5,800. Finally, the Company offered an increase on basic salary of 1% in June 1987 and 0.7% in October 1987.

Workers, having made important gains on their salaries, felt victory at hand and pressed for further negotiations on their working



conditions. They were demanding 122 rest days (at present 116), 18 Sundays off (at present 14); changes in the working week (5 days work followed by 2 days leave; at present 6/2 or even 7/2); improved rostering; no work on nights after Sunday rests (giving 48 hour instead of 36 hour rest); improved conditions in rest rooms; and better terms for casual workers.

Instead of making any precise concessions, the SNCF made vague promises and offered further negotiations but only once the offer was accepted.

The trade unions sat on the fence, hoping that the rank and file organisations would not stand the stress. And this is exactly what has happened, as the movement slowly crumbled, in total confusion.

Some workers thought they had won everything they wanted; others thought this was the best that could be achieved, while a minority core refused to give in until better improvements in their working conditions were secured. As the decisions were taken depot by depot, the strike co-ordinating committees were too weak to build a national opposition to the offer.

In some depots, even when a majority of workers decided to continue the strike, they finally went back to work in order not to break their unity with the minority.

The SNCF's offensive has been momentarily checked and this had been achieved by a militant movement, which had emerged determined to win. However the achievements of the strike are extremely significant.

But it had its limits. It has shown that rank and file organisations can achieve much, but wind up sold short unless they resolve the question of leadership in the unions as a whole. We have seen here in the case of railworkers that despite having fended off trade union officials, a vacuum remained — which sooner or later would be filled by those same officials. This is why they led the negotiations and this is why they will lead the forthcoming negotiations for a new wage structure. The railway strikers didn't suffer from isolation. In fact important strikes broke out in the RATP (Paris buses and metro), and EDEEGF (Electricity and gas); there was an embryo of a strike in the Post Office, and an ongoing guerrilla warfare brought many harbours to a halt.

Most of these strikes — apart from the sailors' which was about jobs — were over wages and improved working conditions. This, and the enthusiasm and the determination of the strikers, were the only features that made them similar to the railstrike. None of them achieved the same peak or the same degree of self-organisation.

In the RATP (Paris buses and metro) the strikers never succeeded in shutting down the service. One reason was that the many trade unions involved chose different days to pull out the maximum of their members. January 7 was the hardest day, as strikers blockaded three main depots and shut down nearly 50% of traffic. The major weakness, however, was the diversity of demands, which never united workers across the craft and trade

union divide.

The SAT (independent) representing more than 50% of metro skilled drivers wanted a monthly increase of 400-500FF to keep parity with the SNCF suburb drivers. The other unions (CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, GCG) wanted wage increases to catch up with the loss in purchasing power in 1986 and 1987 (around 7-8%), rejection of merit increments, rejection of job losses, and full implementation of the 1983 wage structure.

The RATP made quick concessions: for the SAT drivers a bonus of 150FF in exchange for the transfer of 4 days rest from the summer period — usually a busy period — to the winter period. For the rest an increase in wages of 2.98% in two instalments: 1.2% on June 1 and 0.5% on September 1. The minority unions (representing some 40% of the workers) grabbed at the deal, while the CGT, CFDT and SAT continued on strike.

Further negotiations centred on whether a special bonus ("glissement vieillesse technicite") of 1.7% was included or not in the calculations. However, on January 13, the SAT broke ranks and suspended the strike, the Company having given them everything they demanded, including the parity increase of FF500.

Unlike the railway workers, the transport workers remained divided in their sectors and in their respective unions. Also the officials were in charge of the negotiations and finally made recommendations to mass meetings.

However, the result was equally significant. The eagerness to fight was there, as workers responded almost unanimously whenever they were asked to take action. But the craftist traditions and the disastrous divisions between the different trade unions allowed the RATP to limit the damage. For the most powerful it was an easy push: the ST members won their demands in 8 days!

The electricity strike was not that different. Again the different unions involved decided not to shut down the network but to proceed with 24 hour revolving strikes, involving no more than 50L\$ of workers at any one time, with a peak around January 7.

As the strike started biting, resulting in cuts, some of the unions took fright and offered to limit the cuts to 20%, spread across the network in order to bring down even further their duration. The company responded to this gesture of goodwill by offering some concessions: consolidation of a 0.4% bonus in the 1986 wage review, and an average rise of around FF1,700 for 1986 and 1987.

On offer were also further negotiations on working conditions. The CFDT was quick to oblige and



Rail strikers

recommend acceptance. Despite an uncertain delegate meeting (605 for and 578 against with 14 abstentions and 12 votes not cast), the CFDT forged ahead and signed an agreement on Monday 12. The CGT, left on its own, made maximum capital denouncing the betrayal of Edmond Maire (CFDT General Secretary) before finally suspending its action.

The most determined and at times violent action was taken first by sailors then at a later stage by all sections of staff employed by the port authorities.

What was at stake was perhaps the disappearance of the totality of jobs in the French merchant navy. The government "survival plan" allowed the maritime companies to transfer all their ships to a flag of convenience. This meant the end of all the trade union agreements and the sacking of all French sailors.

The strike paralysed most harbours, with Marseilles the hardest hit. Here, daily battles with the CRS took place. After two weeks of guerrilla warfare, the government caved in and agreed to freeze all the applications for registration received after December 22. Here the same pattern was repeated with the CGT holding out until the last minute.

In the Post Office, the strike never gathered momentum, and remained confined to small pockets. Less than 1% of workers were on strike, but a significant situation developed in the Louvres post office in Paris where around 200 staff were on strike. In view of the involvement of Trotskyist activists — the PCI (Lambertist) and LCR. The CGT preferred to play down this action — the biggest

support for the strike — and instead focussed its fire on the CFDT which resolutely refused to be involved.

It is yet too early to measure with accuracy to what extent the students' victory has transformed the relationship of forces. A cautious view would recognise this victory as a momentous event which created a brief favourable conjuncture where powerful sections of workers took advantage and pressed home some improvements in conditions.

After all, Chirac did not do that badly. After the initial shock of the students' battering ram, none of the major industrial conflicts achieved wage settlements beyond his guidelines of 3%.

A more facile analysis would see students crystallising their newly acquired political maturity and ready for another tidal wave.

The reality is far more complex and the outcome far from settled. Yes, the students have confounded the doubters. Yes, the working class has woken up and proved that its combativity is still intact. Even the CGT has revived its fortunes.

By supporting every struggle, by holding until the last minute until after every single other union has capitulated, the CGT has cynically put all its energy into projecting the image of being the only union that is fighting. Krazucki, its colourless general secretary, scored his biggest success when, at the height of the strikes, the French media accused him of plotting a political confrontation with the government!

The overall picture can only be one of optimism. The workers have come through with increased confidence and the battles ahead in the public service, in education and in the car industry may well prove to be the next decisive test.

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

10p



“International Conference” — or a dialogue of the deaf?

By JOHN LISTER

THE Workers Revolutionary Party proposes to all Trotskyists an international conference to discuss the responsibilities of Trotskyist organisations in resolving the continuing crisis of the Fourth International.

The resolution of the crisis is an inescapable necessity and responsibility in the face of the decisive changes which have begun in the relationship of class forces on the world arena. changes embracing the political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states, as well as the struggles of the working class and oppressed masses against imperialism in the advanced capitalist countries and in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

It is these great changes which have both exposed clearly the nature of the crisis of the Fourth International and created the conditions for overcoming that same crisis.

The WRP does not in any way consider itself to be in any privileged position in initiating the preparation of the International Conference. We make this call as the result of joint work and discussion with Trotskyists in a number of countries.

In 1961 and 1962 the WRP expressed the practical and theoretical results of political degeneration and revisionism in the Fourth International in an extensive form.

In respect to the international fragment of the Third International Committee, the WRP has been compelled to recognize the necessity of a return to fundamentals in the contents of the struggle of the working class and oppressed masses. This is the only way to the founding of the Fourth International.

The explosion in the WRP was part of the historical crisis of the working class revolutionary leadership of the Fourth International. The crisis can be overcome only in the framework of a

But the same might class forces which lay behind the explosion in the WRP.

For an International Conference in 1987 for the Re-organisation of the Fourth International



state. They were forced to return to work to the betrayals of the reformist bureaucracy and the Stalinists.

Trade unionism had clearly reached its utmost limits. Revolutionary tasks were posed. Those who characterise the working class as a defeat for the working class, one of many such defeats, are wrong.

The WRP was forced, in the struggle against Healy, Banda and North to recognize that this upsurge of the working class in a situation with no way out except proletarian revolution and the successful struggle for revolutionary leadership.

France is a powerful continuation of the struggle taken up by the

develop before conference

1. The rest of the Third International in all its principles in order to reform and reform taking of political leadership of the working class in the face of the oppression in the work in the action: us

2. The emergence of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class in the face of the oppression in the work in the action: us

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6. The necessity of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class in the face of the oppression in the work in the action: us

IS there any easy answer to the political crisis and organisational fragmentation which have so weakened the post-war Trotskyist movement since the major split of 1953?

Is there any single initiative which can make up the political and theoretical ground that has been lost?

The answer to both questions is "no".

But they are questions which have arisen in a new way for members of the Workers Revolutionary Party following the expulsion a year ago of former leader Gerry Healy and the collapse of the "International Committee", which they had regarded as the sole continuity of Trotskyist politics.

Though WRP comrades come fresh to the problem, still few of them have any detailed knowledge of international currents other than their own.

Having for decades accepted Healy's line that the United Secretariat (USFI) could be simply dismissed as "Pabloite" and beyond the pale, and that every other grouping was "revisionist", WRP members have found it hard to catch up on the background and present-

day politics of other organisations. They have found it equally hard to break from the conditioned gut reponse of hostility to the USFI, though they have taken a rather more charitable line towards other organisations about which they know as little or less.

One of these is the International Workers League (LIT), based on Nahuel Moreno's Argentine Socialist Workers Party (PST), and other sections in Latin America, and which modestly proclaims itself as "The World Trotskyist Movement".

Moreno's Bolshevik faction broke from the USFI in 1979, and joined for a period with another oppositional current from the USFI and with Pierre Lambert's OCRFI to form a "Parity Committee".

This body issued a call late in 1979 for an "Open Conference" of Trotskyists to fight the USFI's "revisionism" on Nicaragua, and loudly announced itself as the new arbiter of orthodox Trotskyism.

However the "Open Conference" proved to be "open" in name only; the Parity Committee swiftly became a body restricted to those prepared to sign a detailed and politically restrictive programmatic statement. This was clearly designed to exclude people rather than involve them. The one curious exception was the "revisionist" USFI, which was offered unconditional access, but refused to get involved.

The predictable outcome was not a full or open debate on the central political issues facing the world movement, but a top-level and opportunist merger between Moreno and Lambert. The document upon which this merger took place appeared voluminously comprehensive, but dodged any assessment of the work of either tendency in their own countries, and lacked any analysis of social democracy — a notorious achilles heel of the Lambertists.

Equally predictably, the fusion collapsed in an ugly split — in the event, a split over differences arising from the election in France of the Mitterrand government — only nine months after the emergence of the "Fourth International (International Committee)" had been noisily proclaimed.

Shortly before his untimely death in Argentina, Moreno visited Britain — this time to see the WRP. Once again, he raised the call for some form of World Conference as a way to resolve the crisis of Trotskyism.

The outcome was a lengthy resolution, calling for such a conference to be held this year. This has already been published in Morenist journals, and has just been adopted and published by the WRP (*Workers Press*, January 31) as we go to press.

Far from seeking to open up a genuine discussion among the varied

currents of today's Trotskyist movement, the WRP/Morenist resolution appears to present a series of *conclusions* from a discussion that has never actually taken place, as preconditions for attendance or support to the "International Conference".

How else are readers from other political traditions to interpret the resolution's curious insistence that by convening an International Conference in 1987, the sponsors are continuing the process which was begun by the International Committee in 1953?



Still no analysis of Gaddafi, but WRP lays down exclusion clauses

1953 was a year in which the Trotskyist Fourth International *split without discussion!* Is this the "process" which the Conference seeks to continue? The resolution significantly makes no political criticism of the IC tradition which began then and came to such an ignominious conclusion in Healy's debauchery.

The reality was that the IC made no serious effort to reconstruct a democratic centralist Fourth International, or to resolve the political and theoretical problems which had precipitated the 1953 split. Its attitude to the other wing of the FI, the International Secretariat, was to use denunciation and "orthodox" phraseology as a substitute for political struggle.

Unfortunately there are many indications that this is the attitude which the WRP/Morenists are seeking to continue in relation to the United Secretariat today.

The whole text, while littered with questionable points and formulations and statements, is sufficiently detailed to include specific items with which the USFI could not agree — certainly not prior to a discussion.

Ironically, many of these same points have yet to be discussed in any detail by the WRP itself — and if they were applied retrospectively to Moreno's current (or the WRP) only a

few years ago, the same preconditions would result in them being excluded from their own conference!

They say there is none so zealous as a repentant sinner: but the hypocrisy of the WRP struggling to keep out other tendencies by laying down such detailed political preconditions for participation in the political debate is breathtaking.

Who can be impressed by the resolution's sweeping three-word dismissals of what the WRP believe to be positions of the USFI and Lambert on Poland?

These sideswipes — with many more implied — run alongside insistence upon the need to build "revolutionary parties in every country". Yet who is making this demand? The WRP, which only 18 months ago itself tail ended Vietnamese Stalinism and Gaddafi's Libyan regime, and *still* has no position on the character of the Cuban state or its leadership!

The entire problem of the post-war International is put down to "liquidationist revisionism" — with not a word on the chronic problem of *sectarianism* towards the mass movement and the development of the Marxist programme.

In this sense the early phrase calling for a "return to fundamentals, to the continuity of the struggle of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky..." sums up the conservatism and sectarian narrow-mindedness of the WRP/Morenist Conference call. It is an invitation to a conference in which on this basis there will be no real attempt to learn or to convince, in which glib "orthodox" formulae would stand in place of serious development of programme.

Will *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters, and others who share these views or have other criticisms of the Conference call, be allowed to argue this in the debate up to and within the Conference itself? Or would we be excluded? Will the WRP deny that the objective is to exclude in advance the two other major currents of world Trotskyism — the USFI and the Lambertists — without any discussion at all?

It is on these questions that the seriousness of the Conference call, and its implications for further healthy development of the WRP in breaking from its Healyite past, must be judged.

The political reconstruction of the Fourth International is a *qualitative* political task, involving the reworking of the 1938 Transitional Programme and the fight an objective appraisal by *all* Trotskyist currents of the lessons of the last 50 years of class struggle. To prejudge the results of this process is to kill it.

The calling of a World Conference is no short-cut: instead it may yet become a damaging diversion.

After years of crisis and confusion:

Political answers needed to crisis of world Trotskyist movement

The critical role of criticism

THE political development of the Marxist movement has always had to begin from a criticism of the inadequacy of previously accepted theory, often transformed by years of routine into empty dogma. Only on this basis has it been possible to elaborate new, more adequate theory and programme to meet the changing objective situation.

Marx himself in this way broke from the radical bourgeois politics of the Young Hegelians to spell out a scientific basis for the understanding of capitalism itself, and a consistent materialist conception of historical development — including the development of ideology and theory itself.

Lenin's decisive contributions to the Russian revolution centred on his fundamental break from the loose, opportunist type of mass party — on an increasingly reformist programme — favoured by most of the leaders of the Marxist movement of the day — the Second International. He fought instead for an alternative model not found in Marx: a centralised, disciplined vanguard party of the working class, able to draw sharp lines of demarcation between itself and the "liberal" bourgeoisie, and to make sharp and decisive tactical turns when necessary in the class struggle.

Of course the organisational structure in itself did not guarantee a correct political line would evolve, and Lenin's further key contribution was in the April 1917 fight, in which he effectively discarded his own

By HARRY SLOAN

previous conceptions of the development of the Russian revolution, even while he fought tenaciously to overturn the conservative, orthodox "Marxist" schemas which had led Stalin and the other "Old Bolsheviks"

inside Russia to lend support to the bourgeois Provisional Government.

Lenin insisted upon Marx's point that "Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide to action." He made no apologies about the need to abandon some cherished old ideas in order to advance the revolution:

"My answer is: The Bolshevik slogans and ideas on the whole



Lenin with Trotsky, 1917

have been confirmed by history; but concretely things have worked out differently; they are more original, more peculiar, more variegated than anyone could have expected.

"To ignore or overlook this fact would mean taking after those 'Old Bolsheviks' who more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly learned by rote instead of studying the specific features of the new and living reality."

(First "Letter on Tactics" in *The April Theses*)

We can see this same healthy Marxist spirit of criticism and self-criticism in the political development of the early years of the Communist International, which rapidly moved beyond general proclamations and denunciations of social democracy. Lenin developed the struggle against ultra-left sectarianism, and the Third and Fourth Congresses fought to direct the new inexperienced Communist Party leaderships "to the masses", with the development of a programme, and tactics — centrally the United Front tactic — to enable these parties to build work in the mass trade unions and among the masses of workers who remained loyal to social democratic parties.

It was in defending this same bold, critical approach, and fighting to sound the alarm bells against a rising tide of bureaucratism and economic contradictions arising from the New Economic policy after the Revolution that Trotsky and what became the Left Opposition first ran into confrontation with Stalin and the rising bureaucracy.

Trotsky's insistence upon drawing the political lessons from the failed German revolutionary struggles of 1923 and from the successful October revolution also brought him into conflict with conservative, routinist "Old Bolsheviks" in the Russian leadership.

Though driven out of Russia, out of the Russian party and eventually out of the Comintern, Trotsky and the left Opposition continued to battle for a conception of internationalism which drew experiences of actual working class struggles — in Britain, in China, Germany, France and Spain. They set out not simply to attack and expose the false positions of the Stalinists, but to spell out an alternative analysis, and an alternative, revolutionary line of action.

In December 1932 Trotsky wrote:

"The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four congresses of the Comintern. This does not mean that it bows before every letter of its decisions, many of which had a purely conjunctural character and have been contradicted by subsequent events, but all the



Troops demonstrate in Russia 1917: Lenin's ability to develop beyond routine schemas was the key to the October Revolution.

essential principles (...) remain even today the highest expression of proletarian strategy in the epoch of the general crisis of capitalism.

"The Left Opposition rejects the revisionist decisions of the Fifth and Sixth World Congresses and considers necessary a radical restatement of the programme of the Comintern, whose Marxist gold has been rendered completely worthless by centrist alloy."

(The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods, in *Writings* 1932-3, pp51-52)

Trotsky went on to elaborate an eleven-point summary of basic principles to be reaffirmed, each one of which related to the experiences of the mass movement since the fourth congress of the Comintern. In doing so, he encapsulated much of what was to become the essence of the politics of the Fourth International formed in 1938; but even while arguing for these conceptions, Trotsky was critically assessing their adequacy in the objective situation. Eight months later he was to change his assessment on one basic issue: the extent of the degeneration of the Comintern and its parties.

He argued it this way:

"The most dangerous thing in politics is to fall captive to one's own formula that yesterday was appropriate, but is bereft of all content today."

(It is Necessary to Build..., *Writings*, 1932-3, p305)

After the failure of the Comintern parties to respond politically even to the catastrophic defeat inflicted on the working class of Germany through Stalin's ultra-left "Third Period" turn, Trotsky saw the need to reassess what had been a firmly held conviction — and to renounce his attempts to reform the Comintern from within. The International formed by Lenin had under Stalin's domination become "dead for the purposes of the revolution", and a new International and new parties would have to be built.

The workers' movement now contained not only the living relics of the Second "Marxist" International, but also the degenerated parties of the bureaucratized Third International — each with vastly more mass support and implantation in the working class than the small, isolated forces of the Left Opposition.

In critically reworking his own previous analysis of the degenerated Russian workers' state, Trotsky again spelled out the scientific approach:

"Our tendency never laid claim to infallibility. We do not receive ready-made truths as a revelation, like the high priests of Stalinism. We study we discuss, we check our conclusions in the light of experience, we openly correct the admitted mistakes, and — we proceed forward. Scientific conscientiousness and personal strictness are the best traditions of Marxism and Leninism."

(The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor, 1935)

It was on the basis of this kind of approach — developing a tradition which determinedly draws the political lessons from the experiences and struggles of the working class, that the Fourth International was founded in 1938, adopting a programme which does not restate but goes beyond and builds upon the programme and tactics of the early Comintern.

That was nearly 50 years ago, before World War 2, in a radically different international situation. The Fourth International itself was — as Trotsky put it — "born amid the roar of defeats", the relentless body-blows inflicted upon the international working class as fascism stalked Europe and Stalinist police terror crushed working class opposition in the Soviet Union.

Yet despite the immense changes that have taken place in the overall situation facing the working class since the war, there have been few systematic attempts to criticise, expand and develop the 1938 Programme to provide a new, unifying programme for the Trotskyist and international workers' movement.

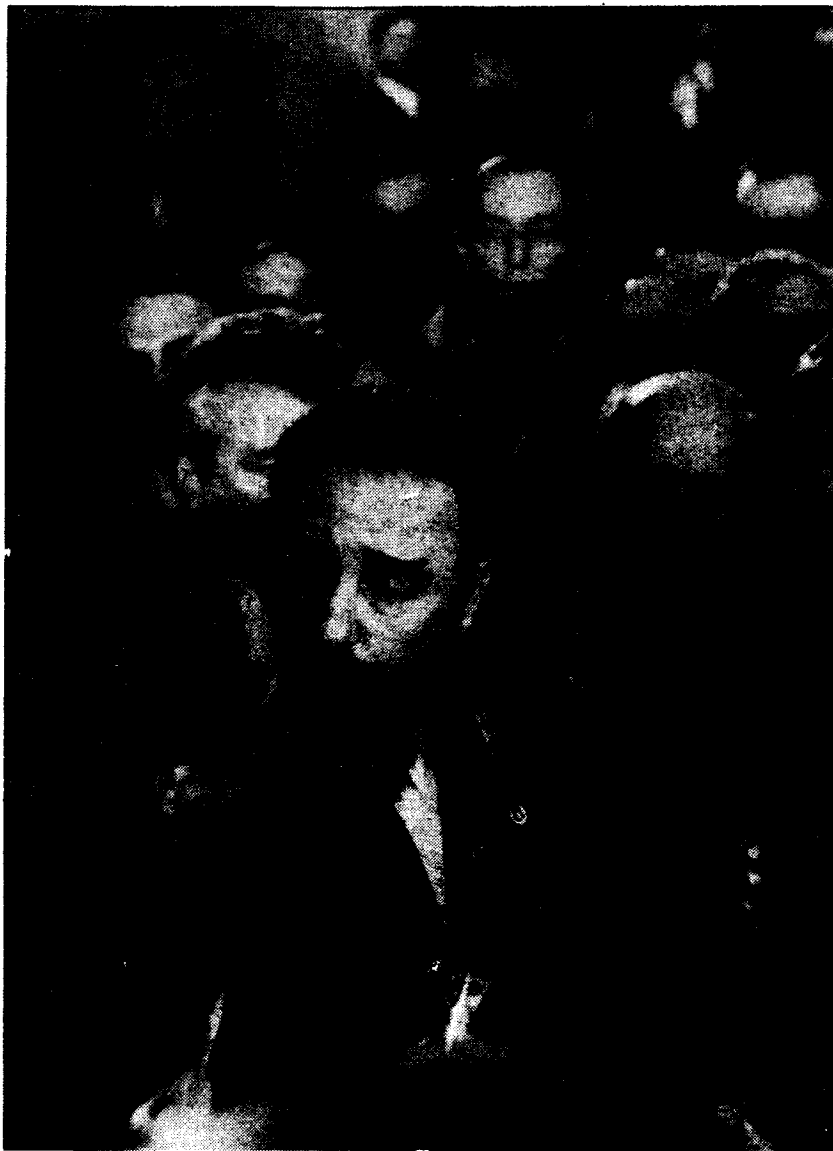
An unchanged Programme in a changing world

Among the issues to be incorporated into a programme for Trotskyism in the 1980s and 1990s are many developments that have transpired since the drafting of the basic Theses on which the Fourth International was founded:

- The varied processes which brought the emergence of deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba.

- The successful liberation of much of the colonial world from the direct grip of imperialist rule — bringing in its train the emergence of new types of populist bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships with their own means of gagging the independence of the working class.

- In particular there have been the mass revolutionary struggles that



Castro: revolutionary of 1959, now feted by Soviet press and TV

ousted the Batista dictatorship in Cuba, French imperialism from Algeria, US imperialism from Vietnam, the Caetano fascist regime in Portugal, the Shah's police regime in Iran, and the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. Each of these events has brought important political tests for the Trotskyist movement, which was not able to refer for guidance to any direct parallels in the pre-war writings of Trotsky.

- There have also been defeats reflecting the unresolved crisis of working class leadership — as in Bolivia 1952 — as well as those inflicted by imperialist intervention and CIA-provoked destabilisation in Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954 and by a succession of military coups and US-sponsored dictatorships including Brazil, Zaire, Indonesia, the Philippines, Turkey, and most notoriously Chile 1973. The imperialist-sponsored Zionist state has inflicted repeated setbacks on the Palestinian and Arab masses. The US invasion of

Grenada, and threats and pressure against Nicaragua have run alongside renewed proxy wars by CIA-backed terrorists against Angola, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. A developing analysis is needed of the balance of forces between the struggling masses and the imperialists, in which the most decisive and consistent factor remains the bankruptcy of political leadership in the mass struggle.

- The development of capitalism in the "boom" period brought an increase in the size, strength and militancy of the proletariat, not least in the exploited countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia — some of which have emerged as substantial economies in their own right. Both the "boom" and now the effects of recession in much of the world economy have served to bring women and immigrant workers into a central position of exploitation within the enlarged ranks of the proletariat in the advanced economies and in the



Since World War 2 the Soviet bureaucracy has acquired a global role

so-called "Third World", raising the need for specific policies and tactics to mobilise and support the fight against racist and sexist oppression.

● The Kremlin bureaucracy has gained in military strength relative to 1945, and gained a world-political role enabling it to act as an alternative patron to the Cuban revolution and to certain nationalist regimes seeking to distance themselves from imperialism. But while it is capable, and on occasion prepared, to overturn capitalist property, Stalinism remains inflexibly hostile to any independent revolutionary action of the working class.

● However the post-war period has also seen this same bureaucracy continue and even deepen Stalin's counter-revolutionary opposition to working class independence and revolutionary struggle. First came the cynical betrayal of revolutionary opportunities in Western Europe, Asia and elsewhere at the end of the war, in the search for a "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. This was followed by the bureaucratic measures to exclude the working class from any real power even while capitalist property relations were overturned in Eastern Europe. Later came the exploitation of the Vietnamese liberation struggle as a bargaining counter in global dealings with imperialism. The same Stalinist leaders also gave political support in their attempted liaisons with a variety of anti-working class nationalist leaderships. All this has run alongside periodic brutal



Stalin carving up the world with imperialism

military onslaughts against the workers of East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and sustained police repression in all the Stalinist states of the basic democratic rights that are essential for an independent working class movement.

● Despite its best efforts to maintain control over its own "sphere" of world politics, the Kremlin bureaucracy has been unable to prevent a shattering of the monolithic movement which Stalin had been able to maintain before the war under the unchallenged leadership of what was then the single workers' state, controlling the police apparatus of the Comintern. The emergence of rival national-based

bureaucracies — symptomised by the Stalin-Tito "break" of 1948 but repeated in different fashion in other circumstances since — has not led to any qualitative break from Stalinist politics or methods, but has rather emphasised the ways in which — whatever the "ideological" trappings — the material pressures of seeking "socialism in one country" are the decisive factor in the politics of such bureaucracies.

● The re-emergence of social democratic parties from the post-war wreckage, in the absence of revolutionary mass leaderships, and able to divert upsurges of working class militancy into reformist channels, has been recognised and exploited on occasion by the



The military strengthening and enhanced world role of Stalinism has also run alongside developing struggles for political revolution in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

bourgeoisie, most notably with the CIA backing for Soares' Party in Portugal after 1974. In Britain and elsewhere social democracy has represented the chief obstacle for the small, isolated forces of Marxism, and played a central role in managing and reconstructing capitalist economies. Internationally, it seeks out class collaborationist solutions to potential confrontations — as in the Second International's search for a "solution" in Central America.

● A new lease of life has been found for the politics of the Popular Front, following the post-war cross-class coalition governments involving the Communist Parties of France and Italy. The long-running Italian "historic compromise" between Stalinists and Christian Democrats helped lay the groundwork for "Eurocommunism", which in turn seeks to replicate the disastrous Popular Front politics that opened wide the door for Pinochet's coup against Allende in Chile 1973.

● The growth and increasing

organisation of the black working class of South Africa has opened a new phase in the struggle against the apartheid regime, and underlined the class collaborationist programme of the ANC under the domination of the South African Communist Party.

A starting point for development

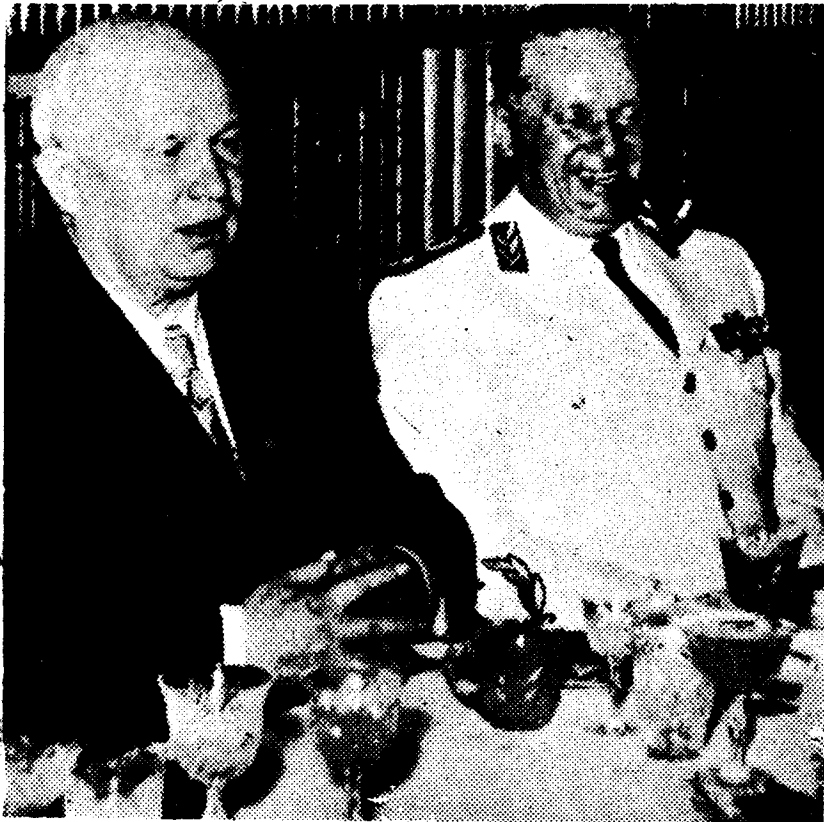
The sum total of these changes is a world substantially different in many respects from the world of 1938 — so different as to make the Transitional Programme drafted by Trotsky a crucial *starting point*, but inadequate on its own as a guide to analysis or activity.

Marxists must reject any notion of turning the Programme from its original purpose — as a guide to the action of revolutionaries — into some kind of semi-Biblical, immutable text or ikon. Already it is clear that those who have reacted in this way to the need to develop the programme have acted as an obstacle rather than assisting the political and theoretical

strengthening of the movement.

There have been two basic false attitudes to the 1938 Programme. One is the opportunist "Broad Church" approach, which simply seeks to regroup those who, nearly 50 years later, still "accept" the Transitional Programme, irrespective of the differences that such agreement can conceal. The other is the wooden dogmatist view that despite the global events of half a century, the world is somehow still basically the same as in 1938, and that therefore no fundamental programmatic development is necessary — and anyone who seeks to make such development is a "revisionist". This is quite the reverse of the method of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, who fearlessly criticised outdated conceptions in order to build upon the conquests of the past.

Too often the post-war Trotskyist movement has shrunk from a bold analysis of new problems, falling back on the one hand on "orthodox" repetition of quotations from Trotsky's writings, or conversely throwing



Tito with Khrushchev 1955.

sections of the USFI, but also among the "anti-Pabloite" British WRP. None of the main currents of the Trotskyist movement raised any programme for independent working class action in Vietnam — the building workers' councils, seizure of land and factories, or any other measures to offer an alternative to bureaucratic domination in Hanoi following the great victory. The Stalinists were to wait three years to ensure that the masses of the South were firmly under control before moving to expropriate capitalist property in the South.

● In 1979 it was not so much new problems which wreaked havoc on the Trotskyist movement as the re-emergence of the old, but still unresolved problem of orientation to petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships — this time the Sandinista Front in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas ousted Somoza and established a cross-class government containing millionaire opponents of the Somoza dynasty.

History repeated itself, with a majority of the USFI, comprising supporters of the US SWP and the European leaderships, echoing its previous slavish support for the Algerian leadership by extending a political blank cheque to the Sandinistas. This included support for the expulsion from Nicaragua of the Simon Bolivar Brigade which had been sponsored by Nahuel Moreno's Bolshevik Faction of the USFI as a solidarity gesture in the final stages of the civil war, but which had taken a

less starry-eyed view of the new government. This helped precipitate the split of the BF and another minority oppositional current from the USFI in advance of the XIth World Congress. Similar uncritical adaptation by the USFI followed the coup which ousted the vicious Gairy regime in Grenada and installed Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement.

● The same period also saw a swing back towards the most crass political illusions in Fidel Castro's Cuban leadership on the part of the American Socialist Workers Party and its international co-thinkers. In a thorough and unashamed rethink on the most fundamental issues to bring SWP politics more into line with the "revolutionary internationalism" of Castro, the SWP began a process which was to lead to them:

—jettisoning Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution;

—seriously questioning the validity of calls for Political Revolution in Stalinist states;

—returning to Lenin's discarded schema of revolution leading through a "dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry" which had been so abused under Stalin's leadership;

—fetishising calls for "workers' and farmers' governments";

—embracing the Castro/Kremlin world view of the world as divided into two "camps" — the imperialist and the anti-imperialist — in which the independent interests of the working

class in the Stalinist states and "anti-imperialist" regimes are effectively ignored;

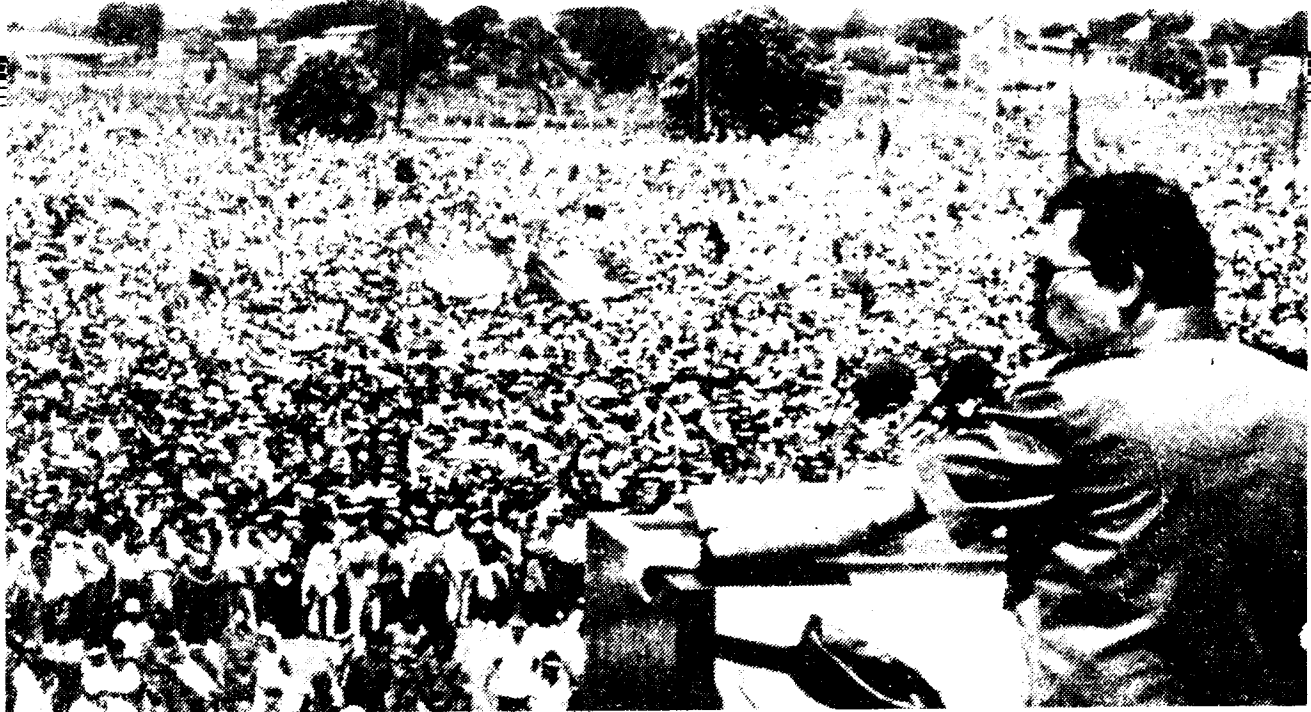
—giving concrete expression to this by enthusiastically defending Khomeini's reactionary anti-working class leadership in Iran, and offering only mealy-mouthed support for the Solidarnosc struggles in Poland for fear of assisting Reagan's propaganda;

—embracing Castro's style of inner-party democracy — mounting a massive purge of long-standing party members, especially trade unionists, who rejected the propagandist "turn to industry" and balked at the political line pumped out by the Barnes leadership.

● The "anti-imperialist" gestures of the Khomeini regime in Iran following the upsurge that ousted the Shah served to disorientate other sections of the USFI, with the majority abandoning the necessary fight for independent working class politics as the basis for a section in Iran, and not shrinking from promoting a split from those comrades in the section who rejected such a course. This same crass adaptation to a bourgeois nationalist, clerical-reactionary regime with a brutal record from early on of repression against women, gays, national minorities, and increasingly against the Iranian left and working class movement, led the USFI majority to side with Iran in the Gulf War instead of upholding the principle of fighting for the defeat and overthrow of the reactionary regimes in both Iran and Iraq.

● But even the current which claimed to take seriously the development of the Transitional Programme failed abysmally to clarify basic questions of strategy and tactics. After its 1979 split from the USFI, Moreno's Bolshevik Faction linked up with Pierre Lambert's OCRFI to form a Parity Committee — later renamed the "Fourth International (International Committee)". This adopted an enormously lengthy "Theses" document, claimed at the time to be a modern-day equivalent of the Comintern Theses. Yet missing from





USFI regards Nicaragua as a "workers' state".

the text was any serious analysis of social democracy, popular frontism, any coherent analysis of post-war Stalinism, and even the slightest reference to the fight against women's oppression or for gay liberation. The text skated around long-held differences between the two fusing tendencies, and dealt in no detail at all with their tactical line in their own sections: the result was a rapid blow-up and new split in this new "orthodox" tendency following differences on how to relate to the new Mitterrand government.

• More recently, Moreno's current, the International Workers League, now modestly proclaiming itself "the World Trotskyist Movement", in 1985 adopted a Manifesto reeking of sectarian denunciations and self-proclamation, and allotting a mere half paragraph of 44 pages for a passing reference to women, again ignoring the fight against anti-gay bigotry, and rehashing the most crude analysis of Stalinism.

• The USFI at its last World Congress focussed almost its whole discussion on only two countries — Nicaragua and El Salvador — in which the Majority agreed that it would be wrong to build Trotskyist parties, and full political support was extended to the Sandinistas and FMLN. Worse, basic elements of Marxist analysis were thrown aside in order retrospectively to re-label Nicaragua as a "dictatorship of the proletariat" — since the seizure of power by the Sandinistas in 1979! Though documents were carried against the opposition of supporters of the US SWP which reaffirmed support for Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, this formal orthodoxy bears little relation to the USFI's actual policy of political support for the Sandinistas, who are committed to an indefinite policy of

maintaining a "mixed" (capitalist) economy in this "workers' state"!

A political crisis requiring political solutions

Though it may appear to take an organisational form, with the division of the world movement into contending factions — each claiming itself to represent the "continuity" of Trotskyist politics — the crisis of the FI is above all a *political* development. What is needed is a new programmatic foundation, based on the central principles and method of the Transitional Programme, but drawing in the experiences and political lessons of 48 years more experience of the fight for Marxist leadership and world revolution.

There has been little serious attempt to hammer out a rounded programme and perspective for the key struggles of the international working class. Instead each new round of struggle has been met either by stale, stock formulae, empty phrases and outdated slogans, or alternatively by improvised, empirical schemas, abrupt about-faces, and adaptation to the most overtly "left" components of the spontaneous movement or of its bureaucratic leadership.

Time and again, too the leaders of the main currents have run from any re-examination or serious debate on their own past political mistakes, and the lessons from the movement's past political mistakes, and the lessons from the movement's past failures of analysis. This denies the role in the movement of the Marxist method of *dialectical materialism* which must start with practical experience and constantly return to it, enriching and developing the theory of the movement. It also negates the role of democratic centralism as the mechanism for analysing, criticising

and *developing* the practical work of the Marxist party. As a method, it leaves the movement constantly floundering in the same unresolved confusion and mistakes, staggering from one blunder and missed opportunity to the next, viewing the class struggle as Henry Ford viewed history as "one damned thing after another".

This introspective, misguided, defensive attitude towards past experience (in which every current has shared in the errors that have been made), and the haste with which each current has rushed to denounce its rivals, indicates a sectarian fixation on preserving the narrow interests of the leading elements of a grouping rather than any feeling of urgency to resolve the political problems in constructing a Marxist leadership of and for the working class.

This same method makes it even more difficult to create conditions in which long-standing "blind spots" of the movement — in particular the development of working class comrades, black comrades, women, lesbians and gay men into the leadership of national sections and the international movement.

The same sectarianism, coupled with the development in some of the larger groupings (and even in some quite small ones) of a fixed hierarchy of quasi-bureaucratic "leaders" and mini cults of personality, explains the frequent resort in the post-war movement to organisational means to muzzle discussion and tendency struggles in organisations which present themselves as "Bolshevik".

Only a real international debate, involving a sharp struggle for programmatic clarification and against sectarianism in all its guises can offer a serious alternative to the danger of further disintegration and political confusion.

Nahuel Moreno

1924-1987

By JOHN LISTER

AS this magazine was preparing to go to press, we heard of the unexpected death in Argentina of life-long revolutionary Nahuel Moreno.

Moreno has been one of the few post-war Trotskyist leaders to succeed in developing both a sizeable organisation – the Argentine PST (Socialist Workers Party) and more recently the Movement for Socialism (MAS) – and a substantial implantation in the working class. Immediately before he was taken ill, Moreno had attended a MAS rally of as many as 40,000 supporters in Buenos Aires, and the organisation has grown rapidly in the fertile conditions in Argentina since the fall of the Galtieri dictatorship.

The basis for this mushrooming growth had in part been laid by the ability of the PST to survive and function clandestinely under the repression of the dictatorship from 1976.

It was during this period that a number of us in Britain first met supporters of Moreno when they came seeking support for a campaign on release of political prisoners. We were impressed at that time by the PST – at that time affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International – and also in much agreement with political criticisms which Moreno levelled against both wings of the divided leadership of the USFI on their lines for the Portuguese revolution. It was on these points that Moreno formed first the Bolshevik Tendency and later the Bolshevik Faction, comprising much of the USFI's Latin American membership.

Occasional written contacts and meetings took place until 1979, when Moreno himself came to Britain to urge support for the newly-constituted Simon Bolivar Brigade, which the Bolshevik Faction was assembling to give military aid to the Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua. In the run up to the XIth Congress of the USFI, that year, some of us urged Moreno not to drop the polemic on Portugal, and to force a real debate over the differences he had raised.

In the event, USFI support for the Sandinistas' swift expulsion of the Brigade from Nicaragua in the summer of 1979 precipitated a rapid split by the Bolshevik Faction from the USFI – without discussion and prior to the world congress.

Events moved rapidly, and within a few months Moreno had entered a "Parity Committee" with French OCI leader Pierre Lambert – whom Moreno had branded a "hopeless sectarian" only a few years previously. Though some of us were at first invited to participate in the Parity Committee, this invitation was soon altered to a



requirement that we first endorse a detailed resolution.

Since the split with Lambert, Moreno's International Workers League has taken on a more sectarian, strident tone of self-proclamation as "The world Trotskyist movement". Interestingly, however, it is the only major international grouping to attempt to systematise its politics into an up-to-date programmatic document building upon the Transitional Programme.

Supporters of *Socialist Viewpoint* will find numerous points of political disagreement with Moreno and his current – not least with the programmatic texts, which are eclectic and empirical. But the political evolution of Moreno, and his ability to build substantial support for Trotskyist politics, further underline the scope of the political changes that can be

brought about through a combination of experience, circumstances and political struggle.

Moreno, interviewed last year, freely admitted to "an infinite number of errors", which he clearly felt he had managed to detect and correct. But every current and individual continues to make errors.

The vital issue for the Trotskyist movement is to break from the entrenched habit of writing off opposing currents on the basis of their errors, and to fight instead to establish a serious political basis for development.

Moreno stopped short on this task, and failed to learn the lessons of his own political evolution. It would be a tragedy if those who most respect his achievements were to show it by echoing his sectarian weaknesses.

This is the full text of a speech made by Alan Thornett on Monday February 2 in London at the memorial meeting for Comrade Nahuel Moreno of the MAS of Argentina and the International Workers League who tragically died the previous week. The meeting was organised by the WRP and there were speakers from the SLG, Socialist Organiser, Lutte Ouvriere and others.

Due to time constraints a few of the points at the end of this text were not fully made in the meeting.

WE come together on this platform tonight to pay tribute to comrade Nahuel Moreno, a major world figure of the Trotskyist movement who fought to maintain the Trotskyist movement through its most difficult years.

My first contact with the PST of Argentina (as the MAS was then) was in the early summer of 1976 soon after the military seized power in Argentina from the Peronists. We were a part of the old Workers Socialist League which we formed soon after being expelled from the WRP in 1974. The WSL received an urgent request from PST to hold a public meeting in Britain in solidarity with PST comrades, and others on the left, who had disappeared and were be-

ing persecuted under the military crackdown of the Videla Junta.

It was to some extent a surprising request since the PST, as a USEC section, was asking us to do something which would naturally be the job of the IMG — the USEC section in Britain. We approached the IMG and they had a speaker on the platform and we had a successful meeting.

All we knew about the Argentine PST at that time was that they were an important movement in Argentina and had been a part of the Leninist-Trotskyist faction of the USFI along with the US SWP since 1969.

After the public meeting we were approached by PST representatives and had several meetings with them.

We took those meetings very seriously for the same reason that we take tonight's meeting very seriously. We recognised that the validity of Nahuel Moreno was not first and foremost what he had to say but what he had built in Argentina. It did not take much to see that the construction of the Argentine PST was a major contribution to world Trotskyism; that it was a Trotskyist movement rooted in the Argentine working class and that it had an experienced leadership serious about addressing the central political problems of the world movement.

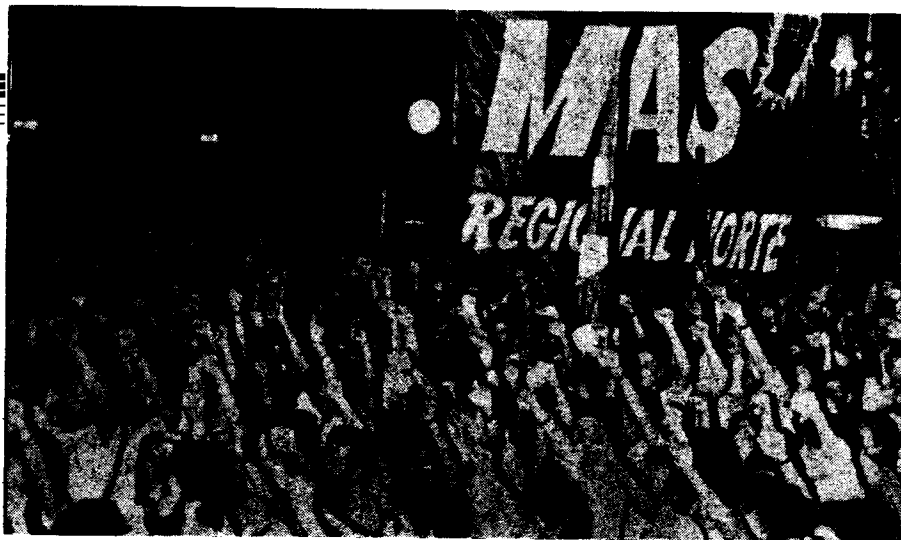
In November 1976 the PST published the "Declaration of the Bolshevik Tendency" (later to be the Bolshevik Faction) — the call to form a tendency which was effectively a challenge for the leadership of the USFI at the upcoming 11th World Congress and a response to the proposed dissolution of the factions inside the USEC.

Much of what the "Declaration" said we agreed with. It pointed to the disastrous and ultra-left guerrillaist orientation of the 9th USEC World Congress and the student vanguard deviation of the late 1960s. It pointed to the reflection of this in the "new left vanguard" conceptions for Europe developed at the 10th World Congress and to the positions being developed by Jack Barnes that a fourth international could be built in which the Trotskyists were a minority. We agreed with the declaration when it criticised both the US SWP and the USEC majority for capitulating to the Portuguese armed forces movement and tail-ending the Stalinists.

We had our problems with the "declaration" as well. We could not agree with its position on Angola, its call for a "Black Afro-American Revolution", or its lack of accounting of the PST's long relationship with the SWP. Nor was there any accounting of the fact that Moreno himself had been a strong supporter of the guerrilla turn from November 1967 until May 1968, arguing that the USFI should join OLAS.

We also, naturally, had historical disagreements with the PST and comrade Moreno. In particular over the nature of the 1963 reunification in which he was involved, which formed the USEC, and its central idea that the Castro leadership in Cuba were "natural Marxists" and had a progressive role to play in the building of a Trotskyist world movement.

Despite these disagreements we saw the formation of the Bolshevik



Tendency as an important step to take. We didn't expect to agree on everything anyway and we saw the areas of agreement as very important.

Moreno came to Britain to discuss the Bolshevik Tendency with us. He argued that we should join the IMG and fight with him where we had agreement inside the USFI.

We did not feel that joining the IMG was an option for us at that time, but we did continue to take what Moreno and the PST had to say seriously. We had discussions with local representatives and in the summer of 1978 we sent a comrade as an observer to the conference of the Bolshevik Tendency in Bogota and we tried to make an assessment of the work of the PST in Argentina itself.

We did this with some humility, conscious that we were people from an imperialist country trying to look at the work of other comrades of the Trotskyist movement in a country oppressed by imperialism — with all the differences in politics, organisation and tradition which that implies.

Some things we could not accept, however: in particular the relationship between the PST (and its predecessors) and the Peronist movement. At the same time we could not fail to be impressed with the PST, their implantation in the working class, the role they had been able to play in the class struggle in Argentina, and the work they were able to carry out even under conditions of the military rule which existed again at that time.

We found ourselves in further agreement with the Bolshevik Faction with the upsurge of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979, although we did not agree with everything the comrades said — in particular the position that Nicaragua was the new "epicentre of world politics" but we did strongly agree with what the BF were saying in general about the Nicaraguan revolution, and we agreed with the idea of the Simon Bolivar Brigade. At the same time we were strongly opposed to the developing line of the USEC majority and its logical outcome — the instruction to its Nicaraguan section to dissolve into the FSLN.

Our relationship with comrade Moreno's movement reached a crucial point with the call put out by the Bolshevik Faction for a "World Conference of Trotskyists". Comrade Moreno sent a representative to Britain to discuss this proposal. We strongly favoured a world conference and were keen to participate.

Unfortunately, however, we were

never to get to such a Conference since it was quickly overtaken by the formation of the Parity Commission between the LTT, the OCRFI and the Bolshevik Faction — which we felt avoided carrying the fight through inside the USEC.

We were excluded from the Conference by conditions laid down in advance. The only unconditional invitation now was extended to the USEC, which turned it down. Anyone else who wanted to attend had to make a statement in advance that the groups comprising the Parity Commission represented "the historic continuity of the Fourth International".

That development effectively ended our relationship with the current led by Comrade Moreno. The Parity Committee lasted 10 months and since then the PST comrades have been building their own international movement.

Now we have again the call for an international conference of Trotskyists from the Comrades of the WRP and the comrades of the International Workers League and again we have exclusion clauses before the discussion has even begun. We think it is a very negative development. We have to recognise that there is a range of opinions within the world movement and that people's ideas change. For example there are periods in the past where the criteria for this conference would have excluded Comrade Moreno's movement from it!

We believe that we have to get away from these kind of attitudes if we are going seriously to tackle the problems of the movement. We have to get away from self-proclamation and denouncing others in the Trotskyist movement for original sin before the discussion has even started.

We need to see the contradictions in the contribution of comrade Moreno. We need to see both the great strength and the great contribution he made and also see that he was a part of the same crisis of the movement of which we are a part. He did not have the whole answer and none of us have the whole answer. If we are going to tackle these problems we need to draw on the strengths of the whole movement. It cannot be done with two or three sections of the movement getting together to the exclusion of the others.

I make these points frankly but I make them in the context of paying a very sincere tribute to the contribution which comrade Moreno has made. We need to draw on the strengths of that contribution and at the same time to recognise that the Trotskyist movement is very much the poorer for his passing.

China's reform of the labour system —

IN the wave of general economic reform, reform on the labour system in China is also unfolding.

The basic feature of the existing labour system is: the state has full power of controlling and allocating jobs to all urban and rural labour power; all workers are allocated to enterprises in the status of regular workers; a regular relationship is established between the workers and the enterprises, and the right to a job is guaranteed.

Since 1949, under the policy of the Communist Party, the Chinese proletariat has enjoyed a more privileged status than the peasants mainly because their support is necessary in countering the influence of the bourgeoisie, the landlords, the remnant force of the Nationalists, and the military threat and economic blockade of American imperialism. Later, their support is needed to counter the strong pressure of the Soviet bureaucracy.

At least, the CCP still considers that the system of regular jobs has played an active role in China's economic construction.

However, in the past few years, the authorities have been attacking the "abuses" of the system: "big pot of rice" (same remuneration for all disregarding difference in individual contribution), "iron rice bowl", nurturing lazy people, "too much control, too strict allocation, one cannot get out once being put in an enterprise, and one's whole life is determined by one allocation"...

The present reform is carried out first on new recruits of state run enterprises. The system of regular jobs is replaced by the system of contract jobs. The new system is also applied on new recruits in state institutions, enterprises and societies. In fact, such a system has already been practised in non state run industrial and commercial enterprises.

The contract system has been tried in state run enterprises for a few years. According to the statistics, 3.5 million workers now work on a contract basis, and make up 4% of all workers in state run enterprises.

On October 1, four Temporary Stipulations relating to the contract system in state run enterprises promulgated by the State Council began to take effect. Let us look at how the reform affects contract workers in the light of the Stipulations.

Stipulations unfavourable to workers

● Firstly, the term of contract is short, hence contract workers have no guarantee to their right to work. The enterprises determine the contract term according to the need of production and work, and recruit workers on short term (1 to 5 years), on long term (over 5 years) and on temporary basis (less than 1 year). When

(From *October Review*,
September 1986)

Zhang Kai



Deng: capitalist methods

the term expires, the contract can be renewed on mutual agreement, otherwise the workers will be unemployed.

● Secondly, the workers are liable to dismissal at any time. The Stipulations provide that the contract can be annulled under the following conditions:

1. During the probation period, the worker is found to be not up to the requirements of recruitment.

2. The worker cannot resume his/her work after convalescing from an illness or injury not caused by his/her work.

3. According to the "Temporary Stipulation on the dismissal of workers in state run enterprises who breach discipline" promulgated by the State Council, the following circumstances justify a dismissal: serious violation of labour discipline, violation of operation procedures thus inducing economic loss, bad attitude of service, disobedience to normal work transfer, fighting, or "committing other serious errors."

Thus, the enterprises have the power and the excuse to dismiss workers on free will. An example of the application of the first conditions is: in Wuhan, the Jiangxia Motor Repair Centre run on joint venture (it is not a state run enterprise) recruited 64 workers from 400 applicants, but 44 workers (70% of all recruits) were dismissed during the probation period. (*People's Daily*, October 5, p. 2)

● Thirdly, the psychological pressure is strong and the labour intensity is increased. In the contract is stipulated the quanti-

ty and quality quota of production, the labour discipline, and the liability on the breaching of the contract.

● Fourthly, in the contract is stipulated the compensations to be made for the damage caused by violation of the contract. Apparently, both parties are responsible, but in fact, the worker is the one vulnerable, since the worker has no right to resign before the term expires and resignation can be considered violation of the contract. The Temporary Stipulations do not provide for the right of the worker to resign unless on the following conditions: adverse sanitary conditions or safety; non-payment of wages; non-compliance of the contract; workers' pursuit of study on the agreement of the enterprises.

● Fifthly, the contract workers enjoy less benefits than regular workers. According to the Stipulations, the wages, insurance benefits, bonuses and subsidies of contract workers should be the same as those of regular workers of the same enterprises. However, the following are different:

1. On the expiry of the contract, the worker can receive an unemployment fund for a short term. Workers who have worked for less than 5 years can receive the unemployment fund for not more than 12 months at a rate of 60% to 75% of their basic wages. Regular workers need not face the problem of expiry of the term of service or unemployment.

2. When a contract worker is dismissed after a stipulated period to convalesce from an illness or an injury not induced by his/her work, the enterprise pays a medical subsidy of 3 to 6 months of basic wages, and an unemployment fund of not more than 12 months. For a regular worker under the same circumstances, when he/she leaves the job after 6 months of medical treatment, enjoys a relief fund paid every month equal to 20% to 30% of his/her basic wages, until resumption of labour power or until death.

3. The contract worker has to contribute to a pension fund. The amount is not more than 3% of the monthly basic wages (the enterprise contributes 15% of the wages). The pension the worker receives is the total amount paid. A regular worker, on the other hand, need not contribute to the retirement fund and after retirement, receives 50% to 75% of his/her basic wages every month until death.

Welfare items such as residential quarters, childcare services, etc., are not mentioned in the Stipulations, reflecting that contract workers have no right to enjoy them.

Besides the above unfavourable items reflected by the Stipulations, the contract workers suffer a lowered social and political status. Their work is temporary, unstable; their relationship to the enterprises is one of casual wage labour.

Workers against the Contract System

The opinion of workers on the contract system has been revealed in the newspapers since the contract system was tried a few years ago. On January 29, 1983, the China News Agency referred to a commentator's article in the *Workers' Daily*: "At present, the cadres and workers of many enterprises still harbour doubt and anxiety over the system of contract labour. Some workers worry that once the relationship between the enterprise and the workers under the contract system becomes one of wage labour, will the political status and political treatment of workers be changed, and their livelihood not safeguarded? Such worry can be comprehended."

The same opinion is reflected in the *People's Daily* on September 20, which quoted questions put forward by the readers: are workers on contract the master of the enterprises? Will all regular workers turn into contract workers? The September 23 Editor's Note said, "Quite a number of readers ask: what is the difference between China's system of contract labour and the capitalist system of wage labour?" On October 5, the *People's Daily* carried an article entitled "Does the system of contract labour harm the interests of the workers?" It said that after the practice of the system of contract labour, "some people worry that the interests of the workers will be harmed." It then quoted the answer of the Minister of Labour Personnel, Zhao Dongyuan, to these questions.

To the question of whether there exist any differences between the system of contract labour and the capitalist system of wage labour, Zhao explained that the two are qualitatively different because: 1. the system of property ownership is different; 2. the aim is different — the capitalists go after surplus value, whereas the system of contract labour aims at creating social wealth, satisfying the need of society and the need of the labourers; 3. the relationship and status of the two parties are different — it is a relationship of exploiting and exploited in the capitalist system of wage labour, whereas the status of the two parties signing the contract is equal.

However, from the viewpoint of the workers, will they not think that the enterprises use the means of extortion to seek profits, even if such means are not termed exploitation to seek surplus value? Will they not think that the phrase "workers are masters" exists only nominally? The factory directors control much power, and can dismiss workers but workers have no right to resign. When workers are unemployed, they are obliged to accept official "reference" to a job because if they refuse the reference two times without a proper reason, their unemployment fund will be cancelled.

Workers are not masters

Does the Chinese proletariat have the status or spirit of the master of the country?

Jiang Yiewi, the former deputy head and now the advisor of the Institute of Industrial Economic Study under the Academy of Social Sciences, said, "It is still a central link in the ideological and political work to establish the spirit of master among the worker masses." He said, "If workers have no right to intervene in the major decisions of the enterprises, it is difficult to assert that workers have the

status of master in the enterprises." "If the workers cannot feel that they are master in real life, it is empty to talk to educate them to have such a spirit."

If the general workers are in such a situation, how can contract workers whose jobs are not even secure be master of the enterprises?

All along, the proletariat is master in name only. The real ruler is the CCP. The workers are only required to work "hard, fast, well and frugally". In addition, with China poor and backward, the living standard of the workers and the general people is very low. On the other hand, the cadres enjoy material privileges and lead a corrupt, luxurious life, which contrasts with the hardship of the people. These factors frustrate the enthusiasm and creativity of the workers and peasants for production.

Struggle between workers and bureaucracy

In the three decades since 1949, the Chinese proletariat has increased from 16 million in 1952 to the present 120 million. Their general cultural level has also risen significantly. They resist attacks on their gains. The CCP's attempt to replace the system of wages calculated on an hourly basis by the system of piecework wages or floating wages was carried out at a very slow tempo due to the strong resistance of the workers. The authorities then promoted the system of bonuses in an attempt to induce differentiations among the workers, and stimulate them on competition in production; yet, the workers divide the bonuses among themselves and the bonuses cannot play the role they were intended for. Model workers that the authorities attempted to nurture are generally rejected and isolated by the workers.

Now, with the promotion of the system of contract labour, the authorities quickly clarify that the rumour that regular workers will also turn into contract workers is "a rumour without any policy basis." Zhao Dongyuan admitted that the present reform on the labour system "concerns the interests of the general workers and will bring about changes in some traditional concepts; the reform inevitably will encounter various difficulties."

The workers not only oppose the system of contract labour, they also disagree with the reforms on prices, wages, encouragement for a minority to get rich first, development of the commodity economy. The mood is reflected in the speech of Luo Gan, deputy chair of the General Federation of Trade Unions, at the work conference on ideological work on workers convened in early August. He said that old concepts and habits have quite a considerable influence on the worker masses. For example, some workers view the thaw

on prices as "socialist superiority"; have doubt on the reform of the price system; view the wage reform with the selfish and egalitarian mentality of a small producer; fail to understand the extension of wage differentiations; reject the encouragement of a minority to get rich first; consider the "iron rice bowl" labour system as the signal of the proletariat being master; have the opinion that the practice of the system of contract labour will cause the ideology of wage labour among workers; fail to understand the development of the socialist commodity economy; etc.

"All these illustrate that old concepts and old habits are indeed the invisible force obstructing the smooth development of the reform. If these old concepts and old habits are not eliminated, it will be difficult for the workers to devote themselves to the reform with enthusiasm and initiative." Luo Gan appeals to "the broad workers to actively eliminate old concepts not corresponding to the reform." (*People's Daily*, 4 August 1986)

At the same time, the general Federation of Trade Unions published a "random sampling survey" on 640,000 workers, which simply said that "94.78% staunchly support or basically support the reform, and 92.95% staunchly support or basically support the open door policy." (When Hui Bao, 14 October 1986).

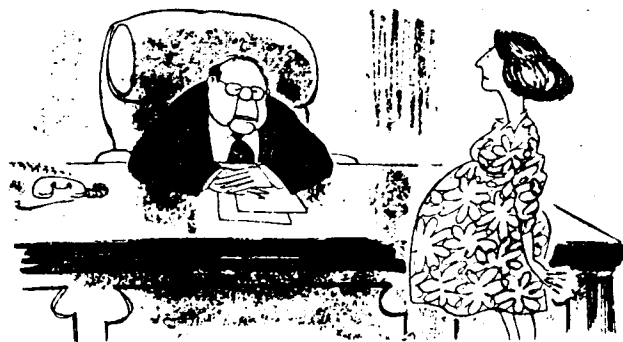
It is quite generally accepted that China needs reform and needs to open to the west. Yet, serious differences exist concerning what should be reformed and how should the reform be conducted, not only between the rulers and the people, but also within the ruling state. The report did not state the concrete political questions put to those interviewed. So it is difficult to deduce much from the above statistics. Nevertheless, the report also said that the workers interviewed "strongly demand the right of decision, of electing the factory director, of assessing the recalling address, and also of democratic management in the sphere of economic distribution."

Thus, the results of this random sampling survey conducted from March to May this year does not overturn the appeal made to the "broad workers" by the deputy chair of the General Federation of Trade Unions.

The rejection of certain concrete reform measures and the "strong demand" for democratic rights in the functioning of the economy indicate a rejection of the growth of capitalist forces. It signifies a new awakening of the Chinese proletariat.

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October Review,
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Hong Kong.



"Of course my hair transplants will be covered by sick pay. Baldness is a disease. Pregnancy, on the other hand, is the natural state of women."



Armed German workers demonstrate in 1918 - betrayed by social democrats

Don't rush with the death certificate!

Marxists and the Labour Party

JOHN LISTER looks at the current situation of the Labour Party in a more historical context.

Is social democracy in its death agony in an immediate as well as a general historical sense? Is its demise foreseeable within the next period? If so, what will replace it as the mass political expression on the main steam of the British workers' movement?

These questions have a real

significance in today's situation: depending on how they are answered, the tactics and strategy of Marxists might take widely different courses.

They are not new questions. Since 1914, Marxists have always been keen — over-keen — to pronounce the incipient or imminent death of social democracy, which first gained

mass proportions through the opportunist degeneration of the parties of the Second International, culminating in the "social patriotic" collapse of 1914 in which each major "socialist" party voted war credits to its "own" imperialist bourgeoisie.

The first two Congresses of Lenin's new Third International, under the influence of the massive upsurge of revolutionary struggle which flowed across and beyond Europe following World War I, issued ringing denunciations of the reformist parties and proclamations of the death of the Second International.

Yet after the defeat of many revolutionary struggles and in the absence of adequate revolutionary leadership or mass Bolshevik-type parties, the social democratic parties were to emerge once again, in alliance with conservative sections of trade union bureaucracies, as a potent force for reaction and class collaboration within the workers' movement.

Noske and Scheidemann in Germany, the murderers of Luxemboug and Liebknecht, may have been the vanguard of social democratic counter-revolution: but the whole apparatus of German social democracy proved itself in 1918-1919 to be a major obstacle to the struggles even of a mobilised, armed and insurrectionary working class. The defeat of social democracy was again shown to be a *political* and not an organisational question or one that could be solved by the spontaneous movement of the working class.

The Third and Fourth Congresses of the Comintern were forced to make a more sober analysis of the immediate outcome of the post-war upsurges, and to recognise the

continued existence and influence of social democracy as a major obstacle to revolutionary politics.

From this assessment arose the necessity for much more detailed tactics for work, particularly in the unions, with the Comintern insisting upon the need for Communist involvement in even the most partial and limited economic struggles by the working class. In rejecting the "Infantile Leftists" who wished simply to go round the social democratic parties, the Comintern pressed for the tactic of the *united front* and for a programme of *transitional demands* designed to make the link between the revolutionaries and the broadest layers of workers. The concept in each instance was to put forward demands and initiatives which could advance the day-to-day struggles and the political demands of the working class, while leading workers *through their own experience* to move beyond the limitations of the reformist programme, break from the various wings of social democratic leaders, and embrace the programme and perspective of revolution.

Of course despite this, and despite the victory of the October revolution and the miserable betrayals of social democracy elsewhere, the post World War I period saw not the death agony of reformism, but its re-emergence.

This was due not only to the *subjective* weakness of the forces of revolution (who nowhere outside Russia had developed vanguard parties comparable to the Bolshevik model, which had come through the test of 1914 and fought tenaciously for internationalism and working class independence throughout the war period); but also to the continued existence of the *objective* material base on which social democracy rests.

Large, bureaucratized, but still independent reformist trade unions provide a basic support for social democratic politics, while the pressures of bourgeois society direct resistance along reformist and Parliamentary channels, corrupting and sucking in "socialist" oppositionists.

Mass social democratic parties exist only in the imperialist countries. This reflects a fundamental fact about social democracy: its ultimate material base lies in its ability to make material gains for at least sections of the working class through class collaboration and reformism. Social democracy thus rests not only on class collaboration in the workers' movement but also on a willingness of the bourgeoisie to engage in class collaboration.

This material base means that in conditions of economic crisis (especially where, as in Britain today, the relative position of the



imperialist power has been greatly weakened) social democracy, too, will experience massive and persistent crisis as it finds itself less and less able to deliver reforms and itself comes under attack from the bourgeoisie.

It is not guaranteed that these crises will have a positive outcome. This can only be the base if a strong revolutionary Marxist movement, vigorously applying the tactical lines advocated by the Comintern, can be created.

Though there were substantial splits in many social democratic parties in the aftermath of 1917, bringing the emergence of mass Communist Parties, neither of the principal conditions for the existence and influence of social democracy was sufficiently altered by the post-war upsurge to extinguish it, even where (as in France) its dominant power over the working class was broken.

Nor did leaderships capable of implementing the tactical line established by the 3d and 4th Congresses emerge within the new mass CPs. Soon afterwards came Lenin's death and Stalin's

stranglehold on the CPSU and the Comintern.

Under Stalin, the CPs were still less able to break the grip of social democracy. The rank opportunism of the 1924-27 period brought disastrous adaptation to "left" trade union bureaucrats and helped produce defeat in the British General Strike.

Strong left wing and centrist currents within the Labour Party in the same period produced a powerful rank and file resistance to a witch-hunting Conference ban on dual membership of the CP and Labour Party. In December 1925 a National Left Wing Conference heard that nearly a hundred divisional and borough Labour Parties had refused to implement the Conference decision. This opposition grew even stronger after the 1926 sell-out, and in 1927 the CP-led Minority Movement also reached its peak despite a still small CP membership of only 7,500.

However a combination of lingering sectarianism among sections of the British leadership and the catastrophic "Third Period" line



2nd Congress of the Communist International

of the Comintern finally killed the momentum of the National Left Wing Movement in 1929. Under the politics of the "Third Period", Communists once again began prematurely pronouncing social democracy "dead" as a current of the working class, now characterising it instead as "social fascism". This turn left the British CP stranded and unable to capitalise upon the Labour Party crisis and MacDonald's split of 1931.

By the time of the "Popular Front" turn to cross class alliances involving "progressive" sections of the capitalist class in 1935, the CP had actually swung to the *right* of the Labour leadership and the most militant rank and file workers — a position repeated in the post-war election of 1945; again during the Bevanite movement of the 1950s; and again today.

In short, at each historic turning point where a substantial split in the British Labour Party and labour movement, and the emergence of a hard, centrist/revolutionary current has seemed possible, the British CP had missed the opportunity, and confirmed its own isolation.

But it is not only the Stalinists who have failed correctly to analyse developments in social democracy and taken an incorrect line.

Since World War II the Trotskyist movement and currents arising from it have been divided between a sectarian and an opportunist line towards the Labour Party — which in most cases have been derived from an excessive enthusiasm of tiny numbers of comrades to diagnose the "death agony" of social democracy.

In the immediate post-war period, there were the attempts to build the RCP as a small mass party outside the Labour Party at a time of truly massive illusions in a Labour government. The subsequent split in the RCP and the Healy group's turn to entrism did not resolve the problem, however: instead, there was an opportunist deep-entry in Britain, pinning hopes on the evolution of the Bevanite current in a centrist or revolutionary direction.

In the 1950s and 60s the entry work of the Nottingham group/IMG, tied to the International Secretariat, was led to opportunism by the concept of the "replacement leadership", according to which the Trotskyists must first become a "current" within the official left, only breaking with this left when it had defeated the right wing. The upshot of this was the politics of Ken Coates' Institute for Workers' Control and of *Chartist* — a systematic adaptation to reformism.

The founders of *Militant*, having drifted into the Labour Party in the 1950s, scabbed in 1964 on the SLL members who were expelled from the Labour Party. They tended to put their Labour Party membership before the interests of the class struggle, and to become increasingly sectarian. Their break with the USFI in 1965 and burial in the CLP/YS milieu produced a steady rightward evolution of their politics as they adapted to the Labour Party environment.

In the late 1950s, what was to become the SLL-WRP, having won important forces from the CPGB after Hungary, turned correctly to the building of a trade union base and to the youth as a force for change in the Labour Party. But it then drew false conclusions from the success of this work, which became increasingly separated from the fight within the Labour Party.

Following the mass youth expulsions of 1964, despite an initial period in which the organisation still orientated demands and campaigns towards the Labour Party, Healy moved to entrench that separation and embark on the one-sided "party-building" exercise which abandoned any involvement in the Labour Party. Healy's material from the late 1960s onwards abounds with premature announcements of the death or

imminent demise of social democracy.

The tendency around Tony Cliff, expelled from the Healy group in 1950, continued entry work (mainly in the youth) on an opportunist line until 1967, when, along with the IMG, it turned to the student-youth milieu radicalised around Vietnam. In the early 1970s the International Socialists rank and fileist line won this group a significant base amongst shop stewards which led it to proclaim itself The Party in 1975.

The cases of Healy and Cliff illustrate how the older militants of the Trotskyist and semi-Trotskyist movement, used to the conditions of tiny groups in the 1950s, can become intoxicated by the creation of organisations grouping a few hundred or thousand militants, and imagine that the death agony of social democracy is at hand. In practice this triumphalist sectarianism (now the pessimistic sectarianism of the SWP), almost a parody of the Third Period of the Comintern and the "infantile leftism" attacked by Lenin, leads to *abstentionism* on many actual struggles in the workers' movement.



Callaghan: his treachery led to 1979 revolt.

But errors have also been made by currents within the Labour Party. In the exuberance of the "Bennite" struggles for democracy and accountability in 1978-82, many tendencies drew up schemas for the wholesale "renovation" of the Labour Party, which all leaned excessively upon the "objective" dynamic of the left wing opposition and paid little attention to the subjective political weaknesses of the Bennites, or the specific contribution which Marxists were required to make to the fight.

In particular, most schemas failed to recognise the unique conjuncture which had rallied certain sections of the "left" and not-so-left union bureaucracy behind the unlikely and unaccustomed banner of inner-party democracy. They then failed to

detect the *change* in that conjuncture after 1982, and especially since the 1983 election, which has produced a predictable but dramatic weakening of Bennism as a force within the Labour conference.

The reality was that, politically weak and confused as it was, the Benn current — itself merely a "left" social democratic current — could never have simply strode without interruption from victory to victory against the right wing establishment in the unions and the Parliamentary Labour Party. For that reason, this, most recent version of the predicted "death agony of social democracy" was also mistaken.

Though it did not represent any definitive *answer*, Bennism clearly reflected a growing preoccupation of sections of the left wing of the labour movement with the *problem* of social democracy and its consistent betrayal of the independent interests of the working class. Its emergence as a response to the experiences of successive Wilson and Callaghan governments, and its search for solutions in more left-wing policies and inner-party democracy under the slogan "never again" opened up considerable new possibilities for the Marxist left.

The fact that some sections of the Trotskyist movement broke from well over a decade of ultra-leftism and sectarianism in seeking to relate to the Bennite movement through initiatives like the Rank & File Mobilising Committee was a positive development.

However the legacy of opportunism and impressionism meant that the result was not a healthy growth of Marxism in the mass movement, but further confusion, disorientation and fragmentation as various currents have each sought to tailor their political line and practical activity to conform to the limitations of the Bennite milieu.

The present period

Since Thatcher's 1979 victory, the ruthless employers' offensive (which had already begun to take shape under the Edwardes regime in BL) has set the scene for the class struggle in Britain — forcing to the surface the political weaknesses of the labour movement (not least the union bureaucracy, and the shop stewards' movement which developed during the "boom" conditions of the 1950s and 1960s). The highest point of this offensive was the class confrontation of the Miners' Strike, followed now by the hell-for-leather retreat by neatly all wings of the labour bureaucracy.

So is *this*, now the period of the death agony of social democracy in Britain?

No. It is certainly a period of traumatic crisis for social democracy and its political and trade union



Benn

leaders. The Kinnock leadership has since 1983 had to repair the damage done to the Party's credibility by its crushing electoral defeat. That is no easy task.

But we must be clear that Kinnock has set out to achieve this objective not by abandoning but by *reaffirming* the political "principles" of social democracy — class collaboration, craven respect for the laws and machinery of the capitalist state, and seeking to reverse the democratic and political gains made by the left in 1979-82.

Egged on by the Euro-Stalinists of *Marxism Today* and the crypto-Stalinist witch-hunters of the LCC; and backed to the hilt by his sponsors — the 'new realist' majority of the union bureaucracy — Kinnock is groping his way towards a possible new accommodation with the SDP by returning the Labour Party to the political line it had when Owen, Williams, Rodgers et al. were in the leadership.

A basic component of this is to repress any form of class struggle politics. The betrayal of the miners was no flash in the pan; the hounding of Liverpool is not simply because of the *Militant* connection: these are Kinnock's ritual sacrifices to the bourgeois media in his frantic quest for acceptability to "public opinion".

The almost uninterrupted series of betrayals and defeats suffered by the trade union struggles in the period since 1979 has sapped one avenue of possible resistance to this line, and reinforced a drift towards passive electoralism among former elements of the Labour left. Kinnock's careerist bandwagon has lured on board many former prominent figures of the Bennite resistance, while sections of the

"hard left" (Socialist Action!) have been further divided over perspective during and since the Miners' Strike.

Kinnock's campaign to roll back the progress made by a radicalised rank and file in 1979-83 has not been without contradictions and problems. Nor indeed has it by any means wiped out a vital layer of working class militants (as the Miners' Strike confirmed) or a hard left layer within the Labour Party which will remain committed to class struggle politics, is ready to challenge capitalist legality, and at least questions some basic tenets of reformist orthodoxy (the "viability" argument in the Miners' Strike). Though this challenge has never itself broken from the framework of reformist politics, these class fighters are a crucial building block for the fight for conscious opposition to the Kinnock-Hattersley economic policy.

But this crisis can only develop to the point of the "death agony" of social democracy under conditions where a coherent and conscious new left-wing leadership can be constructed to enable a distinct class-struggle current to take shape and break from social democratic politics and methods.

Problems with the "death agony" analysis

It vastly understates the strength of Kinnockism and of the trade union bureaucracy which spawned it. While it has become commonplace for Marxists to argue the organic link between the Labour Party and the trade unions generally in order to make a case for Marxists to be active in the Labour Party — we must remember that the link is a **two way** connection. Just as the Labour Party leans on the unions for resources and for bureaucratic block votes, **so the unions need the Labour Party**, to give political expression to the reformist politics of the bureaucracy. Hence the decision even of the EET-PU to re-establish that link through the (albeit limited) campaign for political levy ballots.

For many union leaders there is not even a contradiction between social democratic politics and a coalition with the capitalist parties of the Alliance. The task of drawing a clear class line on that issue, and rallying the working class to fight the inevitable attacks that would be mounted by a coalition government, will fall to the most militant minority of the rank and file and the hard left — in opposition to the union bureaucracy.

So long as the main union leaders are able to conduct their collaboration free from a serious challenge from any organised hard left with shop floor support, they will preserve the Labour Party in the way their forebears created it.

as a parliamentary vehicle for reformist politics.

While understating Kinnock's strength (even while Marxists face a growing threat of expulsions), the "death agony" analysis also tends to *overstate* the strength and political independence of "Bennism" and the hard left.

In the present division and demoralisation of the Labour Left it is not yet certain that by the next election the hard, class struggle left will necessarily be larger or even politically stronger than was the left in 1974 when Wilson came to power (though certain issues such as women's rights and gay rights have more firmly established themselves on the left agenda).

Time dulls the memory of the bitter struggles against Heath's Tory government which helped shape Labour's "left" battles in 1973, and helped steel a militant left wing in battles like the Pentonville 5, Clay Cross, pay strikes by postal workers, builders and healthworkers, two miners' strikes, and other bruising confrontations.

Under Heath militancy remained very high, the level of shop floor various opportunist (*Socialist Action*, Chartist Minority) and hybrid sectarian-opportunist (*Socialist Organiser*) tendencies of the left, in failing correctly to fight for the political and organisational development of the Bennite forces.

Of course Benn's left wing reputation can be traced to his involvement with these struggles. But his immediate role under Wilson was not to spearhead the working class opposition to wage controls, speed-up or the Tory anti-union laws, but to join the government. He became the figurehead for Wilson's collaborationist Industry Bill, and thereafter remained a minister through four phases of wage control until the 1979 election.

In this way "Bennism" showed even at this early stage its acute political limitations as a left social democratic current, unable to offer a coherent working class policy to challenge Wilson/Callaghan.

When "Bennism" moved into opposition after 1979, it did so as part of a major upheaval involving not only the rank and file who had fought Wilson/Callaghan, but also sections of the bureaucracy who had only recently turned against them. Partly because of this, Bennism did little or nothing to *organise* a current within the Labour Party!. With the exception of Scargill's (unorganised) popular base of support in the NUM, Bennite politics have for this reason always found much stronger support in the conferences, campaigns and gatherings of activists such as Broad Lefts than on the shop floor.

This weakness has continued today. Advanced workers respect and



PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

Labour

Hattersley: no innovation, just the old logic of class collaboration

support Benn and Scargill: but Benn and Scargill do nothing to organise any support within the unions. The "current" they represent is therefore more potential than actual, while their political line overlaps heavily with the economic strategy of Kinnock-Hattersley.

Some even continue to cherish the illusion that Kinnock can somehow be "pressurised" into adopting more radical policies — for instance on the reinstatement and amnesty for victimised and jailed miners. This kind of approach indicates a naivete which offers instant fodder to the cynical pro-Stalinist forces of the LCC and others who would lure unwary leftists into the Kinnock camp. Even now the "Bennite" wing of the movement is shot through with these type of illusions, lacking any scientific grasp of the role of bureaucracy or of the politics of reformism.

As a "current", Bennism can have

no viable existence outside or separate from the Labour Party. It depends for its support upon the CLPs, and other structures of social democracy: lacking any real alternative programme, it can only survive or appear as a coherent oppositional current within the social democratic milieu.

Its demands may be more radical, but Bennism represents no break from Parliamentaryism, upon which it is wholly dependent in its schemas for "taking power" and legislating "socialist policies". Bennism is not revolutionary or even centrist in character. Cut off from the routines and structures of the Labour Party, it would be torn apart, with present followers drawn backwards into the camp of Kinnock-Hattersley social democracy, and a comparative hand-off making the break towards Marxist perspectives and programme.

Potential within the "Bennite current"

This is by no means to belittle or ignore the potential for development contained within the Bennite current. Under this extremely wide and loose heading can be grouped nearly all of the most class conscious activists in today's labour movement.

But we reject any notion that this potential strength can or will simply and of itself crystallise spontaneously into a more organised, politically coherent current or tendency. And we recognise the largely negative role being played by the sectarian (SWP), propagandist (*Militant*) and various opportunist (*Socialist Action*, Chartist) and hybrid sectarian-opportunist (*Socialist Organiser*) tendencies of the left, in failing correctly to fight for the political and organisational development of the Bennite forces.

We face the task of fighting to correct this historic weakness, combat sectarian abstention and develop a healthy practical orientation which

enables us to fight alongside the best elements of the hard left in the Labour Party and the unions.

The key to future development must in our view be the adoption of tactics and a strategy to mobilise the broadest possible layers of Bennites to fight now and under a Labour government on *class issues* (defence of jobs, wages, no hand-outs to big business, demands for new jobs, internationalism, etc.), on *democratic rights* (against police violence, racism, for women's and lesbian and gay liberation, etc.) and on *transitional demands* geared to the certain economic crisis that would follow the return of a Labour (or a Coalition) government.

The experience of such struggles can deepen the understanding of the political nature of social democracy, *organise* an active class struggle opposition, and begin to establish and popularise transitional and workers' control demands through

which the labour movement can find an alternative to reformist capitulation in the face of capitalist crisis.

Such campaigns and struggles must be taken into the ranks of the trade union movement, breaking out of the stifling narrow routine of much Labour Party work, and fighting to bring the harsh class issues of workplace exploitation into the more abstract, parliamentary political arena of the wards, CLPs and circles of left activists.

In this way the task of Marxists is seen clearly as one of finding ways to *challenge* and (through serious mass campaigns on immediate issues) *break down* the political limitations of the Bennite current. A clear programme for action, designed to connect at every level with the needs of working class, must be developed, and fought for in practice through every possible avenue in the unions, the Labour Party and in the various campaigns of the oppressed and the labour movement.

SKINNER'S VIEW

SAID to be still the best "turn" on the Labour circuit, DENNIS SKINNER MP was in the Yorkshire coalfield recently. Socialist Viewpoint was there to report on the main points of what he had to say.

THE "beast of Bolsover" began talking about the Hangers dispute, triggered by the vicious sacking of the 300 artificial limb-makers by BTR:

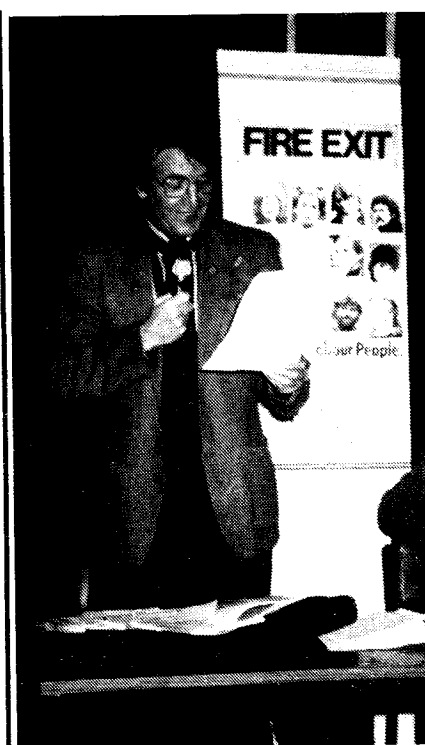
"These are people who should be the last in the queue for sackings. Tory-MP Peter Temple Morris is paid £5,000 by BTR subsidiary J.E. Hanger in addition to his £18,000 MP's salary. He has *four jobs*, and not much is said about it.

Cecil Parkinson has ten directorships. There are 250 MPs with directorships — some Labour ones too.

The government says they can't intervene in J.E. Hangers dispute, just like the miners' strike. They arrested miners every day, arrested their wives, trampled their families — but they weren't intervening, were they?

So they can't intervene in Hangers, and 5,000 patients are prevented from receiving their artificial limbs. Just imagine if the union had called them out on strike. It wouldn't have been Myra Hindley on the front page of the *Sun*, but those 'violent' men and women, scum of the earth, that had prevented all these poor disabled people from getting their artificial limbs.

It would have been on every BBC pro-



gramme — with no protest from Tebbit then. We would have said the the TUC 'Stand up for these people,' and Willis would have stood up and run away, like he did in the miners' strike!

Isn't it sad? So much action, but when it reaches the top of our movement these people are in retreat. You can't find them leading, and you could never have a bet-

ter chance than during the miners' strike: 12 months out. That means every union in Britain had a pay claim in during that period. Mrs Thatcher couldn't handle more than one dispute during the miners strike.

You're bound to come to the conclusion that some people were engaged in a conspiracy. We had a great chance. We don't need academics from the woodwork telling us why we lost the strike, these people who never went anywhere near Orgreave, who probably think it's an Australian football team.

We all remember those glorious moments when the dockers were out; all it needed was for a pay claim to be put in to bring those out at Dover and Felixstowe. It just needed someone in the T&G to say 'We'll get them out. We'll put a pay claim in.' The deputies had it there, with a ballot of 85%. I wonder when we'll see the peerages and knighthoods.

We don't need academics to tell us why we lost — we lost because there were people in the trade union movement who didn't deliver when they had the chance. You don't need a 300 page book to tell you that.

Those of us who were brought up in the crude conflict of battle and struggle know the signs of defeat. It was written over the face of Norman Willis as he waddled out of Transport House.

But I'm not one of those people who believe it was all downhill. I believe a lot of things came out of that strike that were valuable. It destabilised Mrs Thatcher. It cost £8 billion. She's now down to borrowing money on a grand scale. In September 1985 she borrowed \$2.5 billion the largest sum ever borrowed by Britain at one go.

PHOTO: Wayne Edgington

Last September she had to borrow \$4 billion. Britain's reserves are now four times lower than Germany and half of Italy's!

We've got to get stuck in over the next few months. I don't believe the election is all that far away. I believe that as soon as there is a little bit of blue in the sky, she'll cut and run.

That's why the fishing zone has been put around the Falklands. It has nothing to do with fish. She needs the jingoism of 'Let's duff up the Argies'. If they were concerned about the stocks of fish, why haven't they put one around Britain? It's to raise the flag of nationalism in time for the election!

There was no fight over Hong Kong — with the 'Reds'. Geoffrey Howe went over and signed it away. If it had been Derek Hatton that had done that they'd have hunted him, and blamed me and Tony Benn for it!

150,000 bankruptcies since the Tories came to power. You know about that in Wakefield. Even the shop she was born in, in Grantham, converted to a café, has gone bankrupt. Even Thatcher's café can't survive in Thatcher's Britain.

During the strike it was 'got to make a profit or we shut your pit.' Then the Johnson Matthey bank went under, with no reserves, £100 million down. Lawson got on the phone to her, Sunday night, September 30. He says 'It's got no reserves, Mrs Thatcher. She says 'Shut it then, shut it! You don't have to ring me on a Sunday night. If it has no reserves then shut it. McGregor's told you every night on the BBC — the one that's full of left wingers.'

'But I just thought I'd better tell you that it's not a pit, it's the Johnson Matthey Bank.' — 'Christ, keep it open! It's run by those mates of ours, who used my name and Norman Tebbit's.' So they found £100 million of your money!

We needed that money for the coalfields. We needed it for the health service. But they used it to keep the bank out of the bankruptcy court.

It should have been shouted from the housetops. Not left to back-benchers. Hattersley should have been in there pitching. He could have always imagined it was *Militant* he was throwing at.

The SDP talk about a middle way. There wasn't one during the Strike. In real life you have to make decisions. Either you go in the gates or you stay out. People who claim there is an easy non-combative way are fooling you. There is no yellow brick road. You are either on the side of those who produce the wealth or you're on the side that exploits them.

The Tories have taught us a few lessons — to look after our own. Things have to pick up now we've got them on the run. That means we've not got to waste any more time investigating ourselves. I remember the story when they said 'it's only Liverpool, a tiny minority of 1%' Then they went to St Helen's, to Coventry, and now Brent, Lambeth, Islington — now Redcar. Then an inquiry into Knowsley.

I call upon this Party to assist in stopping these expulsions and inquiries into people whose only crime is fighting the Tories.

We have to make sure that when we've got a majority we done something with it, that all of us are going to act together like socialists and be accountable to the Party that sent us here, and not get bogged down inspecting our own navels.

There are great socialist landscapes to conquer. Let's do it together!"

LABOUR AND THE WORKING CLASS

JOHN PETERS discusses in more detail the peculiarities of the British Labour Party and the correct tactics for Marxists.

THE prime obstacle to building a mass revolutionary party in Britain is the ideological and organisational hold of social democracy on the working class. A successful socialist revolution will only occur in Britain once this hold has been smashed.

To recognise the problem is only the beginning: we need to have an understanding of the nature of social democracy and learn from the successes and failures of revolutionaries in the past in coming to grips with it.

The Origins of the Labour Party

Unlike other European countries where social democratic parties were built which then constructed Trade Unions, the British working class had no independent party for a long time after mass (general) unions were built.

Until the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 the British working class overwhelmingly voted Liberal and trades unions sponsored Liberal MPs.

This difference in the way it was formed gave the Labour Party a different political character *from the beginning* to other social-democratic parties.

Outside Britain, European social democracy was initially revolutionary, with the debate on reformist

"revisionism" taking place from the turn of the century and coming to a head in 1914 with "patriotic" support from social democracy to their own capitalist class in each imperialist country at the start of World War I.

The debate over reformism, best exemplified by that in the German SPD between Luxemburg and Bernstein, concerned many issues, including the General Strike and parliamentarianism, but is best summed up in the opportunists' phrase "the moment is everything, the goal nothing."

In this debate, the main social democratic leadership, or "centre", took a position of defending the revolutionary programme on paper, but carrying out the programme of the reformists; hence the term "centrists" for those who show themselves to be "revolutionary in words, reformist in deeds."

The British Labour Party however grew from much less theoretical soil — the trade union movement. Trades Unions are, at root, bodies for gaining reforms from capitalism. The TUC founded the Labour Representation Committee as a *continuation* of that struggle for reforms in the "political" (i.e. parliamentary) arena.

Despite what some (such as *Militant*) claim, there was never a "golden age" of the Labour Party. It was always a party reflecting the limited political horizons of the trade union leadership.

Arising from this difference in how it was formed is the main continuing difference between social democracy in Britain and elsewhere — that of direct affiliation of the trades unions to the Labour Party. (When initially formed, the LRC/LP did not have in-

dividual membership but only affiliated bodies — mainly Trades Councils and Independent Labour Party branches.)

Social democracy, by its very nature, has close links everywhere with the union bureaucracies, but the "open-valve" with direct representation of the unions at all levels and their *direct* domination of policy making is unique to Britain.

The Class Nature of the Labour Party

The programmatic nature of the Labour Party is clearly bourgeois, regarding parliamentary democracy as sacrosanct, making no challenge to the capitalist nature of the state and the economy, and regarding bipartisanship as the norm on "foreign policy" — accepting the role of British imperialism.

The fact that Labour governments implement some reforms which benefit the working class (NHS, education, etc.) does not alter the basic characterisation of the Labour Party programme as counter-revolutionary, *defending* capitalism rather than struggling to overthrow it.

As Lenin put it:

"...the concepts 'political organisation of the Trade Union movement' or 'political expression of this movement' are wrong ones. Of course the bulk of the members of the Labour Party are workers; however, whether a party is really a political party of the workers or not depends not only on whether it consists of workers, but also upon who leads it, upon the content of its activities, and of its political tactics.

"Only the latter determines whether we have before us really a political party of the proletariat. From this point of view, the only correct one, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because although it consists of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst reactionaries at that, who act fully in the spirit of the bourgeoisie.

"It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie which exists in order, with the help of the British Noskes and Scheidemans to systematically deceive the workers."

(This is from a speech to the 2nd Congress of the Comintern, 1920, in which Lenin also advocated that the British CP should affiliate to the Labour Party.)

However, the Labour Party is securely based on the trades unions, the mass organisations of the working class, and no amount of sociological analysis of its membership or activists alters this.

The Labour Party is best defined as a bourgeois party based on the mass organisations of the working class. This characterisation clearly shows



PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni, Report

Labour: an alternative party of bourgeois government

the contradictory nature of the party and the contradiction between the historical interests of the working class (the struggle for socialism) and the programme of "its" party. It is this contradiction which revolutionaries have to exploit if we are to break workers from social democracy.

This does not mean that the Labour Party is in some way a "two class party" with a bourgeois leadership and a working class base. The bourgeois nature is programmatic, not sociological.

Those who question the "mass" nature of the Labour Party miss the point. It does not have a mass individual membership, let alone an active one. In organisation it is usually a feeble sect, but remains influential out of all proportion to its active members.

The "mass" nature stems from the organic link with the unions and what this represents in terms of working class support. The overwhelming victories in the recent political fund ballots (despite all the obvious qualifications) confirm this.

Social-democratic parties depend on inertia, and one of the central purposes of demanding that the Labour Party act contrary to its bourgeois nature, in accordance with the needs

of the working class, is to cut through this inertia and undermine one of the props of capitalist society.

Labour Governments

The nature of Labour governments follows clearly from this characterisation: they are *capitalist* governments, but still based on the organisations of the working class.

They are an alternative party of government, often able to push through anti-working class measures which would meet far more resistance if implemented by a Tory government (and, as a consequence, laying the foundations for more reactionary Tory governments).

Labour governments are seen as "safe" by the bourgeoisie when they can be relied on to act against the working class (with little pressure from such as the IMF). A Labour government becomes "weak" for capitalism when its working class base rises up against it — as in 1969 with "In Place of Strife" or in the 1978-79 "Winter of Discontent". In such circumstances the ruling class will use the other agencies at its disposal to repress the working class.

Those who argue that it is Kinnock's intention to break the direct link between the Labour Party and



Marxists do not endorse Labour's programme by calling for a Labour vote

the unions, have to explain why it should be in the interests of the bourgeoisie (or Kinnock) to break precisely that aspect of the Labour Party which makes it of use to them.

Whilst removing the link would reduce pressure on a Labour government to act in the interests of the working class, it would also reduce the pressure on workers to patiently bear the cost of capitalism's problems, and restrict Kinnock's ability to utilise union block votes against the rank and file.

The United Front and Transitional demands

In the aftermath of the 1914 betrayal by the Second International and the formation of Communist Parties, the leadership of the Comintern recognised that it was not sufficient to point out to workers the inability of capitalism to cater for human needs, the need to overthrow it, and to "expose" the bankruptcy of the reformist leaders in their unwillingness to fight for the interests of the working class.

There was a need to put forward demands which took up the immediate needs of the working class, which if taken up and fought for by those who did not accept the communist programme would show the logic of the struggle for socialism and the treachery of their present leaders. This was the essence of what became called "transitional demands".

Because the unwillingness of reformist leaders to fight for the basic interests of the working class can only be exposed by fighting for them *in practice*, the tactic of the United Front was also developed. Communist parties were to say to workers: "we do not believe your leaders will fight for the basic needs of the working class, but we are prepared to fight alongside you for these needs and for your leaders to take them up."

Demands were to be made *not* as an exercise in literary exposure but because the working class *needed* what was demanded. They were *mobilising* demands, for without mobilising the working class in self-activity they were sterile. The Communist approach fought for by Lenin was to say: "fight alongside us for limited demands, and we will convince you in the course of struggle," *not*: "first accept our overall view, our analysis of your leaders, then fight."

The United Front meant not only fighting alongside the rank and file on day-to-day issues, raising transitional demands with them and calling on them to raise them with their leaders, but also making direct approaches to the social democratic leaders to fight for these demands.

This meant firmly rejecting the sectarian concept of a "united front from below" (seeking to exclude the

bureaucratic leaders while linking up only with the rank and file) as epitomised by the ultra-leftism of Stalin's disastrous "Third Period". But also to be rejected is any attempt at a bureaucratic "united front from above" between leaderships without the involvement of the rank and file, shown in its full colours by Stalin's relations with the British TUC in the Anglo-Russian Committee prior to the TUC betrayal of the 1926 General Strike.

The united front tactic requires a quite different approach, which above all maintains the political independence of the Marxist forces, especially their right at all times to criticise the social democratic leaders and their policies.

Governmental Slogans

The United Front flows over into the question of governments. Where revolutionaries are not strong enough to stand their own candidates in elections, we generally call for a critical vote for reformist workers' parties while placing clear demands on them.

Marxists do not call for a vote for Labour against the Tories because we see them as "better"; on the contrary, we argue that there is no fundamental difference. We call for a vote for labour because we need to dispel the illusions held by the working class, who believe a Labour government is

a "lesser evil" to the Tories.

As Lenin put it in *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*:

"If we are the party of the revolutionary class and not merely a revolutionary group, and if we want the masses to follow us (and unless we achieve that, we stand the risk of remaining mere windbags), we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill...; second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right, i.e. that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; third, we must bring nearer the moment when, on the basis of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once..."

(...)

"...with my vote, I want to support Henderson as the rope supports a hanged man — that the impending establishment of a government of the Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdens..."

But such a process is not automatic. A call for a vote for Labour has to be tied to demands on the government that it should act in the working class interest and strike at the capitalists. We urge workers to mobilise to enforce these demands. To the extent that we are successful, we will break the working class from reformism.

The fact that we have had seven Labour governments in Britain without a mass revolutionary party having been built reflects the fact that sectarianism and opportunism have been the *norm* in British far left politics, rather than the incorrectness of the policy spelled out by Lenin and the early Comintern.

The Early Communist Parties

Because most of European social-democracy had portrayed itself as "revolutionary" prior to 1914, the break to social-chauvinist support for the war produced major left-wing splits, even if many of these did not appear fully until after the war. In every case where a mass communist party was formed, it arose from a split in social-democracy not outside of it.

Even when such mass parties had been formed, they used the united front approach to effect further splits from social-democracy. Thus in Germany there was not only the split of the Spartakusbund to form the KPD, but later also the split of the "Independents" (USPD) followed by

the fusion of the KPD and USPD to form the United Communist Party.

When this period of instability and "re-alignment of the left" of the immediate post-war years was over, and mass communist parties had been formed, the problem of winning the majority of the working class to the struggle still remained. It was in this period that the policy of the United Front was refined by the Comintern.

However, of the vestiges of ultra-leftism towards social-democracy and the difficulties of incorporating the principle of the United Front into the programme of the CPs against such ultra-leftism, had not been resolved before Stalinisation of the Comintern, so this policy had little opportunity to be developed and tested in practice.

The highest point of the United Front is the demand on reformist/centrist parties to form a workers' government independent of the bourgeoisie and "take the power". This demand was intended to be used in revolutionary situation where soviets were being built, with the class struggle at its peak, even though large sections of the working class still followed reformist or centrist leaders.

The two best-known uses of this demand were in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1923. The first led to the successful revolution; the second to a missed opportunity when the German Communist Party hung back. The demand "Labour take the Power" loses its cutting edge when applied timelessly in periods of relative social peace.

The United Front and Entrism

If the united front was a difficult policy for mass communist parties to carry out, the problems for small groups of revolutionaries are infinitely greater. (In this sense any grouping is "small" so long as it is of insufficient size and authority in the working class to be able to directly challenge the leadership of the movement to take up central demands.

For this reason, Lenin argued that the early British CP should seek to affiliate to the Labour Party, working within it both to win the best militants and in this way put demands on the leaders. Although the CP accepted this advice (by a small majority of its conference), it couched its application for affiliation in such terms that it was easy for the Labour leadership to reject it.

However, many CP members retained individual membership. Despite the failure to affiliate, the healthiest period of the CP saw the National Left-Wing Movement within the Labour Party develop as a sizeable thorn in the flesh of the bureaucracy. In 1927 it claimed 150,000 individual members, at a time when the CP had 7,500. However, with the coming of Third

Period Stalinism the NLWM was seen as a "barrier" to workers joining the CP and was wound up, and the Labour Party itself decried as just another bourgeois party.

Since the degeneration of the Comintern, the banner of Marxism has been carried forward by the Trotskyist movement, which has never been able to begin from its own mass parties established in the workers' movement.

Building parties in a linear fashion, that is by the slow accumulation of militants has proven painfully difficult and falls considerably below the requirements of the period. Only a convulsive process through splits and fusions, nationally and on a world scale, will culminate in the birth of a mass revolutionary party.

Even during exceptionally turbulent periods — such as acute crises of reformist apparatuses — it would still remain impossible to build revolutionary parties with mass influence in a matter of a few years, if no centrist currents appear within the traditional organisations of the working class.

In practice, Marxists should have a flexible and open approach to every current coming out of the traditional parties or even the trade union movement. This policy does not mean an abandonment of principles, or an adaptation to the positions of these currents. It does not mean either ramming the Marxist programme down their throats in the hope they will swallow it. Marxists must learn how to advance selected revolutionary positions — not the whole programme but its most fundamental points, the ones that correspond best to common work and point towards a common organisation.

However the precise tactical character of the work that is done to advance the revolutionary programme and expose to workers the bankruptcy of social democracy remains a topic for debate between the various Marxist groupings.



Attack the real causes of ill-health!

BY SUE ARNALL

Edwina Currie, Junior Health Minister, marked her first few days in her new job by blaming women for the poor health of working class people in the North.

Long before she opened her mouth and shot to fame overnight, we women in the North were aware of our disadvantage, but placed the blame elsewhere. In Bury, we have a campaign to demand action from Currie's Ministry and lighten the load on our backs.

The story is a familiar one. The relative mortality rates of people of all ages by class and living conditions has been closely documented since Edwin Chadwick's reports of the mid 1800s.

We know that ill health, infant mortality, and early death in adult life together with poverty, overcrowding, poor diet, unemployment, and damp housing. We have known this for centuries, and experienced it — we don't need to be told.

Governments have known that the great improvements in infant life expectancy and in conquering diseases such as TB were made as a result of clean water, public health planning, improved housing and better diet. The fact that there is still a gross difference between the life expectancy of the middle class and the working class is no mystery.

You only have to visit our housing estates, see the grim, damp living conditions, see the working conditions in the sweatshops, the mills, the workshops to get some idea what the reason might be. And then there is the poverty. How many thousands live without gas or electricity because they've been cut off for non-payment? How are they supposed to cook nutritious meals?

Edwina Currie, would like the remedy to be seen in Health Education — she says we are responsible for our "foolish" lifestyle, we need to change our eating habits!

It takes very little to make women feel guilty, and so direct their anger away from this Government's economic policies which rely on poverty wages and unemployment. They can feel guilt for the cigarettes



which give some relief from stress; guilty for allowing kids sweets to stop them whingeing; guilty for the odd drink to help relax.

The Black Report in 1980 said fairly simply who the real guilty party was. It was a survey of inequalities in the nation's health, and it showed that, despite 30 years of the NHS, manual workers and their children tended to die younger and to have worse health than middle class families — and it

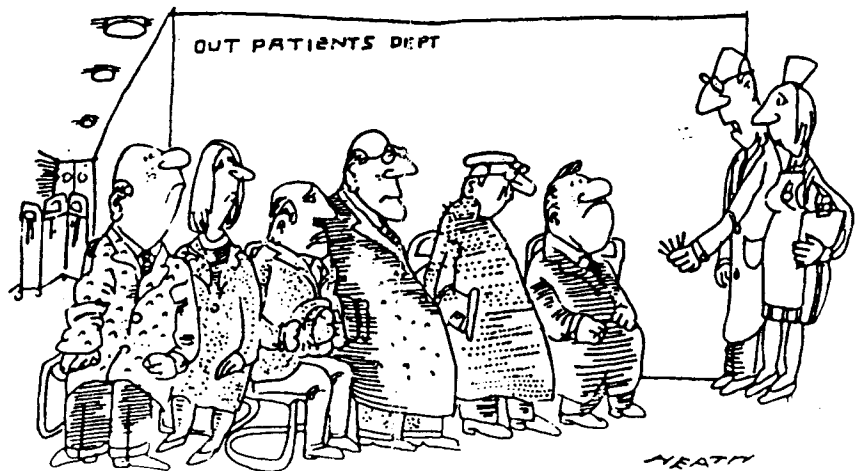
warned that this gap was growing wider.

The Tory government has been silent about Black's recommendations, which were that poverty must be combatted, in particular by increasing child benefit, free school meals, improved housing and redistribution of wealth from rich to poor.

In terms of NHS charges, Black noted the inverse-care law, that is to say there tends to be less health care in areas where the need is greatest. Black called for much greater emphasis in *preventing* ill health, a concentration of health care in areas of greatest need such as the inner cities, and better community health centres providing preventive screening, home care for disabled and elderly and antenatal care.

It is clear that the Black Report was not calling for Socialist Revolution — the only realistic measure which would ever equalise our chances of a full healthy life for all irrespective of class. Nevertheless, the report had a radically different emphasis from present government policies.

In Bury, Greater Manchester, we have a local campaign which takes its starting point from the Black recommendations. I live in a world which has been studied by the University of Manchester Extra-Mural Department on behalf of our Community Health Council. The report was prompted by the closure of the ward's only NHS clinic in 1985.



"I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to ask you to pick straws"

The study showed that on the basis of 8 different variables (percentages of households without indoor WC; percentage 0-14; percentage of single parent households; percentage of pensioner households; percentage of unemployed; percentage without a car; percentage living in council housing; and percentage born in New Commonwealth), East Ward scored significantly above all other wards in the District.

Nobody living here would be at all surprised. Our main council estate is pre-war, with neither inside WCs nor reasonable heating systems. We all know about the chronic unemployment and since deregulation of public transport, the fact that so many rely on the bus is a real problem.

In addition we have a great number of elderly people who rely on their sheltered housing workers or their home care workers for shopping and for the collection of prescriptions. It was helpful, however, to have things down in black and white, because the data showed that our economic, material circumstances were also mirrored by higher mortality rates than the rest of the district.

So people in East Ward don't just suffer from poor jobs prospects, damp houses, lousy bus services; they also live shorter lives and are ill more often.

Wouldn't you think this information would lead to a massive input of health professionals? Not a bit of it. In comes the inverse care law. We have neither Doctor nor Chemist in the ward, and we have now lost our clinic.

The children — who are more likely to suffer from cot deaths, or infant illnesses — now have to travel across town to see a GP or other health professional. Elderly people have to walk across the town centre to reach the chiropodist, the audiologist, or the Health Visitor, or And when they need medicine they have to pay for their home carer to travel into town to the nearest chemist.

After the publication of this CHC survey we have begun a campaign which we have no intention of dropping until we achieve our modest goal: a proper health centre in the ward, accessible to all the residents, which will not simply house GPs and chemists but which could be a centre for preventive care, for self help, even for Edwina Currie's hobby horse of Health Education!

So East Ward Health Centre campaign will carry on fighting, along with the Tenants Association in their campaign for inside bathrooms, damp-free homes, cheap central heating and decent play areas for the kids.

SUPPORT DAVID KITSON

IN the minds of British trades unionists, for years David Kitson has been an important symbol of the fight against apartheid.

While spending 20 years in South African jails after being found guilty of membership of the African National Congress's military organisation, his imprisonment was widely raised in the labour movement, and demands made for his release by anti-apartheid activists, notably from his former college, Ruskin in Oxford, and by the leadership of his trade union.

Now David Kitson is being remembered for something else. Only three years after his release and return to this country he is the victim of a vicious persecution campaign by that same union, TASS, and its left wing General Secretary Ken Gill.

An explanation for this remarkable turnaround is to be found in the politics of the factions within the anti-apartheid movement and Communist Party of Great Britain.

David Kitson joined TASS's predecessor union in the late '40s. Given his political sympathies as a supporter of the Communist Party, his subsequent imprisonment ensured a CP-supported campaign in his defence.

As a union, TASS featured its support for Kitson as representing the union's commitment to opposing apartheid. For many in other unions too, it was a tangible link between the workers' movement here and the South African struggle.

As well as some (limited) assistance to Kitson's relatives, TASS repeated loud and often its pledge to provide for David after his release. In the union's own words, they promised to help him "build a new life".

The means of doing this was by financing a teaching position at Ruskin College to guarantee David's livelihood — vitally needed since, on his release, he would be approaching official retirement age yet by virtue of his 20 years in a South African jail, was not entitled to any state benefits.

But this principled and unconditional promise from TASS was to be subject to political pressures not foreseen at the time it was made though increasingly apparent in the period leading up to David's return to Britain in 1984.

The source of these developments was the anti-apartheid movement. Anti-Apartheid as an organisation has, from its formation, been heavily influenced by the Communist Party. There are a number of reasons for this. The CP's attitude to solidarity work coincides with those at the top of the labour movement from where it derives the bulk of its support — including a number of people in the trade unions, who are CP members or sympathisers.

This method is essentially moralistic, propagandist and strongly against anything but the most token direct action. In addition, in AAM (as with numerous other similar international solidarity campaigns), the CP has the enormous advantage of political links with the organisa-

tions actually influencing, and sometimes leading, the resistance movements in the countries concerned — either through other Communist Parties or, in the case of South Africa, the African National Congress.

Recent events in the CPGB have complicated this process and now there is fierce competition between the CP majority and the (mainly expelled) dissident wing around the *Morning Star*.

The latter faction are particularly keen to assert their right to inherit the franchise as "orthodox" Stalinists concerned with "internationalism" against CPGB — majority Eurocommunist — "revisionism".

On the issue of South Africa Ken Gill, being the leading trade unionist in the *Morning Star* group, therefore has a strong factional interest in slavishly promoting the ANC and, it seems, is prepared to do so even at the expense of his union's policy and one of its most respected members.

The background to this has been events in AAM, the leadership of which has had a long-running battle with its now-expelled City of London Group. Over recent years this group had pursued a policy of solidarity action radically different from mainstream AA methods.

Influenced by the Revolutionary Communist Group, it adopted a militant, direct action approach typified by its effective and much-publicised Non-Stop Picket outside South Africa House.

Along with many other independents David Kitson's family, understandably keen to support increased action against apartheid, became involved, as tensions built up between City Group — dubbed "Trotskyists" — and the AA centre.

After David's return his family's involvement with City Group led to controversy and a demand from AA that he condemn this section of anti-apartheid activity — something he refused to do. A further consequence was the suspension of David and his wife Norma from membership by the London ANC, though without charges being laid or them being given the right of defence.

For Gill and the TASS leadership, this issue of David's "relations with the ANC" has been used as the reason for the union reneging on its financial support for the Ruskin teaching post, which is now due to end completely in the summer of this year, despite unanimous opposition to the TASS stance within Ruskin, reaching from the college Principal to the students.

Within TASS, David's own Divisional Council have backed his case, as has the Oxford Branch.

In Oxford, the Trades Council, District Labour Party, and Oxford City AA Group, having had a request for a meeting with Ken Gill turned down, and been told the Executive Committee of the union "regard the matter as closed", have issued an appeal to the labour movement nationally for protests to be made to the TASS leadership demanding an end to this victimisation and for continuation of financial support.

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