



THE TIME TO FIGHT IS NOW

STATEMENT BY THE WORKERS NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

1 THE election of the third Thatcher government is the direct result of the betrayals of the Labour and TUC leaders. Having refused to support the struggles of miners, printers, hospital and local government workers, civil servants and teachers, Kinnock and the Labour leaders could not mobilise the support necessary to defeat a hated Tory government.

2 By eliminating all the central class questions from its election campaign, Kinnock tried to tailor Labour's appeal to the upwardly mobile sections of the middle class who have benefited from low taxation, privatisation handouts and the speculative 'boom' in property and share values.

3 Kinnock's presidential style combined silence on the Tories' attacks on the trade unions with the complete absence of a credible alternative to mass unemployment, the housing crisis, and the collapse of health and social services.

4 Faced with a choice between the weakness of the Labour leaders and the apparent 'strength' of the Tories, large sections of the middle class opted for the latter. But the working class in all the main industrial areas — Scotland, South Wales, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and the North-East — voted solidly for the Labour Party in spite of its leaders. The 'middle' represented by the Alliance was squeezed between the two main classes, with the result that many of its leaders failed to win seats. The election result, above all, signifies the deepening of class divisions in Britain.

5 What drives the classes into battle is the deepening world economic crisis. The Labour leaders preach class peace and 'one nation'. Meanwhile the bankers, freebooters, asset-strippers, property speculators, City mafia and privatising spivs who stand behind Thatcher have declared war on the working class, its trade unions and its democratic rights.

6 The Tories will bring forward a new round of anti-union legislation, devastate education, health and social services and privatise transport and other service industries. They will strengthen the police, judiciary and

other agencies of the state to meet head-on workers, students and youth drawn into struggles to defend their livelihoods. The latest revelations concerning MI5 and MI6 and the manipulation of the stock exchange during the general election show in the clearest way that the ruling class will never surrender voluntarily.

7 On the eve of the election, Kinnock launched a witch-hunt against black sections in the Labour Party, following on from the expulsion of supporters of 'Militant'. Immediately following the election, the Labour leaders announced new measures aimed at destroying the rights of Constituency Labour Parties to choose their own candidates. The Workers International League calls on the constituency parties and the trade unions to remove the right-wing leadership of Kinnock and Hattersley. Repudiate the Labour Manifesto. Elect a leadership committed to socialist policies. End the witch-hunt of 'Militant' supporters and the black sections.

8 The Workers International League stands opposed to the defeatism of those who say Thatcher is here to stay for five years. We reject the calls for proportional representation by the Communist Party 'Euros' and Arthur Scargill. The struggle to defeat the Tories depends entirely on the development of a revolutionary leadership armed with a programme to unite the working class and take it forward to power.

IS NOW

Build revolutionary leadership



Pickets outside the Middlesex Hospital in London — see 'Day of action by health workers' on page 3

9 Mass unemployment menaces the working class on an international scale. There can be no permanent relief from it under capitalism. To create work for the four million unemployed requires nationalisation of the banks and basic industries under workers' control and without compensation and the creation of a centrally planned economy. A vital part of such a plan would be a major programme of public works — the building of new hospitals, houses, schools, recreational facilities etc. Close down the stock exchange, haven of the speculators and asset-strippers and open up the business secrets of the City swindlers.

10 To fight the daily onslaught on jobs and wages we call for the formation of Councils of Action to organise united action by all workers' parties and the trade unions. Such bodies would draw into a united

front committees representing the unemployed, tenants, ethnic community groups, pensioners etc.

11 The organisations of the working class are threatened by the battery of anti-union laws and the build-up of the state forces. Demand the Labour leaders defend the trade unions against state attacks. Demand the TUC conference re-establishes total non-compliance with the anti-union laws. End no-strike deals. Defeat the pro-Tory fifth column inside the TUC — expel the EETPU. Release all jailed trade unionists and Broadwater Farm youth. Disband the police, the judiciary and the armed forces.

12 Youth must have a future. The trade-union and Labour leaders must break from collaborating with the Manpower Services Commission cheap-labour schemes. Full training or apprenticeships under the con-

trol of the trade unions on adult rates of pay. Open trade-union membership to the unemployed and youth. Abolish private education. Defend all schools, colleges and universities from the threat of closure.

13 End the housing crisis. Nationalise building societies and the land. Requisition all empty properties and hand them over to the homeless. Demand Labour councillors refuse to implement Tory rate-capping. Defend all health, welfare and social services. Occupy hospitals under threat of closure. Nationalise the drug monopolies without compensation and abolish private health care.

14 Fight racism. For unity of the working class. Build workers' defence squads based on the trade unions and ethnic communities. Repeal all immigration acts. No to deportations.

15 Troops out of Ireland, defeat British imperialism. Release Irish prisoners of war. Unconditional support for the Irish, South African, Palestinian, Tamil and all other national liberation struggles. TUC must halt all trade by sea and air with Botha's apartheid regime and Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile.

16 A Tory government has been returned to power. The Labour leaders offer no programme to fight it; only the mirage of an election in five years time. The working class must defend its rights today in order to carry forward the fight for workers' power tomorrow. Above all the most important task facing the working class and youth today is the construction of a revolutionary leadership. We urge all those who agree with this programme of action to join the Workers International League.

June 23, 1987

SNOWDOWN CLOSURE ANNOUNCED

THE day after the Tory election victory British Coal announced the closure of Snowdown Colliery in Kent with the loss of 189 jobs. Although the National Union of Mineworkers has the option of appealing against the closure, no miner puts any faith in this procedure.

British Coal was undoubtedly strengthened in its decision by Thatcher's re-election for a third term. However, the path to the closure announcement was paved by the disastrous campaign earlier this year which failed to save the nearby Tilmanstone Colliery.

By Colin Harrison

That campaign was led by Euro-Stalinist Malcolm Pitt, then President of Kent Area NUM and branch secretary at Tilmanstone, and conducted in line with the pressure and protest politics of the Communist Party. This was as good as a stab in the back for the Kent miners, who would certainly have responded had the leadership called for a real fight.

As the closure went ahead, Pitt addressed the Kent miners from the same platform as NUM President Arthur Scargill who spoke out angrily against the shortcomings of the campaign. Pitt was deservedly booed into silence when he tried to speak

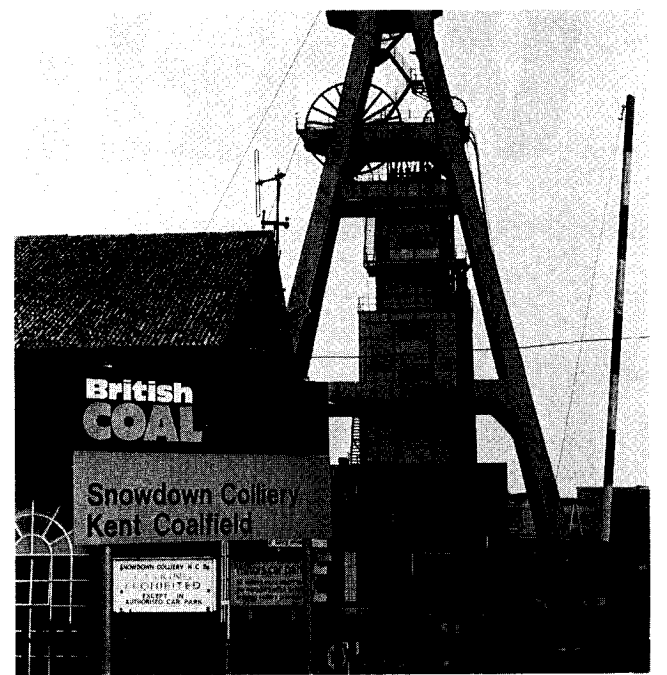
and shortly afterwards resigned from his positions in the union. His fellow Euro-Stalinist Laurence Knight is now Acting Area Secretary of Kent NUM, following the recent death of Jack Collins, and secretary of Snowdown branch.

On June 13, miners in Kent gathered to commemorate the late General Secretary, Jack Collins, who epitomised the stubborn fight waged by Kent Area during the 1984-85 strike. On the same day, Arthur Scargill addressed the South Wales Miners' Gala. He condemned the collaboration of the South Wales NUM leaders with British Coal's plan to introduce

6-day working at the proposed £90 million pit at Margam, West Glamorganshire. He also attacked the Labour Party leadership for restricting his campaigning activities during the general election.

At the same time, and in a very different spirit, Neil Kinnock was attending the Scottish Miners' Gala. It turned into a cross between a consolation party for would-be prime minister Kinnock and a special benefit

for retiring NUM Vice-President and leading Euro-Stalinist Mick McGahey. In contrast to Scargill, McGahey is a keen supporter of the 'right' of the South Wales leaders to accept the principle of new shift patterns at Margam. He is also an advocate



Snowdown Colliery, Kent

of 'Christian' reconciliation with the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers set up in the wake of the 1984-85 strike as an instrument to smash the NUM.

The Euro-Stalinists of the Communist Party in alliance with Labour Party right-wingers pose the greatest of dangers to miners, their families and their communities. Pits and jobs in Kent, and nationally, can only be successfully defended by

rejecting the class collaboration policies promoted by NUM leaders in Kent, South Wales, Scotland and elsewhere.

The May Day strikes in the Doncaster area in support of the sacked miners, whose picket lines 17,000 men refused to cross, show that the basis exists for resisting the Tory-inspired attacks of British Coal. The fight for a leadership able and willing to mobilise that potential must and will continue.



Police make an arrest on the HFW picket line

Police attack plastics workers

By our own correspondent

THE 47 sacked strikers at the Gateshead firm of HFW Plastics are more resolved than ever to win their full reinstatement, following an escalation of the dispute by the police. Four pickets were injured when police violently intervened to allow the bus carrying scabs to enter the plant during the regular weekly mass picket on Wednesday June 10.

The predominantly female workforce, members of the print union SOGAT, faced a massive onslaught on their jobs and living standards when Paul Jackson became managing director 15 months ago. He

immediately set about smashing the rates of pay for male workers, whilst insisting that no woman was worth the regular rate of £92 per week.

When the workers put in for a wage increase earlier this year, it was refused point-blank. Coming as this did after four years without a rise, and a pay cut of £10 in the last year to help management over a difficult period, it was adding insult to injury, especially as the firm has a full order book and the directors all sport expensive cars.

The workforce responded with an overtime ban and on March 23 HFW issued an ultimatum:

either sign a written agreement for compulsory overtime within 30 minutes or 'face the consequences'. When eight refused they were sacked and a further 39, almost the entire workforce, came out on strike. In keeping with current management practice in Thatcher's Britain, their jobs were immediately advertised at approximately half the rate. Since then, SOGAT 82 members and many local trade unionists and supporters have mounted a successful picket.

One of the victims of the recent police assault was Veronica Smith, a worker at HFW for over eight years, who explained to Workers News what happened: 'I was picketing as usual on Wednesday mornings around 7.45am. The scabs' bus was due at 8.00am and the police moved us out of the road onto the side. There were a lot of supporters that morning and when the bus came we all surged forward to block its entry. As I moved with the crowd a policeman grabbed me from behind and threw me to the ground, leaving me unconscious.'

Veronica condemned the scab role of K&B Transport, the haulage firm shipping out HFW's finished products which range from plastic bank wallets to Fisher Price toys, and called for increased numbers on the picket line. 'As far as I'm concerned we must win here and need as much support as possible from the labour movement each morning.'

Phil May, SOGAT FoC (branch secretary), said that it was unlikely that the negotiations being conducted by the arbitration service ACAS would bring a successful outcome to the dispute. HFW management had already refused to speak to local union officials and the police appeared to have unlimited numbers at their disposal. They were being shipped in from as far away as Cleveland and were seemingly intent on a high physical presence.

• The HFW strikers are calling for physical support from the working class. Donations should be sent to: Gateshead Plastics Workers Welfare Fund, 119 Jesmond Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 1NL.

Water privatisation top of agenda

ONE of the most significant acts of turning the clock back by the third-term Thatcher government will be the privatisation of the water industry. Behind the immediate financial windfall that this will provide for business and City institutions lies the ending of the state's commitment to a comprehensive public health programme.

The Tories have resisted a fully integrated, state-owned water industry to the end, but they were obliged in the middle decades of the nineteenth century to legislate for piped household supply and sewage disposal. There was nothing benevolent about this. Rather, it was recognition, during the rapid expansion of industry and profits, that a productive workforce had first of all to be alive and secondly in reasonable health. Tory 'reforms' in this period stressed improving factory conditions, housing and sanitation.

A terrible cholera epidemic had sliced through the densely populated, filthy cities in 1831, and then reappeared in the late forties and early fifties. Worse still for the ruling class, it had become impossible to contain the disease within the working-class districts. London's prim-

itive sanitation system relied on 100,000 cess-pits together with tributaries of the Thames, such as the Fleet River, acting as open sewers. It was no wonder that by 1858 the stench of untreated waste in the Thames was sufficiently overpowering to drive the future Tory Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, and other MPs out of the House of Commons in disgust. The same year saw the passing of the first Public Health Act.

Developments in scientific technique, particularly the invention of cast iron piping, now allowed the establishment of a modern sewer system, much of which remains with us today. In London, the Metropolitan Board of Works was set up to manage this operation, to be superseded by the London County Council in 1889.

Water had been supplied throughout the country by private companies since Tudor times — with local authorities taking over this responsibility piecemeal when it became unprofitable. This continued in much the same way until the introduction of the 1973 Water Act. Ten Regional Water Authorities in England and Wales took over all the functions of the water cycle from 1,600 separate undertakings. It was state intervention along the lines of the other public utilities

By Paul Stickley

with boards predominantly composed of local authority representatives. However, it still left 28 privately-owned statutory water companies supplying some 25 per cent of the population.

The rising militancy of water workers was shown in the 'dirty jobs' strike of 1971. The relative increase in their bargaining power gained through the introduction of national wage negotiations prepared the ground for the first national water workers' strike in 1983. This was seized on by the Thatcher government, newly-elected for a second term, as positive proof that the strength of the trade-union movement had to be further curbed.

Until now, Tory plans for the break-up of national pay bargaining, designed to 'tailor local wages to local conditions' — that is, to mercilessly drive down wages in areas of high unemployment — have proceeded cautiously. Most employers remain unconvinced that the ending of traditional methods of deciding the annual pay round will bring them anything other than fresh problems.

In the water industry, Thatcher has employed the softly-softly approach with some success. Elected boards have been disbanded and replaced

with small, ministerially-appointed boards, meeting behind closed doors; the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has been wielded to open up services to private contractors; and former British Airways chief executive Roy Watts has been appointed as chairman of the influential Thames Water Authority as a stalking-horse for privatisation. He has given notice of Thames's intention to opt out of national pay negotiations within nine months. Tory plans for returning the control of clean water provision and sewage disposal to the private sector are well advanced. In doing so they will be handing over responsibility for the most basic health and hygiene to the anarchy of the market-place. Their intention is to introduce metering of the domestic water supply which will lower water rates for private industry and put a heavier burden on domestic consumers.

The reply of the union leaders has been publicity campaigns, lobbies and yet more publicity campaigns. Their perspective has been limited to getting back to the halcyon days of the elected boards and discussions with the employers over beer and sandwiches. But changes have also been taking place

amongst the workers in the industry. Privatisation plans have been met with the formation of joint trade-union campaign committees, resolutions calling for occupations and a large vote in favour of merging one of the tame 'house' unions, the Thames Water Staff Association, with the local government officers' union NALGO.

Privatisation must be fiercely resisted by water workers. Any attempt to introduce it must be exposed and boycotted in the work-place. The possibility promoted by the union leaderships of a return to elected local authority boards is at best a utopian illusion and at worst a reactionary attempt to divert the struggle into a dead-end. The surcharged and disqualified Lambeth and Liverpool Labour councillors and the abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan County Councils are testimony to the fact that the so-called 'autonomy' of local authorities no longer exists. Tory privatisation plans must be met by national strike action, occupation of key installations and the demand for complete nationalisation under workers' control. This struggle is inseparable from the need to build a revolutionary socialist leadership in the water industry unions.

Day of action by health workers

MORE than 300 National Health Service trade unionists and members of the Royal College of Nursing lobbied the TUC headquarters at Congress House on June 2, as part of a day of action against cut-backs and closures.

The workers, employed by Bloomsbury District Health Authority, were demanding that the TUC co-ordinate national action to defend jobs and vital services. They also called for the TUC to withdraw its support from the Manpower Services Commission cheap-labour schemes currently being introduced into the NHS.

Assistant General Secretary John Monks told a delegation from the lobby that the TUC was not in a position to organise such an action on demand — the call had to come through official union channels.

Earlier in the day the members of the health service unions, ASTMS, COHSE, NALGO and NUPE supported by nurses belonging to the RCN had picketed the two main hospitals in the Bloomsbury District. They distributed more than 15,000 leaflets outside the Middlesex and University College hospitals in central London condemning the imminent closure of the four St Peter's Group hospitals and the plans to concentrate the remaining facilities in the District onto a single site.

They were supported by a delegation of shop stewards from the Royal Free Hospital in the adjoining Hampstead District Health Authority where last year the management closed the

hospital for the elderly at New End.

Since they were reorganised in 1982, the Bloomsbury and Hampstead DHAs have cut 1,000 beds and sacked over 2,500 staff. Preparations are in hand for more closures and redundancies this summer. The day of action in Bloomsbury was the first strike there since 1983 when staff protested against government attacks on the GLC.

The picket lines and lobby were joined by members of the Royal College of Nursing who took a day's leave to support the strike. They prepared a leaflet detailing the cuts in student nurse intake, loss of training facilities and the fraud of the recent government pay offer which only gives student nurses a five per cent increase. Wendy Harris, the representative of the RCN in Bloomsbury, told the mass picket at the Middlesex Hospital that 30,000 trained nurses a year are leaving the NHS because of the low wages. Harris went on to reveal management proposals to introduce a stock exchange-based company to review the use of nursing manpower and quality of nursing care at University College Hospital.

The Joint Trade Union Committee has discovered that an internal bid from within the NHS to carry out this review made by Brentwood Management Services, though cheaper than the private company, was unsuccessful in tendering for the work.

Bloomsbury's management are currently using seven private management consultants, including the notoriously anti-trade union

Price Waterhouse and Deloitte Haskins and Sells. Another favourite of Bloomsbury's is Arthur Anderson, an IBM associate. It has recently been revealed that Junior Health Minister Edwina Currie has a brother and brother-in-law working for this firm. Evidence has also come to light recently of management using an anti-trade union blacklist against known trade-union activists.

The Joint Trade Union Committee will be making the activities of these firms and Bloomsbury's Labour Party-dominated management the focus of a campaign of action to defend jobs and trade-union organisation in the coming months.

They now have the support of members of medical staff, including consultants who previously went along with the cuts. An average of seven patients a day are being sent to University College Hospital's operating theatres without their medical records and consultants have warned the health authority they will not be held responsible for accidents arising because of this. Medical staff are also known to be concerned that the closure of one of Bloomsbury's medical schools has led to a decline in the quality of student training.

With Bloomsbury's waiting list now the longest in the country — 14,000 patients — the trade unions are confident they can rally the support of local community groups in defence of services.

Less confident, however, are members of the Socialist Workers Party. While 'supporting' the day of action on June

2 they circulated a leaflet which stated that: 'Resistance to the cuts has been patchy, and confidence to fight has been low ... staff who do not have the confidence to come out on strike are discussing working to rule and supporting the lunchtime rally.' With leaders like this to inspire them and tell workers they have been 'defeated' before the day of action, it is not surprising that a vote in St Pancras Hospital to support the strike on June 2 was liquidated on the day. Other members of the SWP and the Revolutionary Communist Party, having chanted this now ritual formula for days before the strike, went to work as normal and blamed their own retreat on the members who had elected them.

Community defends casualty ward

WORKERS and their families living in the Old Mill Street area of Manchester are appealing for support to maintain their occupation of the casualty department of Ancoats Hospital.

In January, local residents heard that the District Health Authority was going to close the busy casualty department in Manchester's city centre as part of a programme of cuts. While the authority withdrew staff, effectively closing the department, local residents organised a round-the-clock sit-in with the aim of forcing the authority to re-open the service.

With the support of hospital staff and local trade unions they formed the Ancoats Action Group, led by District Health Authority member Mary Kelly. They

have been pledged the support of local union branches if there is any attempt to evict them from the hospital.

The Ancoats Action Group sees its fight to retain the department as part of the struggle to defend hospitals throughout the NHS. Members of the group point out that behind the actions of the local health authority are the attacks by the Tory government on NHS expenditure and manpower.

The occupation has won the support of the city's ambulance crews who are now compelled to waste valuable time taking casualty cases from the city centre to hospitals on the outskirts.

• Donations and offers of support to: Ancoats Action Group, c/o Ancoats Hospital, Old Mill Street, Manchester 4.



Picket duty outside the Passport Office in Petty France, London, on the day of the general election. The week-long strike was part of the civil servants' four-month-old dispute over a government offer of a 4.25 per cent pay rise. Thousands of CPSA and SCPS members took action in support of their claim for a £115 minimum wage. Widespread criticism of the 'rolling programme' of regional strikes has led the CPSA executive to ballot its members for all-out national strike action from July 20.

Keeton strikers defiant

By Brian Key

THE sacked strikers from the Sheffield precision engineering firm, Keeton Sons and Company, are determined to continue their fight for reinstatement as the dispute enters its second year.

They voted in a secret ballot for strike action on July 2, 1986, after the managing director of Keeton's refused to discuss the repeated breaking of an agreement on the multi-manning of machinery. The entire shop-floor — 38 men with over 600 years collective service — was immediately sacked.

The agreement had been negotiated by the AEU engineering union in November 1985 and allowed for one man to run up to four machines at once. It was presented to the workforce as a means of saving jobs but was, in fact, a prelude to a savage attack on working practices and the eventual exclusion of all trade-union activities from the factory.

As Strike Committee member John Moore said: 'This firm has slowly been taken apart, reducing us from over 300 workers to the present 41. The new manning agreement over working combinations of machinery was the final straw.'

'John Barry Doyle, the managing director owning 76 per cent of the business, just ignored our

agreement and intimidation and harassment took place to get us to ignore safety procedures. They also tried to lay men off at the same time as refusing to speak to the union. He organised the secret ballot fully expecting that his intimidation would guarantee a successful outcome for him. The result however was a 2-1 majority for strike action. When that came out we were instantly dismissed.'

Deputy convenor Mark Simpson explained that Keeton's produced a variety of quality borings which required highly skilled operatives. When the workforce was dismissed, however, Keeton's quickly replaced the men by shipping in scab labour, some of whom were unemployed workers who were threatened with loss of benefit unless they took the jobs.

Another striker, George Stacey, praised the local trades unions and community, saying: 'The Sheffield people are marvellous and always support us when we collect three days each week.' This support was invaluable, he stressed, as with two young children his benefits amounted to a meagre £15.74.

John Moore was clear that the Keeton's strike had many parallels with the year-long printers' struggle at Wapping. 'I believe management modelled



Keeton's strikers campaign at the NALGO conference in Blackpool last month

their tactics on Wapping,' he said. 'First they forced a confrontation ballot, then instantly dismissed us and replaced us with a scab labour force, hiring a scab haulage firm to collect and ship the orders.' The picket, John said, had been successful in turning back many lorries

and one notable brother unionist from Gateshead had still refused to cross the picket line even when faced with dismissal by his own firm.

Keeton's response to these successes had been to use an Ecclesfield firm of hauliers, A&E Transport, who had acted

as a depot for incoming orders before driving them in through the picket line. The strikers appeal to workers to boycott this firm, particularly in the many factories and the dockyards which A&E deal with.

Keeton's have, on a number of occasions, made completely

unacceptable demands for a return to work which have included no union rights, total flexibility and a no-strike agreement. These have been put together with an offer of re-employment for 17 strikers, with the rest getting half the normal redundancy pay. When this was rejected the number of 'restarters' was bumped up to 26 but with the condition that they immediately face a redundancy exercise. The strikers rejected this too as it amounted to a complete loss of everything they have fought for over many years.

As they go into their second year on strike, the Keeton workers remain convinced of the importance that their dispute holds for the rest of the trade-union movement. They are at the sharp end of the Thatcher government's attempt to create a cheap-labour economy through the destruction of union organisation, but remain undaunted. As striker George Shirt put it: 'We have organised ourselves with a Strike Committee and Hardship Fund and we have no intention of returning to Keeton's without a clear victory — not one of us has gone back!'

• Donations and communications of support can be sent to: Keeton's Strike Committee, AEU House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield 1.

New bankruptcy law set to fuel Yugoslav crisis

By Daniel Evans

THE Stalinist leadership in Yugoslavia have this month introduced a new law which will compel all unprofitable state-owned enterprises to either balance their books or close down. The 'Bankruptcy Law' came into effect on July 1 and represents a further lurch to the right by the bureaucracy as they attempt to solve Yugoslavia's economic problems at the expense of the working class.

So-called 'self-management' of nationalised industry was introduced in the early 1950s. This was justified by a distortion of Marxist theory. Since the state was now 'withering away', a centrally-planned and directed economy was no longer necessary. In theory, 'self-management' was designed to introduce competition as a spur to boosting productivity, whilst still maintaining central control. In practice, the retreat from central planning, however limited, strengthened the hand of the petty-bourgeoisie and allowed for the growth of the capitalist sector of the economy.

Last year, 2,306 'self-managing' enterprises lost a total of \$1.5 billion. The introduction of the new law means they will be given six months, at the end of which, if they have failed to recover their losses, they will be forced into liquidation. Credit and tax incentives from central government will, in the future, be made available only to 'economic organisations with real growth prospects, particularly those that are considered capable of holding their own on the highly competitive world market' ('Yugoslav Review' Sept-Oct 1986).

Some 600,000 workers are employed by the potential bankrupts and even if, as is already happening in some cases, wages are stopped altogether, most of them will be unable to avoid closure. In enforcing this law the bureaucracy will come further into collision with the working class.

Attacks on workers' living standards have been taking place throughout the 1980s with the cost of living having risen by 1,636 per cent since the beginning of the decade and wages falling in real terms by 50 per cent in 1986 alone. This year, however, the attacks have become an onslaught.

The newly-appointed Federal Government of Prime Minister Branko Mikulic, beset by hyper-inflation currently around 130 per cent per annum, imposed a wage freeze and price-hikes on February 27. All future wage increases were to be linked to the productivity levels of individual enterprises, a ruling which was to be back-dated to the beginning of the year.



Tito inspects the First Dalmatian Brigade of the partisans in 1944

Thousands opened their monthly pay packets to find their salaries as much as halved. In March, workers from the Republic of Croatia responded with a series of strikes in which an estimated 20,000 took part. Sixteen workers were dismissed at the Istra steelworks in the port of Pula for 'interrupting work contrary to regulations' but such tactics failed to stop the strike-wave spreading. As the unrest began to reach all six of Yugoslavia's Republics and its two 'autonomous' provinces, the pressure on the Federal Government to retreat grew as local party chiefs, particularly in Croatia, began to fear that the strikes were 'taking on a mass character'.

Mikulic threatened to take up an offer of assistance from the army, but in the face of continuing strikes and the reluctance of local party leaders to be identified too closely with his hard-line approach, he retreated from an open confrontation with the working class. He now claimed that the new policy was being 'unfairly' imposed in the case of some enterprises and withdrew some of the savage price increases which had included a 25 per cent rise on bread.

Since the beginning of the year an estimated 350 strikes have taken place in Yugoslavia involving nearly 50,000 workers. The longest strike, which lasted 33 days and cost the government \$5 million, ended with victory for 1,700 miners in Labin, Croatia. They succeeded in winning a pay rise of 46 per cent and, even more significantly, the resignation of several unpopular managers.

Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union severed relations as a result of Stalin's economic blockade of 1949 with which he hoped to bring the 'independent' leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party to heel. Under Tito's guidance the YCP had led the fourth largest army in the final assault on Nazi Germany in World War Two. In line with post-war agreements between Stalin and the leaders

of imperialism it established itself at the head of the deformed workers' state.

The Yugoslav party initiated an ambitious programme of industrialisation after the war and resisted Stalin's efforts to subordinate the economy to that of the Soviet Union ('Why do you want heavy industry when we have everything you want in the Urals?').

The crisis facing the Yugoslav leadership today flows directly from the Stalinist claim to be able to construct socialism in a single country. Tito's break with Stalin was guided by the subjective requirements of the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party rather than from any principled political disagreement.

Despite being accused of 'Trotskyism' by Stalin, Tito was not an international socialist but an economic co-thinker of Stalin. The 'Yugoslav Road to Socialism' repeated all the criminal mistakes that Stalin himself had made in the late 1920s and the 1930s, but without the advantage of the wealth of national resources present in the Soviet Union.

Tito attempted to continue with his ambitious industrialisation plans and at the same time instituted a programme of enforced collectivisation of agriculture over the heads of an embittered peasantry. These bureaucratic methods brought the country to the brink of civil war and made the turn to the West inevitable.

Industrial regeneration was dependent on buying in technology from Europe and America. Unable to finance this with foreign earnings because of the country's tiny export trade, Tito negotiated larger and larger loans from Western banks. The imperialist countries, encouraged by the split with Moscow, began to send aid, but only after the Yugoslav government had agreed to reimburse them for property expropriated by the revolution and relaxed its import controls.

The administrative and bureaucratic plan of the previous period now became the 'self-managing, market socialist economy'. Far from limiting capitalist-type distribution within the limits of strict necessity and regulating them through the state, all sorts of small and not so small capitalists were encouraged, particularly in the tourist industry, to set up shop and fill the gaps in the economy.

By 1972 the foreign debt had risen to \$2.5 billion. It then began to escalate rapidly, reaching \$8 billion by 1978, and is currently approaching \$20 billion. By 1984, 40 per cent of the country's earnings from exports, tourism and the remittances sent home by the million or so workers forced to find jobs abroad (unemployment is 15 per cent) was being swallowed up by debt servicing. Alongside the growth of the foreign debt has been the ever-widening trade deficit. This is a sign that the domestic manufacturing ability has not been able to keep up with the basic requirements of the working class.

In order to discipline both industry and the working class to the realities of the debt crisis, Mikulic has brought in the Bankruptcy Law. It is a desperate drive to raise efficiency and productivity. But the attempt to solve the crisis by turning increasingly to bourgeois methods can only intensify the contradiction that the Yugoslav leaders are caught up in. Every effort made to modernise the economy has increased their dependence on imperialism without enabling Yugoslavia to 'catch-up' with the West. Yugoslavia cannot produce commodities of the same quality cheaper than the advanced capitalist nations and the government's attempt to gear the economy to the export market in order to obtain foreign currency to pay off loans are doomed to failure — exports are already down 12.7 per cent compared with 1986.

New legislation is currently being prepared which will offer new incentives for foreign capitalists to move in. There is already a substantial private sector in Yugoslavia with its face firmly turned to the West.

Mikulic's pro-capitalist 'reforms', like those of Mikhail Gorbachev, threaten the very foundations of the nationalised property relations established by the revolution of 1917 in Russia and extended to Yugoslavia after the war.

The Yugoslav working class has proved that it will not be the whipping boy for the treacherous Mikulic regime. But only the policies and programme of Trotskyism can provide the leadership necessary to carry out the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, re-establish Soviet democracy and, together with the working class of the capitalist countries, defend and build on the gains of 1917.

U.S. ROUND-UP

Trotsky archives found

AN extremely important collection of Leon Trotsky's personal archives has come to light in the United States. Said to include 35 folders of photographs and more than 70 boxes of letters, speeches, notebooks and documents, it contains the only known drafts of Trotsky's classic 'History of the Russian Revolution'.

These papers are now in the possession of the Hoover Institute in California, having apparently been sold to the Stanford Affiliated Institute in 1963 by the Menshevik exile, Boris Nicolaievsky, who died in 1966.

In October 1936, following his expulsion from France, Trotsky deposited a large collection of papers with Nicolaievsky's International Institute of Social History in Paris for safe-keeping.

Working at the Institute was Marc Zborowski, the closest political collaborator of Trotsky's son Leon Sedov. Zborowski was subsequently exposed as a GPU agent.

On the night of November 6-7, 1937, a Stalinist gang broke into the Institute and stole a part of the archives. To provide himself with an alibi Zborowski had placed elsewhere a further section of the archives, which were not stolen.

Suspicion nevertheless fell on Zborowski, and Nicolaievsky was among the first to suggest that he was a provocateur. In February 1938, Zborowski had Sedov murdered at a Paris clinic.

It is presumably the section of the archives removed to give Zborowski an alibi and subsequently recovered by Nicolaievsky which have now been unearthed. A question mark remains as to why such a large and important collection has remained hidden for nearly fifty years.

Miners under attack

MINERS in Utah are involved in an important struggle to defend health and safety conditions at Kaiser Steel's Sunnyside mine.

Recent state legislation covering the testing for methane gas underground and cutbacks in the mining inspectorate have enabled Kaiser Steel to replace miners responsible for monitoring gas levels with machines.

Geological conditions in the mine predispose it to build-ups of the colourless, odourless, highly inflammable gas. The Sunnyside branch of the United Mine Workers of America, Local

9958, is campaigning to retain miners alongside electronic testing devices. They warn that sufficient methane is produced during the course of a day's mining operations to heat and light the whole surrounding community — enough to cause a terrible disaster should it build up undetected and explode.

Kaiser Steel's contempt for basic safety procedures has caused wide concern in the area. Retired miners' organisations and a newly-formed women's auxiliary to Local 9958 have turned out in force to support demonstrations against the company.

Fishing rights denied

FIVE Yakima Indians have been sentenced to between one and five years in prison by Federal courts in Oregon for fishing in the Columbia River. They had been leading a campaign to defend tribal religious practices and a longstanding treaty which includes fishing rights.

Federal agents tricked the Indian activists into selling them salmon. David Sohappay Senior, a tribal elder, was sentenced to five years in prison for selling 317 fish. His son got five years for selling 28 fish.

During the trial, the Federal authorities tried to use the five as scapegoats for the massive decline in salmon stocks in the Columbia River. However, they have been forced to admit that the responsibility for this lies elsewhere. Commercial trawling operations off the coast catch up to 80 per cent of adult fishes before they are able to return up river to their spawning grounds.

The hypocrisy of the Federal accusation is revealed by the fact that salmon catches in the river have declined from 40 million tons per annum at the turn of the century to a mere two million tons in the 1980s.

Cash for closures

ILL-HEALTH is big business in the United States. Super-profits have long been made by opening a hospital or two and charging patients a fortune for treatment. Now, however, it seems that closing hospitals can be just as lucrative.

Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), which owns 182 general hospitals all over the country, announced in May that it would be 'spinning-off' 104 of them. The announcement immediately sent its shares rocketing on Wall Street and a rumour in June that HCA's rival, American Medical International, are preparing to follow suit has got speculators buying for more.

The proposed buyer is a new company set up by HCA under an employee stock ownership plan. HCA rid themselves of unprofitable hospitals and a hefty wage bill, get cash from the sale, retain a controlling interest in the shares and have the right to buy back any part of the business which starts to make money. The employees take a wage-cut and possibly lose their jobs — and the patients continue to pay through the nose.

Ecstatic money-men are describing the plan as 'the most brilliantly conceived financing mechanism ever in the hospital industry'. Legalised robbery would be a better description.

STUDENTS DEFY CHUN DICTATORSHIP

THE boast of President Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea that when he steps down next February it will be the first peaceful transfer of power in the history of his country looks increasingly unlikely.

The tempo of the student struggle against Chun has been quickening since early in the year, but two events have now combined to give the demonstrations the beginnings of a mass character. For in the second week of June, for the first time in many years, the students were joined on the streets by thousands of white-collar and professional workers.

In January, 21-year-old student Park Chong-Chol was detained for 'routine questioning' by an elite anti-communist unit of the police force. Whilst being subjected to water torture to force him to betray a fellow dissident, Park's throat was crushed against the side of a bathtub and he died. It was the subsequent attempt to cover-up the murder that inflamed opinion against the Chun regime. Eight senior members of the government have now been sacked and five police officers are standing trial for the crime in the capital city, Seoul.

If this served as a particularly vivid reminder of the absence of democratic rights and the police-military methods by which all opposition to the dictatorship is systematically crushed, it was Chun's declaration on April 13 that he was suspending talks with opposition leaders on 'democratic progress' which triggered the latest revolt. Instead, he announced on June 10 that his chosen successor, Roh Tae Woo, would be the ruling party's candidate in the presidential elections later in the year to be held under the present 'fixed' constitution.

There followed some of the biggest demonstrations against the government since Chun, then a Major General, seized power in December 1979. Led by students from the country's 100 universities, office workers and sec-

tions of the middle class began to openly support the call for the overthrow of the government, congregating in large crowds as students battled with riot-police and joining in with the familiar battle-cry 'Down with dictatorship!'

The struggle against US-backed dictatorship in South Korea dates back to the end of the Second World War in 1945 which brought to an end forty years of occupation of the whole of Korea by Japan. However, as part of the carve-up of the world between the Soviet bureaucracy and the imperialist powers, Korea was occupied by the

Soviet Union and United States and divided at the 38th parallel.

In 1946, the Americans installed Syngman Rhee, who had spent 37 of his 70 years in the United States, as the head of a 'Representative Democratic Council' to run South Korea under the auspices of the US Military Government. After the war between North Korea and South Korea, which lasted from 1950 until 1953, Rhee remained in power, setting the repressive pattern for his military successors. He was

toppled in 1960 after attempting to rig the elections.

The general election which followed was won by the opposition Democratic Party who managed to rule, under Prime Minister John Chang, for almost a year until being overthrown by a military coup in May 1961 led by General Park Chung Hee. Park ran for president in 1963 under a 'revised' constitution. His presidency lasted until 1979, when he was assassinated. During his years of office, he established a

massive internal security apparatus, an official party (his) with a guaranteed majority, legislation by presidential decree, and total control of the press, radio and television. The death of Park followed an upsurge in the class struggle which has continued until today.

General Chun Doo Hwan launched his period of rule with the most violent bloodshed. He seized power in December 1979 and in May 1980 declared martial law in an attempt to exert control. Later the same year he sent 30,000 riot police and 3,000 special combat troops to the city of Kwangju to smash the up-

rising there. As a result 2,000 workers and students were killed.

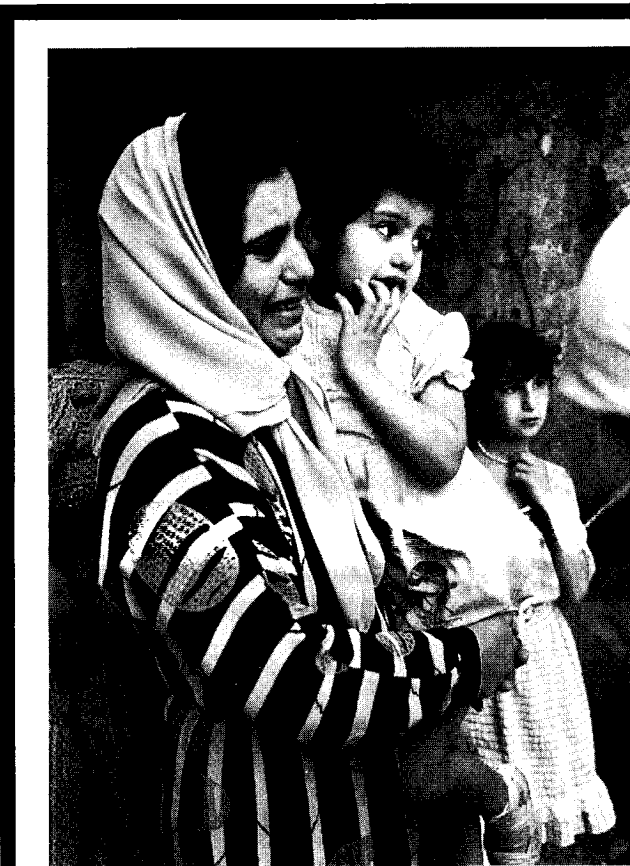
During 1984 and the first half of 1985 Chun attempted to present a more moderate face to the world. However, in October 1985, 20 students were sentenced to up to seven years in jail for occupying the US Information Services Library to draw attention to the US role in the Kwangju massacre. Subsequently, Chun's government passed a law to provide for students to be detained in 're-education' camps. Hundreds of industrial workers and trade-union activists have also been locked up.

The students in South Korea play a distinctive role at least in part because of their numbers — about 40 per cent of South Koreans have a degree. Since 1984, students have increasingly taken part in workers' struggles. In November 1984, more than 1,000 students gathered at Yonsei University and drew up a list of demands on behalf of Daewoo Apparel workers. Many students go to work in factories to help organise workers. They do this in the face of victimisation and banning orders by the government.

The consistent growth of the South Korean economy has been hailed as a miracle. In the space of 25 years industrial production has increased by 5,000 per cent, exports have increased by 10,000 per cent and the averaged-out standard of living has reached that of European countries. A largely peasant country has been transformed into a leading contender for a share of world trade — last year brought the first-ever trade surplus of \$4.8 billion.

But the 'miracle' is no act of god. It has been paid for by the enforced sacrifices of the working class. Independent trade unions are banned and many workers are compelled to live in South Africa-style compounds adjacent to factories, isolated from the main urban areas. Strikes are brutally put down by company goons assisted by the police.

By Martin Sullivan



Inside Shatila camp, Beirut

Camps still under siege

THE siege of the Palestinian camps in Beirut is still in force, despite the presence since early April of a 'peace-keeping' force from Damascus.

The arrival of the Syrians, who were responsible for the massacre at Tel al-Zaatar camp in 1976, has increased the danger for the Palestinians. Amal militiamen continue to circle the camps but Syrians now control the perimeter checkpoints. The routes in and out are only open to women and children — the men have remained confined in the camps for nearly two years.

Conditions inside Shatila and Rashideyeh are deteriorating rapidly. Food supplies are only allowed in on a strictly limited basis from day to day. An estimated 95 per cent of the buildings are uninhabitable. There is no electricity or regular water supply and only sufficient fuel for the

hospital generator in Bourj al-Barajneh. Rubble-strewn streets flooded with sewage are a breeding ground for disease.

The greatest fear is that the continuing siege will prevent rebuilding work. If this is not completed by winter, the end of the camps may be in sight. Of the 490 families living in Shatila at the beginning of the Amal assault, only 40 remain.

The international workers' movement must come to the aid of the Palestinian people without delay. Demands for an end to the siege must be sent to the Syrian and Lebanese embassies.

Medical Aid for Palestinians are organising a team of health workers who will leave for Beirut in July. Money and medical supplies must be collected at once and sent to: MAP, 29A Enford Street, London W1H 1DG.

Gandhi faces drought crisis

INDIA is currently suffering the worst drought in living memory and the government of Rajiv Gandhi has admitted that it is unable to deal with it.

The worst effects are being experienced among the impoverished urban masses crowded in shanty towns and living on the 'gments of the larger cities. In fact, of the 402 'regularised' shanty colonies in the capital, New Delhi, only 250 receive any water and matters are far worse in the unauthorised colonies.

The problem is so great that even a good monsoon this year or next will do nothing to relieve the drought. Attempts have already begun in Calcutta, Hyderabad and Madras to sink thousands of bore wells to replace supplies from the dried-up reservoirs. Other cities are resorting to transferring water via road tankers and railways, rationing water supplies through taps and standpipes to one hour every other day.

But there are limited prospects for relief with the underground water-table in large areas around the cities sinking from 50 feet to 125 feet below surface in recent years. In the Madras region, the water-table has dropped so low that it

has been contaminated by sea-water.

The cost of piping supplies or transporting them by rail to the worst-affected cities is astronomical. No city or state in India has the financial resources available to resolve the problem. Central government's allocation is, by its own admission, pitifully inadequate. Its emergency economic plan provides for only 0.02 per cent of the required funding.

The drought is cutting agricultural production by up to 50 per cent, drying up two out of three reservoirs supplying India's sprawling urban areas and has produced a new breed of street vendors selling buckets of visibly filthy water for eight rupees a time. Behind it lies grinding rural poverty which has given rise to the rapid, unplanned growth of the towns with their huge populations. This, in turn, is the result of India's uncompleted bourgeois revolution, her sham 'independence' and super-exploitation by British and world imperialism.

Without a properly centralised planning authority, and the division of land among the peasantry, India is racked by numerous conflicting administrative, tribal and capitalist interests. The growth of towns and industries has resulted in

massive deforestation. India is losing forests at an annual rate of 1.5 million hectares. As a result, the water-table sinks, while the surface soil is scattered by wind creating a desert waste.

The perpetually weak Indian government, plagued by dissent in many states, has failed miserably to implement a forest planting programme to replace diminishing fuel, pulp and timber supplies. Three years ago Rajiv Gandhi's government announced a programme of tree plantation with a target of five million hectares of new forests annually. So far less than one third of the target has been reached.

India is unable to provide more than a third of its fuel and a fifth of its fodder requirements. Industry is desperately seeking pulp and timber to meet its production commitments which consumes vital prime forest land. At its present rate of deforestation the country could be left with as little as 35 million hectares of forest cover by the end of the century, out of a land mass of 329 million hectares.

The consequences for India's underground water reserves can already be seen in the region around Shillong and Cherapunjee, recognised as the

world's wettest place, where taps, wells and reservoirs have been dry for a month. In Bangalore the state congress is organising rallies to protest against recent government increases in power supply and the water shortages which have led to numerous farmers falling into bankruptcy.

So far the protests have remained peaceful. But if the drought has at this stage set regional seats of government in peaceful motion against India's ruling Congress Party, headed by Rajiv Gandhi, its next phase will bring the urban poor out of the shanty towns onto the streets in their hundreds of thousands. This will be anything but a peaceful protest.

This is the latest example of a drought which threatens the lives of millions of workers and peasants in a semi-colonial country. So-called 'natural' disasters on this scale are the fruits of the anarchy of capitalist production. Unreliable weather is aggravated by the appalling economic and social conditions stemming from the impact of advanced capitalist development in a country based on peasant agriculture. It must serve as a further impetus for the building of a revolutionary socialist party to lead the Indian masses to take the power.

• IN China, despite the twin burden of economic backwardness and a Stalinist regime, centralised state planning has assisted the recovery of vast areas of deforested land. The period since the revolution has seen forest cover increase from eight per cent to 12 per cent of the 960 million hectares of land mass.

Of the 115 million hectares of forest, 28 million are man-made and cover much of the previous-

ly barren ravines and hill-tops unsuitable for agricultural production. Planned planting has provided 800 kilometres of 'green wall' forest to act as a wind break in cyclone-ravaged areas.

In the period between 1978 and 1984, 70 million hectares of barren hills were allocated to 50 million peasants for cultivation. China intends to afforest 20 per cent of its land mass by the year 2,000.

FUNDS

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The general election provided a striking example of reformist treachery.

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EDITORIAL

Behind the Iran-Contra hearings

THE Iran-Contra hearings in Washington are a clear indication of how far the Reagan government is prepared to go to protect US economic interests throughout the world.

The preferred outcome of the Iran/Iraq war for Reagan was the defeat of Iran. But as the prospect of an Iranian defeat receded, a new approach had to be developed. The sale of arms to Iran, ostensibly a means of getting the Khomeini regime to influence its Lebanese sympathisers to release American hostages, was in reality aimed at feeling out the weaknesses of the Iranian government. The objective was, and is, to prepare a settlement of the war on terms favourable to imperialism.

Having sworn never to deal with what it described as 'terrorists', the Reagan government was faced with having to explain its change of tactics. However, it was the subsequent disclosure that funds raised in this way had been transferred to the Contras to finance their attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua which compounded the crisis. It has brought into the open significant divisions within the US ruling class over the pros and cons of fighting a Vietnam-style war in Central America.

At the same time, it has provided evidence that constitutional channels of government — the Senate and the House of Representatives — are only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath them stretch a vast network of covert semi-legal and illegal operations whose source is in the Oval Office. They are directed not only at the nationalist uprisings in the semi-colonial countries, but also against the US working class.

Blocked temporarily by Congress from giving aid openly to the Contras, a conspiracy stretching from the administration and the National Security Council, via the CIA and private outfits run by 'retired' state functionaries such as ex-air force General Richard Secord, down to Miami-based hoodlums took up the challenge to beat back the national liberation struggle. They raised money from every conceivable source, including the Sultan of Brunei, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the government of Taiwan, ultra-right wing Republican organisations — and from the sale of arms to Iran.

The Iran-Contra crisis is the most concentrated expression of the crisis of world imperialism, at the centre of which is the deepening recession of the US economy. The vast sums of money owed to the main US banks by semi-colonial countries, and the even larger domestic loan problems, have compelled them to set aside special funds to cope with any major default. As the US meets intensified international competition, output in manufacturing industry is stagnating and in some traditionally powerful sectors, such as textiles, cars, steel and machine tools, is in sharp decline. The resulting huge trade deficit caused over 600 protectionist trade bills to come before Congress last year.

The US working class has experienced a fall in its standard of living coupled with an unprecedented attack on basic trade-union rights. Its real income fell dramatically in the late 1970s and has remained at that depressed level as jobs have shifted out of manufacturing and into service industries. The most bitter and drawn-out disputes have taken place over the imposition of new contracts which have, at a stroke, wiped out long-standing agreements on wages, bonuses, hours of work, and health and safety conditions.

If Watergate expressed the conjunction of the emergence of the world economic crisis which forced the dollar off gold with the blows suffered at the hands of the Vietnamese revolution, the Iran-Contra affair reflects the fundamentally deeper stage of the imperialist crisis today. In 1973 the US ruling class could still afford to ditch Nixon. Today, with its enormous interests in Central America threatened, it is clinging to Reagan in an attempt to shore-up the Presidency.

After Watergate, the US ruling class regrouped behind President Jimmy 'Mr Clean' Carter. But as his ill-fated Tabas mission against the Iranian revolution and the earlier Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba by President Kennedy show, the Democrats are, no less than the Republicans, the representatives of US imperialism.

The US working class must draw from the Iran-Contra crisis the most urgent reasons to break its historic links with the Democrats and take the revolutionary road. The first step would be the formation of a Labour Party based on the trade unions.

THE WORKING CLASS IN IRAN

Workers and Revolution in Iran;
by Assef Bayat; Zed Books; £7.95

ASSEF BAYAT claims that this book 'is the only systematic research which has been carried out...on the position of the Iranian working class both in normal circumstances and in a revolutionary crisis'. Centring on the emergence and subsequent suppression of factory councils in the Iranian revolution, it is based on research carried out in Iran between 1979 and 1981. The result is a kernel of highly useful information on the role of the working class in the Iranian revolution, surrounded by a mass of confused 'sociological' jargon of the type current in British universities a decade ago.

The development of capitalist industry in Iran was belated and took place under the domination of imperialism. The stunted Iranian capitalist class was unable to conduct a struggle against imperialism or its agents, the shahs of the Pahlavi 'dynasty'. In its place the state directed industrial investment. The law of combined and uneven development exerted itself in Iran with particular acuteness. The number of modern industrial plants rose from 20 in 1925 to 346 in 1941. Following the CIA-backed coup of 1953 which overthrew the nationalist government of Dr Mossadeq and re-installed the last of the shahs, foreign investment accelerated and a wave of expansion resulted. Ten thousand factories were set up between 1948 and 1952; twenty thousand between 1952 and 1956. By 1974, 183 multi-nationals were operating in Iran.

Alongside the most modern industrial development existed the oppression of national minorities, a sea of rural backwardness, the perpetuation of a mass of bazaar merchants and other semi-feudal hangovers. The breakneck development created in a generation one of the largest working classes in the Middle East. Before the Second World War wage workers numbered only four per cent of the labour force; by 1977 it had risen to 54 per cent, 33 per cent of which were industrial workers.

From its birth the Iranian working class faced the native capitalist class as an enemy. Its trade unions date back to the turn of the century. In 1919 a short-lived Soviet republic was established in the northern province of Gilan. Following the 1953 coup, trade unions were banned and workers' parties driven underground. The working class was herded into shanty towns and factories where it lacked even the most elementary factory legislation and was compelled to join the so-called 'syndicates' controlled by the hated SAVAK secret police.

The massive boom in oil revenues which flowed into Iran after 1973, far from overcoming its social contradictions intensified them to the point of explosion. The ruling class became split between a clique of big capitalists, directly dependent on the patronage of the 'Peacock Throne', and a layer of smaller capitalists and bazaar merchants. The massive borrowing carried out by the Shah's regime in pursuit of its dream of the 'Great Civilisation' was staked on its expected oil returns. With the sharp decline of the dollar during the middle and late 1970s and the fall in world oil consumption, inflation and Iran's debt rocketed. As the crisis developed industrial plans were scrapped and the richest sections of the bourgeoisie flew out their assets to Swiss bank accounts. Such was the immedi-

ate background to the outbreak of mass demonstrations in February 1978 which heralded the Iranian revolution.

Bayat demonstrates that the movement of the working class, even at the outset of the revolution, was by no means identical to the position of Khomeiny and the Islamic clergy, who came to dominate the mass movement against the Shah in the absence of a revolutionary party. In the first mass street demonstrations students, the middle class, small traders and bazaar merchants predominated — the industrial workers played little role.

But by the summer of 1978 a mass strike movement mushroomed which was largely independent of the clergy and, as Bayat correctly states, it was this movement which broke the back of the Shah's regime. The proclamation of martial law following the massacres of Bloody Friday, September 7, 1978, in which troops shot down hundreds of demonstrators, gave the strike movement new momentum. It spread from industry to industry embracing steel-workers, railway and transport workers, printworkers, the shipyards, bank employees, civil servants and — crucially — the oil workers.

Between mid-October and November oil production was reduced from 5.7 million barrels per day to nil. The puppet Bakhtiar government appointed by the Shah on December 31, 1978, alternated desperately between repression and concessions, powerless to halt the strike movement. Strikes which had developed around economic demands took on a directly political character. The oil workers' strike committee issued a ten-point programme which included demands for the release of political prisoners, the disbanding of SAVAK, nationalisation of the oil industry, an end to martial law and equal rights for women.

The strike movement frightened not only the clique left clinging to the Peacock Throne; it alarmed the 'liberal' bourgeoisie of the National Front headed by Bazargan as well as the 'Islamic' bourgeoisie. Bazargan, nominated by Khomeiny to prepare a provisional government, formed the Committee for Coordination and Investigation of Strikes (CCIS) on January 20, 1979. The following day — three weeks before the insurrection — Bazargan issued a statement calling upon striking oil workers, customs and portworkers to resume work. The railway and oil workers' strike committees came into direct conflict with the demands of Bazargan and the Islamic leaders, and the leader of the oil workers resigned in protest at the 'dogmatic reactionary clergy'.

REVIEW ARTICLE BY
RICHARD PRICE

Whilst the 'Islamic' bourgeoisie could not have defeated the Shah without the strike movement, as soon as the fate of the Shah appeared certain, it sought to control the working class to prevent it pursuing an independent road which would threaten its property rights.

Unlike the Russian and Chinese revolutions there was very little development of an agrarian revolution in the countryside. The land 'reform' carried out previously by the Shah had as its aim the creation of a rich peasant buffer to prevent such a development. In this it aped the Stolypin 'reforms' of Tsarist Russia. The result was the increasing predominance of capitalist relations in agriculture, a mass of small peasants receiving a few acres, the creation of a class of landless wage-labourers and a vast exodus to the cities.

The working class lacked a revolutionary party to draw the poor peasants behind it. This undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the 'Islamic' bourgeoisie, which had no desire to see capitalist relations overturned and the land seized by the poor peasants.

Between February 9 and 11, 1979, the stooge Bakhtiar regime was smashed by the insurrection of the Iranian masses. Armed workers took to the streets and destroyed the last vestiges of the Shah's regime. The victory of the national revolution however, far from inaugurating a new reign of 'the rule of the masses', led to the sharpening of the class struggle.

On February 9, Bazargan had told a mass rally at Tehran University that strikes, go-slows and bazaar closures had become 'a contagious disease, a prevalent disease'. Three days after the insurrection Khomeiny ordered strikers back to work and met the instinctive striving of the working class for the socialist revolution with a warning. The daily evening paper 'Ettelaat' reported his speech as follows:

'Any disobedience from, and sabotage of the implementation of the plans of the Provisional Government would be regarded as opposition against the genuine Islamic Revolution. The provocateurs and agents will be introduced to people as counter-revolutionary elements, so that the nation itself will decide about them, as they did about the counter-revolutionary regime of the Shah.'

The incoming Provisional Revolutionary Government of Bazargan was met by a new wave of strikes, which involved 50,000 workers in the first month alone. Workers' councils, or *shuras*, developed in almost every industry and, as sections of the capitalist class fled abroad, took over factories, con-



trolling functions as diverse as finance, the right to hire and dismiss, investment, increasing the wages of the low paid and resting owners and managers. Trotsky remarks:

'Workers' control through factory councils is conceivable only on the basis of sharp class struggle, not collaboration. By this really means dual power of the enterprise, in the trusts, all the branches of industry, the whole economy.'

'What state regime corresponds to workers' control of production? It is obvious that the power is not yet in the hands of the proletariat, otherwise there would have not workers' control of production, but the control of production by a workers' state as an introduction to a regime of state production on the foundation of nationalisation. What we are talking about is workers' control under the capitalist regime, under the power of the bourgeoisie. However the bourgeoisie that feels it is firmly in the saddle will never tolerate dual power in its enterprises. Workers' control, consequently, can be carried out only under the condition of an abrupt change in the relationship of forces unfavourable to the bourgeoisie and its state. Control can be imposed only by force upon the bourgeoisie by the proletariat on the road to the moment of taking power from them, and then also ownership of the means of production. The regime of workers' control is a provisional, transitional

NG CLASS IN THE AN REVOLUTION



A mass demonstration in Tehran calls for the bringing down of the Shah

the 1920s. By painting up in bright colours the 'revolutionary' role of the capitalist class in Iran, they aim to screen its suppression of the working class. In March 1917, Lenin wrote:

'The bourgeois politicians have fed and deceived the people with promises in every bourgeois revolution. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution — therefore the workers must support the bourgeoisie. This is what the good-for-nothing politicians of the liquidator camp say. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, is what we Marxists say, and therefore the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deceit of the bourgeois politicians, teach them not to believe them, but to rely on their own forces, on their own solidarity, on their own arms.'

The first phase of the suppression of workers' councils saw numbers of activists arrested and executed. Legal measures were introduced to forbid intervention in areas of managerial prerogative. Following the fall of Bazargan, Islamic Associations were introduced into factories as a counter-weight to the demands of the workers' councils for workers' control. Coinciding with the measures taken against the councils was the repression of the Kurdish minority in northern Iran.

In December 1979 the Islamic Constitution was ratified in a referendum by an overwhelming majority under conditions in which it amounted to a vote of confidence in the overthrow of the Shah. Bayat describes the ambivalent attitude of many workers to the 'Islamic' order. He cites the response of one factory worker he interviewed to Khomeiny's statement that 'we have not made a revolution for cheap melons, we have made it for Islam': 'They say we have not made revolution for economic betterment! What have we made it for then? They say, for Islam! What does Islam mean then? We made it for the betterment of the conditions of our lives.'

A second wave of repression against militant factory councils was unleashed in the period after April 1980 coinciding with the debacle of the US mission from Tabas. Here once more the Revolutionary Council seized the opportunity to make an amalgam of those factory councils resisting the attempts of the government to disperse them with the big bourgeoisie standing behind Bani' Sadr which wanted a deal with the United States. In particular, factory councils in the traditionally militant areas of Gilan province, Tabriz and parts of Tehran were forcibly dissolved.

In their place the Revolutionary Council imposed Islamic councils which stressed the identity of interests between workers and employers. Bayat cites their founding regulations which included clauses obliging workers to raise productivity, settle disputes 'in good faith', lower costs and co-operate with production plans in 'a spirit of

co-operation and solidarity between all the employees and the management'!

Opponents of such measures to muzzle the working class were described as agents of 'the West, the East and the overthrown Pahlavi regime'. The supposed 'identity of interests' was described by President Khamenei in a speech on May Day 1981:

'The workers must approach the labour question through the Islamic view ... The atheist ideologies attempt to use these means to define the workers as a class, so separating them from the Islamic people and crushing the unity of the Muslim mass.'

Despite the imposition of Islamic councils, some independent factory councils persisted. The third major crisis of the Islamic Republic took place between June and July 1981 with the dismissal and subsequent flight to Paris of Bani' Sadr. Once again, the Islamic Republican Party leaders utilised the external war dangers and the treachery of Bani' Sadr to launch a final mopping-up operation in the factories.

Assef Bayat makes scarcely any reference to the role of the Iranian Stalinist movement, the Tudeh Party, in the revolution despite its substantial base in the working class and the middle class. Prior to the revolution the Tudeh Party called for a Popular Front embracing the 'progressive' wing of the bourgeoisie. Having striven to restrict the working class to 'democratic' demands, the Tudeh Party jumped on the bandwagon of the insurrection and, in order to ingratiate itself with the bourgeoisie, shaken by the mass movement of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie, explicitly endorsed the solution of the Islamic Republic.

This manoeuvre, dictated by Moscow's instruction to carry out class collaboration 'within' the regime, did not save the heads of Tudeh's leaders or members. With the shift of Stalinist diplomacy increasingly behind Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime in Iraq as the Gulf War unfolded, the Tudeh Party became the latest target for liquidation in late 1982.

In its statement of February 1979, 'Forward to Socialist Revolution in Iran', the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International correctly characterised the Tudeh Party as the 'hangman of the Iranian revolution' for subordinating the working class to the national bourgeoisie. For today's epigones of the WRP/News Line group this crime must become retrospectively something of a virtue in having been the first to recognise a 'revolutionary bourgeoisie' when it saw one.

Two lines of revisionism emerged in relation to the Iranian revolution. One line perpetrated by the Pabloite

movement and the Spartacists explicitly refused to defend Iran against imperialism in general, and US imperialism in particular. The second, developed by the Workers Revolutionary Party after 1980, assigned to the Iranian bourgeoisie the tasks of both completing the national revolution and conducting the struggle against imperialism. Assuming that the weight of imperialist oppression of Iran had welded together a single indivisible 'revolutionary nation' above classes (and ignoring all evidence to the contrary) the WRP abandoned any independent proletarian line. Trotsky in his writings on China draws directly opposite conclusions: that as a general law the greater the pressure of imperialism upon a semi-colonial country the sharper the class struggle within it.

The example of Iran powerfully confirms, albeit in a negative fashion, the correctness of the theory of permanent revolution. The Iranian bourgeoisie cannot carry through the essential tasks of the democratic revolution. It can solve neither the land question nor the question of national minorities. Its fear of its 'own' working class debilitates at every stage the struggle against imperialism.

Assef Bayat's book is certainly not a Marxist analysis of the Iranian revolution. In revealing the relations between the classes during the critical period 1979-81, however, it has performed a valuable function and challenged the Trotskyist movement to develop such an analysis.

The crushing of the factory councils, workers' parties and trade unions and the elimination of workers' control by the Bonapartist Islamic Republic is in fact the greatest indictment of the line developed by the WRP, which declared at every stage that the revolution was 'deepening'. Trotsky would have denounced such fake 'Trotskyists'. In practice, he wrote in 1927, 'the policy of Menshevism

in the revolution consists of retaining the united front at any cost, as long as possible, at the price of adapting its own policy to the policy of the bourgeoisie, at the price of cutting down the slogans and activity of the masses, and even, as in China, at the price of the organisational subordination of the workers' party to the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie. The Bolshevik way, however, consists of an unconditional political and organisational demarcation from the bourgeoisie, of a relentless exposure of the bourgeoisie from the very first steps of the revolution, of a destruction of all petty-bourgeois illusions about the united front with the bourgeoisie, of tireless struggle with the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the masses, of the merciless expulsion from the Communist Party of all those elements who sow vain hopes in the bourgeoisie or idealise them.' ('Problems of the Chinese Revolution', pp14-15, New Park).

regime by its very essence, can correspond only to the period of the convulsing of the bourgeois state, the proletarian offensive, and the falling back of the bourgeoisie, that is, to the period of the proletarian revolution in the fullest sense of the word.

'If the bourgeois is already no longer the master, that is, not entirely the master in his factory, then it follows that he is also no longer completely the master in his state. This means that to the regime of dual power in the factories corresponds the regime of dual power in the state.' (Workers' Control of Production, 1931).

Thus what emerged after the February insurrection was an embryonic dual power — on the one hand the state of the provisional government; on the other the provisional 'state' of the workers' councils.

Of this period, February-August 1979, Bayat writes: 'The Bazargan government expressed early and direct opposition to the *shuras*, claiming that the triumph of the revolution had eliminated their tasks. Towards the end of this period Bazargan reintroduced the one-man management system with liberal professional managers.' This coincided with the first wave of repression against militant sections of the working class in August.

The fall of the Bazargan government was precipitated by the hostage crisis in September 1979. The Islamic Republican Party consolidated its rule,

directing blows against both right and left. Former SAVAK agents were hunted down and that wing of the 'liberal' bourgeoisie seeking an agreement with US imperialism was driven out.

This phenomenon was seen in the epoch of the great bourgeois revolutions. In the French Revolution, the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie destroyed feudalism through the medium of the Jacobin dictatorship of the petit-bourgeoisie. In doing so it both leaned on the plebeian forefathers of the working class, and curbed it with violent repression, executing the Hébertists and the enragés. In every bourgeois revolution, the bourgeoisie has sought to present itself as the spokesman of the entire nation in its struggle against feudal reaction, yet the most revolutionary bourgeoisie in history even at this stage, viewed its plebeian left wing with antagonism.

But where the bourgeoisie could play a revolutionary role in the great bourgeois revolutions, the epoch of imperialism denied this role to the capitalist class emerging in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution brilliantly anticipated that the task of completing the bourgeois revolution in a backward country could only be carried out by the working class supported by the peasantry through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The role of every branch of

revisionism has been to subordinate the working class of the semi-colonial countries to the 'progressive' bourgeoisie. This question assumes great significance in the history of the Trotskyist movement. History plays cruel tricks. In a statement issued one day after the insurrection of February 11, 1979, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) prophetically warned in relation to the role of the revisers of Trotskyism: 'They will say it is 'sectarian' to advocate policies for the working class which are independent of and opposed to the bourgeoisie.'

Within months this line was shelved in favour of an uncritical support for the 'Islamic' bourgeoisie. Almost eight years later, one wing of the former British section of the ICFI, the WRP/News Line group has issued an article entitled 'Trotskyism and the Iranian Revolution' which amounts to a calculated provocation against the theory of permanent revolution. Jumping over the fact that all workers' parties in Iran are now illegal and the trade unions barely semi-legal, the authors Paddy O'Regan and Steve Colling have 'discovered' that: 'The bourgeoisie (NB not the working class — R.P.) can still play a revolutionary role in the East, in Iran it most certainly has.'

In doing so, O'Regan and Colling are consciously embarking on the road taken by the Mensheviks in 1917 and Stalin in

Without Revolutionary Principles

TROTSKY remarked that a sectarian is a person frightened by his own opportunism. Nowhere is this more graphically illustrated than in the political decomposition of the Workers Revolutionary Party/News Line group. Over recent months it has flirted with abstention in the General Election, maintained its wretched alliance with the pro-Stalinist Greek WRP, and shown its unrestrained opportunism in the trade unions.

By Richard Price

The first fruit of the publication of Workers News has been to force into the open WRP/News Line leaders Sheila Torrance and Paddy O'Regan's break with former WRP leader Gerry Healy and his followers led by Corin and Vanessa Redgrave, who left the organisation in November 1986. In April the WRP/News Line's 'theoretical' journal 'Marxist Review', published a document written by one of Healy's followers, Mick Blakey, under the heading 'Material of the Ninth Congress of the WRP'. Blakey's document breathlessly announces Healy's discovery that the work of certain Soviet philosophers 'has entered into the thinking of a left-moving section of the bureaucracy, which today occupies the leading positions, and which is de-Stalinizing the bureaucracy'. Healy, Blakey and the Redgraves have hailed Gorbachev as the leader of the political revolution in the USSR. In fact this document, dated October 23, 1986, had absolutely nothing to do with the WRP's 'Ninth' Congress held on March 21-22, 1987.

As Workers News previously documented, Torrance and O'Regan, in attempting to hang onto Healy, incubated this pro-Stalinist tendency. before abruptly changing course for their own factional reasons. The Healy-Redgrave group were not expelled. Six months (!) elapsed before Torrance and O'Regan announced their break with Healy and Redgrave, and then not in the form of a Central Committee statement but buried in a 'Marxist Review' editorial. This editorial is in fact a farrago of half-truths designed to bolster the sagging credibility of Torrance and O'Regan's leadership. Unable to explain Healy's degeneration, they attribute it to an isolated defiance of democratic centralism. Yet in the course of her struggle against Healy, Torrance had been forced to refer fleetingly to Healy's numerous breaches of party democracy over recent years.

In this 'break' with Healy and Redgrave we find not a shred of principle, only a shame-faced round of opportunist manoeuvring. This becomes apparent when the WRP/News Line's international connections are considered. Formally it remains affiliated to the shrunken interna-

tional organisation controlled by Healy, the so-called 'International Committee of the Fourth International (1953)' along with the Greek WRP and the Liga Obrera Comunista of Spain. This organisation is openly trampling on the history, principles and traditions of Trotskyism, defended by the founding members of the ICFI (including Healy) who, in 1953, conducted an historic struggle against the pro-Stalinist followers of Michel Pablo in the Fourth International.

On March 14, 1987, Sheila Torrance and Ben Rudder flew to Athens to attend a much-postponed meeting of this rump 'International Committee'. Already present were Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave who were recognised by Savas Michael, Healy's stooge 'International Secretary', to be members of the 'British delegation'. Torrance and Rudder agreed to Healy and Redgrave's presence if it would facilitate the discussion, but would not accept their status as delegates. This was not good enough for Savas Michael who promptly closed down the meeting.

A letter from Michael, dated March 15, declares that the positions of the British leadership are 'incompatible with membership of the ICFI'. Having assumed powers somewhere between those of the Mikado and the Dalai Lama, Michael has told the British 'section' that it may appeal against suspension to an, as yet unscheduled, '11th World Congress'.

Not to be outdone in Byzantine intrigue, Torrance and O'Regan are preparing to call their own '11th World Congress' behind the back of the Greek leadership.

Savas Michael and Healy's Greek WRP has gone further down the road of pro-Stalinist liquidation. In September 1986 it took part in the local elections on a common programme with both the pro-Moscow and the Euro-Stalinist parties, and a dissident grouping of PASOK, the ruling capitalist party.

This orientation has been extended into a public 'dialogue' with the hardline Stalinist Communist Party of the Interior, and moves to stand a joint slate of candidates in trade-union elections. The Greek WRP's paper, 'Socialist Change', carries regular reports

An analysis of the WRP News Line group

of Gorbachev's speeches and other material uncritically recycled from Soviet press agencies. Its transformation into a daily paper scheduled for May 1 has been postponed, presumably while talks proceed with the Stalinists.

Healy and Michael's 'ICFI (1953)' is a stinking pro-Stalinist corpse. The refusal on the part of the WRP/News Line's leadership to break publicly from it is an indictment of its own unprincipled opportunism. Trotsky remarked that a party can be best judged by the company it keeps on an international scale.

Healy has formed his own British 'section' which had its founding meeting in west London in early May attended by some thirty people. Yet Healy's links with the Greek WRP and the LOC are deliberately covered up by the WRP/News Line. In 'Marxist Review', April 1987, it states: '1987 will be a year of major development in recruitment, training and political leadership for the ICFI and the WRP. We are going to build our Party and daily paper, as always, as internationalists, since the ICFI and WRP represents (sic) the real historical interests of the international working class.'

Capitulation to Stalinism and trade-union bureaucracy

Having devoted much of the 'News Line' for twelve months to the Wapping printers' struggle, hardly any analysis was made after the strike was betrayed. Its new-found friends in the Communist Campaign Group dropped the action like a hot potato once the SOGAT and NGA leaders withdrew official support. Indeed the only article purporting to analyse the struggle was a two-page interview with leading CCG and 'Morning Star' supporter, Bill Freeman, headlined 'The way forward after Wapping' ('News Line', March 20). (The word among rank-and-file printers is that the 'way forward' for most of the leading Stalinists has been to land themselves good jobs.)

Where 'News Line' took almost five months of the printers' struggle to criticise Brenda Dean of SOGAT, it has to this day maintained total silence on the role of the NGA leadership, which withdrew official support from the dispute at the same time as SOGAT.

The 'News Line' has continued its unprincipled support for NUPE leader Rodney Bickerstaffe, who actively intervened to knife the struggles at Addenbrookes, Barking and Hammersmith hospitals, and bears chief responsibility for the destruction of thousands of hospital jobs, many of them surrendered without a fight. He has nothing to fear from the 'News Line' which reported his speech to NUPE Conference in its edition of May 18 in awed tones: 'A severe warning was made to the leaders of any future Labour government by NUPE general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe yesterday.' Bickerstaffe's 'warning' was to express 'alarm and dismay' at Labour Party proposals for an £80 minimum wage.

At NUPE Conference leading WRP/News Line member Martin Booth proposed a reformist motion calling for 'democratically elected' health authorities. This demand is a Stalinist-sponsored diversion from the

struggle to defend NHS workers' jobs which is being touted round the health union conferences this summer. In place of demanding workers' control of the NHS, it seeks to draw trade unionists into the trap of 'workers' participation' in management and administering Tory cuts.

Booth assisted in the betrayal at Addenbrookes Hospital in 1986, deserting the strike at a critical stage and not calling a union branch meeting for the last six months of the action. When NUPE and COHSE withdrew official support, a conference of hospital workers was called in London to support the Addenbrookes' strikers. Booth played no role in its organisation because he was in headlong retreat. Sheila Torrance advocated expelling him. One year later he finds himself elected on to the WRP/News Line's Central Committee.

In March, the WRP/News Line held joint TUC lobbies with the Camden Unemployment Action Centre — a body established by hardline Stalinists against the votes of many Trades Council delegates opposed to paying its staff over £11,000 p/a. But when the Centre's convener Mick Gavan stood as a Red Front candidate, Ray Athow 'discovered' that the Red Front was a 'second-rate reformist outfit' ('News Line', May 20).

Ben Rudder, whose by-line has all but disappeared from 'News Line', is understood to be working for a leading trade union.

Electoral rigmarole

After the formation of the Workers International League, the leaders of the WRP/News Line told their shrunken membership that we were 'about to enter the Labour Party' or leave politics entirely.

The basis of this crude slander was our opposition to the notion that the Thatcher government was collapsing and was about to be replaced by a 'right-Bonapartist' (i.e. semi-fascist) regime led by Kinnock. Torrance and O'Regan quietly dropped this and are rattled by the fact that we are not suffering from amnesia. We recall that, according to O'Regan, Kinnock's main rival was the Queen who was preparing to move the military against Thatcher!

This presentation of Kinnock moving to the right of Thatcher serves to screen the 'News Line's' prostration before sections of the trade-union bureaucracy, and to avoid a direct confrontation with the reformist leaders in the struggle for the leadership of the working class. The election of a Labour government would have created problems for the all-inclusive 'anti-Tory' populism served up by the 'News Line'. It would have disrupted cosy relations with its friends in the trade-union bureaucracy who would have been the closest supporters of a Labour government. Under these circumstances the election of the Tories becomes 'the lesser evil'.

At the May 3 'News Line' rally, Sheila Torrance gave the clearest call yet for an abstention: 'In this coming election, we say firmly to the working class, it is not a question of returning another Labour government, it is a question of understanding today that it is a revolutionary struggle.'

On May 16, 'News Line' announced it was standing ten candidates in the General Election, but made no call to workers to vote Labour in the other 640 constituencies. An editorial the same day warned that the election would be conducted amid 'savage provocations', but made no demands on other workers' organisations to take action against the threat of 'military dictatorship'. The entire future of the working class was staked upon it being 'alerted' by the ten WRP/News Line candidates (several of whom were finding difficulty summoning up the enthusiasm to get out and campaign).

The following day, a miserable 45 members attended a London District Congress which discussed a 'perspectives' document of stupefying idiocy drafted by Claire Dixon, whose eight-year membership of the Central Committee has not familiarised her with the ABC of Trotskyism or advanced her literacy. For example: 'It is healthy that one of the decisive battles fought in the London area which is still critical today (!) is the question of building strong and functioning Young Socialist branches.' Roughly translated, this means: 'Your leaders have led you to the stage where the youth movement is all but liquidated.'

Turning to South Africa. Dixon's worship of spontaneity gets really carried away: 'We say no peace talks or negotiated settlements are possible.' 'We would do better to learn the lessons of Algeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya etc.'

On the election, Dixon advances the following gem: 'In areas where we are not standing a candidate we should (!) speak out clearly ... we urge workers to vote Labour — but with no illusions whatsoever in parliamentary democracy.' Perhaps Ms Dixon would like to tell us what purpose voting Labour would serve if the working class indeed had 'no illusions whatsoever in parliamentary democracy'?

Dixon, sensing that the members are increasingly uneasy with such 'perspectives', feels compelled to advance an explanation for the formation of the Workers International League, whose members broke with the revisionist WRP/News Line on February 27, 1987. Rummaging around, she claims it was the result of a 'class explosion' at the London School of Economics, where students occupied the college on February 24.

Unable to resist cheap slander, she accuses the WIL of retreating into 'the bowels of social democracy', justifying herself by stating that Kinnock is to the right of Thatcher 'on some issues'.

By May 20 the line shifts again, when Ray Athow, endeavouring to put some distance between the 'News Line' and other revisionist groups openly advocating an abstention, calls for a Labour vote as a 'class action'. Since 'News Line' explicitly opposed the policy of defeating the Tories and forcing the Labour leaders into power in order to expose them in practice, what it means by a 'class action' becomes apparent — protest action.

On election day the 'News Line' opportunists, sensing the solid class vote in the major industrial cities, called for a 're-

sounding Labour vote' in the constituencies where it was not standing candidates. Two days later it applauded the most backward workers who had failed to vote or register, arguing that 'they have begun to understand that so-called parliamentary democracy is a gigantic confidence trick'.

Meanwhile, the 'great success' claimed for the WRP/News Line's own campaign resulted in its ten candidates polling a total of 1,721 votes, 279 less than the number of members it aimed to recruit.

By combining prostration before the trade-union bureaucracy with permanent calls for a general strike, and crudely counterposing trade-union militancy to the political struggle necessary to win the masses from their reformist leaders, the 'News Line' leadership is committing a political fraud. As Trotsky said, the Labour and trade-union bureaucracy is not two principles, only a 'technical division of labour'.

When ten million workers still stand, however sceptically, behind the Labour leaders, to suggest that the task of exposing them has already been completed is both absurd and reactionary. By encouraging syndicalist prejudices that this can be accomplished through the spontaneous militancy of the working class, the WRP/News Line leaders reject entirely the teaching of Lenin: that spontaneity in the absence of strong revolutionary leadership leads inevitably to the subordination of the working class to bourgeois ideology.

According to the 'News Line', the 'old methods' of exposing the Labour leaders — of forcing them into power and placing demands on them in front of the working class — have become redundant because of the 'revolutionary situation' and the reactionary nature of the Labour leaders.

In the midst of 1917, the Bolsheviks advanced the demand that the Mensheviks and SRs take the power. The founding document of the Fourth International states: 'The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!" is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organisations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals.'

In its 1974 criticism of the role of the French OCI in the revolutionary events of May-June 1968, the WRP correctly attacked the OCI's refusal 'at all times to raise the demand of a Communist Party-Socialist Party government in order to expose mercilessly the political impotence and treachery of the reformist bureaucracies. This bowing to spontaneity and accommodation to the bureaucracy was, of course, covered up with formal criticisms of the Stalinists on the one side and constant demands for "workers unity" on the other'.

The OCI's 'intransigence' against reformism and its demand for the general strike did not prevent it from later becoming the most craven supporter of Mitterrand. In reproducing all the errors of the OCI, the WRP/News Line has added a few of its own. It has joined the OCI in the dustbin of revisionism.

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Shorter hours demand by UCW

By our own correspondent

THE growing radicalisation of Post Office workers was reflected at the annual conference of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) held in St Helier, Jersey, from May 11-16.

There was strong support for a campaign to reduce the working week in the Post Office to 40 hours — a reduction of three hours. A resolution passed set a time limit of September 30 for the Post Office to reduce hours. If no concessions are made, a ballot on industrial action is set for October 1. The form of such action, however, was left to the Executive to decide.

General Secretary Alan Tuffin, in his main address to the delegates, outlined the policy of privatisation in stages being discussed by the Tories. Thatcher has pledged not to privatise letter deliveries but is likely to pursue privatising the National Giro Bank, which has 23,000 branches, and Post Office counter services.

Tuffin came in for sharp criticism over his role in the annual pay settlement. Having described 4.9 per cent as 'totally unacceptable', he had recommended acceptance of an offer of 5.1 per cent. Conference supported a flat rate across-the-board claim for next year, which would favour the lower paid.

The UCW agreed unanimously to pursue its policy of seeking the expulsion from the TUC of the EETPU electricians' union over its scab role in the News International dispute at Wapping. Numerous speakers from the floor warned of the implications of the fourth set of Tory anti-union laws soon to be introduced.

Other decisions included an instruction to the Executive and all local branches to break off all negotiations over the Revised Revision Procedure — a time-and-motion study of letter sorting and delivery — and for an inquiry to be carried out by the Executive into the role of the Post Office Investigations Department in harassing and threatening staff.

NALGO to ballot for political fund

By Ian Harrison

THE annual conference of the 750,000-strong white collar union NALGO took place in the last week of the general election campaign.

The Tories' intention of continuing their eight-year offensive against the trade unions was clearly registered on June 3. When Thatcher announced the election, two Tory NALGO members, Alan Paul and Simon Baron Fraser, successfully sought a High Court injunction against the union's 'Make People Matter' publicity campaign. Granted by Vice-Chancellor Sir Nicholas Brown-Wilkinson, the injunction would have placed the union in contempt of court if it had not withdrawn leaflets and posters detailing cuts in public services and calling on voters to 'think before you vote'.

NALGO's National Executive Council made no attempt to appeal against the injunction. Conference delegates were told by General Secretary John Daly that the union was 'unlikely to get support from a higher

authority'. But members of Fraser's branch, Wandsworth Local Government, were reprimanded for reportedly making hostile remarks to him.

The conference had, as a result, a tense mood from the opening day, with delegates in conflict with a leadership retreating under the Tory attack. Caught in the cross-fire were both factions of the Communist Party, who traditionally come to the aid of the right-wing leadership.

The first day of conference saw them balancing between the NEC and the majority of delegates seeking to establish a political fund to defend the union. A motion to establish a political fund was passed overwhelmingly, but not before the NEC attempted to postpone indefinitely the ballot of members required.

The conference responded angrily by instructing the NEC to campaign for a 'yes' vote —

a move widely seen as a first step to affiliate NALGO to the Labour Party. Tory delegates remained silent.

The NEC received another blow in the debate on fascism. An emergency motion, arising from reports in the anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight', called for an investigation into NALGO employee Paul Kingsley, editor of a number of fascist publications. Attempts by the General Secretary to prevent conference deciding NALGO staff recruitment policy failed and the motion, which also called for Kingsley's immediate sacking, was passed near-unanimously.

The main debates on the economy centred on motions calling for TUC withdrawal from MSC cheap-labour schemes. Communist Party delegates and their sympathisers on the NEC, anxious to defend the considerable privileges of their members who

supervise Community Programme and YTS schemes, called for withdrawal from the new JTS scheme, but instructed the NEC to seek 'reform' of the CP and YTS.

On election day — June 11 — the NEC joined forces with leading Labour and Communist Party members to vote down motions demanding a minimum wage, flat-rate pay increases and the defence of local government services.

Two rule changes which would have admitted unemployed youth as members and given unemployed members speaking rights at conference were defeated by the leadership. Bill Gill, for the NEC, warned that 'the unemployed would be able to stand for elections all the way to the NEC, and decide conference policy'.

Attempts by health and local government branches to commit NALGO to a policy of joint union action in defence of jobs,

pay and conditions were also opposed by the NEC.

On Ireland, the NEC won an amendment supporting the Anglo-Irish Agreement and condemning the IRA. Labour Party member Bill Gill blamed '90 per cent of deaths' in the north of Ireland on 'fellow Irishmen'. Stalinist Graham Burgess attacked 'IRA intimidation' of trade unionists, while Rita Donaghy proposed a 'peaceful solution' to British occupation and opposed withdrawing troops. The debate on South Africa, stage managed to boost John Daly, failed to propose a single action against the apartheid regime.

In one of the most significant blows against the NEC, conference instructed the leadership to break all links with Labour Friends of Israel and the Zionist-controlled Histadrut. The shock was too much for Labour Party and NEC member Norrie Steele, who lost no time in attacking the Trade Union Friends of Palestine representative in the corridor after the vote, because of the latter's association with the NALGO black workers' action group which had sponsored the successful motion.

London bus strike opposes sell-offs



Pickets at the Holloway bus garage during the one-day strike

LONDON'S 20,000 busworkers showed their leaders they were prepared to take firm action to resist privatisation when they overwhelmingly supported a one-day strike on May 11. The first London-wide bus strike for 30 years was called to protest at LRT's policy of hiving-off routes through competitive tendering.

The attack on London's bus services is part of the Tory strategy on public transport which began with the 1980 Transport Act. This established three trial areas for deregulation of bus services in Devon, Norfolk and Hereford where an operator could run a bus service without being subject to the usual public service regulations.

In Hereford, the only trial area with town routes, it led to three private firms competing with Midland Red. The resulting fares war led to chaos with operators competing for passengers at the same stop at the same time.

Despite the widely-acknowledged failure of the experiment, the Tories proceeded, in the 1985 Transport Act, to extend deregulation to the rest of the country, except London, by abolishing road service licensing. All the publicly-owned bus operations outside London were formed into limited companies, outside local government control.

In the initial phase of operation of the 1985 Act, all operators were allowed to register, by February 1986, to provide any bus service they pleased. The most popular services have, not surprisingly, turned out to be at peak hours, mainly to and from town centres. Services not in this category can be subsidised by local authorities and put out to tender. Since January 26, 1987, an operator need only give six weeks notice to alter an existing service or introduce a new one.

The consequences of deregulation have been truly horrific. In Glasgow, a two-mile jam of 70 buses, mainly empty, blocked the city-centre, leaving the suburbs largely unserved. Over the whole country, up to 35 per cent of bus miles have been cut from rural routes. Sunday services are down by half. Old buses discarded years ago are being brought back into service leading to a dramatic increase in break-downs and accidents.

The National Bus Company has been divided into 70 separate subsidiaries which the

government hoped would be sold off. Only a handful have been disposed of so far but the break-up of NBC together with deregulation has led to the loss of thousands of jobs, wage-cuts of up to 30 per cent and the loss of pension rights. Longer hours, shorter holidays and shift systems are being imposed wherever possible.

In London, specific routes have been privatised rather than allowing a general free-for-all. Buses and tubes were seized from the GLC under the London Regional Transport Act 1984 which required LRT to put half the bus route miles out to tender 'as quickly as possible'.

Anticipating total deregulation in London in the future, and its own privatisation, LRT created a wholly-owned subsidiary, London Buses Ltd, to compete with private operators for the routes on offer. Of the 79 routes put on the market since July 1985, 34 have been retained by London Buses by tendering so low that the only way they can fulfil their contracts with LRT is to slash operating costs. Behind the 24-hour strike was anger at the 4,000 jobs lost last year alone, wage-cuts of up to £40 per week and an increase from 38 to 43 hours per week.

Bus workers should be on guard — Transport and General Workers' Union leaders are trying to convert militancy into harmless protest. The shelving of strike action in favour of a battle in the High Court to prove that wage-cutting is illegal is the road to betrayal. The T&GWU has accepted the inevitability of the Tory attack on public transport. As their London Bus Officer, Terry Allan, says: 'We accept privatisation — reluctantly.' Busworkers must prove him wrong.

A STRIKE by 1,800 junior doctors in defence of jobs and working conditions has reduced hospitals in the south of Ireland to emergency admissions only.

The attack on the doctors is part of the new round of austerity measures introduced since the election of the Fianna Fail government of Charles Haughey.

The health service accounts for 20 per cent of government spending and is an obvious target for 'savings' at the expense of the working class in a country with a £19 billion foreign debt.

DONS DUCK FIGHT

By David Lewis

THE Summer Council of the Association of University Teachers, held in Leeds on May 14-16, was overshadowed by the onslaught of the Tory government on the universities since 1981 and the prospect of further cuts in the near future.

On the first day the convenor of the Broad Left, a leading Executive member, said that the recent White Paper on Higher Education came at a time when every university was facing a crisis, starved of resources and contemplating the closure of whole departments. He told Council that the White Paper now threatened destruction of the universities and that the AUT must do everything possible to prevent its implementation.

These fine words were exposed for their emptiness when, the following morning, a motion which recognised that the AUT

had effectively been collaborating in the closure of institutions and job losses and proposed that the Executive should instead plan effective industrial action against further cuts was narrowly defeated by 97 votes to 93. The Broad Left-dominated Executive voted solidly against the motion. However, the close vote reflected a clear recognition within wide sections of the AUT that a fight is necessary.

Within hours, a report on the situation at University College, Cardiff, underlined the need for a fighting policy. As part of a £10 million 'rescue' package, the University Grants Committee is demanding the loss of 140 jobs by March 31, 1988. The current policy of no compulsory redundancies will clearly come under a little strain to cope with this scale of loss.

Motions were carried supporting the industrial action of the

college lecturers' union NATFHE against government policies in the colleges and polytechnics and condemning the Tories' attack on the negotiating machinery and pay and conditions of the school teachers.

The section on international affairs saw overwhelming votes for two important resolutions on South Africa. The first pledged support for the overthrow of apartheid and instructed the Executive to press the TUC to adopt a policy of total economic blockade. The second called for the strengthening of the academic boycott.

Also in the international section, Council condemned the West German system of *Berufsverbot* which prevents left-wingers of all shades from working in public service jobs, from postal workers to professors.

On the concluding morning, the debate on salaries took place against the background of the

collapse of the national negotiating machinery through the unilateral withdrawal of the employers from discussions on implications of the recent pay settlement. The employers want instead to negotiate, or rather impose, new conditions locally. At the time of the meeting of Council, the arbitration service ACAS had been called in by the AUT and were expected to meet the employers the following week. The pay deal conceded to the employers a major restructuring of the scales, including more grades and hence more management control. It was reached as a result of a strenuous campaign by the National Executive to accept it and came in the wake of extended preparations for action in the form of strikes and non-marking of examination papers. The warnings of the minority that the employers would interpret acceptance as weakness were discounted by the Executive.

EYE - WITNESS IN NICARAGUA

IN the first issue of Workers News I described travelling to Nicaragua as one of a brigade of 29 British volunteers to pick coffee in December of last year. The account described the journey to Managua, then on to the region of Matagalpa. The calculated savagery with which US imperialism has sought to intimidate, destabilise and overturn the gains of the Nicaraguan revolution clearly illustrates the desperation of capitalism in crisis.

The mainstay of Nicaragua's economy is agriculture. At least 60 per cent of the three million population live and work on the land. Our first night in the mountains was spent in the wooden schoolhouse of a typical small village up in the mountains. This tiny cluster of a dozen or so dwellings was our first real contact with rural Nicaragua. Looking about me, the abject poverty these people were living in came as a physical shock — barefoot children and adults in tattered clothes; huts made from discarded planks of wood, old drums and mud; flea-bitten dogs and choking woodsmoke.

The comings and goings of the brigade had turned the area around the schoolhouse into a quagmire. It was pitch black outside. Several young men carrying AK47s suddenly appeared in the doorway. Although they seemed younger, no-one in Nicaragua under the age of seventeen is permitted to carry arms. They were members of the local rural militia, sent to watch over us for the night.

Armed men and women are a common sight in every part of Nicaragua, but in this remote, rural setting, the sense of a country at war became more obvious. Around such a cash crop as coffee, now the most important export, there is a network of Irregular Warfare Battalions (BLIs), Light Hunter Battalions (BLCs) and Regular Army (EPS) units. The BLI and BLC carry the weight of the war, especially in the mountains. These forces know the whereabouts of all *Brigadistas* (international volunteers) in the areas that they patrol.

Coffee makes up one-third of Nicaragua's foreign earnings, so those involved in its harvest are seen as important targets by the Contras. In previous years, the coffee harvest has been severely affected by Contra activity, some areas remaining unharvested. Military victories by Nicaraguan forces during 1985-86 have meant an improved harvest in 1986-87. As transportation in the coffee-growing areas is an acute problem, much of the revenue earned on the crop will be used to buy vehicles.

The next morning we trekked the final half mile to the *finca* (farmhouse) in which we would be billeted for the next month. Set on the side of the mountain, surrounded by tall coconut palms and commanding a magnificent view, it had previously been the home of one of

By Eugene Ludlow

PART TWO

Somoza's generals, now a resident of Miami. The steep slopes on which we worked were never more than a mile away. The scenery was spectacular, with grapefruit, orange and banana trees dotted among the coffee plants, large numbers of dazzlingly-coloured birds above us and busy insects at our feet.

A few miles away sounds of distant shooting and explosions could be heard regularly. Being so high up meant we could see not only our valley, but also the larger one that ran parallel to it. Two Russian-built MI24s (helicopter gunships) plied this route quite regularly. The firepower of these machines is immense, and it was said that just six of these were helping keep the military balance. Pod-firing machine-guns, rockets and armour-piercing cannon bristle from their exteriors.

Being in a very remote area, we relied totally on the co-operative's headquarters for our supply of food and news. These headquarters were several miles down the valley. The nearest doctor or hospital was even further away in Matagalpa itself. Having only four of us fluent in Spanish not only placed a burden on our *Responsable* (a woman elected from the brigade to act as intermediary between ourselves and the Nicaraguans) but also severely limited and distorted whatever news might be available. For example, on returning from the fields on Christmas Eve, we heard the 'news' that Reagan had resigned as a result of the handing back of American Contra link-man Eugene Hasenfus!

The Hasenfus case received world-wide media coverage, especially in the US. One outdated US plane blown to pieces, two US personnel dead, another captured, tried and sentenced as a criminal, and a whole battery of compromising information about the 'dirty war' displayed for all to see. None of this altered the Reagan administration's support for the Contras — but it has intensified its problems.

Faced with a mounting domestic crisis, US imperialism has been reluctant to compound its problems by engaging in an expensive and unpopular Latin American 'Vietnam'. Its preferred policy has been to allow an army of counter-revolutionary mercenaries to do the job on its



A Nicaraguan peasant family

behalf. CIA 'advisors' equip and train the Contras at US army camps in Florida, Georgia and Texas. Funds have been siphoned into Contra bank accounts from noted reactionaries all over the world.

However, the US ruling class cannot afford at any cost to lose its economic and strategic military control over Central America. The dangers of direct military intervention have increased with the worsening of America's economic position and its inability to prosecute the war by other means.

By July 1979, when US-sponsored dictator Anastasio Somoza realised that the insurrection initiated by the Sandinistas would be successful, he ordered the air force to bomb the cities, including Managua. The president's final 52 days saw sixty thousand people die. (An equivalent proportion would be 1.2 million Britons). 250,000 were left homeless and 50,000 children orphaned. Many of the National Guard crossed over the border to Honduras, while Somoza and his generals fled to Miami.

There have been six Contra groups operating from both sides of Nicaragua's borders with Honduras and Costa Rica. MISURA, made up from three indigenous groups on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua — Miskito, Suma and Rama; MISURASATA, drawn from Miskito people only; KISAN, another north-eastern indigenous force formed in 1985; ARDE (Revolutionary Democratic Alliance), organised and led from Costa Rican bases

by ex-Sandinista Eden Pastora; UNO, a new unification of remnants of the above groups and finally the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), made up of ex-National Guard members, Cuban anti-communists and mercenary riff-raff from around the globe.

The FDN began its operations in 1980 on the Honduran boarder in north-western Nicaragua. Directed by Somoza's former military attaché in Washington, one Colonel Enrique Bermudez (National Guard), the group was originally called 'Legion 15 de Setiembre'. Funding was originally provided by the military government of Argentina. The FDN as such was formed in November 1981, when the Reagan administration decided to start a programme of destabilisation, orchestrated by the CIA, which would hinge on terrorising remote farming communities deep within Nicaragua.

President Reagan refers to the Contras as 'freedom fighters' and compares them to the French Resistance of the Second World War. The facts are quite different. The Contras' main targets are civilians. Evidence of rape, torture, mutilation and executions has been documented by such agencies as Oxfam, Amnesty International, War On Want and Americas Watch.

Each morning, as we made our way to the slopes, we passed a typical *campesino* shack by the side of the road. In a little garden adjacent to this dwelling was a mound of earth with a simple wooden cross, around which had been wrapped bright

plastic flowers encased in a plastic bag. The man of the house had been killed at the front. Two weeks later, another mound appeared alongside the first. The son, killed in the same way. At least they were spared falling into the hands of the Contras.

On May 15, 1984, a large force of Contras attacked a state farm at Castillo Norté. Thirty men and one woman defended the farm. A survivor, Antonio Rodriguez, described the events that followed: 'The Contras killed five men in the first hail of mortar fire, but the others fought on till their ammunition ran out. Eleven were caught in their foxholes and were killed in cold blood. Rosa had her breasts cut off. Then they cut into her chest and took out her heart. The men had their arms broken, their testicles cut off and their eyes poked out. Then they were killed by cutting their throats and pulling the tongue out through the slit.'

The sadism and savagery practised by these 'freedom fighters' is almost beyond belief, yet hundreds of such atrocities have been witnessed and documented in the last six years. Although by the summer of 1986 most of the Contras were disbanded or in disarray having sustained heavy losses at the hands of Nicaraguan forces, the FDN was still very active. On April 28 of this year, six Contras burst into the office of Benjamin Linder and shot him to death. Linder was a volunteer from North America, assisting with a hydro-electric project at San José de Bocay in Jinotega.

A mercenary army marches on its pocket, however, and while Congress stems the flow of dollars, Reagan has had to lean on others for funds. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has put up \$32 million and another \$10 million has come from the Sultan of Brunei, though much of this illegal funding seems to have gone astray. The 'Iran-Contra' scandal highlights the crisis of the Reagan government. Behind Oliver North and John Poindexter stand colossal US capitalist interests in Central and South America that have been exploiting every resource from fruit to cocaine in these countries for the past sixty years. The last thing these conglomerates want, especially in the face of mounting recession, is their cheap-labour workforces rising up to challenge US imperialism the way Nicaragua has done.

Recent weeks have seen President Daniel Ortega announce further tax increases, petrol and food rationing under pressure from the US economic blockade. The Nicaraguan people are suffering incredible deprivation and hardship as well as resisting attacks across the borders.

Honduras is asking why FDN bases have not been removed from its soil as promised, and on June 6 refused to issue a visa to the FDN's chairman, Adolfo Calero. Meanwhile, the United States and its backers are confronted with a nation of three million people who are prepared to fight and die if necessary for their freedom.

JOIN

THE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

I would like to join the W.I.L.
NAME

ADDRESS

TRADE UNION
POST TO:—

Workers International League
1/17 Meredith Street
London EC1R 0AE

This month 50 years ago . . .

REISS BREAKS WITH STALIN

IN July 1937, Ignace Reiss, a senior Soviet intelligence officer with the NKVD, broke with Stalin, denouncing the crimes of Stalinism and announcing his intention to join the Fourth International.

Born Ignace Poretzky in Galicia, Eastern Poland, he was one of six childhood friends who all joined the Soviet intelligence services, inspired by the Russian revolution, and who were all to die at the hands of Stalin.

—To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR—

I should have written the letter I am writing you today a long time ago, on the day when the Sixteen¹ were massacred in the cellars of the Lubianka on the orders of the 'Father of the People'.

I kept quiet then and did not raise my voice at the murders that followed, and as a result I bear a heavy responsibility. My guilt is grave, but I will try to repair it, to repair it promptly and thus ease my conscience.

Up to this moment I marched alongside you. Now I will not take another step. Our paths diverge! He who now keeps quiet becomes Stalin's accomplice, betrays the working class, betrays socialism.

I have been fighting for socialism since my twentieth year. Now on the threshold of my fortieth I do not want to live off the favours of a Yezhov². I have sixteen years of illegal work behind me. That is not little, but I have enough strength left to begin all over again. For it will indeed be necessary to begin everything all over again to save socialism. That fight began a long time ago and I want to take my part in it.

The noise that is made about the deeds of pilots flying over the Pole is supposed to drown out the moans and the cries of the victims tortured in the cellars of the Lubianka, in Svobodnaia, in Minsk, in Kiev, in Leningrad, in Tiflis. It will not succeed. The voice of truth is stronger than the noise of the most powerful engines.

It is quite true that the records of the pilots will affect the hearts of American ladies and of the youth of two continents intoxicated by sports, much more easily than we will succeed in conquering international opinion and affecting the conscience of the world. But make no mistake, truth will find a way and the day of judgement is much nearer than those in the Kremlin think. The day when international socialism will judge the crimes committed in the past ten years is not far off. Nothing will be forgotten and nothing will be forgiven. History is harsh. 'The leader of genius', 'the Father of the People', 'the Sun of Socialism' will have to account for what he has done. He will have to account for the defeated Chinese revolution, for the red plebiscite in Germany, for the defeat of the German proletariat, for social fascism, for the things told to Mr Howard³, for his flattery of M. Laval — all acts of genius.

This trial will take place in the open and many a living and dead witness will attend it. All will speak and this time will tell the truth, all the truth. All will testify — those who were slandered and those who were shot though innocent — and the international workers' movement will rehabilitate them, the Kamenevs, the Mrachkovskys, the Smirnovs and the Muralovs, the Drobnis, Serebriakovs, Mdivanis, and Okudzhavas, Rakovskys, and Andreas Nins⁴ — 'the spies and enemy agents, the saboteurs and Gestapo agents'!

The working class must defeat Stalin and Stalinism so that the USSR and the international workers' movement do not succumb to fascism and counter-revolution. This mix-

We reproduce below the letter of resignation Reiss sent to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Three weeks later he was dead. On his way to Rheims to meet Dutch Trotskyist Henryk Sneevliet who was going to publicise his break with Stalin, he was lured to a rendezvous in Lausanne and murdered by a GPU gang which had tracked him and his family to Switzerland.

ture of the worst of opportunism, devoid of principles, and of lies and blood threatens to poison the world and the last forces of the working class.

What is needed today is a fight without mercy against Stalinism! The class struggle and not the popular front, workers' intervention in the Spanish revolution as opposed to the action of committees.

Down with the lie of socialism in one country! Return to Lenin's international!

Neither the Second nor the Third International can carry out this historical mission. Corrupt and dislocated, all they can do is to prevent the working class from fighting. They can only be the policemen at the service of the bourgeoisie. The irony of history! In the past the bourgeoisie provided its own Cavaignacs and Gallifets, its Trepovs and Wrangels. Today, under the glorious leadership of the two Internationals, it is the proletarians themselves who have become the executioners of their comrades. The bourgeoisie can attend quietly to its own business: order and peace rule. There are still Noskes⁵ and Yezhovs, Negrins⁶ and Diazs⁷. Stalin is their leader and Feuchtwanger⁸ their Homer.

No. I cannot stand it any longer. I take my freedom of action. I return to Lenin, to his doctrine, to his acts.

I intend to devote my feeble forces to the cause of Lenin. I want to continue the fight, for only our victory — that of the proletarian revolution — will free humanity of capitalism and the USSR of Stalinism.

Forward to new struggles! For the Fourth International!

LUDWIK
17th July 1937

P.S. In 1928 I was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for services to the proletarian revolution. I am enclosing the decoration. It would be beneath my dignity to wear an order also worn by the executioners of the best men of the working class in Russia. (In the last two weeks Izvestiia has published the names of those who have received the award. Their achievements have been discreetly kept quiet: they are the men who have carried out the death sentences on the old Bolsheviks.)

NOTES

- 1 The 16 old Bolsheviks tried in Moscow in August 1936 and subsequently executed.
- 2 N.I. Yezhov was People's Commissar for Internal Affairs from September 1936.
- 3 The American Roy Howard, who interviewed Stalin in 1935.
- 4 Kamenev, Mrachkovsky, and Smirnov were tried and executed in August 1936. Muralov, Drobnis, and Serebriakov in January 1937, and Mdivani and Okudzhava in Georgia in July 1937. Rakovsky, arrested at the end of 1936, was not tried until 1938. Nin, political secretary of POUM, was arrested in Spain in June 1937, and may have died under interrogation.
- 5 Gustav Noske was the extreme right-wing German Social Democratic minister responsible for the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in 1919.
- 6 Juan Negrin, the pro-Stalinist leader of the Spanish Republican government who supported the suppression of POUM.
- 7 José Diaz was the leader of the Spanish Communist Party.
- 8 Leon Feuchtwanger was a Zionist, pro-Stalinist novelist of the 1930s. Author of a book justifying the Moscow Trials.

Banned opera triumph

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk; opera by Dmitri Shostakovich; English National Opera at the London Coliseum.

By Philip Marchant

THIS is the first British stage presentation of Shostakovich's magnificent opera which was banned in the Soviet Union for almost 30 years after Stalin attended a performance in 1936.

'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk' is based on the short novel by the nineteenth-century Russian writer Nikolai Leskov. Shostakovich took his story about an unfulfilled merchant's wife who commits murder in order to marry her lover, and re-worked it to meet the explosion of new ideas which accompanied the 1917 revolution.

Instead of condemning Katerina, he presents a complex portrait of a woman who kills in an attempt to find happiness. She is a victim of circumstances who refuses to submit to her 'fate' — a spineless husband, a brutal, lecherous father-in-law and a cloistered existence.

The first performances of the opera took place as 'socialist realism' was being consolidated as the official doctrine on art.



Josephine Barstow as Katerina

According to Stalin, the foundations of the socialist economy had now been established and the function of artists was henceforth to sing the praises of the architect. Art had been outlawed.

There was no room in this for an opera which proposed the extension of workers' democracy, and an article was published in 'Pravda' which ensured that 'Lady Macbeth' was not performed again.

The ENO production is

musically, vocally and technically breathtaking. Unfortunately, producer David Pountney lacks faith in Shostakovich. At times the lumbering 'Constructivist' set (which appeared to have a life of its own), and the sumptuous costumes, became the stars of the show. Compensation was always at hand, however, in the performance of Josephine Barstow as Katerina. The production has been recorded for future presentation on BBC television.

Bolivian miners pay for tin crash

The Great Tin Crash: Bolivia and the World Tin Market; by John Crabtree, Gavan Duffy and Jenny Pearce; Latin American Bureau, 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL; £2.95

Review by Wendy Upson

IN October 1985 the news broke of the collapse of the international tin market. The price of tin dropped from over £8,000 to less than £4,000 per tonne.

In Britain, attention was focussed on the London Metal Exchange, which suspended trading, and the consequences for the tin mining communities of Cornwall. The Conservative government agreed to subsidise two of the three mines in the area — those owned by the multinational Rio Tinto Zinc. The third was refused support, the government instead offering £50 million to the London Metal Exchange to reduce the financial burden caused by the International Tin Council defaulting on payments for tin it could not afford.

In fact, the real impact of the collapse was being felt elsewhere in the world. At the time of the collapse, Bolivia's economy was dependant on tin production which made up 34 per cent of total exports. The country was already racked by a huge foreign debt which went from \$2.8 billion in 1984

to \$3.2 billion in 1985. Inflation was running at 8,146.4 per cent.

The aim of this useful book is to examine the collapse of the tin market from Bolivia's perspective. At the same time it attempts to explain the events which led to the collapse by analysing the nature of the market, the economic vulnerabilities of the tin-producing countries (which are principally Thailand, Malaysia, Bolivia, Indonesia, Britain and Brazil) and how each government dealt with the collapse both economically and in terms of the human consequences.

It examines, in digestible form, the harsh nature of the world economic market which operates in a detached, impersonal way, with no regard to the human cost of mine closures. The ability of the Bolivian mining communities to endure continuing deprivation is due to their strong social cohesion and their radical tradition which is reflected in a strong trade union: The Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mineworkers, formed in 1944).

A succession of military governments have tried to crush the strength of the trade unions, especially the mining union, and the book points out

that it is no coincidence that there are military barracks close to all mining centres in Bolivia. The unions' strength is slowly being eroded for another reason however. The falling numbers associated with mining is the greatest factor. Many workers are leaving the mining areas, heading for the coca-growing regions. Bolivia now supplies 40-45 per cent of the world's cocaine market.

Although the book is informative and highly readable, there are three observations worth making. The first is that given the wealth of information on the living conditions of the Bolivian mining communities which is dispersed throughout the narrative, it would perhaps have had greater impact on the reader if it was consolidated in one chapter. Overall, the book's great strength is in its compassionate treatment of the Bolivian people, caught up in an economic and social crisis over which they have little control. Secondly, the book failed to critically analyse the governments and financial institutions which were ultimately responsible for the crisis and therefore, finally, it is as good as its limitations could let it be.

Child arrests rise in South Africa

By Gary Hollingsbee

MORE than 10,000 children have been detained without trial in South Africa over the past year. Despite the recent release of about 1,000 detainees, the number continues to rise.

The American branch of the Defence for Children International (DCI) has published a report called 'Children Under Apartheid' which examines the treatment of South African youth detained under the renewed state of emergency by the racist Botha regime.

According to the report, children who have been detained by the South African police said that they had been beaten with rifle butts, half-suffocated with wet nylon bags and hung by their wrists and spun around — a torture known as the 'helicopter'. It states that: 'The incidents of torture, arbitrary killings and unlawful imprisonment of children continues unabated.'

DCI calls for the setting up of a legal centre in South Africa to provide expert representation for detained children and to train lawyers in juvenile law.

Another report, produced by the South African Medical and Dental Council, states that 90 per cent of a group of 131 people examined by Johannesburg doc-

tors following release from detention said that they had been beaten and 52 per cent showed signs of physical abuse. A quarter said they had been subjected to suffocations, 13 per cent said they were given electric shocks, 21 per cent said they

had lost consciousness and more than a third said that they had been kept in solitary confinement.

More than two-thirds of the number were between 15 and 20 years old and six were between 10 and 14.



Children in Cape Town protest against the state of emergency



A demonstration in the centre of Johannesburg in March

BEHIND the latest round of manoeuvres in the trade-union bureaucracy over the Tories' work-for-your-dole Job Training Scheme (JTS) lies the most cynical betrayal of youth.

At the TUC General Council meeting in May, delegates from the local government union, NALGO, tabled a motion calling on the TUC to boycott JTS. Pressure was immediately brought upon NALGO to withdraw the motion. Ron Todd, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, told NALGO delegates not to propose the motion during the General Election campaign. When NALGO refused to withdraw, Todd backed the right wing and the motion was lost by about two to one.

Whilst the TUC right wing are open defenders of JTS, many of those making 'left'-sounding noises against the new scheme are trying to cover up their participation in YTS and Community Programme cheap-labour schemes. Chief traitors in this second group are both the 'Euro' and 'Morning Star' wings of the Stalinist Communist Party.

The Stalinist-dominated Scottish TUC has passed a resolution calling for a boycott of JTS.

But the Stalinists remain the chief defenders of the Community Programme, and spread the lie that both it and YTS can be 'reformed'.

In the Strathclyde region of Scotland, the Community Programme is now the largest single employer. Having lost much of their base in the industrial unions and among students in Scotland, the Stalinists have plugged a large number of their members and supporters into supervisory positions administering the Community Programme. Small wonder, then, that they are its leading defenders.

The implementation of JTS would not have been possible without the support given to YTS and the Community Programme by the Labour Party and Stalinist leaders, and the TUC which sits on the Manpower Services Commission's Management Boards.

All the attempts by the TUC to 'reform' YTS have failed; not a single 'reform' has been made at national level and where local union branches have fought for improvements the MSC have shut these schemes down.

With the introduction of JTS, the Tories are closing down the Community Programme, which

pays higher 'wages', and transferring its funding to JTS, on which 18 to 22-year-olds will only receive unemployment benefit plus £15 per week.

While the TUC were busily warning trade unionists oppos-

SENIOR officials from the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) have admitted that nearly half of the 328,000 school-leavers enrolled on its Youth Training Scheme (YTS) at any one time are working for employers who are likely to fail, or already have failed, the Commission's own 'quality' tests.

ed to Tory cheap-labour schemes not to 'rock the boat' during the election, the Labour election manifesto was launched, promising a 'caring' programme for young people. Despite its deliberate vagueness, the Labour manifesto outlined a major extension of cheap-labour 'training' schemes. It received a grovelling tribute from the Stalinist 'Morning Star' which, in its edition of May 25, ran the banner headline 'Labour promises youth a future — Kinnock pledges jobs and training for all under 20'.

The latest treachery of the reformist and Stalinist leaders in the face of the Tory onslaught against youth makes even more urgent the demand that the TUC must break from the MSC.

Since last summer the MSC has inspected 905 of the 3,500 companies, local authorities, colleges and voluntary groups who take advantage of the cheap-labour scheme, and have been forced to remove 'approved training organisation' status from 44 per cent of them.

TUC DEFENDS CHEAP LABOUR

By Lizzy Ali

Son was murdered father claims

THE father of Jeffery Singh, a 17-year-old soldier found hanged in the Shorncliffe army barracks in Kent on January 24, claims that his son was murdered.

Mr Bir Singh said at the inquest into his son's death: 'I believe he was hit first, he was unconscious and then he was hanged.'

The inquest was further told by Anne Osborne, Singh's social worker, that before his death he had been subjected to racial harassment in the army.

'It's as bad as the first day I arrived. Within two minutes I'm

being called a black bastard,' she recalled him telling her.

The inquest heard that Singh had been racially abused and that on the day he was found dead, he had been summoned to help an investigation into the alleged theft of sweets and chocolates and bullying by NCOs at the barracks.

Another soldier stationed at the Shorncliffe barracks confirmed that there had been bullying incidents, and told of how the squad had to parade naked except for their mess tins.

Before the jury retired to decide their verdict, the coroner,

Brian Smith, ruled out a verdict of unlawful killing: 'I take the view that you do not have the evidence which would justify the returning of that verdict,' he said.

The verdict reached by the jury was that Singh had committed suicide. Mr Singh said afterwards he had been told of his son's death by an army officer who visited him. The officer said that he had hanged himself, but he did not believe it either then or now.

What happened to Jeffery Singh is not an isolated incident. Many young people, faced

with a future of unemployment or cheap labour opt to join the army. Other cases have come to light which show that this type of bullying and harassment, especially racial abuse, is rife in the army. In the last month alone several incidents have come to court-martial and criminal court.

A lance-sergeant in the Irish Guards was sent to detention centre for beating up and 'dead-legging' 12 trainees; an 18-year-old Royal Artillery Gunner, Anthony Savage, died after being forced to drink a cocktail of spirits and beer from an over-

sized army boot in a bizarre initiation ceremony for new recruits; and a Royal Marine sergeant was given a 'severe reprimand' for hitting two teenage recruits over the head with a mallet when they refused to drink pint mugs of urine during a 'party game'.

These incidents show that there is a specific policy of brutalising working-class youth to knock out of them any class ties that they have left, in order to prepare them for tours of duty in the north of Ireland or for use against the working class in Britain.

more than twice this figure.

Official figures only include families, disabled people, old age pensioners and pregnant women. Shelter say that more than 200,000 people have applied to be housed by local councils, but that half this number have been refused on the grounds that they are single, or that they have made themselves 'intentionally homeless'.

The housing crisis has been accelerated by the effects of rate-capping and the withdrawal of central government funds for house-building in areas of acute housing shortage. Housing spending in London has been cut by half by the Tories over the past six years. In 1976, 25,000 new houses and flats were built. By 1984-5 this had dropped to 2,000. In the last year 7,000 council homes in England were sold.

Young people living at home with their parents face as long as ten years on waiting lists before they qualify for council housing.

The position facing young and homeless workers contrasts starkly with the massive boom in property speculation. Property prices in south-east England are rising at almost four times the rate of inflation. The effect has been to wipe out most cheaply-rented accommodation, forcing more and more homeless people into squalid bed-and-breakfast hotels.

At least 25,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 are living in youth hostels or YMCAs and, despite vicious crackdowns by councils, 35,000 youth are estimated to be squatting in London alone.

This massive pool of homelessness is a necessary condition of capitalism in order to drive up the value of its speculative investment in property. Only the working class can end the misery caused by the anarchy of the housing market through the socialist revolution.

● Housing must not be geared to profit! The sale of council houses must be stopped. Empty houses and flats must be opened up to accommodate the homeless!

● The building and construction industry must be nationalised under workers' control and a programme of public works established to build homes, hospitals and other basic services needed by the working class and employ the tens of thousands of building workers made redundant.