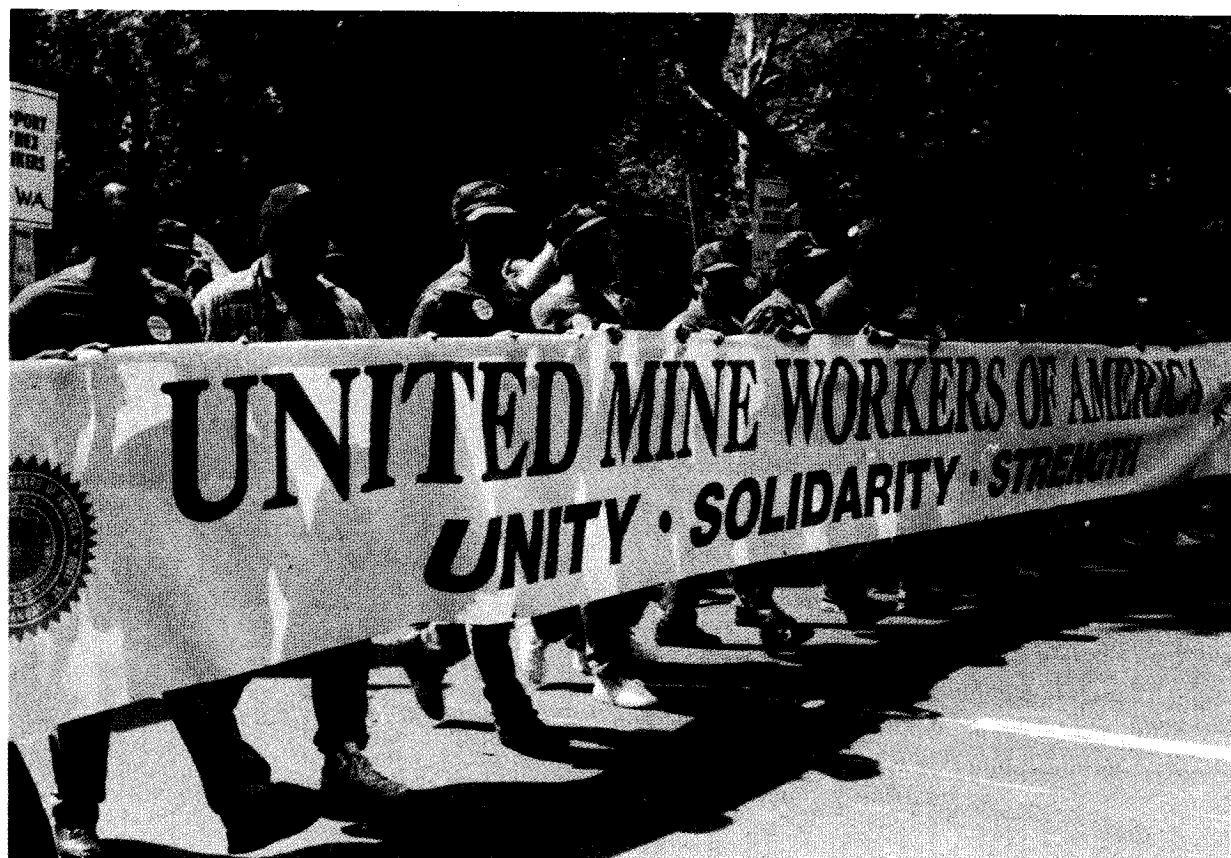


# Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League

No. 20 October-November 1989 25p



## US MINERS' STRIKE

- see centre pages

Striking Pittston miners march up Fifth Avenue on the Labor Day Parade in New York City on September 4  
PHOTO: SUZY ALLEN

## Anger at Honecker regime boils over

IF ERICH HONECKER and the Stalinist old guard who head the regime in the German Democratic Republic imagined that stemming the flood of emigrants to the West would resolve the political crisis, they were quickly disillusioned. No sooner were the borders closed than anti-government demonstrations broke out throughout the GDR. With their chants of 'We're staying here' and demands for an end to Stalinist dictatorship, these protests represented a much greater threat to the regime than the earlier mass emigrations.

By Bob Pitt

The wave of demonstrations began in Leipzig, where political meetings at the St Nicholas church had attracted large crowds for several weeks. On the evening of October 2, in defiance of the police, some 20,000 protesters marched through the city calling for the release of jailed oppositionists. Two days later, a crowd of 10,000 gathered outside the railway station at Dresden, where trains carrying refugees to West Germany were due to pass through, and the resulting clashes between police and youths continued for four days.

In a close parallel with events in China in June, a major upsurge in the protest movement was prompted by the visit of Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, who arrived in East Berlin on October 6 to help celebrate

the 40th anniversary of the founding of the GDR. The next day demonstrations took place in East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Karl-Marxstadt, Potsdam and Halle. They were attacked by police using truncheons and water-cannons and hundreds were arrested.

But repression failed to crush the protests. A 70,000-strong march in Leipzig on October 9 was the largest mass action seen in the GDR since the East Berlin workers' uprising of 1953. Those taking part did so despite rumours that the police were armed and authorised to shoot. In fact, the march passed off relatively peacefully. But the Stalinist regime was caught in a quandary. Easing the repression would only encourage bigger demonstrations, while an escalation of state violence might provoke an explosion of revolutionary proportions.

In the face of this crisis, Honecker stubbornly resisted demands for change, convinced that implementing reforms such as those in Poland and Hungary would destroy the GDR's reason for existence and lead to absorption into the capitalist Federal Republic. But his position became increasingly isolated within the ruling Socialist Unity Party. At an extended Politburo meeting which ended on October 11, Central Committee members argued successfully that the threat of workers launching industrial action in support of the protests made concessions necessary.

With the masses unwilling to go on living in the old way, and the Stalinists losing confidence in their ability to continue ruling by the old methods, the revolutionary potential of the situation is clear. What is lacking is a revolutionary leadership. All opposition spokesmen, whether from the Protestant church or from illegal political groups like New Forum, have emphasised the need for dialogue with the bureaucracy, proposing a strategy of putting pressure on the regime to implement reforms. As experiences in China and Poland show in their different ways, this perspective presents grave dangers for the East German working class.

Background, page 3

# THE REAL FACE OF GLASNOST

By Richard Price

IN HIS MOST significant move yet against industrial workers, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev piloted a ban on strikes in key industries through the Supreme Soviet on October 9.

The new law replaces the emergency 15-month ban on strikes passed on October 3, and whilst it contains a clause giving workers the right to withdraw their labour, it makes the practical implementation of a legal strike almost impossible to achieve.

The ban covers sectors of the economy where, it is claimed, strikes could have 'serious and dangerous consequences', including rail and air transport and the fuel, energy and defence industries. 'Politically motivated' strikes are also outlawed. It affects almost half of all Soviet workers and runs concurrently with a 3 per cent ceiling imposed on wage increases (inflation is said to be running at between 5 and 10 per cent).

Further clauses in the legislation place a strait-jacket on any group of workers contemplating strike action. They decree a mandatory three-day cooling-off period, followed by five days in which a 'conciliation commission' will attempt to find a formula to end the dispute. If no agreement is reached, the strike may only go ahead if the majority of the workforce vote for it in a ballot. No picketing will be allowed, and wages will be withheld for the length of the strike.

The anti-strike measures rushed through by the Stalinist leadership are in direct contrast to the tolerance displayed towards bourgeois

nationalists in the Baltic states who openly favour the restoration of capitalism.

The lie has been given in the clearest way to all claims that Gorbachev is restoring 'socialist democracy'. The 345-strong 'liberal' opposition bloc, having balked at Gorbachev's original proposal for a complete ban on all strikes, dutifully fell into line. The law sailed through by 373 votes to 12 and the result was greeted with a round of applause.

Despite threats of secession in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and dire warnings that the Transcaucasian republics are on the brink of civil war, it is the Soviet working class which the bureaucracy fears most. Gorbachev is clearly worried that the strikes in July, which spread from Siberia to the Ukraine and involved hundreds of thousands of miners, are the shape of things to come. The strike committees, which drew considerable support from other workers, are the embryo of a mass trade union movement independent of the Stalinist apparatus.

Widespread strike action in defence of living standards was anticipated in a steadily worsening economic situation. Workers in Leningrad and on the railways had demanded either an end to the wage freeze or stringent price controls - and local miners' leaders denounced any suggestion of a ban on strikes several weeks ago. Far from having remedied the legacy of 'the Brezhnev era', Gorbachev is presiding over a gathering crisis.

The budget deficit is running at 120 billion roubles; acute shortages of basic commodities are regularly reported, as are widespread problems in the distribution network; both industrial and agricultural output are stagnant. Such measures of 'restructuring' as are in place have only made things worse. Recently-formed self-financing enterprises are mimicking capitalist firms by cutting output and raising prices.

On September 9, Gorbachev went on Soviet television to call for 'exceptional measures' which would be 'harsh, unpopular and pain-

ful'. At the Supreme Soviet on October 2, he justified the first round of anti-strike measures, saying that 'we cannot wait any longer. Every extra day brings terrible consequences. We have started to lose control of things. New methods have not taken root, the old ones work no longer'.

The clamp-down on independent workers' action has another aspect to it. On September 20, the Central Committee plenum of the CPSU voted to remove five 'hardliners' from the Politburo and replace them with pro-Gorbachev 'reformers'. Those ousted included former KGB chairman Viktor Chebrikov and aging Ukrainian party boss Vladimir Shcherbitsky. This reshuffle was intended to strengthen Gorbachev's hold over the party apparatus and offer an olive branch to the 'Popular Front' nationalist movements which have sprung up in many non-Russian republics. At the same time Gorbachev is anxious to contain the faction struggle in the bureaucracy within definite boundaries, and avoid

alienating those sections of the apparatus grouped around Ligachev and the 'hardliners', who fear that the relaxation of dictatorship will undermine their parasitic existence. The ban on strikes is therefore a measure of reassurance to those elements.

Gorbachev's balancing act is becoming daily more precarious with the Soviet working class poised to intervene directly into events. The struggle for independent trade unions will be at the centre of this struggle. To smash the bureaucracy and re-establish workers' democracy, however, requires that these unions become organs of political struggle, transcending syndicalism. This task requires the building of a Trotskyist party in the USSR.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Labour's anti-union plans, page 2

Bush's history lesson, page 4

Ablett: the pioneering spirit, page 6

# Beware sabotage of shorter-hours fight!

By Ian Harrison

**LEADERS OF the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) have finalised plans for scuttling industrial action by their members for a 35-hour week – even though the strike has yet to begin.**

Instead of mobilising their 800,000-strong membership in manufacturing industry in all-out action alongside the 12 other unions affiliated to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU), the AEU leaders are limiting the strike to seven plants belonging to four member companies of the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF).

The last strike in engineering was in 1979. Since then one million jobs have been lost in the industry and the employers have been given a clear field to increase productivity by 73 per cent. Today, the British manufacturers targeted for strike action – British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, Smith's Indus-

tries and Northern Engineering Industries – have full order books and are making record profits.

Since 1984, pressure from the rank and file for a national campaign to shorten the working week has increased, and in a series of mass meetings up and down the country over the summer, the overwhelming feeling was that the leadership should step up the action. Negotiations with the employers broke down in April, but it took the AEU leaders – Bill Jordan, Gavin Laird and Jimmy Airlie – five months to announce a ballot for strike action – and then only in a handful of plants employing just 24,000 workers.

Behind a screen of concern for their members, the AEU/CSEU leaders have used the summer months to find a formula to contain the dispute. They are calling on all engineering workers to con-

tribute an hour's pay each week towards a strike fund, and using strategically released announcements about the growth of the fund to pressurise the employers back to the negotiating table.

This is not a campaign to win the claim, but to win the moral 'high ground' in the war of words with the EEF. The right-wing engineering union leaders are committed to a 'partnership' in industry between workers and management for a 'healthy British economy'. They have no intention of leading a real fight for a 35-hour week which guarantees no loss of jobs and no productivity deals.

Some measure of the state of the AEU's leadership can be gauged from the refusal of the Stalinist Jimmy Airlie to stand in the recent election for general secretary against the incumbent right-winger Gavin Laird. In addition, Airlie refused to endorse a

left-wing candidate for the post – Keith Scotcher, a carworker at Ford's Dagenham plant and a member of the WRP/Workers Press group. Scotcher clearly announced his support for all-out action to win the 35-hour week and challenged the AEU right wing's class-collaborationist policies. However, a number of left-wing organisations, motivated by sectarianism, refused to support him, and the Stalinist *Morning Star* refused to print a letter and advert about his campaign.

Joint shop stewards' committees throughout the industry must now counter the actions of the AEU/CSEU leaders by fighting for a national strike of all engineering workers. Such a strike will necessarily be carried out in defiance of the Tory anti-union laws and employers' threats of mass redundancies. Jordan's remark at the Labour Party Conference that 'today's party is a party of law-makers, not law-breakers' shows that he clearly grasps his role in policing Tory law. An emergency conference of the Confed unions must be called to repudiate the selective action put forward by Jordan and Co, and to start the campaign to replace them with leaders who will fight for socialist policies.

## Tories harass the unemployed

By a CPSA member

THE LATEST phase of the Tory campaign to disqualify unemployed workers from receiving state benefits came into force on October 9.

Before these changes took effect, about one million people had been eliminated from the register of unemployed. These included almost all 16- to 18-year-olds, youth and adults on government training schemes, men and women over 50 who sign quarterly and men over 60.

The new Social Security Act, however, is not so much aimed at massaging the statistics as at driving thousands off unemployment benefit and income support altogether. The changes fall into three main areas.

- Under the old regulations, claimants had to state that they were 'available for work'. Now they will have to prove that they are 'actively seeking work'.

- A new clause restricts claimants to a period of between one and 13 weeks to look for work in their usual occupation. After that 'permitted period' they will be instructed to widen their search for work or have their benefit suspended.

- In the past, claimants could have their dole cut off for refusing 'suitable employment'. From October 9, refusal to take any job, regardless of the rate of pay,

becomes grounds for disqualification outside the one- to 13-week 'permitted period'.

The implications for the unemployed are clear. At every stage, from making a fresh claim, to availability 'reviews', to Restart interviews, claimants will be faced by a series of traps and minefields designed to prove that they are not 'available' for or not 'actively seeking' work, and will be dragged into taking the worst-paid, non-unionised jobs, regardless of their skills, experience or personal circumstances.

The interpretation of the new rules is so complicated that it runs to several dozen closely printed pages. But claimants will be expected to fulfil the conditions on the basis of reading an A5 leaflet handed to them when they sign on.

Many junior civil servants working in job centres and benefit offices are strongly opposed to the changes. However, a growing number of them are being diverted from benefits work into becoming new client advisers, claimant advisers and Restart counsellors, where the route to promotion will lie in zealously applying the Act to the letter.

This latest attack on the rights of the unemployed has been implemented with scarcely a murmur from the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC.



A demonstration in London against racist attacks following the stabbing of two Bengali youths

## Dewsbury 82 call for union support

By Lizzy Ali

KIRKLEES Black Workers' Caucus in Dewsbury has set up a campaign for the defence of 82 people charged with committing a variety of offences following a counter-rally in the town against the British National Party on June 24.

Known fascists who had not attended the BNP rally at which John Tyndall addressed about 150 supporters were allowed to roam the streets and congregate in the pubs of Dewsbury. They proceeded to harass and steal from Asian market traders, taunt passers-by with racist abuse and terrorise and attack families doing their shopping. The police response to these incidents was to tell the local black community they should not have been out that day!

The 800-strong crowd of anti-fascists, after being attacked by BNP supporters, was surrounded by a cordon of police and groups of fascists were allowed to hurl

insults at them. Despite the fact that the demonstrators remained unprovoked, the police decided to forcefully disperse them. They herded the anti-racists down narrow streets, wielding truncheons indiscriminately and beating people for resisting arrest.

The police eventually made 79 arrests, of whom 59 were either black or anti-racist. The figure has now reached 82 following a number of police raids on the homes of anti-racists. Draconian bail conditions on a par with the emergency regulations in South Africa have been imposed. These range from curfews and bans on attending meetings or demonstrations to the confiscation of passports, and are designed to make it impossible for defendants to campaign to clear their names.

The Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign was set up to demand the dropping of all

charges against the accused and to fight the racist actions of the police. Countless incidents of racially-motivated attacks have either been ignored or explained away as other forms of crime by the police. One example of this is the case of an Asian man who was murdered while attempting to defend his family from a racist gang barely 40 yards from Brick Lane police station in east London. The police deny the attack was racially-motivated.

The campaign demands the right for black and Asian communities to defend themselves against racist attacks. It calls for trade unions to affiliate to the campaign and support the national demonstration on October 28.

- For further details, write to: Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign, Kirklees Black Workers' Caucus, 24 Westgate, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.

## Labour votes for anti-union laws

By Jon Bearman

THE VOTE at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in favour of the section of the policy review entitled 'People at Work' confirms that a future Labour government would keep the central elements of the Tory anti-union laws introduced since 1979.

This latest act of class betrayal was prepared by a pre-conference statement drafted jointly by Michael Meacher, shadow employment spokesman, and Eddie Haigh, a leading T&GWU official and co-convenor of Labour's industrial relations review group.

In response to a successful motion at the TUC conference a few weeks earlier demanding that a future Labour government should restore all the basic democratic rights enjoyed by trade unions prior to 1979, the Labour leaders stated: 'We will not provide blanket immunity in tort. Industrial action outside the ambit of a lawful trade dispute will not enjoy immunity in tort or protection from damages.'

It was the T&GWU that proposed the motion at the TUC but now it is Ron Todd's right-hand man who has helped prepare this cowardly about-turn. Haigh was rewarded with the largest union block vote for a seat on the Labour Party NEC.

Labour Party policy is now that secondary action will still be outlawed, except where workers can demonstrate a 'genuine interest' in a dispute. What constitutes 'genuine interest' will be left to parliament and to the courts to decide, as will the

definition of a 'lawful trade dispute'. The conference also backed the Tory-imposed requirement of pre-strike ballots and a strict limitation on the size of picket lines.

As an apparent sweetener, the introduction of new courts was announced. They would consist of a judge 'with experience in industrial relations' and two lay 'assessors' – one trade unionist and one employer – who would play an advisory role. The idea of these courts is to make the judges act 'fairly' and to stop them 'inventing new torts or arbitrarily changing the definition of a trade dispute'. In fact, they are a revival of Edward Heath's infamous Industrial Relations Tribunals which were swept aside by the working class in the early 1970s.

Such is the grip of 'new realism', the concept of Labour to power at any cost and the illusion that Labour has only gained in popularity by abandoning the working class and the trade unions, that the union leaders have voted for a motion they would have considered inconceivable a few years ago.

Nobody spoke against the NEC-sponsored composite motions inspired by the policy review document. A motion demanding the repeal of all the Thatcher government's anti-union legislation found considerable support on the conference floor but was defeated, with only NUM leader Arthur Scargill and two CLP representatives speaking in favour. The

openly corporatist right wing in the shape of Bill Jordan, AEU, and Eric Hammond, EETPU, spoke with a confidence born out of the knowledge that their policies had won the day: 'These are the keys that will open the doors of No. 10 for Neil Kinnock' (Jordan) and 'The Labour Party review seeks a genuine partnership with industry' (Hammond).

If there was any confusion remaining after the conference about the employment policies of a future Labour government, it was dispelled by Michael Meacher's response to criticisms in the press. Fines on trade unions, he reiterated in *The Independent* of October 9, would be 'deterrent, sufficient to secure compliance with the law'. On picketing: 'We have repeatedly said that we would retain the current Code of Practice on peaceful picketing which limits the numbers of pickets.' On sympathy action: 'Would it be lawful for workers to refuse to handle imports from South Africa? Answer, no. Would meat porters be allowed to take action in support of nurses? Answer, no.'

■ The Tory government published a Green Paper on October 12 outlining future legislation intended to curb unofficial strikes. Along with measures to make all secondary action illegal and the complete abolition of the closed shop, the proposed Bill will open unions to heavy fines and sequestration unless union leaders repudiate unofficial action by writing to every member involved in the dispute.



# East German exodus – an indictment of Stalinism

ONE OF Stalinism's many crimes against the working class, and not the least of its contributions to the maintenance of capitalist class rule, is the discredit it has brought to the name of socialism.

The spectacle of thousands of workers and their families abandoning the 'socialist' German Democratic Republic for the capitalist West has provided a more effective piece of anti-communist propaganda than anything Tory Central Office could come up with. By the end of the year, well over 100,000 East German citizens – most of them younger skilled workers whose loss will make a significant impact on the GDR's economy – will have joined the mass exodus.

This wave of emigration has been cynically encouraged by the right-wing coalition which governs the West German Federal Republic. The offer of West German passports, 200 Deutschmarks 'welcome money', jobs and housing to the fugitive East Germans has clearly not been the result of simple humanitarianism. The West German bourgeoisie has grasped an opportunity to recruit from the GDR the skilled manual and professional workers required by the Federal Republic's economy, while at the same time stepping up its political offensive against 'communism'. As hawkish statements by Christian Democrat leaders have indicated, they hope

By Bob Pitt

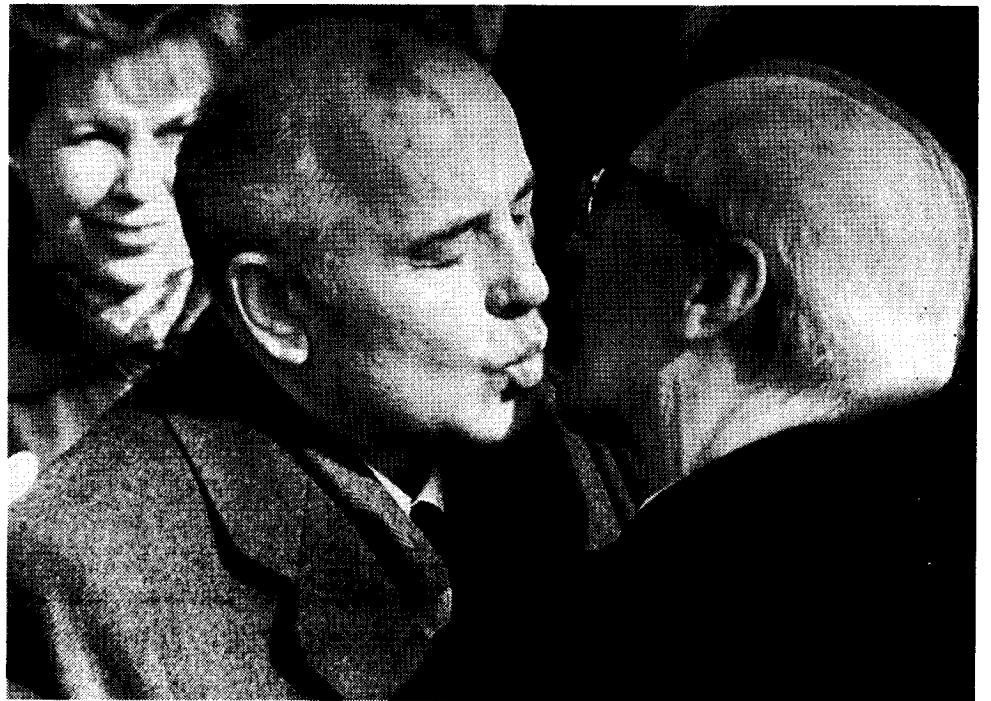
the destabilisation of the GDR will force the Stalinists into making concessions that will pave the way to the reunification of Germany on a capitalist basis.

Nor was the decision by the Hungarian government on September 10 to allow the free passage of some 20,000 East German refugees an exercise in pure altruism. With elections imminent, Hungary's Stalinist politicians were eager to advertise their new-found liberal credentials to the electorate. Perhaps more important, the decision gave a boost to their strategy of establishing closer economic links with the capitalist world. Within days of the refugees crossing the border into Austria, the successful negotiation of a major bank loan from West Germany was announced.

Although the East German bureaucracy angrily denounced the emigrants as dupes of an imperialist conspiracy against the GDR, the regime was forced to make compromises in a vain attempt to resolve the crisis. At the beginning of October, under political pressure from Moscow, Stalinist leader Erich Honecker authorised the departure of thousands more refugees holed up in West Germany's embassies in Prague and Warsaw. Unfortunately for Honecker, this only prompted a further

influx of East Germans into Czechoslovakia, and the GDR government had to move quickly to close the border. The face-saving formula requiring the refugees to pass through the GDR on their way into exile also backfired, as the railways were besieged by would-be emigrants hoping to jump the trains carrying refugees to the West. Even some of the Stalinists have been forced to admit that the desperation of such vast numbers of young people to escape from 'socialism' cannot be explained away as a capitalist plot.

The motivation for this mass defection is in part economic. The GDR's economy has been the most successful in Eastern Europe, but in recent years growth has slowed. Although the central planning of production has spared East German workers the scourge of unemployment, living standards have probably stagnated, and are certainly much lower than those enjoyed by skilled workers in the Federal Republic. Emigrants drawn to West Germany by elementary greed, however, may well find that capitalism contains some unpleasant surprises. West German employers are trying to take advantage of the new arrivals by enticing them into jobs with inferior pay and conditions, while many of the down-and-outs in the Federal Republic's major cities are reportedly former East German re-



Kissing cousins: East German leader Erich Honecker greets Mikhail Gorbachev as he arrives in East Berlin for the GDR's 40th anniversary celebrations

fugees.

But the readiness of so many East Germans to risk an uncertain future abroad probably owes as much to the deadening influence of Stalinism on political and intellectual life in the GDR. The contempt of the ruling Socialist Unity Party for the workers in whose name they exercise power is revealed in the crude propaganda of the government-controlled media, and in the blatant rigging of the May elections, the official result of which

was a 98.85 per cent vote for continued rule by the Stalinists. It is not surprising that many East Germans have given up on the prospect of changing this politically corrupt regime and have chosen exile instead.

The freedom of workers to settle in a country of their own choice is a principle which must be defended. But the individual road of emigration to the West offers no solution to the working class in the GDR. Rather, it

is the organisation of collective resistance to Stalinism which points the way forward. The mass anti-government demonstrations in the GDR's major cities have already shaken the regime. To resolve the present political crisis in its own interests, the East German working class must take up the Trotskyist programme of political revolution, which calls for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and for the establishment of genuine workers' democracy.

## Hawke mounts scabbing operation against pilots

LABOUR Prime Minister Bob Hawke has joined forces with the employers in a crusade to smash the Australian Federation of Air Pilots.

The pilots, who fly domestic air services, demanded a 30 per cent pay increase and began a work to rule in August. The airline companies responded by locking them out and the pilots resigned en masse. The employers then issued Supreme Court writs for damages against individual pilots and Hawke declared a 'war' to the end. He immediately ordered eight Royal Australian Air Force planes into service and allowed international airlines to carry passengers on internal flights for the first time. He has given total backing to the airlines' efforts to recruit pilots and cabin crew from South Africa, Britain, Europe (including Stalinist states) and the United States, declaring: 'The airline operations will be restored without these people.' But the international scabbing operation has had little success and American pilots have been picketing the Australian embassy.

In an attempt to isolate the pilots from other workers, Hawke has described them as 'greedy grabbers' and 'highly-paid bus drivers' who are trying to wreck the Australian economy. Labour's 'monetarist' Treasurer, Paul Keating,

By Daniel Evans

told a gathering of concerned American bankers: 'The pilots' federation is not a trade union. It is a rogue professional body, and it is being treated with the same kind of contempt that the air traffic controllers were treated by the Reagan administration in the United States.'

The government is compensating the three main domestic airlines – Ansett, jointly owned by the TNT transport empire and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation; East-West, an Ansett subsidiary; and the government-owned Australian Airlines. The deal involves at least A\$100 million cash and, to cover the cost of keeping 21,000 other employees on their staff, the suspension of airport landing charges.

This has brought angry demands for compensation from other employers. Australia's biggest foreign currency earner is the tourist industry which is losing A\$35 million a day. Nearly 15,000 workers in the industry have been laid off, and 300,000 tourists a week are being lost.

But there are much bigger things at stake in this dispute which explain the fury of the right-wing Labour administration. With inflation run-

ning at 7.6 per cent, the government has a wages pact with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) limiting pay rises to 6 per cent. 'If Australia was to cop a 30 per cent increase to the pilots, the whole wage system would break down and the economy would be fractured irreparably. I am not going to allow that to happen,' says Hawke.

The ACTU leadership has stood shoulder to shoulder with Hawke throughout the dispute and when arbitration talks collapsed Bill Kelty, ACTU secretary, announced at the congress at the end of September: 'They are not after an olive branch. They are after an olive tree.' But the leadership failed to stop motions at the congress condemning the government for the use of the air force, for compensating the airlines and for orchestrating the scabbing operation.

In complete contrast to the militancy of the pilots, their own leaders have pulled out all the stops to limit and end the dispute. They are seeking to persuade pilots to accept a lower pay rise and are offering the airlines increased productivity in advance of the 'deregulation' of domestic routes due in November 1990.

Australian capitalism is in extremely bad health. Record trade deficits have given it the third highest foreign debt in the world and interest rates are a crippling 20 per cent. The Labour government has declared its intention to 'restructure' industry. Savage productivity deals, wage cuts, unemployment and union busting will be the hallmarks of this endeavour. A decisive confrontation between the working class and the capitalist state moves closer and closer.

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### Rise of Norway's right

THE SEPTEMBER general election in Norway saw the emergence of the extreme right wing as a significant force. A sluggish economy and a high, for Norway, unemployment rate created the conditions for the Progress Party under Carl Hagen to increase its representation in the 165-seat parliament from two to 22 seats. Underlining the polarisation which has taken place, the Left Socialists gained 11 seats to take their total to 17.

Hagen calls for lower taxation, the cutting of welfare benefits, an end to immigration and the introduction of a wholly market-orientated

economy. But for many older workers, the sight of Hagen's activists in their white uniform boilersuits evokes memories of the Quisling-directed Norwegian ski battalions who fought alongside the Nazis in the Second World War.

The rise of the Progress Party has been assisted by the policies of the outgoing minority Labour government under Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland. Wages were frozen and unemployment driven up to 4.2 per cent in an attempt to offset the slump in world oil prices. It also made heavy cuts in the health and welfare services.

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## EDITORIAL

## The president's new clothes

**DURING HIS tenure as vice-president under Ronald Reagan, George Bush found the intellectual level of an administration, the predominant ideological influence on which was fundamentalist Christianity, something of an embarrassment.**

Provoked into making what is probably the only witty remark ever attributed to him, Bush commented sourly that he sometimes felt he was the only member of the Reagan administration who had only been born once. In an attempt to cultivate a more sophisticated intellectual tone to his own presidency, Bush and his advisers have enthusiastically promoted an essay on political 'theory' by one Francis Fukuyama, deputy director of the State Department's policy planning staff.

Entitled 'The End of History', Fukuyama's essay claims to draw its inspiration from Hegel's idealist philosophy. It does so only in the sense that Fukuyama discards the rational kernel of Hegelianism in order to fit his argument into its mystical shell. In opposition to 'materialism' (he conspicuously fails to mention the Marxist analysis of historical change as based on the development of the forces and relations of production), Fukuyama presents a vulgarised Hegelian interpretation of conflicting ideologies as the motor of history.

He takes as his text Hegel's thesis that with Napoleon's defeat of Prussia at the Battle of Jena in 1806 the ultimate victory of the principles of the French Revolution was secured, and history, as a process of ideological contradiction, came to an end. Fukuyama argues that Hegel was essentially correct. The claims of rival ideologies having proved to be hollow, history has culminated in 'the unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism'. It is a victory, he admits, which has 'occurred primarily in the realm of ideas and is as yet incomplete in the real or material world'. As Fukuyama includes South Korea among the nations where the principles of 'liberalism' have triumphed, this is clearly a necessary qualification to his argument.

Fukuyama identifies the two main ideological challenges to liberalism as fascism and Marxism. The former, he asserts, 'completely lost its appeal' after the Allied victory in 1945 - a judgement which blithely ignores the material roots of fascism in the crisis of capitalism, not to mention the increased vote for extreme right-wing nationalist parties in recent European elections. But the main thrust of his argument is, needless to say, directed against Marxism.

Here Fukuyama is not hampered by any deep understanding of his subject. For example, he claims that Marx, too, anticipated that history would come to an end, at the point where 'a communist utopia that would finally resolve all prior contradictions' was established. (Marx, in fact, held that with the achievement of a classless, communist society - he rejected the notion of utopia - the *prehistory* of humanity would end, and a truly human history, free of those contradictions arising from class conflict, would begin). Secure in his own ignorance, Fukuyama is able to portray political developments in the Soviet Union and China as representing, not the crisis of Stalinism, but the death throes of 'Marxism-Leninism' in its role as 'a living ideology of world historical significance'.

If Marxism is dying in the East, according to Fukuyama 'the class struggle has been resolved in the West'. The end of history, it seems, has been accompanied by an end to conflict between Labour and Capital. This view would possibly appear less than convincing to US miners who are currently battling their employers, company thugs and the forces of the capitalist state in the Virginia coalfield. Even more bizarre is Fukuyama's claim that the 'egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisaged by Marx', and that such economic inequalities as still exist are merely 'the legacy of a preliberal past'. Given that Fukuyama regards the victory of liberalism in America as having taken place in 1776 (conveniently forgetting that slavery existed for almost 90 years after the Declaration of Independence), perhaps the homeless masses struggling to survive on the streets of the USA's wealthiest cities can console themselves with the thought that their plight is not a consequence of 'economic liberalism', but rather a historical hangover from rule by the British monarchy.

Fukuyama accepts that not all conflicts have been eradicated from the world, for 'terrorism and wars of national liberation' will persist in those societies still mired in preliberalism. No doubt 'post-historical' nations like the United States will continue their efforts to impose 'liberal' values on these backward peoples. But with the collapse of convincing economic and political alternatives to liberalism the world will become, frankly, a rather uninspiring place. Ideological struggle will be replaced by 'economic calculations, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands'. The end of history, Fukuyama writes regretfully, opens up the prospect of 'centuries of boredom'!

It seems almost unbelievable that this gibberish can be taken seriously, yet Fukuyama's essay has been serialised in *The Independent* and has received respectful comment from political pundits like Peter Jenkins and Neal Ascherson. Contrary to Fukuyama's thesis, his article, together with the mindlessly uncritical response it has evoked, only serve to demonstrate the utter decay of bourgeois political thought, 'liberal' or otherwise. This ideological degeneration itself reflects the crisis of capitalism as a historically outmoded form of production. In its day, during the period of capitalism's ascendancy, Hegelianism represented a heroic attempt to grasp objective truth. Now, in the epoch of capitalist decline, philosophy repeats itself as farce.

## Class war in

VIRGINIA miners on strike against the Pittston Coal Company marched at the head of New York City's annual Labor Day Parade. Confident and determined to see the struggle through to the end, wherever they go the miners have become symbols of the labour movement fight-back against company and government union-busting.

Over the last five years, Pittston Coal has laid off four out of six thousand union employees while simultaneously transferring control over new coal reserves into the hands of non-union subsidiaries and landholding companies. In 1987, following its withdrawal from the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA) which negotiates contracts with the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), Pittston said it would not renew the existing UMWA contract due to expire on January 31, 1988. Although union miners continued working while negotiations continued, the company immediately cut off all health care benefits for 1,500 retired and disabled miners and miners' widows, as well as stopping pension contributions for miners who were still working.

Under the old contract, when coal reserves were exhausted or mines were sold, the laid-off miners would be first in line for positions in new mines or vacancies in existing mines. Even though this arrangement actually saved the company money (there was a trained workforce ready and waiting to go to new jobs), Pittston said it 'needed flexibility' and the demand was now impossible. In other words, management would rather employ young, untrained workers who would need less costly health care and who were years further away from retirement. Pittston bosses have said they want to 'take back management at the mines', i.e. they don't want to be restricted by a union in any way. Their 'bargaining' proposals included loss of the basic eight-hour day and the right to operate the mines seven days a week and on all holidays. The company would be able to work some miners as little as a couple of hours, three days a week and others as much as 14 hours a day, seven days a week. (At present, the company's non-union miners work a basic eight-hour day.)

On November 9, 1988,

**Miners at the Pittston Coal Company in Virginia have been on strike for over six months for union contracts. Suzy Allen reports on a crucial struggle for the US labour movement**

replace workers engaged in a purely economic strike, the UMWA leadership cited Pittston's repeated violation of labour laws as the immediate reason for the walk-out. In March, the company had been charged by the National Labor Relations Board with violating federal law. Its illegal labour practices included subcontracting work usually performed by UMWA members to non-union employees, and the changing of miners' work schedules, forcing men to work overtime. Pittston was also charged with refusing to negotiate a settlement of the dispute by abandoning arbitration over a seven-month period.

Action has taken the form of a series of large-scale, peaceful demonstrations in which miners and their families have held sit-downs in front of mine entrances, blocking coal trucks and frustrating attempts to bring in scabs. In the second week of the strike there was a massive crackdown by the

of Virginia. The almost weekly occurrence of deaths of individual miners due to unsafe working conditions, who are electrocuted or trapped underground when a mine roof caves in, are barely mentioned in local newspapers.

Meanwhile, in this strike more than 2,500 union demonstrators have been arrested, 95 per cent for blocking traffic or contempt of court. And Pittston has recourse to a number of law firms who specialise in advising company managements on how to break unions. John Duray, editor of the *United Mine Workers Journal*, explained how the union interviewed a former partner of such an outfit who described its tactics straight down the line: 'Incite violence, get someone to throw a rock or start a fight, pull out the video cameras, film it and take it to the judge.'

In July, a Congressional committee which conducted an investigation into the strike issued a report that found that US labour laws were unfairly balanced against workers, and that there were no effective and immediate legal remedies for working people under the law. John Duray: 'If one worker throws one rock, there are eight different legal sanctions that come into play almost immediately, but if the company cuts off illegally the health benefits of 15,000 retired miners, widows and disabled miners, it goes to court and there may be remedies five or six years down the road.' Though this will come as no surprise to any worker anywhere in the world, the fact that such an admission has been forced out of a government body is a tribute to the militancy of rank-and-file UMWA members and their families.

Pittston's output is now about one-third of the amount of coal it produced before the strike. This is being achieved by non-union labour, protected by a hired army of several hundred private security guards and 400 state police. Business as strikebreakers is booming for armed security firms in the United States. Vance International Security, hired by Pittston, is run by a former secret service agent. A Vance brochure says the company's guards are armed with 'assault rifles or shotguns, gas masks, tear gas munitions, counter-sniper equipment, intrusion detection devices, special illumination devices, armored vehicles and K-9 teams'. The pickets, of course, are banned by a court order from carrying guns.

Despite widespread knowledge of the systematic campaign of harassment, intimidation and brutality being carried out by Vance goons and state troopers, it is the miners who have been found guilty of violence. In the same month that the Congressional committee produced its report, a Virginia judge fined the union \$4.5 million for 'acts of terror' in the coalfields. A different story is suggested



State police break up a union sit-down

Talks between the company and the UMWA continued from February 1988 right through to the summer of 1989, although it was June of this year before Pittston sent to the bargaining table an official with the authority to reach an agreement. Clearly the company had no intention of reaching any kind of compromise.

The two basic issues in the dispute are medical and retirement benefits and job security. Whereas the old UMWA contract offered a health plan which covered 100 per cent of miners' medical expenses, Pittston now requires miners to pay an annual \$400 plus 20 per cent of medical expenses up to \$1,000. Pittston has also abandoned the UMWA Health and Retirement Fund - a multi-employer pension plan which protected miners who moved from one company to another. Pittston has set up its own scheme. It has also ended the agreement which gives miners the right to a job at other mines of the same employer - and which the union wanted to extend to all mines of the Pittston empire.

Pittston declared that its offer was non-negotiable and that it refused to participate in any further discussions. A series of protest tactics on the part of the union - including a work-to-rule in the mines, a request that Pittston shareholders put pressure on management and a national publicity campaign - brought the company back to the negotiating table but with nothing more on offer. The union leadership had set a strike date of January 31, 1989 - fully one year after the contract had expired, and seen as yet another form of 'pressure'. When it looked as if the strike would have to go ahead, UMWA president Richard Trumka was persuaded by the governors of Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia to initiate a 30- to 60-day 'cooling-off' period while further discussions took place. Again, the company refused to budge.

On April 5, 1989, after 14 months off contract, up to 2,000 UMWA members in Virginia and parts of West Virginia were called out on strike. Since US law allows employers to permanently

PHOTO: JOSEPH W. CORCORAN, JR

state police (sent into the coalfields by their hundreds by the government of Virginia since January 1988) who started hauling people away and throwing them into jail just for being on the picket line. Several were injured and hospitalised and others were handcuffed and threatened with loaded shotguns. A public outcry following a series of pictures in the local press showing rough treatment of demonstrators forced the police to clean up their act.

The government was not to be thwarted, however, and in late April and May, injunctions were issued against the union by the state and federal courts banning demonstrations at picket lines (i.e. restricting the number of pickets). Violation of these injunctions would bring the union a \$500,000 fine for the first day and a doubling of the amount for each successive day of 'civil disobedience'. When, in 1983, seven miners were killed in an explosion at Pittston's McClure No. 1 mine, the company was fined just \$47,000 by federal officials and nothing by the state

4 25 '88



# south-west Virginia

by a *New York Times* report in September which included details of a union member shot in the arm and hospitalised for a week and a scab arrested and charged with attempted murder after carrying a union miner 50 feet in the bucket of a coal loader after driving the vehicle through a blockade.

By June, Pittston was claiming to have made 'substantial compromises' (which consisted of partially restoring the health benefits which it had illegally withdrawn from the retired and disabled 17 months previously), and said it would put into action, without further discussion, a modified version of the November 1988 proposal. Although the union called for a renewed negotiating effort, Pittston refused. The governor of West Virginia offered to mediate between the two parties in 'continuous talks until a settlement is reached'. The union accepted, Pittston remained silent. Talks were, however, resumed in July, at the request of federal judge Glen Williams, but with Pittston management refusing to sit in the same room as union representatives. In return for company acceptance of certain job security clauses, the union leaders offered to give in to demands for Sunday working. Management, clearly sensing even greater concessions if it held out, called this 'nothing new' and made no suggestions of its own.

Then, in the middle of the month, a series of unofficial strikes at other coal companies broke out in support of the Pittston miners. The wildcat spread rapidly throughout the coalfields of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama as rank-and-file miners instinctively sought the best means of defeating Pittston's union-busting plans. It was not directed or approved by the UMWA leadership and union president Richard



Virginia state police move in to arrest miners staging a sit-down outside the McClure River preparation plant

PHOTO: MILDRED DEEL

Trumka requested union members at other companies to return to work.

Pittston has said publicly that it's prepared to take a two-year strike. But the company is already losing money: its coalmining division, once the jewel in the corporate crown, is in deep trouble. International working class action in support of the miners has had its effect. Pittston is the second-largest coal exporter in the US and a leading supplier of metallurgical coal to the steel industry in Japan. In the first week of the strike, Australian mineworkers announced that they would not make up any shortfalls experienced by the Japanese. Consequently, the Japanese steel-makers are seeking new contracts elsewhere and Pittston is losing customers as well as money.

If they are to press home

their advantage, the Pittston strikers must extend the action beyond the company's 20 or so union operations in south-western Virginia. The wildcat showed that miners throughout the US recognise the importance for them of this dispute. But the strike policy of the UMWA leadership is one of a long war of attrition, fought with the weapons of civil disobedience, weekend solidarity camps and a public relations campaign directed at shareholders, outside directors and other 'decent' capitalists.

The strikers are receiving massive financial and moral support from other trade unionists. They must fight in every union local to turn this into national strike action by all mineworkers against the coal bosses, the courts and the government's labour laws.

## Fight on two fronts

MINERS ON strike in Virginia for over six months at Pittston Coal are fighting a war on two fronts - against the attempt by the company to close down the union side of its operations, and against their own union leaders' determination to prevent the strike from spreading.

The right-wing bureaucracy of the United Mine Workers of America, headed by president Richard Trumka and vice-president Cecil Roberts, has from the start confined the campaign to attacking the company's 'unfair' labour practices and its lack of moral scruples. Much is made of the fact that Pittston unilaterally removed the union-backed health plan

and that retired and disabled miners, and miners' widows, had their benefits withdrawn. Everything that the UMWA leaders have organised has been directed towards convincing 'liberal' shareholders and Democratic politicians to bring pressure to bear on the company's board of directors to back down, and to presenting themselves as the genuine American patriots best able to manage the capitalist system.

Their practice in the coalfield has been to lead a series of stunts designed to assure miners and their families that the conduct of the strike can be safely left to their leaders. When 17 leaders of the US trade union federation, the AFL-CIO, including president Lane Kirkland, turned up at a demonstration outside a courthouse in Russell County with the aim of being arrested, Roberts greeted them - for the benefit of the 1,500 miners present - with the words 'Welcome to class warfare in south-west Virginia.' But his sights are set, not on winning the class war, but on assisting a Democratic administration into the White House which, he hopes, will treat the labour leaders as equal partners with management in running industry. His modest ambition is that the union leaders should have a little more 'economic leverage'. 'The country needs desperately labor law reform that will at least level the playing field,' he said in an interview with the *Bristol Herald Courier*.

Mike Odam, the head of Pittston's coal group, is explicit both about the company's anti-union drive and the economic reasons behind it: 'Two-thirds of our total production goes outside the US to the world steel industry and we have to compete with every company in the world on tons and price.'

'When you are out trying to sell a lump of coal abroad, the first thing the customer asks you is: "Is it union or

non-union?" If it's union, well, it's clear they think that's not a reliable source.'

In this situation, to suggest that the way ahead lies in persuading corporate investors to withdraw their funds from Pittston-connected companies is a conscious, counter-revolutionary betrayal of the miners and the whole working class.

If this needed underlining, it would only be necessary to look at the UMWA leadership's role in crushing every attempt by rank-and-file miners to widen the dispute. When miners took unofficial action across the US in June, they were immediately denounced by Trumka as being a threat to the success of his public relations campaign. Though he was forced to endorse the strikes when the numbers involved reached between 40 and 50 thousand, he called them off on July 14 on the pretext that Pittston was about to make concessions. In the event, it was the union leaders who offered to make concessions. In the latest act of sabotage, Trumka and Roberts have called off the occupation by 98 miners of one of Pittston's coal preparation plants. While state police and US federal marshals held back, fearing that a head-on confrontation would fan the flames of the dispute, Roberts himself went into the plant and led the miners out behind an American flag.

If they are to deal with the Pittston bosses, Virginia miners must mount a direct challenge to the Trumka leadership and the AFL-CIO, and wage a campaign in every coalfield for a national miners' strike. They must turn to the Eastern Airlines machinists, the NYNEX telephone engineers and every other section of workers under attack to launch a joint struggle against union-busting. Above all, they must start the fight to build a revolutionary socialist leadership in the US labour movement.



Pittston miners picket the company's headquarters in Greenwich, Connecticut

PHOTO: ELAINE OSOWSKI

TO MARK the anniversary of the Russian revolution, we reprint an article by the South Wales Marxist Noah Ablett originally published in the Merthyr Tydfil labour paper *The Pioneer* in August 1918. It is a reply to an editorial which, reflecting the predominant ILP influence on the paper, had argued that the Bolsheviks' repudiation of parliamentary democracy had alienated the sympathies of 'British Socialists', making it impossible to defend the revolutionary government against imperialist military intervention and domestic counter-revolution. In answering this mealy-mouthed reformism, Ablett mounts a stirring defence of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Noah Ablett (1883-1935) was a prominent figure in the pre-Communist revolutionary movement in Britain. A leading militant in the South Wales Miners Federation, he was an organiser of the Marxist education movement promoted by the Plebs League and Central Labour College, and a forceful advocate of a syndicalist strategy which sought to expropriate the capitalist class by industrial rather than political action. This strategy received its most famous exposition in 'The Miners' Next Step' (1912), of which Ablett was part-author.

It was South Wales miners trained in this tradition of syndicalist militancy and independent working class education who provided an important industrial base for the Communist Party of Great Britain after its foundation in 1920. Ablett himself, however, proved unable to break from the old methods of syndicalism and propagandism, and failed to embrace the revolutionary politics of the Communist International. Demoralised by the miners' defeat which followed the Black Friday betrayal in 1921, Ablett increasingly found refuge in alcohol, and from then on ceased to be a significant force in the movement.

The article reprinted here reflects in part Ablett's inability to grasp the central lessons of the Russian Revolution. Applauding the Bolsheviks for establishing 'proletarian control of industry', he ignores the fact that they built a revolutionary party which led a political struggle to establish a workers' state. Nevertheless, in his open support for the dictatorship of the proletariat against reformist illusions in bourgeois democracy, Ablett certainly stood much closer to Bolshevism than some of those, in South Wales and elsewhere, who masquerade as 'Communists' today.



Noah Ablett

## Noah Ablett's defence of the October revolution

WHEN I read the leading article in the *Pioneer* last week my temperature went up about 100 degrees . . . Now let us briefly reason this matter out . . . Two revolutions have occurred in Russia, the first a capitalist revolution (though effected by the proletariat), and the second a socialist revolution. In the second revolution the land and the means of production were seized by the workers. There is no parallel to this in the history of the world.

The capitalists of every country - Germany or Britain - cannot be expected to like that second revolution.

The Allied Powers have now succeeded in lulling labour opinion, so that only a feeble protest is heard against the expeditionary force on the Murman coast. Indeed, some labour leaders are hailing that force, and the Czechoslovak counter-revolutionary forces, as an attempt to help Russia. They don't say which Russia, but they don't mean Bolshevik Russia, which the Editor, like myself, fears will be crushed by capitalist governments. Crushed because it is the first attempt to establish proletarian control of industry. How will it be crushed? By the 'counter-revolution,

in which the Bolsheviks will have to face the armed powers of their fellow-countrymen (landowners, capitalists, etc), strengthened by a large measure of support from the capitalist parties of Europe'.

It is in these circumstances that the Editor chooses to announce that the British Socialists have lost faith in the Bolsheviks because 'the Constituent Assemblies were not forthcoming'. If he represents British Socialism, then so much the worse for such socialism. I, for one, at least will hail the Bolshevik Revolution (not the merely anti-Czar revolution) as the

most glorious event in the history of the working class of the world. Constituent Assemblies, forsooth! Because in this country we are soaked in capitalist parliamentary government and capitalist municipal bodies disguised by the presence of a few Labour members as the 'public powers'; because of this are we to lose faith and withhold active support from workers who, faced with the most terrible realities, grapple in an original way with their difficulties?

What are the difficulties of the Bolsheviks? They are threatened on every hand by the bloodbath of a counter-

revolution. What are they accused of? Of retaining power by the use of armed force. How strange! Why don't they allow Constituent Assemblies to dissolve their armed power, and so delight the hearts of British Socialists? Are there no British Socialists who realise that socialism means that private property in land and means of production must be eliminated? That there is one place on earth where this has been done - Bolshevik Russia. And must we now quarrel and refuse to support our fellow workers who, faced with an armed counter-revolution, refuse to allow

votes to replace effective resistance to the bloodthirsty dispossessed? Would the South Wales miners . . . agree to dissolve a strike by a public vote of consumers?

The Bolsheviks have to provide food for the people; they have to prevent a counter-revolution; up to now they have done so. While I believe the Social Revolution must be international, yet the Bolsheviks are holding the mirror to us as to how it will be achieved. Let no word of ours daunt these glorious pioneers, and I hope I shall never see such a word in the South Wales *Pioneer* again.

## Will the real Idris Cox stand up?



South Wales hunger marchers, October 1932

THE OBITUARIES of Idris Cox (Hywel Davies, 'Coalfield Radical', in *The Guardian*, 30th June 1989, and Tony Heath in *The Independent*, 30th June) who died on the 25th June this year serve to remind us, not only of the direct access of the Communist Party to the Liberal media, but also of the continued need for this party to glorify its unpleasant past and to mythologise the obedient servants who were to blame for much of it.

Cox, who was a full-time official for the Communist Party for 42 years and knew on which side his bread was buttered if anyone ever did, was the most dedicated prop-

By Al Richardson

ponent of the official 'line' who ever filled a post, whatever that might have been at any given moment. In 1929 he was on the Political Bureau carrying on a vigorous campaign against the 'Right Deviation', for such was the word from Moscow in full cry after Bukharin. He spoke at the party congress in favour of pulling out of the National Minority Movement and killing it off, and if there was no-one intelligent enough in the CPGB to be a real live Bukharinist, that was no fault of his. Albert Inkpin and others would have to do.

When the Third Period became old hat and the turn was towards the Popular Front he next appears with orders to subordinate the National Unemployed Workers Movement to the organisation of the TUC - even if that meant its liquidation.

Then came the Second World War, and here was the opportunity for turns whose intricacy would delight a formation team dancer. When the seat of Cardiff East was up for a by-election and the Tory candidate was the Minister for War, Sir James Grigg, the seat was contested by the ILP, for Labour refused to stand under the coalition no-contest pact. There Cox campaigned for Grigg against Brockway under the slogan 'A Vote for Brockway Is a

Vote for Hitler', claiming on his leaflet that it was a 'far better vote for Sir James Grigg, the honest capitalist, than a false Socialist'. He then went on to complain to the local press that whilst the Tories welcomed the support of the CP, they were 'reluctant to work in active co-operation with the Communists'. That did not prevent Cox, in his capacity as head of the Communist Party's anti-colonial work, from turning up at Brockway's birthday celebrations many years later and fawning on him.

But then, Cox was nothing if not thick-skinned. As he admitted during a discussion of the Communist Party's somersaulting in 1939, 'in the eyes of ordinary people the biggest negative feature in our Communist attitude was in the first year (i.e. of the war - A.S.R.) and before the Soviet Union was involved, when many people felt that we would only fight against Fascism when the Soviet Union came under attack. It was a big political problem for us, and this was used against us for many years during and after the Second World War'.

Such a track record leaves you in utter bewilderment as to whether the chap described by Heath and Davies is the same fellow. If you have to do that to become part of a 'legendary band of heroes' (Heath) and a 'coalfield radical' (Davies), what do you have to do to become a coalfield sycophant?

## 'New realism' at work

'I'M PLEASED to see that there's a realisation that we can't return to the heady days of 1979.'

The voice outside the Labour Party Conference in Brighton was that of the former research officer of the South Wales NUM, Kim Howells. He was commenting - along with EETPU leader Eric Hammond - on the section of the party's policy document which commits a future Labour government to retaining important features of the Tory anti-union laws.

That the former Communist Party member - now a Labour MP - should emerge

as one of the most strident advocates of class collaboration is the natural extension of his role during the miners' strike of 1984-85.

Howells accurately gauged the mood of the reformist and Stalinist NUM bureaucracy as it grew increasingly conservative and defeatist. He was credited by the Labour leadership as having found the formula which ended the dispute - 'returning to work with heads held high' - and was subsequently rewarded with the safe Pontypridd constituency.

His usefulness to Kinnock lay in the fact that, unlike the

NUM leadership, he could openly promote the 'realistic' assessment that the strike couldn't be won. Though only one of many reactionary influences bearing down on the miners, Howells exemplified the gut reaction of Labour's right wing to the problem of re-election - that it had to distance itself from the organised working class if it was to win votes from the Tories. What he was hailing at Brighton on October 4 was the institution of this view as official Labour Party policy.

The miners have already paid a heavy price for the 1984-85 betrayal. Nationally, 97 pits have closed since the

strike ended, leaving only 76 in operation, with a reduction in the workforce from 221,000 to 88,000.

In South Wales, the closure of three more pits at the end of August with the loss of 1,600 jobs brought the total down to six pits employing about 3,400 miners. In March 1985, 20,000 miners were employed in 28 pits.

But this Tory onslaught on one of the historic centres of militant trade unionism has only been accomplished with the help of a fifth column of Stalinists and right-wing Labourites. It is the genuine face of Labour's 'new realism'.



# Stalinist treachery in Southeast Asia

IN THE WAKE of the June 4 massacre in Tiananmen Square, the military wing of Thailand's coalition government is strengthening relations with the Stalinist bureaucracies in Beijing and Moscow. At the same time it is carrying out a complex series of manoeuvres intended to draw Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam back into the imperialist camp.

The leading figures in this intense round of diplomatic activity are Thailand's Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Chatichai Choonhavan, and his close associate Chaovalit Yongchaiyat, supreme commander of the armed forces. Approaches to neighbouring Stalinist countries have been made, in Chatichai's own words, 'to turn Indochina from a battlefield into a trading market'. Chaovalit expressed himself in a somewhat more flowery fashion: 'The Thai armed forces will strive to create a durable peace... for the development of economic co-operation, solidarity and prosperity in this Suwanaphume [golden land] - with Thailand at its centre.'

To bolster this image of peace blossoming throughout Southeast Asia, Chatichai has offered to provide technical and skills training for the 300,000 Cambodian

In the first of two articles on the betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution by Stalinism, Ian Harrison looks at the relationship between the Chinese leadership and Thailand's bourgeois-military regime

refugees living in camps in the east of Thailand before they return home. And, in August, Chaovalit proposed that Thailand's 37-year-old anti-communist legislation should be scrapped since the few hundred remaining members of the Thai Communist Party were very well behaved and reported to their local police stations once a week - model citizens of a new and developing democracy.

But behind the mask of peace and goodwill lies a different reality. Internally, the Thai military clique is consolidating its grip on the reins of power. In May the generals established a war-reserve stockpile of military hardware under the terms of the Thai-US security pact. The army has been comprehensively modernised with weaponry obtained from China at 'friendship prices', including tanks and a squadron of aircraft. Further purchases from the United States have given it the capacity to launch an invasion with air cover through

neighbouring Laos and Vietnam, which would divide them rapidly in half.

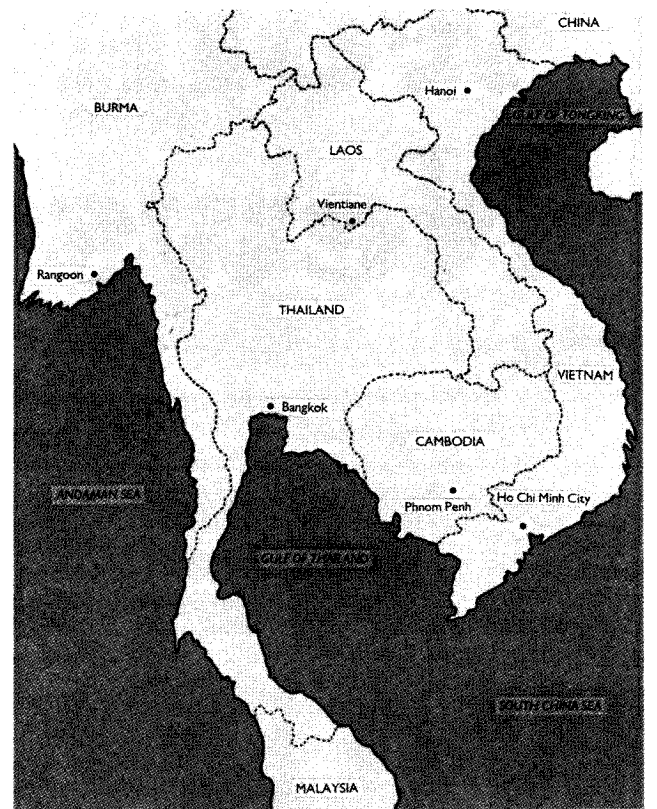
The Thai bourgeoisie has been given a new lease of life and prepared for a highly reactionary role in Southeast Asia by US and Japanese imperialism. But the conditions for this were created by the treacherous policies of the Stalinist bureaucrats in Beijing and Moscow.

In 1975, the anti-imperialist struggles led by the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian Communist Parties inflicted powerful defeats on US imperialism and the native bourgeoisies. In Thailand, student radicalism and a growth in the Communist Party (with an estimated 15,000 guerrillas under arms), together with the presence of Burmese and Malaysian Communist Party guerrillas in the western and southern provinces, threatened the stable rule of the bourgeoisie. Chatichai Choonhavan, then Foreign Minister and army commander in his predecessor's government, went to Beijing for

help. Alarmed by the success of the anti-imperialist struggles which it feared would lead to the Moscow Stalinists dominating the region, the Beijing bureaucracy threw out a life-line to the Thai bourgeoisie and progressively reduced its aid to the Thai Communist Party.

The Vietnamese Stalinists also played a role in sealing the fate of the Thai Communist Party. During a visit to Malaysia in September 1978, a representative of the Vietnamese government, Pham Van Dong, visited the monument to troops killed suppressing the Communist Party-led uprising after the Second World War, and laid a wreath. He went on to assure the Thai government that Vietnam would not support the Thai CP's liberation struggle in any way. By the mid-1980s the Thai CP was defeated, together with the students and the middle-class radical opposition.

However, anti-US sentiment remained and was nurtured by the bourgeoisie for its own ends in an increasingly stable political environment. The exploitation of Thailand as a source of raw materials for US imperialism motivated sections of the industrial bourgeoisie and the present ruling military clique to distance themselves from the US. Instead they looked for support from the Japanese, Taiwanese and



South Korean bourgeoisie who faced rising labour costs at home. Today, Thailand's economy is experiencing a mini-boom which has grown at the rate of 10 per cent per year for the last two years.

The Thai government has seized every opportunity to play a leading role in 'stabilising' the region by eliminating any potential opposition. Following his previous success in negotiating the liquidation of one faction of the Malaysian CP, assisted by ex-British army intelligence officers, Chaovalit initiated a new round of discussions with the Malaysian government. This time, the aim is to wipe out the

pro-Maoist faction of the CPM - led by Chin Peng, now in his mid-70s - which operates from bases in southern Thailand's jungles bordering Malaysia. In September, Deng Xiaoping despatched Chin Peng's wife from her residence in Beijing to the Thai-Malaysian border area to speed up the liquidation of the CPM.

Meanwhile, the Stalinist party in Burma has disintegrated. In March, the majority of its members - hill tribesmen based near Thailand's western border - smashed up the party headquarters, renounced Marxism and forced their leaders to take refuge in China.

## South African Trotskyists launch new journal

THE PUBLICATION of a new South African Trotskyist journal is a welcome event. Considering the strategic importance of the South African revolution, the scant attention paid to it by the main 'Trotskyist' tendencies down the years, both in terms of analysis and political intervention, has been little short of scandalous.

*Workers Revolution* is clearly the product of serious revolutionary activity. It does not content itself with declamatory pronouncements 'for' the socialist revolution, but addresses itself to the many-sided problems of developing revolutionary leadership in the mass movement in South Africa.

At the centre of the main articles is a critique of the forces pushing for a 'negotiated settlement' with the apartheid regime - the African National Congress (ANC) and its Stalinist core, the South African Communist Party (SACP), sections of the trade union leadership and assorted liberals. The move towards open capitulation to, first Botha, and now de Klerk are related to the drive of the Soviet bureaucracy under Gorbachev for ever-closer collaboration with imperialism, and are shown clearly to be a reaction to the massive wave of struggles which shook South African capitalism to its foundations in 1984-86.

No doubt the editors' characterisation of the period since then as one of 'temporary defeat' will find little favour with those 'Marxists' who consider all development to be continuously onward and upward, becoming ever more revolutionary by the minute. As *Workers Revolution* makes clear, however, the ability of the regime to carry out savage

repression of mass organisations rests neither with 'objective conditions' nor with the incapacity of the working class to take power, but is the product of opportunist leadership: 'The task of tasks is to build an alternative vanguard of the proletariat - a Bolshevik party.'

The Botha regime is correctly defined as Bonapartist, acting less and less as the executor of white 'democracy' and more and more closely resting on the police-military apparatus.

More questionable is the recurrent use of the term 'apartheid-capitalism'. Apartheid and capitalism, it is argued, are inextricably linked - in other words, capitalism cannot survive in South Africa without apartheid. There can be no argument with the basic contention that apartheid is the historically determined form assumed by capitalism in South Africa. That an ANC government or coalition would not seriously alter the oppression of the black masses (and that capitalism would continue to have a powerful racial component) is equally correct.

However, as the strength of the support in the recent white elections for the Democratic Party shows, growing sections of the white capitalists and middle class consider the present regime to be ultimately doomed and see the way out in a 'reformed' capitalism. At the same time, the ANC lead-

ership has shown itself willing to bend over backwards to such elements.

The condition for the coming to power of an ANC government or coalition via a 'negotiated settlement' would be the formal dismantling of 'separate development' in order to carve out a niche for a black bourgeoisie and middle class. If the opportunist leaders succeed in carrying through a Zimbabwe-style sell-out, capitalism will remain, life for the majority in the townships and bantustans will be largely unchanged and the migrant labour system will continue. But much of the legal apparatus of apartheid established by the National Party after 1948 would be sacrificed.

To rally the working class, whose fighting potential has been clearly shown in the recent stayaways, *Workers Revolution* calls for a programme of action to expose in practice the opportunist trade union and nationalist leaders who have attempted to stifle all debate and steamroller adoption of the ANC's Freedom Charter through the mass organisations. As well as calling for a fight in the unions to link the low-wage campaign to the struggle against the draconian Labour Relations Act, there is a serious discussion of the role of revolutionaries within residents' committees, and among students and youth.

Review by Richard Price

A further article discusses the situation in Namibia during the run-up to the elections and the implementation of UN Resolution 435. While advocating a vote for SWAPO, the magazine correctly accuses the SWAPO leadership of 'open class conciliation' and lays bare the reality of the UN's independence plan 'foisted onto the Namibian masses with the SWAPO leadership's complicity'. The SWAPO leadership's statements on the land question and its overtures to the multinationals leave no doubt that it will act as the guarantor of capitalist interests in Namibia, while its brutal repression and frame-up of large numbers of its own fighters within the camps indicate the extent to which it is prepared to go in order to stamp out independent workers' struggles.

At the same time, the majority of workers, peasants, landless labourers and youth continue to look to SWAPO to carry out self-determination, and their trade unions and other organisations are affiliated to it. At the high point of the euphoria surrounding 'independence' and illusions in this leadership, the editors argue that 'to look for an alternative outside SWAPO at this important stage is to desert the masses in their hour of need'; revolutionary socialists should fight within

oppressed Soviet working class he has opened up space for taking the struggle in the Soviet Union onto a higher plane.'

Like all demagogues, Yeltsin knows how to exploit the masses' 'feelings'. To claim, however, that this 'dubious Stalinist product' can take the struggle forward - against Stalinism - and articulate the 'interests' of the working class amounts to saying that the political revolution can be opened up using a blunt instrument.

These criticisms aside, we welcome the publication of *Workers Revolution* and will follow its development with close interest.

**Workers Revolution is available at £2.50 per copy (including postage) from PO Box 549, Glasgow G41 2AR.**



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# Workers News



8 Workers News

October-November 1989

## One year of the ban

THE THATCHER government introduced the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein and ten other organisations on October 19, 1988.

Though it includes loyalist paramilitary groups, the aim of the ban is to silence the voice of the Irish nationalist movement, and stifle criticism of the increasingly vicious terror campaign being waged by the British security forces on the IRA.

The fact that neither the BBC nor the IBA have chosen to follow legal advice

and challenge the ban in the European Court is no surprise. Both bodies are dominated by Tories and have been practising more and more rigid censorship in all fields since 1979. The blanket ban on reporting members and supporters of republican organisations merely saves them the trouble of arguing the toss with programme makers.

The Labour Party and trade union leaders, for their part, are terrified of being identified as 'supporters of

terrorism' if they oppose the ban too loudly. They have been careful to add to any criticisms of the Tory legislation the reminder that support for the IRA is likely to strengthen if the British government behaves in an 'undemocratic fashion'.

Meanwhile, in Southwark, the Labour council withdrew its support for an Irish arts festival in mid-October and insisted that films dealing with the nationalist struggle could not be shown in council-owned premises.

# THE SECRET WAR AGAINST REPUBLICANS



The 'Sun' uses its front page as part of the campaign to intimidate the republican movement

**THE LEAKING of hit-lists of republicans to loyalist assassination squads is neither the result of lax security, nor the existence of a few 'bad apples' inside the police and army in the north of Ireland. It is, and has been for over 15 years, the covert policy of successive British governments, orchestrated on the ground by the intelligence services.**

The much-publicised criticism of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment by right-wing nationalists, Labourites

and liberals is designed to conceal this fact. Obligated to present a 'radical' face in order to satisfy the anger of the working class, they are, however, desperate to maintain the fiction that the security forces and the British state are neutral - for on this their entire political outlook and livelihood depends.

Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail-led coalition government in Dublin had to be seen to be taking a tough line. A list of 'meaningful reforms' of the UDR was submitted to the Tories under the terms of the Anglo-Irish agreement: that it shouldn't be issued with plastic bullets; that there should be better screening of

recruits; and that its patrols should be accompanied by RUC officers! In a TV interview, Irish Justice Minister Ray Burke went even further. 'One would have to ask the fundamental question of the necessity for the very existence of the UDR,' he said.

Yet every effort has been made by the Dublin government to shore up the tarnished image of the Anglo-Irish agreement. After the second of two meetings in the space of three weeks with the Tory Northern Ireland Secretary, Peter Brooke, Foreign Minister Gerry Collins claimed that some prog-

By Terry McGinity

ress had been made. In fact, he came away empty-handed.

Meanwhile, the right-wing northern nationalists of the SDLP have weighed in with frequent demands that the Tories should take practical steps to ensure the Catholic population retains its 'confidence' in the security forces. The mood in the SDLP was best captured by Dr Joe Hendron, who called the affair 'an absolute and total disaster'.

But it is clearly more of a disaster for the apologists for British imperialism than for the security forces. The investigation currently being

conducted into the RUC by John Stevens, the Deputy Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, will go the same way as John Stalker's attempt to unravel the shoot-to-kill affair. The outcome of the Gibraltar inquest into the assassination of three unarmed IRA volunteers shows that the security forces have a way of surviving such enquiries. Moreover, the British government can afford to snub Dublin, knowing that it is in Haughey's interest to co-operate with them against the Irish working class, north and south.

Whatever the outcome of the present furore, British imperialism's dirty war tacticians in the intelligence ser-

vices and the SAS will continue to operate. Their role in the suppressing of the Irish national struggle has been particularly crucial since the wave of international criticism in the early 70s brought about the end of internment without trial and obliged the regular army regiments to curtail their open terror campaign.

Irish and British workers must reject any campaign which merely seeks the reform of the army and police, or the disbanding of the UDR. The solution lies not in making the armed bodies of Britain's imperialist occupation of Ireland more 'accountable', but in driving them out for good!

# Terence MacSwiney

By Philip Marchant

**The Lord Mayor of Cork who died on hunger strike**

ON OCTOBER 25, 1920, Terence MacSwiney, the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Cork and commander of the city's No. 1 Brigade of the IRA Volunteers, died after 74 days on hunger strike in Brixton jail demanding the freedom of Ireland from British rule. His defiant stand captured the imagination, and won the support, of millions of workers throughout the world.

The struggle against British imperialism had received a powerful, but contradictory, impetus from the results of the elections in December 1918, the month following the end of the First World War. Sinn Fein contested every seat in Ireland - declaring in advance that its MPs would boycott Westminster and meet in Dublin as the Dail Eireann - and won 73 seats to the north-eastern Unionists' 26. The military struggle temporarily abated as members of the 'illegal' Dail promoted what they hoped would be a peaceful solution based on gradually substituting the repressive local institutions of British imperialism with republican bodies. Against this trend, and opposed by their own GHQ, local

Volunteer leaders stepped up the fight against the Royal Irish Constabulary, the locally recruited force loyal to the British crown.

By the end of 1919, the RIC was on the run - with recruitment at an all-time low and a steady stream of retirements from its ranks. The British government under David Lloyd George responded with the first partition bill - an attempt to deepen the split in the republican movement and isolate its military wing. It offered some crumbs to the Irish bourgeoisie in the form of a parody of home rule in the 26 counties which left Britain in charge of security, foreign affairs and other areas of 'national' interest.

At the same time, Lloyd George was preparing an onslaught on the IRA. A special campaign of recruitment to the RIC was started in December 1919, aimed particularly at former British army soldiers, and in late March 1920, the first of the notorious Black and Tans appeared in Ireland. So named because their hasty

deployment meant they initially wore different coloured jackets and trousers, the Tans, together with the Auxiliaries (recruited from amongst ex-army officers), waged a war of assassination and brutal, indiscriminate reprisals on the Irish people directed by the British intelligence services, and legally sanctioned by the parliament in Westminster.

By the late summer of 1920, the strength of the RIC had been boosted to over 10,000 men; in addition there were 1,500 Auxiliaries and some 50,000 regular British army troops in Ireland. All were employed in crushing the military and political manifestations of intransigent republicanism, and terrorising the general population into acceptance of British policy.

Terence MacSwiney was arrested at a staff meeting of Cork No. 1 Brigade of the Volunteers during a raid on Cork City Hall by British soldiers on August 12, 1920, aimed at disrupting the proceedings of republican local government. He refused to

conduct any defence against the charge of possessing 'seditious' documents on the grounds that the British courts had no legitimacy in Ireland, and was sentenced to two years imprisonment.

The day before MacSwiney's arrest, 11 Volunteers being held in Cork prison - who had not been brought to trial - started a hunger strike. MacSwiney immediately followed their example, and continued his strike in Brixton prison in London after the British government deported him from Ireland. Of the Cork men, two were to die: Michael Fitzgerald on October 17 after 67 days and Joseph Murphy on the same day as MacSwiney, October 25, after 75 days.

Thousands filed past MacSwiney's body as it lay in state in Southwark cathedral, and thousands more lined the route of his funeral procession to Euston station where his coffin was despatched to Cork, the government fearing that it would be unable to control the crowds of mourners were it

sent to Dublin.

Terence MacSwiney's courageous action successfully drew attention to the vicious methods used by the British ruling class to suppress the Irish national struggle. But, along with the Volunteers' military successes of those years, it was to be betrayed two years later with the acceptance of the Treaty that led to a divided Ireland.

MacSwiney's fight, however, proved an inspiration to wide layers of the British and international working class, and to the subject colonial peoples, as he had intended it should. Three weeks before his death, he dictated a letter to the Cork hunger strikers which included the following lines: 'Comrades, if we twelve go in glorious succession to the grave, the name of Ireland will flash in a tongue of flame through the world, and be a sign of hope for all time to every people struggling to be free.'

■ The Terence MacSwiney Commemoration Committee is organising a demonstration on Saturday October 28. Assemble 12.00 noon at Kennington Park (opposite Oval Tube station) for march past Brixton prison, followed by rally.

**Comrades, champion Ireland's cause with trebled energy and thus avenge the martyred Lord Mayor.**

**Never in all our reading of history have we read of a slower and more cruel torture than that practised in Brixton Prison. No cruelty perpetrated by the Belgians on the Congo rubber plantations, no cruelty perpetrated by the Spaniards and other Europeans on the natives of America, no brutality of the slave-snatchers of Central Africa, no torture by the merchant princes of Europe ever excelled in refinement of cruelty this deliberate slaughter of a hero who will rank beside the greatest martyrs of the world. Down with the bloody government that attempts to do such deeds in our name! Down with the system of greedy capitalism that develops blood-mania in its dominant class!**

JOHN MACLEAN  
(From an article in *The Vanguard*, November 1920)

**Troops out now! Self-determination for the Irish people!**