

Workers power

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British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

THE TORIES have renewed their assault on the National Health Service. They are not content with privatising services, cheating nurses of their pay rise, closing wards and slashing jobs. They now plan to introduce an "opting out" scheme.

Later in January a White Paper will detail how hospitals can choose to leave local District Authority control. Like the schools' opting out system, this will create a two-tier system of provision, and open the way for privatisation of whole sections of the NHS.

Thatcher has been gunning for the NHS since she took office. But she faces a number of problems. First, the NHS, despite all its inefficiencies, gives "value for money" compared to other Western countries. Secondly, the vast majority of people in Britain are committed to the NHS.

Destruction

For the working class, the destruction of the public health service would mean a return to the days when a visit to the doctor and getting medicine meant scrimping on other essentials. There is overwhelming support for the principle of a health service which is free at the time of use.

Faced with these problems last year Thatcher felt unable to continue a full frontal assault. She announced a "review".

The "opting out" proposals are a result of that review. The plan leaves hospital and general practitioner (GP) services within the NHS. But it opens the whole service to further "market" pressures.

Hospitals that "opt out" will be self-governing entities. Hospitals will charge districts for services. The aim is to see hospitals "paying their way" by selling services to District Authorities and to private patients. They will also be expected to boost their income through money-making ventures—renting out space for shops in hospitals or setting up catering businesses.

Market

The impact of the "market" in this system will be felt both by health workers and users of the NHS. National pay deals will be scrapped so wages and conditions will deteriorate. Investment will be in high-tech medicine which attracts the money from private patients.

Some hospitals will "specialise" in certain treatments which they will then do more cheaply than elsewhere. Other hospitals will cut out that service completely. Patients will then have to travel further for treatment.

Health services need planning at a national and local

New Year opens with

MORE ATTACKS ON NHS



the anarchic "market" or by bureaucrats in health authorities.

The new proposals are the first step on a path which leads to the Tories goal. They want to see a health service based on independent hospitals and clinics run for profit which provide a good service for those who have health insurance schemes, plus a "safety net" of underfunded services paid for by the state to provide for the needy poor.

Opting out

"Opting out" does not yet involve ditching state funding for hospitals, since the Tories do not believe they would get support for it. But that is their goal so we must be prepared to fight every move in that direction.

Health service workers will be at the centre of that resistance, with hospital, district and region-wide organisation needed to prevent any hospital opting out. The whole labour movement must get ready to support them with solidarity action. ■

level. Providing geriatric hospitals or services for the mentally handicapped will never attract private funding or investment. Consequently these services will suffer.

While managers of big, famous hospitals like Guys "can't wait" to opt out, the prospects are much bleaker for district general hospitals. Even now a quarter of health

authorities are planning cuts to stay in cash limits. Waiting lists are still as long as ever, at 678,000. An estimated £200 million is needed to deal with repairs.

The real solution to this is a massive injection of public funding into the NHS. The services provided should be planned and controlled by the workers themselves, not by

NUS won't fight; students must!

BY SALADIN MECKLED

ANOTHER VEIL has been removed from the Tory education plan and we find Kenneth Baker, Education Secretary, openly preaching his intent to introduce "market forces" into education. Universities have already been instructed to vary and increase their fees for overseas students.

Now, Baker is singing the praises of the US model of "multi-funded" education as the system he intends for Britain.

Higher Education institutions would be further dependent on funding from business. There would be a system of fees paid by the majority of students (on top of the impending loans system) whilst bursaries and charities would exist to help poorer students.

Elite

In practice, this system means that "cut-price" institutions charging lower fees grow up alongside elite institutions like Harvard and Yale. Working class students can only afford the former and are denied access to the top rate universities.

In a word this means exclusion. The further exclusion of the working class from academic education.

At the same time the polytechnic sector is being turned (through privatisation and tendering-out) into a training ground for business and for the channelling of working class students into an education



geared for industry.

In the face of all these proposals the leaders of the National Union of Students (NUS) have attempted to avoid all confrontation. They have called off a national week-day demonstration to Parliament (3 February) and replaced it with a week of localised "action"—open

days, rallies etc—and a Saturday demonstration, i.e. they have watered down our action at the behest of the police.

Now is the time to take the initiative. In every college action groups must be built to prepare the road for a national unofficial demonstration.

The limited actions called by NUS must be built into militant protests which push for effective action. Already the embryo of a London activists group has had its first meeting. This must be built into an alternative leadership prepared to organise students for immediate struggle.

Similar groups need to be set up throughout the country, and links made to form a national activists group.

Alongside building for direct action now these groups need to demand that the NUS leadership organises such action at a national level.

As part of a struggle to transform the NUS into a fighting union, the action groups must challenge the existing do-nothing leaders in every college, area and at national level.

Network

An activists network must fight for the unions in all colleges to stage an indefinite national occupation, calling for support and action from the trade unions. That will stop the Tories in their tracks.

At the same time the colleges in the hands of students and workers will enable us to make the gains lasting ones.

It is no longer enough to say "stuff the loans", the question is how to fight their implementation. Too much is at stake to leave things up to the local bureaucrats. Decisive action must be fought for now.

For direct action groups nationally!

Turn the union into a fighting, political union!

Repeal the Education Act!

For students' and workers' control of education!

Against Tory loans and cuts!

MacGregor in child slave racket

BY LIZ WOOD

A MAJOR British carpet firm, the Scottish Heritable Trust, has been implicated in the use of child slaves. Previous butcher of the British mines, Ian MacGregor, is one of their directors.

A report by the Anti-Slavery Society reveals that E Hill and Co, the firm's Indian subsidiary, employs loom owners who use child slaves as young as five years old.

The children are kidnapped; or sold by their parents as bonded labour to the loom owners. They often work ten hours a day, with no education and little medical care. Children running away have been recaptured and branded with hot irons. They exist on starvation rations and often receive no wages. Where they are paid at all it amounts to about 25 pence per week.

The loom owners choose child labour not only because it is cheap (or free) but also because their tiny fingers are better suited to hard knotting the fine threads in the luxury carpets. These products of slavery are

much in demand by the rich in the West. Carpets produced in this way by coerced child labour are sold by the Scottish Heritable Trust's London wholesalers for up to £3,500. All the bosses' favourite stores, such as Harrods and House of Fraser, sell them. Such slavery yields fat profits for the ruling class—the Scottish Heritable Trust made £6.5 million last year.

Ian MacGregor dismissed the report saying "conditions are grim in China too. They sell carpets". It is sickening that he did not even feel the need to deny that this was going on.

This callousness will come as no surprise to miners and their families. They have already witnessed the fact that despite the moralising about traditional family values MacGregor and his class indulge in, in reality they are prepared to see working class children starve if they think it will break a strike.

In the same way they are prepared to force children of imperialised countries to die in abject poverty and even slavery in the cause of profit. ■

Doctors demand 72 hour week!

BY HELEN WARD

JUNIOR HOSPITAL doctors work between 80 and 120 hours every week, with an average of 86 hours. For most this means working an 80 hour shift every second or third weekend, their only rest being a few interrupted hours of sleep. This shift is in addition to a normal working week of around 56 hours! The result is that doctors get tired, can't concentrate, make mistakes and patient care and treatment suffer.

The trade union which organises a minority of doctors—the Medical Practitioners Union (MPU), part of the MSF—is pushing a bill in the House of Lords.

The Bill is trying to reduce hours to 72 per week by 1992, with a further reduction to 60 hours maximum at some future, unspecified date.

In response to the justified campaign by junior doctors for reduced hours, Health Minister David Mellor accused them of exaggerating and telling "fishermen's stories". He clearly has no experience of the realities of the crumbling health service. Junior doctors spend literally hours finding beds for emer-

gency admissions where wards are full. They have to cover for colleagues who are sick or on holiday. They do much of the clerical work where ancillary staff such as ward clerks have been sacked or not replaced.

The dangerous nature of this work for doctors and patients alike is clear. Yet previous moves to reduce hours have met with little support from health service managers or consultants.

One central reason for this is the question of pay. Junior doctors are hardly amongst the lowest paid of health workers. But for their overtime, unlike others who get time and a half or double time, doctors get paid a lower hourly rate! They get about one third of their normal pay-rate, even when working weekends and bank holidays. Therefore it is much cheaper for the NHS to employ one doctor doing a 40 hour basic week plus 80 hours overtime than to employ three doctors doing 40 hours each!

The campaign for doctors' reduced hours should be supported by other workers as part of the defence of the NHS and the fight to improve health care. Junior doctors are unlikely to

become very militant on these issues, however, because they are tied to the professionalism and elitism of their career and promotion chances. Many doctors know that if they work these long hours for five to ten years they will then be able to take up very well paid jobs.

This is less likely for women doctors who face particular problems—the hours are completely incompatible with childcare responsibilities, and a break to have children leads to women being unable to get back on the "career ladder". Women doctors have therefore been amongst the most vocal in the hours campaign.

Legislation on maximum hours would be a step forward. But it will need a fight with NHS managers and consultants to get it implemented. The junior doctors showed that they can take action and win—a strike in the 1970s resulted in the present payment for overtime, before that all on call work was unpaid.

Junior doctors need to be won away from their professional organisation—the British Medical Association—to the MPU/MSF, and link up with and support other health workers. ■

EDITORIAL

Half-truths and hypocrisy over Lockerbie

THE INDIVIDUALS or organisation that planted the bomb on Pam Am Flight 103 are, as yet, unknown. Nobody has claimed responsibility except an outfit called the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution. Their claim, however, has been discounted.

The uncertainty about the identity of the bombers has not, however, stopped a massive anti-Arab campaign from being launched in the pages of world imperialism's press. In Europe and North America the rags that applauded Thatcher's murderous attack on the *General Belgrano*, and that blamed the Iranians when one of their civilian passenger planes was shot down by the USA have not hesitated in clamouring for revenge. They are urging a strike against some or all of those within the Palestinian resistance movement who have been accused (without a shred of evidence) of being the possible perpetrators of the bombing.

The Zionist government in Israel has led the field in blaming "the Arabs". Immediately after the plane blew up and before it was known that a bomb had been planted Israeli foreign minister Moshe Arens declared that "Arab international terror" was the culprit.

George Bush fuelled the Arab scapegoat theory when he promised to "seek hard and punish firmly" the bombers. The imperialists are quite consciously using the tragedy of 270 deaths to discredit the Palestinian liberation movement and semi-colonial regimes, like Libya, that oppose the USA.

Yet given the absence of evidence it is far from fanciful to assume that Israel had a direct interest itself in carrying out the bombing. Its ruthless secret service, Mossad, is renowned for resorting to

dirty tricks to discredit opponents.

Such speculation will no doubt be denounced by the imperialists and their press. But their criteria for speculation is based on a double-standard. If they speculate that the oppressed are guilty that is fine. If anyone else argues it could be the work of pro-imperialists they are branded as liars.

Whoever carried out the bombing, however, revolutionary communists are duty bound to condemn the action. The flight was in no sense a military target and the action cannot be construed as a legitimate act of war. The presence of some US service personnel does not alter this fact. It was a civilian flight.

Moreover, the action itself does absolutely nothing—it could not possibly do anything—to advance any liberation struggle, Palestinian or otherwise, currently underway.

If the bombing was the work of a wing of the Palestinian resistance we would still condemn the action. But we would recognise it as the product of desperation, bred by brutal oppression at the hands of Zionism and imperialism and the treachery of a PLO leadership steaming towards a rotten deal with their oppressors.

Thus while condemning the action we would not condemn the faction of the national liberation movement that carried it out. Is this a semantic argument?

Not at all. It means that for example we cannot support the Arafat leadership's offer to collaborate with US imperialism in finding the perpetrators. If they are from the Palestinian movement then it is the business of that movement to deal with them.

Imperialism can under no circumstances be handed the prize of being able to try and punish tragically misguided fighters for national liberation.

It is possible, of course, that the bombing was the work of a fanatical individual who mistakenly believed that their action was a blow against imperialism. In this case we would regard the action as an instance of individual terrorism. Once again we would—regardless of the motives of such an individual—unequivocally condemn the action.

Despite our sympathy for the family and friends of the civilian victims of the bombing, we treat with total contempt the attitude of imperialism and its bloodthirsty media. Imperialism has perpetrated acts of terror on a world scale that have left millions dead or maimed. Let us not forget that Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dresden were civilian targets.

Moreover imperialism's exploitation of the world is directly responsible for the deaths, through hunger and poverty, of more human beings in a week than in all the "terrorist" actions ever carried out by anti-imperialists. Only the socialist revolution can end a system which is necessarily violent and which engenders human tragedy after human tragedy. Only this can liberate those who are nationally oppressed and eradicate the contradictions and conflicts that give rise to bomb attacks on civilian targets from whatever quarter. ■

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Justice for miners

MARCH 1989 marks the fifth anniversary of the start of the year long British miners' strike. This heroic strike was defeated, thanks to the treachery of the Labour Party and trade union leaderships. Despite its defeat the strike demonstrated the capacity of the working class to mount determined resistance to the Tory onslaught.

To commemorate the strike a major one day conference and rally

IN brief

is planned for 4 March at Manchester Town Hall. A similar event is planned for London on 18 March.

Both events are being supported by the National Justice for Mineworkers' Campaign (NJMC)—the organisation that has continued the campaign to support all those miners who were imprisoned or sacked as a result of their activity in the strike. We urge all our readers to support these commemoration rallies. Further details of both events can be obtained from the NJMC, care of, Billy Etherington, DCMA, Red Hill, Durham. ■

Free the Tottenham 3

LAST MONTH the Tottenham 3 were refused leave to appeal against their convictions. Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip were convicted of murdering PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm uprising in 1986. But they are innocent.

The case against them rests on statements forced out of youths of 13 and 14, held incommunicado for days on end without clothing or access to a solicitor.

They were picked up in the days after the rising when police

trawled the area for under age "suspects". Against Winston Silcott the only evidence was a police account of his interrogation after two days in custody. Yet Lord Chief Justice Lane ruled their convictions were "safe and satisfactory".

The Tottenham 3 along with 16 other youth still in jail from the uprising are victims of racism and police repression. They were tried and convicted by the gutter press long before the charade of "British justice" ran its course.

The Broadwater Farm Defence

Campaign is planning to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. But the authorities can ignore this at will, as their rejection of its ruling on the PTA shows.

The workers' movement must take up the case of the Tottenham 3. They are class war prisoners made to pay the price for resisting police racism and brutality.

Affiliate to the **Tottenham 3 Are Innocent Campaign, Grassroots Storefront, 71 Golborne Rd, London W10**

Moses Mayekiso



LAST MONTH Moses Mayekiso, leader of South Africa's metal workers' union, was released from prison on bail. His trial, and that of four co-defendants, resumes in February. These trade unionists are being tried by the apartheid state for treason. They have been held in prison for two and a half years. They are class war victims of racist injustice and every worker in Britain must continue to give them all the solidarity they can.

The need for solidarity with another black prisoner of apartheid, the miners' leader Tjeluvuyo Mgedezi is also urgent. Chairman of an NUM shaft stewards' committee, at the Vaal Reefs gold mine, he is on trial for his life. He is accused of murder by the management of Vaal Reefs which is part of the Anglo-American mining empire. Details of the solidarity campaign are available from: The Joint Campaign, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. ■

HEALTH WARNING

THE GOVERNMENT'S plans to create an NHS "internal market" in hospital services has already run into criticism—from NHS senior management!

Dr Kenneth Grant, district general manager of City & Hackney health authority, analysed how and why St Bartholomew's Hospital in London

would survive:

"We will be like the super coalpits in Nottingham, while the smaller pits face going to the wall."

Too true! And, like the superpits ripe for privatisation. The only way to stop this is to take a leaf out of the miners' book—strike to save the NHS. ■

REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY!

March on Saturday
28 January 1989

Assemble 12 noon at

Grange Park, Kilburn, London

Rally after the march at
Bridge Park Centre, Kilburn

AEU

Stop the merger!

THE PROPOSED merger between the AEU and EETPU is still on course for this spring. Engineering workers must do their utmost to stop it going ahead.

It is an absolute disgrace that despite EETPU's expulsion from the TUC in September, AEU leaders Jordan and Laird are planning to lend them legitimacy in this way. Let us be clear, EETPU is a scab union. Its record speaks for itself. It defied TUC instructions and handled scab coal in the miners' strike. It recruited scabs to run Murdoch's Wapping plant in 1985, selling the jobs of 197 AEU members in the process. And only days after its expulsion from the TUC it agreed to supply an army of cheap labour to London's Docklands Light Railway under a false Tory "training scheme". EETPU is an enemy of organised labour.

Hammond's aim is clear. He wants to sneak his outfit back into the TUC by the back door, and to create a million strong union with a free hand to sign single union, no strike deals, selling wages and conditions established through decades of struggle.

But Jordan and Laird are hardly bothered by this. They are keen to

BY BIRMINGHAM AEU MEMBERS

stitch together a bigger power block within the TUC to allow even greater poaching and class collaboration in the future. They have put forward a nine point document making proposals on the mechanics of merger.

This has shown up some disagreement between the AEU and EETPU bureaucrats. On the role of the delegate conference, Hammond wants to be sure that any display of rank and file militancy is kept firmly out of "his" union's affairs. He has argued that conference decisions should not be binding on the new union's executive! Instead, all decisions should be ratified by the whole membership in a postal ballot.

By this method he hopes that, voting from the isolation of their living rooms, members will be open to persuasion from his cheerleaders in the gutter press and TV to vote against any challenge to the bosses and the government. AEU members should see his undemocratic manoeuvre for what it is — an attempt to maintain Hammond's dictatorship over all union affairs.

On the question of full-time officers, the AEU's "nine points" boldly proclaim: "A decision would be needed to be taken as to whether they should be appointed or elected." Surprise, surprise! Hammond wants them to be appointed. In the course of negotiations both sides have been prepared to compromise. EETPU are prepared to accept appointment from a panel of selected members, who might then be re-elected every two years! What is to become of EETPU's undemocratic ban on communists is not mentioned.

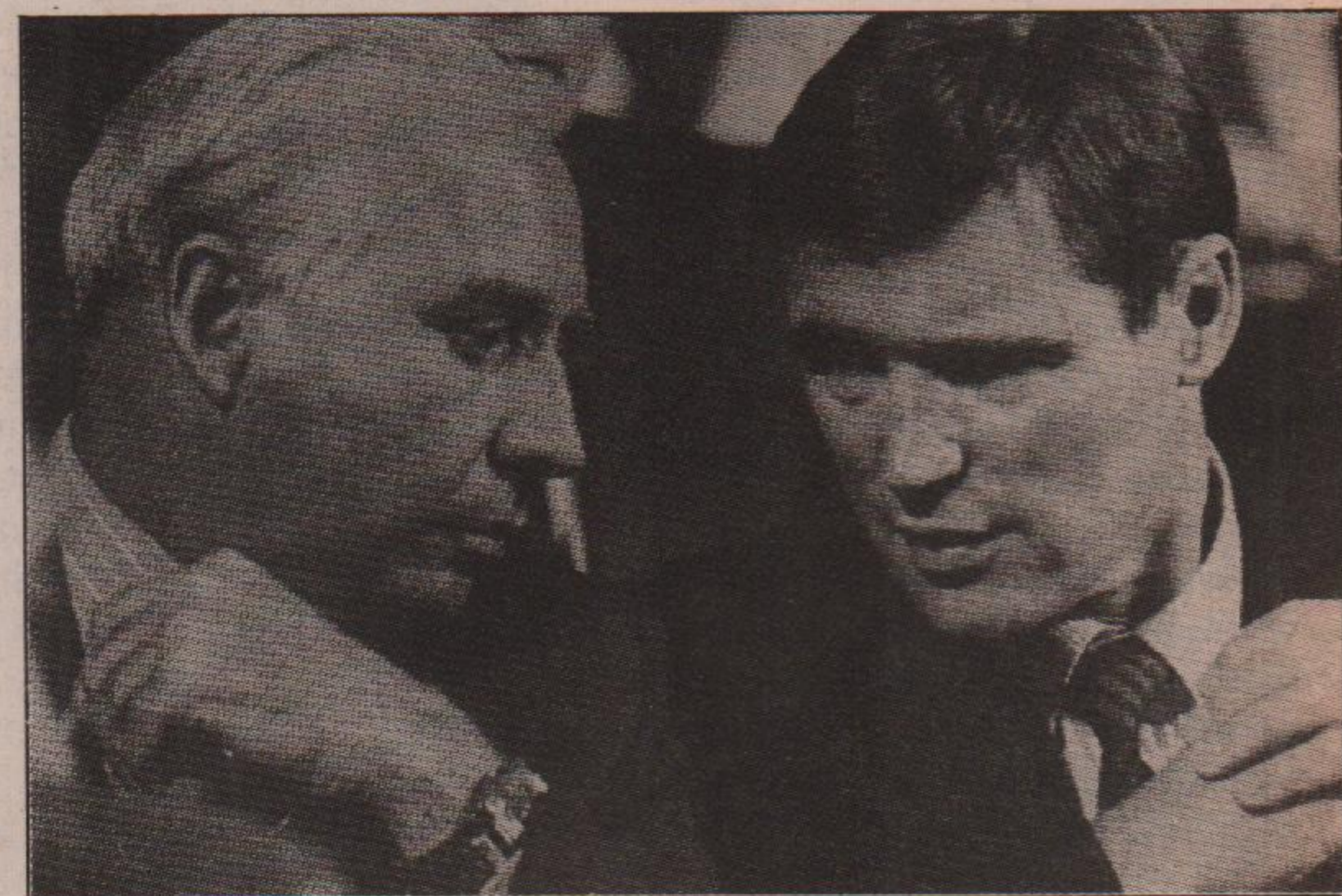
In turn, the AEU say that current full-timers should stay on. The fact that no-one has suggested that officials in the new union be elected as soon as possible, let alone fully accountable to the membership, should give anyone still in doubt an idea of just what sort of set-up Hammond and Jordan have in mind. In the face of this grave threat to the AEU and engineering workers generally, the old Broad Left, now known simply as Engineering Gazette, have done nothing. Stalinist EC member Jimmy Airlie has claimed that the much publicised quarrels between Hammond and Laird over the lead-

ership of the new union will scupper the merger plans. This is just a cover for his own cowardice.

This is why the Anti-Merger Campaign launched by the Birmingham Engineering Gazette group and Birmingham 4 AEU is so important. A real campaign is needed to stop the merger before it

is too late, to prevent the strengthening of US-style business unionism.

All AEU branches should send delegates along to the meeting in Birmingham on 14 January to get this campaign off the ground and build a nationwide challenge to Jordan, Laird and Hammond. ■



Campaign against the AEU/EETPU merger

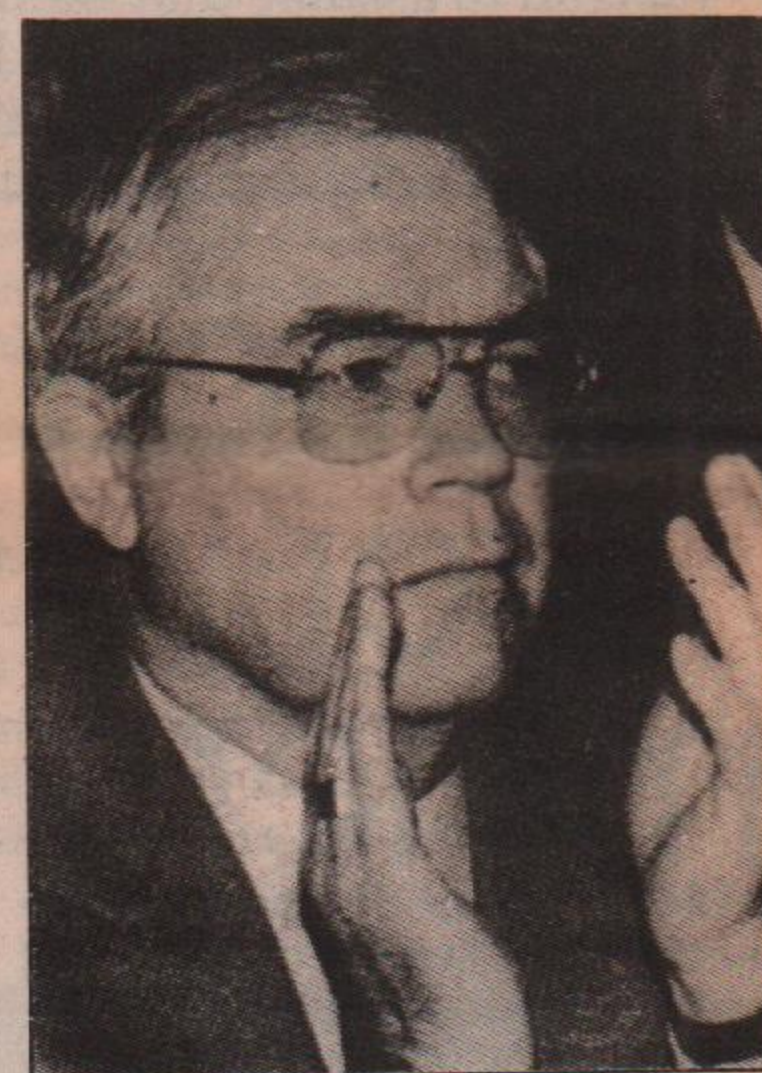
Open meeting:

11.30 Saturday 14 January, Star Club, Digbeth, Birmingham

Speakers: Rob Finlayson, Ford Dagenham AEU National Committee

Jim Bevan, District Secretary, South Wales AEU

Workers Power urges all AEU members to attend this vital meeting.



NUM

Why the vote was lost

THE NUM'S rejection of a national overtime ban on 16 December was a major setback in the fight against British Coal's (BC) plans for the coal industry.

Haslam and BC will treat the vote as a green light to continue to by-pass the NUM in future wage negotiations, and carry through further job cuts, such as the 400 losses at Bilston Glen last month, (which were accepted by the Scottish NUM). Six day working is on the agenda for the entire industry, as is an across the board increase in the working day. BC technical director and hatchet-man Ken Moses even recently announced,

"It doesn't seem to me there is anything very onerous about working underground for ten hours or so."

Perhaps he should try it sometime!

The further boosts to productivity and cost-cutting signalled by the Board clearly have one aim in view: boosting profits and busting the NUM ready for privatisation.

There is little doubt that the failure of the NUM to show a united and militant response to BC will encourage management. Haslam has congratulated miners for their "good sense" in voting against the ban.

But the vote was very close. Only 50.6% voted against action, with 49.3% supporting the ban. Things could have turned out dif-

ferently. If the union is to get back onto the offensive against BC the lessons of this defeat must be learnt.

The South Wales executive, under erstwhile "left winger" Des Duffield, campaigned openly for a "no" vote. The Scottish executive went one step further. Under the leadership of right winger and Communist Party of Great Britain member George Bolton they not only opposed action, but banned Arthur Scargill from speaking at a "Vote Yes" rally in Lothian!

Given the narrowness of the vote, responsibility for the defeat should be laid directly on Bolton's shoulders. Rank and file miners in South Wales and Scotland should organise to ditch these traitors as soon as possible.

But it has to be said that the national leadership did not use every available opportunity to campaign for a "yes" vote. In particular they failed to take the argument into the heart of the areas controlled by the new right wing.

Rallies should have been organised up and down the country explaining what was at stake if BC was allowed to by pass the NUM and impose a pay settlement agreed with the UDM scabs. Where, as in Scotland, meetings were banned, they should have gone ahead on an unofficial basis. And, crucially, committees should have been established in every area to campaign for a "yes" vote, along the lines of those set up in

Scargill's election campaign.

The key would have been to avoid sticking to the rules of the bureaucratic club ("hands off my area"), and to have organised militants to fight the conciliators on the Area executives.

Overall, many otherwise militant miners will not have seen the point in yet another overtime ban which, in and of itself, had no guarantee of forcing BC to back down or even to negotiate. Despite the difficulties, it was necessary to hold out the perspective of a new national strike to turn the tables on BC and stop the privatisation plans in their tracks. The overtime ban should have been presented as vital preparation for such a strike. Sadly the national leadership had no such perspective.

Instead Scargill is now advancing a bureaucratic solution to the problem of breaking the hold of the new realists. He is backing rule changes which will mean all candidates for national office must have the backing of 20% of the branches. With Yorkshire area holding a third of the votes anyway, this is little more than a proposal for Yorkshire are to have total control over the union. This is undemocratic, and no answer to the crisis of leadership in the NUM.

To turn the tide against new realism rank and file miners will need to organise a movement across the union to campaign for a real fight against BC and the Tories' plans. ■

Fleet Street sparks leave EETPU

IN A major step forward for the fight to break up the scab union, EETPU's Fleet Street press branch have voted by a 70% majority to join the print union SOGAT. This action, which took place just before Christmas, breaks Hammond's hold over a vital section of workers in the national press.

The branch's justified revulsion with Hammond's outfit goes back years. In 1982 Fleet Street struck in support of the health workers and had to face the obstructive tactics of their own leadership as well as the Tories' anti-union laws and a TUC instruction to work normally. And in 1983 they voted to join SOGAT but were prevented by the TUC.

On that occasion *Workers Power* argued that it would have been a mistake to abandon the left in EETPU and leave the union to Hammond and his cronies. But the union's role in the miners' strike and the Wapping dispute altered the position entirely. EETPU is now a fully fledged bosses' union and the Fleet Street branch were right to get out.

In doing so they join electricians at several key workplaces includ-

ing several Labour DLOs and Ford Dagenham. The notion that militant electricians should still "stay in and fight" has been shown as little more than a pipe dream by the experiences of branches in Wythenshawe and Manchester South. Just for voting to remain in the TUC and on the local trades council, they were suspended by Hammond and his cronies. All efforts should now be devoted to winning the maximum number of electricians either to the new EPIU or to the relevant industrial union for their industry.

The Fleet Street branch decision provides an opportunity to speed the development of a single union for all workers in the print. But the key will be the political basis on which they enter SOGAT. While EETPU scabbed at Wapping the SOGAT leaders sold out. With a record of struggle, the Fleet Street sparks should fight to turn SOGAT into a class struggle democratic union, opposing sweetheart and no strike deals. It should campaign for the accountability of elected officers and for solidarity with all workers in struggle and facing the anti-union laws. ■

DOCKERS UP and down the country are squaring up for action in defence of the National Dock Labour Scheme.

A special conference of TGWU Docks section delegates on 21 December voted overwhelmingly to ballot in January on an all out indefinite strike. A call for action from Clydeside dockers, already in dispute over bosses' attempts to use unregistered labour, was endorsed by the Conference.

The bosses' association, the National Association of Port Employers (NAPE) is spoiling for a fight, backed to the hilt by Tory right wingers and their friends at the Centre for Policy Studies. They see the National Dock Labour Scheme as a major obstacle in their drive for greater competitiveness as against European and non-scheme ports such as Felixstowe and Dover.

The scheme was introduced by the Labour government in 1946 under pressure to end the inhuman and degrading system of casual labour. Previously dockers were forced to gather at the dock gates hoping to get a day's work by catching the foreman's eye or fighting their way to the front of the crowd. Bosses could get away with abominable wages and conditions. The scheme is a perfect example of the sort of "restrictive practice" that the Tories have aimed to "liberalise" since 1979.

Dockers voted last year for strike action against any attempt to scrap the scheme. There is no point in waiting for each port to be picked

Tories set to take on dockers

BY DAVE GREEN

off in turn. Mass meetings must be organised at every port to vote on strike action now in support of Clydeside. The smug claims of the Centre for Policy Studies that a national dock strike would be "ineffective" must be proved wrong in practice.

The last attack on the scheme, in 1984, provoked two major strikes. Then the Tories backed down to avoid the terrifying prospect of dockers linking up with miners and repeating their victory of 1972 which brought the Heath government to its knees. The Tories will now be more resolute if they can take on the dockers in isolation.

The strike committees that were so successful in co-ordinating action in 1972 need to be reactivated locally and nationally. Under no circumstances should the strike be left in the hands of the national TGWU bureaucrats. They will sell out at the first sign of the Tories using the anti-union laws. The head of NAPE has already threatened court action to prevent indus-

trial action.

But the bureaucrats must not be let off the hook. Dockers must demand that contingency plans be drawn up as a matter of urgency to shut down the registered ports. Non-registered dockers, of whom the majority are also TGWU members, must be called out, and preparations made for flying pickets to prevent non-scheme ports being used to break the strike. However, the best way of doing this would be to ensure that a key demand is the drawing of all ports into the Dock Labour Scheme. If the TGWU fails to organise flying pickets and a national strike through its official structures, strike committees must do it themselves. It seems certain that the bosses latest offensive will go ahead on a concerted nationwide basis. Dockers and the entire labour movement simply can't afford to lose this one. If the anti-union laws are used, the Tories should be met with nothing less than a general strike to defend long established and basic conditions and to stop the whole Tory offensive in its tracks. ■

ILEA victimises teachers

BY KATE FORD

LAST MONTH seven teachers at Highbury Quadrant School in Islington were told they were being moved to other schools. They are being held responsible for the state of the school, which has been criticised by a government inspectors' Report.

The inspectors were sent in by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). They appeared soon after the school's teachers were attacked in the national press and subjected to a vicious campaign of hate mail for holding an assembly to celebrate Nelson Mandela's birthday. In this situation Labour controlled ILEA should have been supporting the teachers. Instead they are attempting to remove them from the school. This is doubly hypocritical as the Inspectors' Report is highly critical of ILEA itself for poor management and underfunding.

The real reason that teachers at Highbury Quadrant School are being moved has nothing to do with the state of the school. The teachers are effective trade unionists and committed anti-racists.

Two years ago the Head of the school walked out, having failed to force NUT members to break union action and attend a meeting after school. She was supported by the ILEA and allowed to remain at home on full pay. No alternative Head was appointed for some time and this led to management problems in the school.

The teachers have been a target for right wing groups since they took action to stop racial harassment of children in the school. The teachers spent months accompanying children home until ILEA were finally pressurised into providing an escort service. They also helped secure the eviction of a local racist family.

These teachers must be defended. Two are being allowed to stay on at the school but the remaining five are being replaced. The vast majority of parents and the Governors are committed to defending the teachers. However, the main teaching union, the NUT, has been more

qualified in their support. The national union has withdrawn its advice to union members not to apply for the posts. This is after an attempt to get a court injunction to stop ILEA has failed.

At local level, the Inner London Teachers Association, politically dominated by the SWP, has not been much better. Their call for a token

one day strike has been withdrawn. They have been slow to get any information to other associations and a planned newsletter has not appeared. This lukewarm response is a disgrace.

It is now up to rank and file militants to build support for the five teachers who are being victimised. Such support will have to include a commitment to all out strike action if it is to be successful. ■

JAGUAR All out for the full claim!

IN ANOTHER sign of the increased militancy in the car industry, delegates representing 9,000 Jaguar workers voted on 4 January to reject the company's "final" pay offer. Unions had put in a claim for a £17 per week rise across the board. Management offered £15 basic over two years. This works out as an annual rise of between 4 and 5%, less than the rate of inflation. They also threw in a profit sharing scheme linked to productivity, of course!

Workers throughout the industry are feeling the pinch, given recent rises in inflation and increases in interest payments on mortgages. At the same time the mood in the plants is becoming more confident. The threat of the dole is no longer hanging over workers as it did in the early 80s, as major car manufacturers have taken on more labour. The workforce at Jaguar has increased by 4,000 since 1985. Rises in productivity have boosted profits and workers are looking for an increased share.

But despite the outcome of the recent meeting, workers at Jaguar plants at Browns Lane, Radford and Whitley in Coventry and Castle Bromwich in Birmingham are to be balloted: not on strike action, but

on the company's offer. Unions are not even prepared to recommend rejection.

All Jaguar workers not prepared to see profits boosted further at their own expense should vote to reject the offer. But the danger is that this will then mean further delay as yet another ballot is conducted on strike action. This plays into management's hands, giving them time to issue further threats to the workforce and prepare to deal with any action.

Instead, rank and file car workers need to push for mass meetings to take place as soon as possible, with a show of hands to decide on action. This will prevent the company from spinning the whole process out for as long as possible. Stewards and officials should be pushed to argue for an all out strike for the full claim and nothing less.

There is no doubt that the mood is changing across the industry. Rolls Royce workers in Derby have just voted for an overtime ban by 4 to 1: the first time they have ever voted for action on their own claim. To unite the struggles the rank and file will need to organise throughout the plant and pave the way for one union for all car workers. ■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Stormy Weather?

THREE NEWS stories over the Christmas break illustrate the contradictions stored up within the world economy. The US imposed £100m worth of sanctions on the EEC in response to a European ban on some US meats. Venezuela and Colombia—two previously highly favoured debtors—stopped repayments of their debts totalling \$46 billion.

The OECD meanwhile issued a gloomy forecast for 1989, warning that the economic boom has made inflation the number one threat to economic stability. It recommends Lawson-style deflationary measures for the main imperialist countries, increasing the possibility of a world recession in the next two years.

Growing protectionism, a renewed third world debt crisis on the back of higher interest rates, the threat of recession: these are the storm clouds gathering on the horizon of world economy. Whilst it is not possible to predict the tempo of development of these problems even ruling class economists realise that the early 1990s will be crisis years for capitalism.

Consequences

At this stage we need to understand how and under what conditions the economic boom of the last five years can turn into recession and why this may have drastic consequences for relations between the USA, its imperialist rivals and the semi-colonies.

The whole period since 1971 has been characterised by the decline of the US economy relative to Germany and Japan. But the US improved its position after the 1979-82 recession by attacking its own working class and using the dollar exchange rate to attack its rivals.

It has achieved this however only by running up a massive budget and trade deficit.

The threat of a world economic recession comes from the potential synchronisation of the USA's attempts to reduce its own debts by raising taxes and interest rates with similar measures taken by its rivals. With the 1987 Louvre Accord the US seemed to secure agreement from the "Group of 7" main imperialist powers that Germany and Japan should reflate their economies to share with the US the burden of keeping the recovery going.

Whilst Japan has done this West Germany has repeatedly faltered—its interest rate rise sparking the international stock exchange crash of October 1987.

This is why the tempo and depth of the coming recession are linked to the growing economic rivalry, in particular between Europe and the USA. The tit-for-tat banning of agricultural produce by the US and the EEC, whilst not massively significant itself, illustrates the growing trend towards "non-tariff protectionism" between the USA and the EEC. Globally there has been a 26% rise in non-tariff protectionism even during the 1980s recovery.

As the US has declined rela-

tively as a world economic power an objective tendency towards a new regional division of the world economy has taken place. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, set up to enforce a US dominated free market after 1945, is, for the moment at least, deadlocked.

Meanwhile, whatever the intentions of the European capitalists, the 1992 liberalisation of European trade will massively increase economic rivalry between the EEC and the US, as will the parallel agreement between Canada and the USA.

The third element of this scenario is the re-emergence of an international debt crisis. Leaving aside the effects of debt on the world's poorest countries, the \$43 billion interest they paid in 1988 to the imperialist banks forms a major part of the super-profits extracted from the semi-colonies. Whilst a massive default by the semi-colonies could not on its own trigger a generalised banking collapse, it could greatly affect the timing, depth and duration of a recession.

At present then the world economy is in an unstable equilibrium, with the above tendencies as the main source of instability. The continuing ability of the imperialists to deploy their economic reserves and resolve their political disagreements to maintain that equilibrium was once again demonstrated by the recovery after the October 1987 crash which resulted in the highest annual growth since 1984.

This makes it very unwise to predict capitalism's imminent doom, as Militant, for example, did after the crash, only to correct themselves in their latest theoretical journal. Not only does the pace of development of capitalism's new crisis depend on the interplay of trade war, debt crisis and deflation, it also depends on the interplay of politics and economics.

Threat

The less the US bosses can offload their problems onto Europe and Japan the more they have to attack the living standards of US workers, and vice-versa. Likewise a working class offensive in any one of the Latin American debtor countries could spark the whole continent into a pre-revolutionary situation. This could potentially threaten not just interest payments but the bosses' system itself.

The example of the Spanish general strike shows how quickly the underlying instability of the capitalist economy can turn even booming imperialist countries into the arena for a working class counter-offensive.

Whatever the tempo and depth of the recession, whatever its effects on inter-imperialist rivalry, it is necessary to prepare the workers' organisations for it. A return to cuts in state spending, attacks on real wages and renewed growth in unemployment can and must provoke a revolutionary response from the working class. ■

CUBA

Castro's Revolution

CUBA TODAY lies firmly in the Soviet camp—the first 'socialist state' in the southern hemisphere if we believe the claims of the Cuban Communist Party and its Moscow backers.

But the 1959 revolution was far from being an anti-capitalist revolution. Its leaders, including Fidel Castro, were committed supporters of a capitalist Cuba, albeit one independent of US imperialism. How did many of the same leaders end up presiding over a degenerate workers' state fundamentally identical in structure to the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam etc?

Dominated

Cuba entered the twentieth century no longer a colony of Spain, but instead completely dominated by the US. A mere 90 miles from the US mainland, nationalists joked that Cuba was about as "independent" as Long Island. Under the terms of the infamous Platt Amendment the US government claimed, and exercised, the right to intervene in Cuba if it believed its interests were threatened.

The price the US paid for its military intervention and dominance of Cuba's political system was a growing nationalist resistance. But the nationalist bourgeoisie were to show themselves, in Cuba, as elsewhere, incapable of leading a real struggle for national independence. The bourgeois nationalist Autentico Party, which held office for two terms in the 1940s and 1950s, was characterised by chronic corruption and subservience to the US.

Fidel Castro was on the left of the nationalists, a member of the Cuban People's Party (Ortodoxo) which was opposed to this corruption. But when a US backed coup brought Batista to power in 1952, Castro chose the road of armed action and broke with the Ortodoxo.

Campaign

The famous, if militarily disastrous attack on the Moncada Barracks on 26 July 1953 was the opening shot in Castro's campaign against Batista. His speech from the dock at his subsequent trial, now known as "History will Absolve Me", showed that his programme was firmly in the tradition of Cuban nationalism.

But whereas Cuba and the leaders of the Ortodoxo party were bourgeois nationalist reformists, Castro was a bourgeois nationalist revolutionary—willing to use revolutionary methods to achieve Cuban 'independence'. These methods were to be armed invasion from outside Cuba, military plots, leading finally to a popular rising in the cities.

The 1950s saw an upsurge in nationalist ferment in Cuba. The US continued to dominate the economy. It took 62% of Cuba's exports and provided over 75% of its imports. US companies had over one billion dollars invested in Cuba. Most importantly the Cuban sugar industry was directly tied to the US market. This was used as a threat to prevent any moves in Cuba for import restrictions or policies not in the interests of US capital.

It was in the context of rising opposition to Batista's regime that Castro launched his military expedition. Organised in exile in Mexico by Castro's July 26 Movement (J26M) it was a military disaster. Only 18 members survived battle to escape to the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. Throughout 1957 Castro's guerrillas were totally dependent for survival on the city organisations which launched most of the actions against Batista.

The J26M was a political coalition. It included outright anti-communists like Faustino Perez, who was in charge of the Havana organisation, and reflected the political complexion of the J26M in the cities. It also included militants like Che Guevara, an avowed Marxist from Argentina, and Fidel's brother Raul, an ex-member of the Cuban Stalinist youth movement.

It held together, not without tensions, as long as it remained a military apparatus in struggle with Batista. Fidel Castro remained throughout the "Bonaparte" who balanced between and ruled the contending factions, sometimes siding with the right and sometimes with the left.

Repression

1958 strengthened the hand of the more radical forces in the revolution. Batista's repression in the countryside, especially against peasants suspected of supporting the J26M, led to a growing number of peasants and rural proletarians supporting the guerrillas.

Power within the J26M shifted away from the cities, especially after the failed April 1958 "Revolutionary General Strike". Faustino Perez had excluded the Cuban communists—known as the Popular Socialist Party (PSP)—from taking part, almost guaranteeing the strike's failure. Another significant development in 1958 was a change in perspective of the Popular Socialist Party. The Cuban Stalinists were historically a powerful force in the well organised Cuban trade union movement, but they had a rotten record of collaboration with Batista.

By 1958, however, the party was increasingly aware of the growing opposition to Batista and its own isolation—its membership had fallen from 20,000 in 1952 to 7,000 by the end of 1958. In May of that year two delegates were sent from the PSP leadership to strike a deal with Castro in the Sierra Maestra. The PSP set about encouraging a new popular front opposition to Batista which went beyond Castro to encompass the leaders of the Autentico party.

Crumbled

The second half of 1958 saw the J26M defeat a massive army of offensive and launch a counter attack. As Batista's army crumbled the United States belatedly tried to find an alternative regime which would prevent power falling to the J26M. However Batista, like Somoza in Nicaragua refused to be dumped, only handing over power at the very last minute.

By this time it was too late. Cities were falling throughout the

THIRTY YEARS ago this month Fidel Castro marched into Havana at the head of a group of guerrillas. The capital had already fallen to a general strike and popular insurrection. Fuluencio Batista, the US backed strong man who had seized power in 1952, had fled the country on New Years Eve, his army defeated in a civil war. The Cuban revolution had begun. Stuart King analyses its origins and development under the competing pressures of US imperialism and world Stalinism.



country as the army surrendered, often without a fight, to Castro's forces. In Havana a general strike organised by the new J26M/PSP labour front (FONU) paralysed the city at the end of December. Guevara's troops arrived on the 1/2 January to an already liberated city.

Thoroughly Bourgeois

The new government put in place by the J26M was thoroughly bourgeois in membership. Castro himself denounced communism and declared that the revolution was "Olive Green" not red. He continued to seek an accommodation with the US. The right-wing was given its head to attack the PSP.

But both the Cuban bourgeoisie and the US remained hostile. They were aware that their position was very weak. In the course of the civil war, the old bourgeois army had been effectively broken and Castro subsequently purged it. The remaining units were integrated with the rebel army. The new army was effectively under the control of J26M.

While that army remained committed to defend capitalism, it was not a stable organ of bourgeois rule. Out of the revolutionary situation which brought Castro to power a special form of dual power

emerged. The Cuban bourgeoisie could no longer rely on the army to defend its interests. The demands of the workers and peasants, their expectations for land, better wages, an end to imperialist domination, were reflected in the rank and file of the army drawn precisely from these sectors.

The Cuban bourgeoisie and the US were determined to reassert control. The first crisis hit the regime with the proposed agrarian reform. Although the reform put forward in May 1959 was moderate, the bourgeois forces, with US support, mobilised against it.

They recognised the dangers of mounting reform in a situation where they were unsure of their repressive apparatus. Worse still, the Agrarian Ministry (INRA) was in the hands of "proto-communists".

Castro faced his first choice when in June the US demanded an immediate and satisfactory compensation for US owned land taken over. June and July saw the start of the breakup of the popular front coalition.

A series of bourgeois ministers were removed and replaced with J26M representatives. President Urrutia was forced to resign. Mass demonstrations culminated in a general strike, and on 26 July a rally of half a million ended by

"electing" a new president, Oswaldo Dorticus—a loyal Castroite.

A further crisis in October/November, including CIA backed bombings of Havana and an attempted revolt by J26M commander Hubert Matos, led to a massive purging of both the army and the J26M. Raul Castro was put in charge of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and of raising a mass militia, while Guevara was put in charge of the central bank.

This was the government, one purged of its bourgeois elements but still committed to maintaining capitalism, which faced a decisive trial of strength forced on it by the US ruling class.

Unsold sugar

In June 1960 the US instructed its Cuban owned refineries not to process Soviet oil. The Cuban government replied by nationalising them. In reply the US government refused to buy the remaining sugar quota leaving Cuba with 700,000 tons of unsold sugar which the Soviet Union bought.

These actions combined with a growing counter-revolutionary guerrilla movement supplied by the CIA pushed the Cuban government into finally expropriating the major sections of the Cuban bourgeoisie along with the US owned companies. The summer and autumn of 1960 saw a wave of nationalisations which completed this task.

The J26M had presided over the expropriation of capitalism in Cuba. In doing so it had reformed its alliance with the PSP and integrated itself into the Stalinist movement.

Necessity

This alliance was a vital necessity as the PSP could ensure a tight bureaucratic grip over the workers' movement in a period of struggle with the bourgeoisie when strictly controlled workers' mobilisations were necessary.

The J26M and the PSP were later to fuse as the Cuban Communist Party. This model was not that of October 1917 but that of 1947/8 in Eastern Europe. The Cuban regime had established itself as a bureaucratic workers' government on the way to constructing a degenerate workers' state.

Such an option was only possible because the Soviet Union was willing, for its own strategic military reasons in the early 1960s, to endorse and financially underwrite a Cuban economy increasingly blockaded by the USA. ■

RICHARD BRANSON is a particularly repugnant example of the breed of "trendy millionaires" who have made good under Thatcher. His self-publicising exploits in ships and balloons and his appointment as an unofficial minister for litter have made him as well known as the "Virgin" retail and travel empire he owns.

Despite all this, his company has done revolutionaries a favour. Whilst we will waste no time being grateful we do urge our readers to take advantage of the production of a batch of films in a "Russian classics" series on cheap (£14.99) videos by the Virgin company. They are available at Virgin record stores throughout the country and at many left wing bookshops. The pick of the bunch are the works of Sergei Eisenstein, in particular the films he made in the mid-1920s, *Strike*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *October*. All three films are eloquent tributes to the creativity of art in a young workers' republic. They are also moving and exciting commemorations of episodes in the history of the Russian proletariat.

Strike, which Eisenstein completed in 1925, was his first film and one of his finest. It tells the story of a strike in a huge Russian factory. The strike is against the inhuman conditions that prevailed in pre-revolutionary Russian industry. It is led by young workers who are members of the Bolshevik Party. It is finally, brutally suppressed by the army.

Agitprop

In many respects, therefore, the film, at least in terms of its plot, owes a great deal to the "agitprop" movement in Russia in the early 1920s. This movement, famous for its colourful travelling trains, explained basic political points to masses of people through the use of street theatre, posters, songs and so on.

However *Strike* transcends agitprop. It does not simply tell a stirring story with a straightforward political message. Its use of juxtaposed images of men and animals, its images of men and machinery in synchronised motion, its caricatures and its characters provoke much more than anger, amusement or even rebelliousness (though they do this as well). In a nutshell, Eisenstein uses images—

Eisenstein on video

Battleship Potemkin, Strike, October
by Sergei Eisenstein
(Russian Classics £14.99 each)

BY ARTHUR MERTON

created by an editing technique known as montage of which he was one of the foremost pioneers and exponents—to stimulate the audience into thinking about and reaching conclusions on the many facets of so-called human nature as shaped by capitalist society.

An example illustrates this point clearly. The massacre of the strikers, which begins on the cat-walks of tenement blocks is juxtaposed with the slaughter of cattle in an abattoir. Far from causing us to reflect on the supposed innate cruelty of mankind, the montage brilliantly demonstrates the way in which capitalism treats workers like animals. The image is not telling us a universal truth—as humanist interpreters of Eisenstein claim. It is telling us a class-specific truth about a specific class society in a way that is visually compelling and emotionally spell-binding rather than simply didactic.

Eisenstein developed his technique in *Battleship Potemkin*, a commemoration of the Black Sea sailors' mutiny in the 1905 revolu-

tion. So powerful was this film throughout the world that it actually provoked mutinies and was banned by capitalist governments. Like *Strike*, it replaces the heroes and heroines of the Hollywood type with character types. The mutinous crew become the collective hero, bound together by their collective action.

But even so, individual suffering is not ignored. The famous Odessa Steps massacre scene focuses our attention on the reality of capitalist cruelty by showing a baby in a pram careering down the steps. In every Hollywood imitation of this scene, the emphasis has been on tension. Will or won't the baby die? With Eisenstein the image induces tension but contextualises it within the savagery of class society.

October, the third of the great trilogy, was commissioned as a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was not issued until 1928, however. The reason was that Eisenstein's first version told the truth about Trotsky's vital role in the revolution.

But Stalin's counter-revolution had, in the same year, smashed the Left Opposition. In an act that symbolised the end of artistic freedom in the USSR and, sadly, one that revealed Eisenstein's prepar-

edness to accommodate to Stalinism, the whole film was re-edited. Trotsky is shown once—opposing Lenin!

Despite this, workers with a video recorder and £14.99 to spare should buy the tape. The film, once again using montage rather than straightforward narrative, chronicles the events that led up to the October Revolution. Cruelty, fear, ambition, courage and honesty are all portrayed through characters shaped by the class war they are engaged in.

Crowds

The point made by Trotsky that a revolution occurs when the masses enter the stage of history directly, is made by Eisenstein's use of crowd scenes. The crowds are not the anonymous extras of Hollywood epics. They are real human beings, with faces expressing the doubts, the anger and the revolutionary hopes of workers fighting for freedom.

The workers in Eisenstein's crowds are seen making choices. This forces every viewer to consider the same questions. But the choices are made, not by isolated individuals but in the context of class struggle. The strikers, the masses in Petrograd all discover the power of collective action. When the arms of the great guns of the Potemkin swing round to face the Tsarist fleet, instead of the mutineers, every worker viewing shares in celebrating that power.

"I am accused of making *Battleship Potemkin* too emotional" wrote Eisenstein, "but are we not all people? Don't we have human feelings? Don't we have passions? Don't we have our own tasks and purposes in life?" Eisenstein made it his task and purpose to bring the message of working class power to a mass audience.

The profits that Branson makes out of selling such great films is galling. But we'll have the last laugh. These films have lost none of their revolutionary potency. Workers who watch them will be forced to think about the questions they raise, forced to consider the revolutionary answers they give. But every worker brought nearer to revolutionary communism as a result will be another nail in the coffins of the profit-system and Richard Branson. ■



Building the party in South Africa

South Africa between reform and revolution
by Alex Callinicos
(Bookmarks £4.95)

BY JOAN MAYER

THESE FIVE essays catalogue the rise and retreat of the black South African revolutionary movement in the 1980s. Callinicos, a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) theoretician provides, a wealth of information and stimulating analysis.

It is disappointing, though, to find that only the last essay "State of Siege" was newly written for this publication. The others have been published elsewhere. This means that although the whole book seems reasonably priced at £4.95, it's a bit steep for the reader who already has the previous publications, to have to fork out a fiver for one new essay!

Financial gripes aside, there is a lot of useful material here, particularly in the fourth and fifth chapters which detail the contending political currents in working class and liberation politics in South Africa.

And for anyone who has tried to follow the contorted but rich debates within the "academic" left in South Africa, it is handy to have an explanation of the theoretical roots of different positions, for instance the way in which the Poulantzian "fractions of capital" theory was used to justify support for the popular frontist strategy of the ANC.

More importantly, Callinicos shows how popular frontism means that the ANC, despite its revolutionary rhetoric in the period of revolutionary upsurge, maintained a strategy of seeking alliances with the "progressive" bourgeoisie and a negotiated end to apartheid. But how could this misleadership be challenged? Here lie the weaknesses both in the essays and in the political positions of the SWP.

Leftist critics of the ANC within the black trade unions aimed to build the unions as class organisations which could not be hijacked by the ANC and its strategy. Callinicos points out that the weakness of the majority of these left "workers" was that they failed to recognise the need for a political party of the working class. This left a vac-

uum of political leadership which allowed the ANC's "populism" to come to dominate the COSATU unions.

But the SWP is unable to provide a satisfactory or convincing strategy for filling that vacuum, nor for party building in the current period. Even in April 1986, as the revolutionary situation in South Africa unfolded, Callinicos' advice to revolutionaries was that their tasks were the "primitive accumulation of cadre"—recruiting ones and twos to revolutionary socialism. A mass working class party is necessary, he acknowledges, but can't be built even on the basis of rapidly radicalising trade unions in a revolutionary period, because it would inevitably be a reformist workers' party.

Such advice left revolutionaries disarmed in the midst of a profound revolutionary crisis. Armed with a revolutionary action program, communists could indeed use what Trotskyists call the "workers' party tactic", making common cause with those in the trade unions who did want to create an independent workers' party, but seeking to win support for working class revolu-

tion and the building of a revolutionary workers' party.

The SWP's rejection of programme means they run away from such a possibility. But the trade unions have ended up being dominated by a "populist" and increasingly reformist leadership anyway! The final call for the "primitive accumulation of cadre" in the most recent article is no more convincing. What will this accumulate around? Callinicos leaves us with the important model of the history of Russian Marxism.

Discussion circles, programmatic debate, hammering out a strategy—these are indeed crucial elements in party building learnt from the early years of the building of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party, lessons learnt time and again by those in the revolutionary movement. But our movement now has a rich heritage of theory and programme and the experience of building Internationals. The SWP's dismissive attitude to building an International and creating an international programme leaves them floundering.

Callinicos' book is a useful addition to any socialist's bookshelf. But for further discussion of the questions of party and programme in South Africa, together with a more detailed analysis of South African monopoly capitalism and its growth into a junior imperialism, we urge readers to return to Workers Power and the MRCI's own material. ■

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The MRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

The Northern Irish state was founded upon a systematic social oppression of its internal minority on the basis of their nationality—their identification with Irish nationalism and its goal of a united Ireland.

From the end of the 1940s the development of the British "Welfare State" increasingly drew the mass of ordinary nationalists into dealing with the state as the provider of elementary needs—the National Health Service, improved educational provision, and especially enhanced unemployment benefits.

Slowly the basis of the Catholic Church's hegemony over its "community" was being undermined. By the 1960s it was no longer the only safeguard against poverty, and its influence over political consciousness was eroded to some degree.

The growing dealings of the masses with the welfare state were principally via the local authorities—precisely where sectarian discrimination operated most systematically against nationalists. Local authorities thus became the focus of a growing nationalist sense of grievance.

The old requirement of house-ownership as the precondition of having a vote in local elections had not been abolished in the North. The system awarded more than one vote to some citizens on the basis of their rateable property—the "business" vote. When eventually it was brought into line with Britain after 1968 the local government electorate leapt from 694,483 to 1,032,694.

Though undemocratic towards protestant and catholic alike, this class-based system operated worst against the more impoverished nationalists. But it was surpassed by the crude gerrymandering of electoral divisions which allocated a minority of the seats to the wards of the nationalist majority in Derry.

The power of local authorities to allocate housing on a sectarian basis was perfected in Derry where delegation of powers by a contrived protestant majority meant that houses were ultimately allocated, without any accountability and in secret, by a single "loyal" official—the Mayor.

Confronting the Northern state

Any fight against the ugliest features of this prison-house statelet would inevitably kindle a national struggle, fuelled by the hope for (and illusions in) a united Ireland as the solution to oppression.

It is possible that some aspects of this sectarian state could have been modified by unionism itself—such as reform of local government—and that the loyalist backlash could have been effectively controlled in the process.

Indeed, the catholic nationalist middle classes would have been happy to settle for limited political reforms to guarantee their place in the sun. Thus they would do all in their power to limit the mass movement to peaceful agitation for limited political reforms.

But discrimination against the mass of the catholic working class was too large in scale and too materially entrenched to ever be erased by political reforms. This was doubly true in a dependent and backward capitalist colony of an imperialist power increasingly faced with its own internal crisis of profitability.

Indeed, the unionist class alliance depended directly on the system of anti-nationalist discrimination and of marginal privileges for its "loyalists". Any attempt to genuinely democratise the northern state challenged its whole foundations.

A revolutionary offensive against the northern state would not, in itself, end the misery of the oppressed nationalist working class and small farmers. Discrimination against the mass of catholic workers, especially in employment and housing, was but one local feature of their exploitation by Irish and British capitalism. That exploitation was fully shared by protestant workers.

However, the discrimination suffered by the catholic working class was far more sharply felt as a grievance than the common exploitation of protestant and catholics. It was almost inevitable that struggle against this class-based system would begin as a democratic revolt, for equality, against discrimination.

Civil rights

The year 1968 saw a rapid growth of protest action among nationalists in the sectarian Northern Ireland statelet. It focused especially on issues of housing discrimination and against unionist bans on nationalist parades and republican clubs. It was against this background that the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), formed in 1967, found itself the focus for all the political discontent of the nationalists. At its core was a group of members of the Stalinist "Communist Party of Ireland" determined to create a cross-class protest campaign to lobby peacefully for a limited programme of civil liberties.

The committee thus embraced figures from the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), Republican Labour, the republican movement and even a co-opted "Young Unionist". Its demands included reform of the local election system and the abolition of emergency legislation and the B-Specials (Ulster Special Constabulary).

In 1968 NICRA was reluctantly forced by the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) to go ahead with the 5 October demonstration in Derry which had been banned by Home Affairs Minister William Craig. The DHAC was the initiative of radical leftists in the local NILP branch, most notably Eamonn McCann, who with two others were afterwards charged with organising that famous march.

Television pictures that day drew the attention of the world to the savagery of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as it batoned the defenceless marchers, including public figures such as Gerry Fitt MP, leaving 96 people in need of hospital treatment.

The first Bogside barricades

The two months following the dam-burst of October 1968 witnessed unprecedented mass demonstrations under the banner of civil rights—several in Derry of up to 15,000. Prime Minister O'Neill was forced to make concessions.

On 22 November he announced his acceptance in principle of a points system for allocating houses, the appointment of an ombudsman, an end to the business vote and a review of the Special Powers Act, plus a Development Commission for Derry to replace the loyalist-packed Corporation. On 28 November Stormont passed an Electoral Law abolishing the business vote in Parliamentary elections and the university seats. But the general question of local government voting was left to a two year review.

On 9 December O'Neill broadcast an appeal for popular support. NICRA called a "truce"—no

1969: THE YEAR OF MASS REVOLT

Twenty years ago the mobilised masses of the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland took their social and national oppression into their own hands. It was a year of crucial tests which Irish revolutionary socialists were severely put to the test. That test proved them bankrupt. The subsequent fate of the whole struggle in the North is in part due to their failure to recognise the roots of their mistakes or to learn any of the key lessons.



Belfast to Derry civil rights march—January 1969

marches or demonstrations for a period. Meanwhile in Derry the new middle class elements in the catholic community—such as John Hume—had formed the Citizens Action Committee (CAC). Almost immediately it moved to dampen the spirit of revolt in the catholic ghettos. Taking a lead from NICRA the CAC pledged to discontinue marches until 11 January 1969.

Free Derry

But not all forces were controlled by NICRA or CAC. In the wake of the Derry march of October 1968 a group called Peoples Democracy (PD) was formed at Queens University in Belfast. Influenced by the semi-anarchist trend dominant in the European student movement it adopted an essentially similar civil rights charter as NICRA but added social reforms (e.g. housing and jobs), together with a commitment to pursue these aims by more radical methods.

It was during the NICRA/CAC "truce" that PD decided on a Civil Rights march from Belfast to Derry on 1 January. The powers at Stormont decided to permit it because it was to be small. But on 4 January the marchers arrived in Derry covered in blood having been beaten up repeatedly by loyalist thugs with police assistance. Derry was inflamed.

After the city had quietened down a mob of police invaded the catholic Bogside area, broke into houses and beat up citizens. The mass anger on the following day resulted in the first barricades and the declaration of Bogside as "Free Derry".

The police were told to stay out of the area, and they did for 5 days during which vigilante groups patrolled the barricades and the left controlled a local "Radio Free Derry, the Voice of Liberation". But the left had no definite plan of action and the CAC emerged from

the shadows to take advantage of the growing nervousness in the area. They had the barriers taken down overnight on the fifth day.

Week after week for the first eight months of 1969 saw mobilisations of nationalists often involving many thousands in an ongoing battle for electoral and housing reform and an end to repression. It was a period of mass direct action which was to quickly fracture the Unionist Party and force it inch by inch towards meeting the civil rights demands.

O'Neill called a new Stormont general election for 24 February. It was a watershed in the nationalist camp. PD got 23,645 votes in eight constituencies. In Derry John Hume took a nationalist seat, as did Ivan Cooper—both future architects of the SDLP which was to consign the old Nationalist Party to the bin. On 2 April Bernadette Devlin, a unity candidate of all the pro-civil rights forces, took the Westminster seat in the Mid-Ulster by-election. Her election further underscored the scale of radical support that was there for the left to consolidate.

Political watershed

At Easter there were unusually large crowds (6,000 in Derry and 2,500 in Armagh) at republican commemorations of the 1916 Rising. Significant rioting, originating in response to loyalist provocations and police attacks, led to the sending in of 500 new British troops on 23 April. They were not to be deployed in areas of strife but would relieve the police by protecting installations. NICRA and the Derry Citizens' Action Committee again used this atmosphere to justify a "pause" on demonstrations.

O'Neill's concessions did not find favour within the whole Protestant community by any means. Then as now Paisley led the loyal-

ist resistance. In the closing months of 1968 it was he who led the provocative counter-demonstrations to the civil rights events. In the weeks leading up to Devlin's election several loyalist bombs had damaged public utilities.

The right wing challenge to Premier O'Neill's concessions, which had led to the general election, gradually developed into a backlash, forcing him to resign. This decision was announced on 28 April and Major Chichester-Clarke took over on 3 May.

The turbulent season of loyalist street demonstrations over the summer culminated in the Appren-

For a detailed analysis of the Irish left's response to the events of 1969 and after read *Class Struggle* No10 November 1988. Available from *Workers Power*. See p15 for details

tice Boys March in Derry on 12 August. The preceding two weeks had seen mob attacks in West Belfast—by up to 1,000 loyalists at times—and the preparation of barricades.

Troops moved into police headquarters on stand-by. In Derry the Republican Club convened a self-appointed "Derry Citizens Defence Association" (DCDA) of two delegates from the major organisations. The bourgeois John Hume's Citizens' Action Committee also joined it—in order to use its platform to appeal for peace at a public meeting of 1,000 on 10 August.

The Defence Association was thus to be the real leadership in Derry in the weeks ahead. But it did little or nothing to promote disciplined and democratic self-organisation of the masses. In no sense was it an organ of the masses. It resigned itself to "inevitable" conflict with the Apprentice Boys' demonstration. It ensured that the materials were made ready to barricade the vulnerable Bogside

R OF

and took the fight against political opportunities in... ed them to be politically... the failure of the Irish left



area but it had not won the influence to control the catholic youths who, on 12 August, responded with stone throwing to the taunts of the loyalist thugs.

The ensuing battle with the police set the whole province alight. For three days stones and petrol bombs rained down on the repeated forays of the RUC who replied with endless tear gas. The police were driven back and demoralised. Their officers had to use physical force to prevent weeping and hysterical policemen from running away from the fight.

B-Specials were mobilised to replace the regular police—carrying pick-handles and cudgels. Before they could be used the British government ordered the withdrawal of these hated security forces of the Six County state and put its own troops on the streets in the guise of peace-keepers.

Solidarity

Meanwhile the nationalist masses had moved in solidarity with Derry in Dungannon, Dungiven and Newry. Their demonstrations were met by loyalist attacks. RUC stations in nationalist areas were attacked. In west Belfast barricades were erected. These matters quickly became far more dangerous than in Derry. Loyalist crowds massed against the catholics in the streets.

On 14 August houses in several catholic streets were burned down by attackers, and police patrolled the area firing Browning sub-machine-guns indiscriminately from their vehicles. 200 Catholic homes were burned, ten Catholics were killed and 100 wounded in the two day police attack on the slums of west Belfast. Troops were put in place on the evening of the 15th.

Only now did the Defence Association in Derry draw in representatives of streets and areas, but

still it had no orientation to the workplaces or organised workers, and no open democratic methods of self-organisation. Incredibly, no link-ups had been created with defence organisations even in Belfast.

The radicals began to lose the loyalty of the youth who turned to the traditional republicanism that was welling up to fill the vacuum of leadership with its promise of armed guerrilla action against British rule in Northern Ireland. The IRA began steadily to recruit the youth throughout the north.

The Defence Association spelt out its demands to the "peace-keeping" troops. The barricades would remain until Stormont was abolished, the B-Specials disbanded etc. However, no demand was raised to withdraw the troops. Bernadette Devlin from the start had railed against any trust in the troops, but the left was no less confused than the masses as to how to counteract what was evidently the real purpose of the troops.

This was a disastrous weakness. Far from coming to the "aid" of the nationalists the troops were a strategic weapon of re-imposing order without fundamentally altering the sectarian state. Many of the limited demands of the movement would soon be met—the scrapping of the B-Specials and disarming of the RUC—but the masses were to be steadily demobilised as the radical leaders floundered in confusion.

Bourgeois Nationalists

The Labour Government's Home Affairs Minister, James Callaghan, was greeted by the nationalist masses of Derry as a champion when he visited the Bogside with flowery promises, strengthening the hand of the Humes and Coopers who soon had some of the barricades dismantled. In Belfast, by mid-September Bishop Philbin was able to talk down the barricades and parade himself through the Falls Road on an army landrover in his ecclesiastical robes.

The illusions among ordinary nationalists in the immediate role of the army was understandable. But the confused response of the "revolutionary left" to the troops—in Ireland and in Britain—and their impotence when faced with the extraordinary events of August 1969, revealed the political bankruptcy of the groups and organisations which claimed to be the modern representatives of revolutionary communism.

This failure of leadership opened the door to the eventual reinstatement of a new bourgeois catholic leadership increasingly able to control and demobilise the nationalist masses. It also allowed the diversion of the most combative nationalist youth into a guerrilla struggle which would relegate the masses to the sidelines.

Both of these newly re-created forces, despite their profound antagonism to each other, shared a determination to limit the struggle within a narrow nationalist programme hostile to the class struggle and opposed to the perspective of permanent revolution.

Permanent Revolution

Agitation for democratic rights in the North had to explicitly take account of the nationalists' aspirations for a united Ireland. Most importantly, it had to confront their illusions in nationalism. It could not do this without explicitly arguing for the completion of the Irish national struggle—but under working class leadership. No other force had the consistent need or ability to carry through the neces-

sary challenge to the existence of both of the partition states. Nothing less could dissolve the divisions in both nation and class.

Socialists had to argue that real democratic rights and equality could not be achieved for the Northern minority without fighting to end the common exploitation of both catholic and protestant workers. Misery was not confined to catholic workers.

The highest unemployment and emigration, and the worst housing in the UK along with the smallest rate of increase in housing stock, made "Northern Ireland" the cesspit of British capitalism. And in the 1950s and 60s a common sense of class exploitation among sections of protestant and catholic workers did lead to a modest growth of support for the candidates of the admittedly conservative Northern Ireland Labour Party and Republican Labour. Hence it was necessary to fight for demands that addressed the sharpest features of their common exploitation—for massive public works to create jobs and houses for all.

Yet at the same time socialists had to confront the reality—borne out in every decade of this century—that the majority of protestant workers would not be broken from their loyalism, and their own complicity in discrimination against catholics, simply by joint economic struggle. To pretend otherwise would be to ignore political reality and leave the catholic working class prey to a resurgence of a spontaneous nationalism which would have no truck with any class programme.

A working class leadership and action programme among the nationalist minority in their revolutionary democratic struggle would inevitably open up a conflict along class lines against the nationalist bourgeoisie and all those sections of the catholic petit bourgeoisie not prepared to fall in behind the workers. This was and remains the only hope of appealing to the more advanced sections of the protestant working class.

North and South

But such a programme could not limit itself to the Six Counties. The working class majority in the South also shared the powerful sentiment for a united Ireland. The mobilisation of the workers of the Southern Republic was essential for any lasting success of the anti-unionists in the North. In Dublin masses had demonstrated outside the British embassy and were baton-charged by the Gardai for their trouble.

Throughout the South there was a tide of pro-nationalist mass anger, but no political force to channel it. Indeed, even the radicals in the fray in the North themselves had done little to win organised solidarity apart from a spontaneous appeal for help in a Southern TV interview during the Battle of the Bogside.

The Southern workers' own class interests were bound up with all facets of Ireland's subordination to imperialism. In the 1960s the much more rapid development of the South led to a growth in the working class, in its confidence, and also in its militant vanguard.

In the decade before 1969 a serious scientific analysis of Irish society and a programme based on it could have powerfully equipped the small circles of revolutionary socialists to give a real lead in the subsequent events. Certainly the forces were there to be mobilised on the Irish left but the leadership on offer in 1969 was not adequate to the tasks posed. ■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



The working class and guerrilla war

SINCE 1945 the world has seen a proliferation of guerrilla struggles: from Indochina, Algeria, Cuba and Angola to the more limited and localised campaigns of ETA in the Basque country and the IRA in the North of Ireland.

Although such struggles invariably have their own particular features, each relies chiefly on small, highly manoeuvrable military units, able to effect swift attacks on a larger and better equipped enemy force. Typically, after harassing the enemy's flanks, supply lines and, if possible, its command structure, the guerrilla unit will be able to retreat promptly and even to disband temporarily. As such, guerrilla warfare is well suited to rural military campaigns, and to tying down and exhausting an enemy.

On the international left there have been two principal responses to the use of guerrilla warfare. One has been simply to condemn guerrilla actions outright. An example of this approach can be seen in the attitude of groups like the Militant Tendency and their international co-thinkers within the NSSP of Sri Lanka. There are major flaws in this attitude.

Firstly, the condemnation of guerrillaist methods often attempts to key into the sense of outrage stirred up by the bosses in response to examples of resistance. Like the bosses Militant are quick to equate the violence of genuine national liberation struggles with "individual terrorism". Thus in the aftermath of major IRA actions, Militant will refer to "mindless violence", "indefensible", "criminal" or "murderous" actions.

Hypocrisy

But to revolutionary Marxists this is little more than moralistic hypocrisy bordering on social chauvinism. Violence is employed by the capitalist class on a daily basis to keep striking workers or recalcitrant semi-colonies "in their place". When armed conflicts occur, Marxists assess which side, if any, is fighting for a just cause, and give unconditional support to those who are at war with imperialism. Proletarian morality assesses the rights and wrongs of any action by whether it advances or obstructs the struggle of the working class for political power.

As Marxists we reject the use of violence that is separated from the organisation of the mass of the working class for a struggle for power. But we do not reject violence per se. We do reject guerrillaism as a strategy for achieving working class power, because that must be achieved by the working class themselves, organised in workers' councils and a militia. However we do not reject guerrilla actions as one of many tactics deployed in the struggle for power. Provided such actions are strictly subordinated to the strategy of mobilising the working class they can play a useful role.

The other major response to guerrilla struggles has been an opposite error to that described above. In the aftermath of the Algerian revolution and particularly the Cuban revolution of 1959, whole sections of the Stalinist, Maoist and supposedly Trotskyist left (especially the USFI) elevated guerrilla warfare from a possibly useful and subordinate tactic into a strategy for the overthrow of capitalism itself. This is a complete abandonment of Marxism

and a capitulation to petit bourgeois guerrillaism in either its Stalinist or nationalist variety. It espouses a strategy that substitutes peasant war and urban guerrilla units for the socialist revolution and the mass of the proletariat.

The overwhelming majority of the working class is concentrated, with the exception of miners and rural proletarians, in the towns. In order to break up the capitalists' apparatus of repression the armed insurrection is necessary.

To be able to maintain an offensive, great force of numbers must be deployed. Armed workers' militias must be developed out of previously existing picket defence squads and the protection of demonstrations, occupations and strikes.

Whilst guerrilla struggle, with its manoeuvrability and capacity for "hit and run" attacks, can be useful in rural war and ancillary to insurrectionary struggle in the towns, it obviously cannot replace the insurrection itself. Localised guerrilla campaigns on the land have on certain occasions developed into fully fledged peasant wars (China and Indochina).

Political power

But the peasantry is not and cannot be a consistently revolutionary or socialist class. Successful peasant war can result, as in Zimbabwe, in a government of the national bourgeoisie, or even, as in Cuba and Vietnam, in a bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism in which the working class is excluded from political power and a state is constructed along the lines of the Stalinist USSR. In other words, the guerrilla strategy when successful obstructs or aborts the proletarian revolution.

When guerrilla warfare is used as a replacement for independent working class struggle, it can end in unmitigated disaster. In 1966 Che Guevara, hero of the Cuban revolution launched a guerrilla campaign in Bolivia with a small force completely isolated from the Bolivian workers' movement. His death in 1967 and the total failure of this project should serve as a warning of the dangers of the isolated and elitist guerrillaist strategy. (See *Trotskyist International* no 2 for an account of this escapade).

The obvious necessity for small armed units of this type to develop in isolation encourages a passive approach from the mass of the working class. Thus in the North of Ireland the IRA's elitist guerrillaist campaign has served as a replacement for the mass struggle against partition. After all, the working class need not engage in mass struggle if the guerrillas will do the job "for" them. As Lenin put it in 1906, "... the party of the proletariat can never regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief method of struggle... it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organising influence of socialism".

It can only be thus when it is controlled by a revolutionary party rooted in the working class. It can only be useful if it is strictly subordinated to the mass struggle. It can never, in and of itself, lead to working class power. Thus our difference with the guerrillaists are not moralistic. They are differences over tactics, strategy and goals. ■



The longest war

SCRAP THE PTA!

THE TORIES are set to implement an unprecedented package of measures aimed at the nationalist population and those who oppose British repression in Northern Ireland.

The broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein (SF) was followed by an order laid before Parliament removing the traditional "right to silence" in custody. The Tories are set to demand that people elected to local councils in the Six Counties sign a declaration denouncing violence before taking office. Automatic remission is to be reduced for political prisoners in Northern Ireland.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) including the powers of exclusion and detention without trial, is to be made permanent. It will be extended to give the police the power to investigate and confiscate money they suspect of going to the IRA—a move clearly designed to attack SF as well.

The Labour Party has had clear policy for the repeal of the PTA since 1983. Despite this we have seen the charade of the Labour front bench imposing a three line whip to force MPs to merely abstain on the first vote on the new bill. This was followed by Kinnock and Hattersley then trying to blame the 36 Labour MPs who rightly chose to vote against it, for "discrediting" the party.

The PTA was rushed through Parliament in 1974 by a Labour government in the midst of a wave of anti-Irish hysteria following the Guildford and Birmingham pub bombings. It is essentially a law created to increase police powers to detain and interrogate anyone they suspect of supporting "terrorism".

The PTA makes the IRA and INLA illegal, allows the police to detain people for interrogation for up to seven days and gives the government the power to expel people from either Northern Ireland or Britain. Up to the end of 1987, 6,625 people had been detained under the PTA without charge. Hundreds have been subjected to internal exile by PTA exclusion orders without ever being given a reason or allowed a public hearing.

Only a tiny percentage detained are ever charged. Up to 1987 only 181 of those arrested were charged. In 1987 of the 225 people detained only 25 were subsequently charged with an offence.

Prior to the European Court of Human Rights ruling that the PTA's seven day detention powers were excessive there was even speculation that the period of detention might be increased to 28 days.

The PTA of course is not designed to protect people from "terrorism". It is aimed at facilitating the mass surveillance of the Irish community in Britain and the nationalist community in the Six Counties.

Under the PTA it is a crime to withhold information from the police. So the act is used to trawl the Irish community in Britain for suspects and informers, and to terrorise Irish people involved in republican and socialist politics in Britain.

The Guildford Four were the first people to be detained under the PTA, followed by the Maguire family and the Birmingham Six. All have

subsequently brought forward extensive evidence as proof of their innocence. Now, even with the new evidence and despite the pleading of bishops and ex-judges, the British Government stand firm because they are fully aware that these cases risk exposing the whole British legal system.

To admit their innocence is to find the police guilty of a massive conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. Michael Havers, now Lord Chancellor, was the prosecution QC in the Guildford Four case. Lord Donaldson, now Master of the Rolls was the judge. The detective superintendent who arrested the Balcombe Street IRA unit, which admitted carrying out the bombings at Guildford, is now Chief of the Metropolitan Police.

These cases are not isolated incidents of injustice from the hazy past. They are part of a systematic pattern of intimidation of the Irish community in this country. The case of the Winchester Three who were sentenced to 25 years each in October 1988 is only the most recent. They were accused of conspiracy to murder Tom King, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. They became the pretext for ending the right to silence after they decided not to give evidence.

Media hysteria was used to fill in the gaps where proof could not be found. And to seal their fate they held the trial in the garrison town of Winchester, home of the British soldiers killed by the IRA at Omagh and in the same month as the Tories returned to Brighton for the first time since the Grand Hotel bombing in 1984.

The PTA must be smashed. A campaign is needed now to stop the new act becoming law.

This cannot be left to the Labour Party whose attempts to challenge the Act in Parliament have gone no further than a narrow legalistic opposition motivated solely by the party's need to be seen to have alternative policies to the Tories. The Labour Party still maintains its support for criminalisation of the IRA. It identifies "terrorism" as the problem in Northern Ireland. It has refused to publicly support the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four.

In the year of the 20th anniversary of British troops going into Belfast and Derry we must renew our efforts to take the issue into trade union branches and Labour Party wards.

We must demand that Labour MPs sabotage the PTA in Parliament—not wait until we have a Labour government in power. We must force them to publicly campaign for the release of the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four as part of the fight against the PTA.

British workers need to see that the attacks that have been inflicted on the rights of nationalists in the Six Counties and the Irish community in Britain also await them as the government prepares for further assaults on workers' democratic rights.

The fight against the PTA must focus, not on the question of whether those arrested are innocent, but on the role of Britain in Ireland. It must be a step towards building a movement capable of forcing British troops out of Ireland.

A GENERAL strike by nine million workers gripped Spain on 14 December. Over 90% of the workforce turned out, stopping industry, transport, commerce and even the TV stations. The strike has shaken Spanish capitalism to its foundations. Its shock waves will be felt throughout the European working class.

The strike was called against the planned introduction of a cheap youth labour scheme by Spain's Socialist Party government. 800,000 youth were to be offered short term contracts and a minimum wage. Modelled on the YTS, the slave labour scheme is not the only thing Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez has borrowed from Thatcher. His policy of low wages and state spending cuts has made the last six years a boom-time for Spanish bosses. Meanwhile workers have seen their job security ended and unemployment rise to 20%. In Spain only a third of the unemployed get dole money.

With the economy growing at 5% per year and profits booming the leaders of the Socialist Party trade union federation—the UGT—could no longer resist rank and file pressure for a fight. In a rare display of unity with the Communist Party-led Workers Commissions (CCOO) the UGT gave official backing to the strike. In the absence of the normal bu-

Spain gripped by General Strike

BY COLIN LLOYD

reaucratic obstructions the result was a total stoppage.

Within days Gonzalez had shelved the youth labour scheme. He has entered negotiations with the unions over the strike's demands: a pay rise in line with inflation, a widening of benefit to the unemployed, trade union rights for civil servants and pensions brought into line with the minimum wage.

The strike revealed the power of the working class. It paralysed society and placed effective control in the hands of the workers for the day. They decided the levels of emergency service and the frequency of news bulletins.

Despite police attacks, mass pickets soon stopped the few department stores which had tried to remain open. The strike took place despite a media propaganda campaign against it.

The strike was an example to British workers. It was also a lesson to all those agonised by Labour's failure at the polls. Kinnock is nothing more than a Gonzalez in

waiting. His commitment to capitalism is no less than that of his Spanish counterpart, and his willingness to take on the unions when in power is no different.

But the history of the British trade union struggle in the last decade holds some valuable lessons for Spanish workers too.

In the last few years British trade union leaders have repeatedly squandered the anger and fighting spirit of rank and file workers. Especially in the crucial first years of Thatcherism the union bureaucrats developed the "day of action" as a way of defusing anger.

The Spanish one day General Strike, though on a scale more massive than any strike in Europe for 20 years, could still allow the government and union leaders a breathing space. The UGT and CCOO have threatened further action if their demands are not met. But Spanish workers should beware of a cycle of one day actions in which they are used as a stage army to aid the bureaucrats in negotiations.

The strike committees which organised 14 December should remain mobilised. They should link up to form local and national Councils of Action which draw in not just UGT and CCOO delegates but also the masses of small traders, housewives and students who took part in the strike. It is these councils of action which should draw up a list of workers demands which go far beyond those requested by the union leaders.

The strike revealed that workers have the power not just to resist the bosses' attacks but to launch their own offensive: for a massive programme of public works to abolish unemployment, for benefit to all the unemployed, for a sliding scale of wages linked to inflation, for the nationalisation without compensation of the banks and major industries.

To achieve this the Spanish workers will have to prepare not for a campaign of one day actions but an indefinite general strike run by the councils of action and defended against the police and army by workers' defence squads. Organisations such as these could not just stop the Spanish bosses in their tracks, but overthrow them altogether and lay the basis for a genuine workers' state. ■



Despite police provocation, workers paralyse Madrid

IN 1965 the Indonesian Communist party (PKI), then the third largest communist party in the world, was decimated in a bloody massacre that claimed up to a million lives. Bodies, dumped into rivers, had to be prevented from flowing into irrigation canals and piling up along river banks at low water.

The tragedy was the culmination of a popular front strategy, that staked everything on a rebel officers' movement (30 September Movement) and a failed coup d'état. Under the leadership of D N Aidit, the masses of the PKI were left as passive observers. In the aftermath of the defeat, General Suharto came to power, his ruthless administration remaining to this day. It left the PKI utterly destroyed and the world working class reeling at the scale of the horror.

Today, nearly a quarter of a century later, a massive anti-communist witch hunt is underway. This is aimed, not at current underground activists (this hasn't stopped since 1965) but at journalists and members of President Suharto's own Golkar Party, suspected of having left wing connections at the time of the 1965 coup.

Government ministries have been

INDONESIA: More blood on Suharto's hands

BY PAT KELLY

told by military intelligence to go through all their employees' files, and journalists have been issued with compulsory forms asking what they were doing at the time of the coup and how they reacted.

The witch-hunt is apparently the result of a power struggle within the ruling Golkar Party, which claims a membership of some 32 million, between the military and vice-President Sudharmono. Sudharmono, Suharto's right hand man from the beginning has never been liked by the military. While holding the rank of General, Sudharmono has never commanded a military unit, preferring to head the bureaucracy. The Sudharmono faction is keen to strengthen the civilian component of Golkar through so called cadre building. It now claims nine million

cadres, whose main task is to mobilise the masses at elections.

The military accuse Sudharmono of allowing Golkar to be infiltrated with pro-PKI elements. In the 1988 Golkar congress Sudharmono was ousted from the powerful party chairmanship. His successor, General Wahono has no direct links with, but is favoured by the military to take over from Suharto, as opposed to Sudharmono who is in line to accede.

Meanwhile the repression continues. Two men, Sukardjo, sixty one and Gijadi Wignyosuharjo, sixty years old, had their executions carried out after waiting twenty three years on death row for their role in the 1965 coup. Only the working class, allied to Indonesia's poor peasants, can put an end to this repression and exact justified vengeance for the bloodbath of 1965. ■

INTERVIEW

Peru in turmoil

Peru is now facing a major political and economic crisis. Under Alan Garcia's bourgeois Apra government a period of sustained economic growth has given way to recession, soaring inflation and attacks on the living standards of the masses. The crisis has caused rifts in the APRA and seriously weakened Garcia's government. It faces opposition from the right in the shape of an anti-APRA bourgeois bloc, the Frente Democratico (FREDEMO) and from the left, in the shape of rising working class militancy, the popular frontist United Left (IU) and in parts of the countryside from the guerrillaist Maoist organisation, Sendero Luminoso.

In this developing crisis our comrades in the MRCI's fraternal group, Poder Obrero, are advancing a clear revolutionary strategy. Recently we spoke to one of its members about the situation.

by the Stalinist Communist Party. In November 1987 the CGTP, together with the peasants, teachers, students and regional and shanty town organisations formed the National Popular Assembly (ANP) as an anti-imperialist organisation. But in the face of the latest attacks the bureaucrats who control the ANP prevented the workers' anger from being turned into effective action.

After the government's September package riots, strikes and peasant land seizures broke out spontaneously. Only after five weeks—during which there had been a major offensive by the right and the demoralisation of many workers who had struck—did the CGTP/ANP leaders act, and then they only called a one day general strike. There were no mass demonstrations called for this day. And in the face of an occupation of Lima by special heavily armed riot troops and tanks—the city was virtually under a state of siege on the day of the strike—the leaders retreated.

Defiance

When the second package was announced the miners were in the middle of a national strike. They joined with textile, social security, bank and naval weapon factory workers in protest. They were met by a decree banning all actions on the streets and the threat that they would be gassed and fired on if they defied the ban. Despite this there were many examples of

defiance. The miners attacked the police and smashed the windows of the Ministry of Labour.

It was at this point that the first national plenum of the ANP was convoked, and on its agenda was the question of organising an indefinite general strike. This was the demand being placed on it by many workers. Faced with these calls the Stalinists of the CGTP and the leaders of the IU got the ANP plenum postponed until February of this year—when they hoped the anger would have died down.

And they cynically called another one day general strike without naming a date. Only two days before it was supposed to take place did a closed executive meeting actually officially call it, adding that there should be no action on the streets. This was a Stalinist betrayal of a working class mobilisation that was clearly heading towards a real general strike against Garcia's attacks. The end result was that the miners and textile workers were left isolated as they continued their struggle.

WP: How has the crisis affected Garcia's own party, the APRA? And what are the right wing opposition to him in FREDEMO doing?

PO: In December the first congress of the APRA to take place since Garcia's government came to power was convened. The right wing of APRA were very critical of Garcia. When he came to the platform the loudest whistling he had ever faced

was heard. He was forced to resign as president of the party.

The militants in the party raised the demand of "All power to the APRA", and demanded a government accountable to the party, instead of an unaccountable presidency. But the whole point is that Garcia's policies are, in reality, shaped by this bourgeois nationalist party.

Concessions

APRA is now massively divided. Some factions sympathise with leftist guerrillaism, some organise right wing death squads. In general the drift is towards a party based government with more concessions to imperialism and more attacks on the working class and the guerrillaists.

The right wing parties, led by the novelist Vargas Llosa, have made many advances. Vargas Llosa is an "economic liberal". He blames all of Peru's problems on "the state" and urges the transformation of Peru into a nation of small businessmen. He is a spitting image of Thatcher, but is meeting opposition from the Social Christians and Belaunde's Accion Popular (AP) who have in the past used the state to intervene in the Peruvian economy. Nevertheless, these forces are united, together with big business organised in the CONFIEP (Peruvian Employers' Federation), to smash the strikes of the workers and restabilise Peru's economy at a massive cost to the working class.



Peruvian miners

WP: HOW has the economic situation developed over the last three months and how is it affecting the working class?

PO: During our "black September" the government implemented one of the most vicious packages of economic measures ever. Over a few days medicine prices increased four to eight times and bread three times. Gasoline and transport prices also soared. All the basic products rose in price—not only in terms of Peruvian currency, but also in pounds and dollars too. In one month inflation was nearly 120%. Yet the government's measures failed to resolve the crisis. In November another package followed, but still inflation kept going up. Every time the government devalued the currency the dollar price on the black market would rise to three or four times the official rate. By December the highest Peruvian banknote was worth less than £1!

In both packages the government ordered rises in pay—but the rises were considerably below the level of inflation. Hyperinflation was being used to steal workers' wages—that is, make them bear the whole cost of the crisis, the debt burden etc. But the working class did not stand by and let their livelihoods be savaged. An attempt to decree the annulment of wage indexation agreements led to a massive strike by bank and textile workers and the government was forced to retreat.

Recession

The hyper-inflation marks the beginning of a very serious recession. It has reduced the home market dramatically. One example of this is the 90% drop in beer sales. Workers simply cannot afford beer anymore. Companies have nothing to sell and demand has slumped. In turn this has occasioned the reduction of overtime. With low wages workers were having to do 14 hour shifts to make ends meet. Now this option has been effectively closed. Even more direct attacks came under the PROAM system, the system that legitimises the expulsion of temporary workers. Whole factories were closed and entire workforces sacked.

The crisis did not only affect the workers. In Peru many small merchants and streetsellers exist. They have been ruined. Their working capital has been simply wiped out. On the land the situation for the peasants is terrible. First, the market for farm produce collapsed. Second, a government increase in bank interest rates of more than 1000% per year has choked off the credit peasants needed to survive and to continue to work the land.

WP: Why has the government been forced to resort to these measures?

PO: We are seeing the bankruptcy of a bourgeois nationalist solution to Peru's problems. Garcia's government is caught in the contradiction of attempting to sponsor the development of a national bourgeoisie while at the same time remaining tied to imperialism. So, despite his populist rhetoric, Garcia has not taken any decisive action against the crippling foreign debt. Therefore he is obliged to try and save the situation by attacking the workers, the poor peasants and the small merchants.

WP: What is the situation with regards to the working class and its organisations? How have they responded to the attacks?

PO: In Peru there are four union federations. The most important is the Confederation General de Trabajadores de Peru (CGTP), led

They would prefer to do this under the auspices of a right wing government. But there are sections of the bourgeoisie that sympathise with the idea of bringing in a Peruvian Pinochet to restore order. They have allies amongst sections of the army who see a coup d'etat as the answer to the crisis.

WP: How have the parties of the left squared up to the developing crisis?

PO: The IU has its first congress this year. It is divided into three wings. The leader of the IU, and ex-mayor of Lima, Alfonso Barrantes, is in a bloc with the bourgeois party, the PSR, and is backed by the petit bourgeois elements of the IU. This bloc is organising the moderate "Convergencia Socialista". Its objective is a popular front, in the shape of a government of national unity with the APRA, FREDEMO and CONFIEP. Its goals would be to smash the guerrillas and rescue the capitalist economy from chaos. The Barrantes group is openly opposed to the indexation of wages. It was complicit, through its silence, in the massacre of 300 Sendero Luminoso prisoners in 1986.

The centre in the IU is led by the pro-Moscow Communist Party. They favour a leftier version of the popular front but refuse to break with Barrantes. Like their Stalinist counterparts in Chile they have learnt nothing from the tragedy of Allende's popular front—a tragedy for the working class whose interests were subordinated to those of the bourgeois parties and whose lives paid for the inevitable failure of the Popular Unity government.

The other main wing of the IU is the PUM, a centrist organisation which has split. One faction, Tapia's group, supports Barrantes. The PUM majority, on the other hand, are verbally very radical, but they combine anti-Barrantes rhetoric with a policy of fostering illusions in a coalition government which would take no measures against the national bourgeoisie.

Coalition

WP: Sendero Luminoso are outside the IU but do not offer a revolutionary alternative to it. How would you characterise them?

PO: They are a Maoist-Stalinist party that believe Deng and Hoxha have started to restore capitalism in China and Albania! They believe that their "popular war" in Peru is the key to resurrecting a Maoist International. In fact, despite their militarism—which is of a thoroughly petit bourgeois guerrillaist variety—they are for a new democracy which would involve a coalition with the "national bourgeoisie". To achieve this, they want to surround the city from the countryside. Their methods, which include killing leftists and workers as well as bosses and officials, are counterposed to the real mass struggles taking place in Peru. They are thoroughly anti-working class.

The real alternative to the IU's popular front strategy is put forward by Poder Obrero. We base ourselves on the direct action of the masses and fight to develop it—through the use of transitional demands against inflation, unemployment, the foreign debt etc—towards permanent revolution and the establishment of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government in Peru. In the period ahead the fight for the general strike and for the transformation of the ANP from its present bureaucratic form into a genuine workers' and peasants' organising centre, an alternative power centre, are our key tasks. ■



the MRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

POUVOIR OUVRIER

Crisis in the (USFI) French Section

"THREE THOUSAND people attended the Paris celebrations of fifty years of the Fourth International—an overwhelming success." So trumpeted the 26 December issue of *International Viewpoint*, the fortnightly review of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

Yet on a more sobering note we find the following in one of the documents produced in the run-up to the Congress of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), French section of the USFI, which will take place this month:

"The LCR is in crisis. That's nothing new. But without doubt, our party has never been so close to the point of no return for over two decades."

Listing heavily and steadily losing members, the LCR is in real trouble following the debacle of the Ligue's electoral waltz with Pierre Juquin. Among the participants at the Paris "celebration" on 10 December were comrades from Pouvoir Ouvrier whose four page leaflet on the reasons behind the LCR crisis provided an occasion for much animated discussion.

In 1987, one-time Communist Party (PCF) national spokesman Pierre Juquin left the PCF with a few hundred supporters and declared that he was to be a candidate in the 1988 French presidential election. Beguiled by Juquin's claims to be a "revolutionary", the French LCR not only dropped their candidate, but piled into the "Support and Initiative Committees" (CIS) set up by Juquin to boost his electoral chances and what they claimed was the "Juquin dynamic" amongst workers and youth.

The problem was that Juquin's talk of disarmament, of anti-racism and of support for anti-imperialist struggles was all couched in the most vague terms that gave no role to those (few) mobilised by the electoral campaign. His project remained firmly within the sphere of reformism. The LCR's intervention was carried out without any major criticism of Juquin's brand of left reformism.

Juquin was happy enough to use the LCR's national presence and organisation to run his campaign, but once the election was over, with Juquin getting barely 2% of the vote, the diplomatic silence was broken. Juquin made it absolutely clear that he wanted to build his own organisation, without the "sectarian and old-fashioned" Trotskyists.

Now Juquin has set up a "red and green" organisation of a few hundred called the "Nouvelle Gauche", which includes a hundred or so right wing LCR members. The strategists of the LCR managed things so badly that instead of them winning people from Juquin, it was Juquin who made gains at their expense!

The failure of the LCR's project with Juquin is at the root of the immediate crisis in the Ligue. Yet for the majority of the leadership the basic message is more of the same—"Continue this line whilst adapting it" they write. But where is the new Juquin to come from?

The majority of the leadership is unequivocal: "the shock wave of the Gorbachev experience" (whatever that means) is going to rock the established organisations of the French labour movement and lead to a "recomposition of the labour movement" a mystical process which they have been banking on since 1974!

The LCR's opportunism towards Juquin was merely the most recent in a long line of opportunist turns. From entry work in the PCF, through the students of 1968, PCF "Eurocommunists" and the various "alternative" movements, the French section of the USFI, under various names and guises, has persistently pursued an opportunist course.

The key task for critical members of the LCR is to raise the current debate to the international level, to get to the origins of the LCR's crisis which is to be found in the USFI's international record. Failure to do so will condemn the LCR to repeat the errors of the last decades.

Fund Drive

ELSEWHERE IN this issue we interview a comrade from Poder Obrero in Peru. The pre-revolutionary crisis in Peru present great difficulties as well as huge opportunities for genuine revolutionists.

To take maximum advantage of the latter the International Secretariat of the MRCI decided this month to dedicate even more funds than previously set aside to assist its work in Latin America.

This already means that the £3,000 six month target we have set will fall short of our needs. We now need this in double-quick time. Last month we received £321.10 from WP readers for the fund. This is welcome but we need twice that a month if we are to meet our summer deadline for the fund drive.

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL 2

The new issue of *Trotskyist International* is out now. Articles include 25 years of the USFI, Theses on Zionism, Nuclear Power Theses, Fighting austerity in Peru. Price £1 (£3 for three issues inc P&P) from Workers Power, BCM 7750, London, WC1N 3XX, England

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

The MRCI

Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Workers Power Group (Britain)

Fraternal groups:

Poder Obrero (Peru)
Guia Obrera (Bolivia)
These groups are in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming affiliated sections.

SRI LANKA

We reprint below a statement from a group of comrades within the Sinhala left fighting against Sinhala chauvinism and for the right of the Tamil people for self-determination. For security reasons we are unable to identify them more specifically.

Since this statement was issued the Presidential elections on 19 December returned the UNP candidate Premadasa, who scored a narrow victory over the SLFP candidate, Mrs Bandaranaike. On the day after the poll the dissolution of Parliament was announced and new elections called for 15 February.

Premadasa has continued his pre-election policy of conciliating with the rabidly Sinhala chauvinist forces of the JVP. Ignoring this the JVP have promised to continue their murderous campaign in the run up to the Parliamentary elections. The warnings in the statement therefore retain all their force.

Fighting neo-fascist forces in Sri Lanka: Mass mobilisation under working class leadership unpostponable

1. The failure for several years now, of the left parties to oppose and develop struggle against the hated reactionary Jayawardena regime, has led to the emergence of a neo-fascist movement—the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or People's Liberation Front and its military arm, the Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya (DJV) or People's Patriotic Movement.

2. The working class and left movement is facing the greatest danger ever of being physically exterminated by these forces, which has during the last few months killed over eighty members or supporters of the three left parties, the LSSP, CP and NSSP and their bourgeois ally, the SLMP. Also recently they have gunned down a number of workers, including motor transport workers and railway engine drivers, who were rightly not ready to engage in work stoppages as a result of death threats by the JVP/DJV. (They have killed over 500 members and supporters of the ruling bourgeois party, the UNP).

3. During several months now, the JVP has sought to create the impression that the working class and toilers are supporting them in their guerrilla terroristic movement and calls for "general strikes" and "hartals" (work stoppages and closing of shops).

But, from universities, high schools to factories, estates, workshops and grocery stores, it has been a case of intimidating students, workers and other employees into coming out for demonstrations and strikes through death threats, which the JVP/DJV have brutally carried out when their orders were disobeyed. Their weapons are the deadly accurate T/56, hand grenades and hand bombs. With petroleum and electricity employees drawn into work stoppages by similar death threats and damage by sabotage to electric transformers, this neo-fascist movement has been able to cause considerable disorganisation of the economy and government administration.

4. From the time of their first armed uprising (1971) up to about 1980 the JVP was using left and Marxist phraseology to conceal their real bourgeois politics. Thereafter, and more precisely after the proscribing of their party by Jayawardena in 1983 in order to mask the involvement of the UNP and its forces in the pogroms, the JVP degenerated into a virulently Sinhala-chauvinist, anti-Tamil movement. From that time, up to now, there is not a word about the struggle against capitalism or mobilising the masses for the overthrow of capitalist class rule and the establishment of socialism. In

truth from the outset of their movement they never showed they had any faith in the proletariat or in the mass movement.

The appeal of the JVP then and now is not to the working class organised in their trade unions, in the factories and plantations and to the rest of the toilers, but to the multi-class patriotic forces which would include the bourgeoisie. And it is significant that since they started their armed guerrilla actions during the last two years they are regularly appealing to the patriotic sections of the armed forces. It is no less significant that the JVP had secret discussions with important cabinet ministers.

What is more, it is a well publicised fact that the representatives of the JVP leadership had several rounds of discussions to form a seven party bourgeois alliance under the leadership of Sirima Bandaranaike, the leader of the SLFP. Among the bourgeois groupings were the reactionary Tamil Congress and the communalist recently formed Muslim Party.

5. It is imperative for the working class and the left movement to understand correctly the nature of this neo-fascist JVP-DJV. This is not just a passing phenomenon—a movement merely seeking to upset the so-called democratic process and disrupt the parliamentary elections. Whatever may be the future of this movement, its aim is to destroy physically the trade unions, left parties and groups; all this in the service of the bourgeoisie whose class rule is in a continuing and deepening crisis. More concretely, the function of this neo-fascist movement is to prevent the proletarian revolution through counter-revolution.

6. The JVP is calling upon the masses to join the struggle against the hated Jayawardena bourgeois regime. The working class, the left movement and revolutionary Marxists will support genuine mass struggles under the leadership of even the bourgeoisie against authoritarian regimes; such support will never be political but military support. But the working class, left movement and revolutionary Marxists cannot support movements whose stated aim is the physical destruction of the working class and left movement and for the triumph of counter-revolution.

Indeed, there is a real and growing anti-government situation in Sri Lanka that must be developed into the perspective of overthrowing this government and for the setting up of an anti-capitalist workers' and peasants' government.

7. Just now, the Jayawardena reactionary bourgeois regime has under the guise of fighting terror-

ism, taken steps that will lead to a qualitative change in the character of this regime. The new regulations promulgated on 9 November and the days following could well lead to a fully fledged military police state:

(a) The police-military empowered to shoot on sight at any type of demonstration

(b) A police officer not below the rank of an ASP is given the power to take possession of a dead body for burial or cremation after an army police shooting without any Magisterial inquest

(c) Any type of demonstration is an offence punishable by death

(d) Also punishable with death are strikes and work stoppages

(e) Confessions made to police officers by suspects in police custody are admissible as evidence against such suspects in trials against them

(f) Trials in regard to such offences to be triable by the High Court by specially appointed military men who will be the new judges; these trials are without jury and they are to be heard within 48 hours after the indictment is served.

This latest death dealing legislation of Jayawardena is all the more reason to speedily develop the struggle against this regime with the perspective of its overthrow.

But the most urgent task today is the mobilisation of all sections of the masses, under the leadership of the working class for the struggle to defeat and smash the forces of neo-fascist JVP/DJV. This struggle must commence and be carried out with arms in hand from today.

Concretely, it is for the leaders of trade unions and left political parties to immediately:

1. Call a conference of all trade unions and left political parties and groups; youth organisations, student organisations, peasants organisations and organisations of the oppressed Tamils to plan out a struggle to fight this neo-fascist movement.
2. Initiate the immediate formation of armed workers' defence squads in every factory, workshop and the plantations.
3. Organise the military training of all members of workers' defence squads.
4. Collection of weapons for workers' fighting squads.
5. Organising of armed workers' squads for the defence of the offices of trade unions and political parties.
6. Solicit the assistance of trade unions and left political parties internationally in regard to the obtaining of arms and military training for workers militants in Sri Lanka.

Workers' front for organising struggle against neo-fascists in Sri Lanka
Colombo, Sri Lanka
5 November 1988

THE SUCCESS of Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the recent elections has raised hopes of change for thousands of Pakistani women. Under the reactionary regime of Zia-ul-Haq, women's democratic rights were severely curtailed. Harsh Islamic laws deepened centuries old oppression. The Zia regime reversed the trend of "modernisation" which had led to an extension of women's democratic rights.

Under Zia, the Islamicisation of the Penal Code included the notorious Zena Ordinance by which all sexual relations outside marriage brought penalties of flogging or death. Women's testimony was held of less account than men's.

The impact of the measures was to strengthen patriarchal relations within the family and countryside. The system of *purdah* (the segregation and seclusion of women) had official approval. Women in the cities who had won a measure of freedom in social relations found themselves targets of Islamicisation and under pressure to return to the *chador* (the veil which covers the head and body). In the early 1980s the *chador* was made compulsory for women in the civil service and later in education establishments. This had particularly severe effects on women from the middle class and intelligentsia who had most benefits from earlier modernisation programmes.

No guarantees

The triumph of Benazir Bhutto shows that Zia and the religious hierarchy did not succeed in permanently excluding all women from public life. But Bhutto's accession brings no guarantees of improvement for the vast majority of Pakistani women who do not share her privileges.

Bhutto's dynasty is part of the modernising wing of Pakistan's ruling elite. Women from this section of society have for decades been allowed greater freedom and educational opportunities than lower middle class, working class and peasant women. The nationalist movement against the British occupation aimed to industrialise and modernise. This demanded an educated ruling group for administration and business. In turn this meant that women, particularly those of the upper class, were needed as a force for progress. Besides this, the democratic ideals of equality and justice with which the nationalist leaders mobilised the population against the British occupation, also lent support to women's independence.

Nevertheless progress for women was slow in the new Pakistan. Women did not win full suffrage until 1956. Equal rights for men and women were not enshrined in the Constitution until 1973 during the early years of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's premiership. That period saw an increase in women's participation in public and social life. The military regime of General Zia which succeeded it, halted those minimal advances.

Liberalisation

Benazir Bhutto and the PPP have therefore been able to relate to a modernising and egalitarian tradition, including the liberalisation of laws on women.

But whilst upper class women and those of the intelligentsia benefited from the previous PPP reforms, and may again if Benazir Bhutto carries out some of her promises, the mass of Pakistani women remained unaffected. The PPP has remained a bourgeois and landlordist party. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto left the power and wealth

Women in Bhutto's Pakistan

In her first broadcast after being elected Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto declared that Islamic laws would be repealed and rights restored to women. **Lesley Day** describes the plight of women in Pakistan and questions the extent to which Bhutto will lift the veil of their oppression.



Benazir Bhutto—lifting the veil of women's oppression?

of the big landlords undisturbed.

For millions of Pakistani women this meant no relief from their intense oppression and exploitation on the land. Three quarters of Pakistan's population lives on the land. Most women's existence is dominated by the daily grind of survival. Many villages have no running water or electricity. Women and girls are responsible for all aspects of domestic work and welfare, spending long hours in back breaking labour such as water carrying, food transportation, repairs and maintenance of the home. It is little wonder that, faced with these enormous tasks, few rural Pakistani girls are allowed to spend much time at school.

The literacy rate for women in Pakistan reaches just 15%. Men's literacy is five times higher. The combination of poor nutrition—the best food is frequently reserved for the men and boys—with successive pregnancies, leads to chronic anaemia and generally poor health.

In addition to this household labour, many Pakistani women also work on the land. It has been estimated that 70 to 80% of rural women are involved in some agricultural work, but this is not translated into any form of economic independence. The labour of all family members generally belongs to the tenant who leases the land. Over half of the country's land is leased out in some form of tenancy, and women are excluded from being tenants. Therefore the labour women perform "belongs" to the male head of household. This is also often the case when women are hired as agricultural wage labourers rather than as tenants—again the income goes to the husband. Where land is owned by small peasant families women are once again excluded—a legacy of British colonial rule which prevented women inheriting land. Whilst the laws have now changed, the custom remains and few women own land.

The impact of imperialist exploitation on the position of women in Pakistan is profoundly contradictory. On the land the two major export crops, rice and cotton, do involve the employment of many women as "independent" wage labourers, receiving a wage directly, leading to potentially more economic independence for women. But whilst the family remains so intensely patriarchal and dominated by Islamic codes this will mean little for women as they give their wages to the household head.

Struggle

The conversion to such crops for export has also driven millions of peasants from the land. They have been concentrated in urban areas in vast shanty towns where women struggle to keep their families and households together. Work as domestic servants or factory hands is available for some women in conditions of super-exploitation, physically destructive in intensity with long hours and pitiful wages. Imperialist domination of the economy of Pakistan has led to these conditions for women—super-exploitation as supposedly "free" wage labourers whilst they have no independence within the family and restricted rights in law.

It was the development of capitalism which led to pressures for "modernisation" with regard to women under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. But lifting the veil for ruling class women did not destroy the customs which imprison the masses of women. Zia brought in a particularly repressive interpretation of Islamic law and enshrined it in the state legislation. He did this with the support of the imperialists who, despite hostility to Islam when paraded by an oppositional regime such as Iran, are prepared to overlook questions of bourgeois democracy and women's rights when they have a loyal ally who suppresses the workers and sup-

ports the anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan.

A fight against the oppression of women in Pakistan must involve both a struggle against religious and cultural reaction and against the rule of the landlords and industrialists who benefit from women's subordination. Bhutto and the PPP cannot be trusted to do either. Some liberalisation is likely both because of the modernising project of the PPP and the pressure from its mass base. Women's organisations, notably the umbrella Women's Action Forum, have been pressing for a reversal of Zia's measures. Women in the upper middle class, especially the professionals and civil servants, will be expecting restrictions to be lifted. But so far Bhutto has taken care not to precipitate a crisis with the military or religious hierarchies.

The Women's Action Forum, while being more radical than the older All Pakistan Women Association (APWA), has like the latter, argued its case for change within an Islamic framework. They have quoted Koranic injunctions which shows that women are accorded a much higher status within those teachings than they are by the current laws and customs of Pakistan. For instance, women's right to own property is enshrined within the Koran, but little practised. The dowry is often considered to be the daughter's "share" of the family wealth—yet it is paid to her new husband and his family!

Motives

Pointing out such hypocrisy can help reveal the real motives of the reactionaries: but to leave the matter there concedes that Pakistan's laws should be subject to religious ones—and thus to the interpreters of religion. Any compromises on the need for a secular state will be a barrier to the emancipation of women.

But a greater barrier to the full liberation of women lies in the stranglehold of the big landlords and capitalists on Pakistan's society and economy. While they hold sway, the masses of Pakistan will continue in poverty. Women's role as unpaid drudges and a pool of cheap labour will remain. Only the road of class struggle can open the way for true emancipation. Such a class struggle must be pitted against the bourgeois government of the PPP.

The bourgeois feminists will not be prepared to take that road, although individuals will of course be won to the side of the working class. Women from these groups may well be courageous fighters for equal rights, and tireless campaigners for the welfare of women generally. But where their own privileges and wealth are dependent on the continuation of existing class rule, they will turn their backs on the mass of women.

Advances

How can working class and peasant women organise for their own interests? The burden of oppression weighs heavily and leaves them, in their isolation, prey to reactionary ideas. Nevertheless, the increasing numbers in factory work, some advances in unionisation and the history of working class and even peasant women in mobilising first against the British, and later against Zia's repression, shows the possibility.

A major task of revolutionary communists in Pakistan is to take up the cause of women's liberation, to win adherents from the existing feminist movement to the side of class struggle and to argue for the need for a proletarian women's movement with communist aims—the destruction of the power of landlordism and capitalism and the freeing of women to play their full part in social and political life. ■

ONE YEAR ago Scotland was aflame with working class anger against the Poll Tax. Thousands pledged non-registration for the tax and organised to defy the law. Now, whilst the anger remains, the non-registration campaign has been defeated.

The defeat was the direct result of the policies of the Kinnochites and the Stalinist Communist Parties. Instead of offering a revolutionary alternative to the disastrous cross-class, protest campaign advanced by these forces, the centrist groups have themselves been thrown into disarray by the defeat.

The centrist groups that make up the British left spent 1988 explaining that various forms of illegal mass resistance could defeat the Poll Tax. Non-registration, non-payment, non-implementation by councils and non-cooperation by council workers were all touted at various times as the answer to the Poll Tax. Embroiled in a dispute with the Labour leaders over illegality, the centrists have up to now completely failed to explain how defiance, in and of itself, could defeat the tax.

The Poll Tax is a class wide attack. It is the flagship of the Tory third term. If implemented it will severely dent the ability of Labour in local government to deliver even the most minimal services to the working class. It will ravage the living standards of millions of workers.

The Tories are prepared to drive home the attack with their laws, courts and police. Precisely because of this, the whole class has to be mobilised for general strike action. Council workers and defiant non-payers will have to unite with trade unionists from every workplace in councils of action; delegate bodies committed to organising strike action in defence of those victimised by the law.

Defiance

The general strike and councils of action are not counterposed to non-payment, non-implementation and other forms of illegal or even protest action. They are the logical outcome of any mass campaign of defiance, the necessary means of achieving such a campaign. And they are the surest means of defeating the class wide attack. They are not only the crucial element of a revolutionary Marxist strategy to defeat the Poll Tax. They are also demands which would enable the working class to turn a mass defensive struggle against the tax into a struggle for working class power itself.

But none of the centrist groups have dared to raise these demands, even as propaganda for the way ahead. Instead they have comforted themselves with tailing the mood of the masses, applauding the will to defy registration until it became clear that only 1% of the electors had refused to register in Scotland. Now they are frantically rummaging through the slogans and tactics of the Labour left for another magic solution to the Poll Tax short of the general strike.

Militant argues that with the defeat of non-registration, it is non-payment and non-compliance by councils and council workers that are the next line of defiance. True as this is, *Militant* cannot explain how non-registration came to be defeated other than by the deviousness of the Tories in registering people despite their refusal to comply. They ignore the fact that the Tories' devious means could never have worked



Embryo soviet?

Centrism and the poll tax

BY CHRIS RAMSEY

against a real mass non-registration campaign. It was thanks to misleadership that the actual resistance was minimal.

Workers' anger did not spontaneously turn into illegal action because the Labour and trade union leaders quickly revealed that they would do nothing to defend those fined for defiance. A commitment to supportive strike action was, and remains, the key to mass defiance of the law. But such action has a subordinate place in *Militant's* strategy. For them the key is to force Labour and trade union leaders into leading "a mass campaign of non-payment and to refuse to victimise non-payers". The mobilisation of rank and file workers independently of the leaders, finds no place in *Militant's* schema.

Instead of general strike action to force the Tories to give in, *Militant* have repeatedly called for a one day general strike in protest at the tax. A one day general strike could of course be a useful tactic in organising the forces of resistance. It would play a useful role in demonstrating the extent of opposition that exists.

But such a tactic cannot defeat the Tories. Only if it is fought for as part of a struggle for indefinite general strike action will it be able to turn the campaign from one of protest into one capable of defeating the Tories. But for *Militant* one day action is the beginning and end of the story.

Double-think

Indeed, every class wide struggle sees *Militant* wheel out the one day general strike as a panacea, a strategy for all seasons—the miners, the NHS and most recently in education. Yet, as the one day strikes around the NHS showed, isolated protests cannot defeat the Tories' key attacks.

Without a strategy which links today's level of consciousness and organisation with the necessary action to defeat the tax, centrism is always reduced to double-think.

So despite the defeat of non-registration we are still told that "an anti-Poll Tax campaign like that in Scotland must be mobilised nationally". The opposite is true! We need a campaign which can defeat the treachery of the Stalinists and Labour left and the mistakes of centrists like *Militant* in Scotland.

Inadequacy

If the recent setbacks have shown the inadequacy of *Militant*, they have produced a change of heart in *Socialist Worker*. Having tailed behind "mass non-registration", its defeat provoked *Socialist Worker* to reject not only this but non-payment as well. In November they called for "a non-payment campaign as widely and solidly based as possible". Less than a month later they concluded:

"Support for non-payment is based partly on misreading what has taken place in Scotland—believing that non-registration and non-payment has been a great success when in fact less than 1% have refused to register voluntarily—and partly on pessimism about the prospects of building a real mass campaign for non-collection." (17 December 1988)

The SWP is wrong to counterpose non-collection to non-payment because, in the first place, non-payment has yet to be tried. When it is, the Tories will find it much more difficult to extract money with menaces than they did extracting names from a register. Secondly the SWP's strategy shifts the burden of resistance from the mass of workers to a minority of council workers. This is due precisely to their "pessimism about the prospects of building a real mass campaign...".

It is a product of the SWP's knee-jerk economism to argue that council workers "in the workplace", can struggle more effectively than millions of workers whose living standards are being slashed by the tax. There is nothing in the purely "trade union", or economic interests of council workers which makes

them able to resist the tax alone. In fact Liverpool NALGO workers hoping for more jobs and upgrading to implement the tax recently packed the union's AGM to stop a motion calling for defiance.

Council workers, unschooled in centrist double-think, know full well that they will be prey to fines and sequestration unless their resistance is part of a mass campaign of strikes, demonstrations and non-payment. Even Paul Foot was sensible enough to declare that "non-payment is crucial to any anti-Poll Tax campaign"... in the same issue of *Socialist Worker* where non-payment is described as "virtually impossible". (17 December 1988)

Militant and *Socialist Worker* of course say nothing about councils of action. Through the methods of tailing variously the left Labour leaders and the spontaneous consciousness of workers they reject such demands as "too far in advance" of the existing class struggle and workers' consciousness.

Another variation on this theme comes from the International Socialist Group (ISG)—the driving force behind *Labour Briefing*. They have tried to seize hold of the Stalinist tactic of "Committees of 100". In a resolution to the recent Newcastle Anti-Poll Tax Conference they argued to:

"... set up national and local 'Committees of 100' consisting of MPs, councillors, trade unionists prepared not to pay the Poll Tax as a way of developing a mass non-payment campaign".

For the Stalinists these are cross-class alliances committed to symbolic defiance and counterposed to mass resistance. But *Briefing* argues:

"The Committees of 100 are not a substitute for a mass non-payment campaign but a stepping stone to it. They must not be used to confine resistance but to spread it as widely as possible. The aim of every Committee of 100 should be to develop into a committee of 1,000 then 10,000 and so on."

But in all the really existing Committees of 100 the price for

keeping the MPs, Councillors and other dignitaries is that there is no accountability, no criticism of their refusal to fight and no commitment to do anything but passively defy the tax. Far from preparing a fight against this the ISG have launched into the fray under their usual banner "against sectarianism".

"No one" they argue "can claim a monopoly on tactics or organisation. We need to include as many types of activity as possible". In the Lambeth Campaign against the Poll Tax this translated into the argument that members of the campaign should be "free to choose their own tactics". That is, they refused to fight for even their own limited strategy and tactics as the basis for the action.

Fantasy

It is impossible to mobilise millions of workers without giving them not just a voice but the chance to decide how to win and hold their leaders to the course of action decided. It is a fantasy to suggest that Committees of 100 can do this. How can self-selected Committees of 100 organise non-collection or strike action? How can they hold leaders to account? How can they develop into organisations which really represented 10,000 or 100,000 unless they break from the Committee of 100 strategy in favour of organising delegate Councils of Action?

To bring together all those forces who are willing to fight, and to organise and agitate amongst those who are not yet committed and thus swell our ranks, we need councils of action. Delegate based bodies bringing together representatives of those who are willing to take action can discuss and decide tactics and then put them into practice.

Centrism in Trotsky's words "views with hatred the revolutionary principle state what is". By various routes the main centrist groups in Britain have arrived at the same refusal to state what is necessary to beat the Poll Tax.

Barren formulas, sleight of hand and economic schemas are substituted for a transitional action programme. The centrists content themselves with echoing the demands of the masses seemingly unaware that these are in fact the demands of Stalinism and left reformism.

Workers looking for an alternative to Stalinist and left reformist strategies will not find it in the pages of *Militant*, *Socialist Worker* or *Labour Briefing*. ■

Workers power

INSIDE

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British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

**As
Reagan
steps
down ...**

COLONEL QADDAFI is the US government's favourite bogeyman at the moment. Or as the *Financial Times* put it he is "the scapegoat which can be clobbered to useful and educative effect".

According to Reagan and Thatcher, Libya is behind most acts of "international terrorism". Qaddafi can be relied upon to turn up behind arms supplies to the IRA, a conduit for Semtex explosive to the Six Counties.

In the absence of anyone claiming responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing, the world's media circus is keen to put the blame on Qaddafi.

Not that there is any proof, of course. But he does keep "unsavoury" friends. For example, Libya harbours the offices of the Abu Nidal-led Fatah Revolutionary Council. Nidal places himself on the extreme wing of opposition to Yasser Arafat's accommodation to Israel. "By your friends shall ye be known", it seems.

Conjecture and speculation apart there is a serious purpose in targetting Qaddafi once again for punishment. Since the US administration decided to hold talks with the PLO in the wake of Arafat's recognition of Israel, the Zionists have felt betrayed.

Confirm

The US decided to pick on Libya again to confirm their loyalty to their closest regional ally and as a warning to anyone in the Arab camp thinking of disrupting the PLO leadership's latest diplomatic compromise.

The White House leaked to the US press long known details of a chemical plant at Rabta in Libya. If, as claimed, it is capable of producing chemical weapons, then such weapons could be targetted on Israel.

Reagan has thus raised the threat of bombing the Rabta complex. A battle fleet has moved near the coast of Libya and its provocative presence has now resulted in the shoot-

ing down of two Libyan jets. This warning to Qaddafi is similar to the downing of two jets in August 1981. Will it be followed up by an April 1986 style bombing raid on Libya itself?

Two years ago speculation that Libya had a hand in the bombing of a nightclub in Berlin—a haunt of US troops—led Thatcher to let Britain be used as the base of a bombing raid on Tripoli, resulting in many civilian deaths.

Not certain

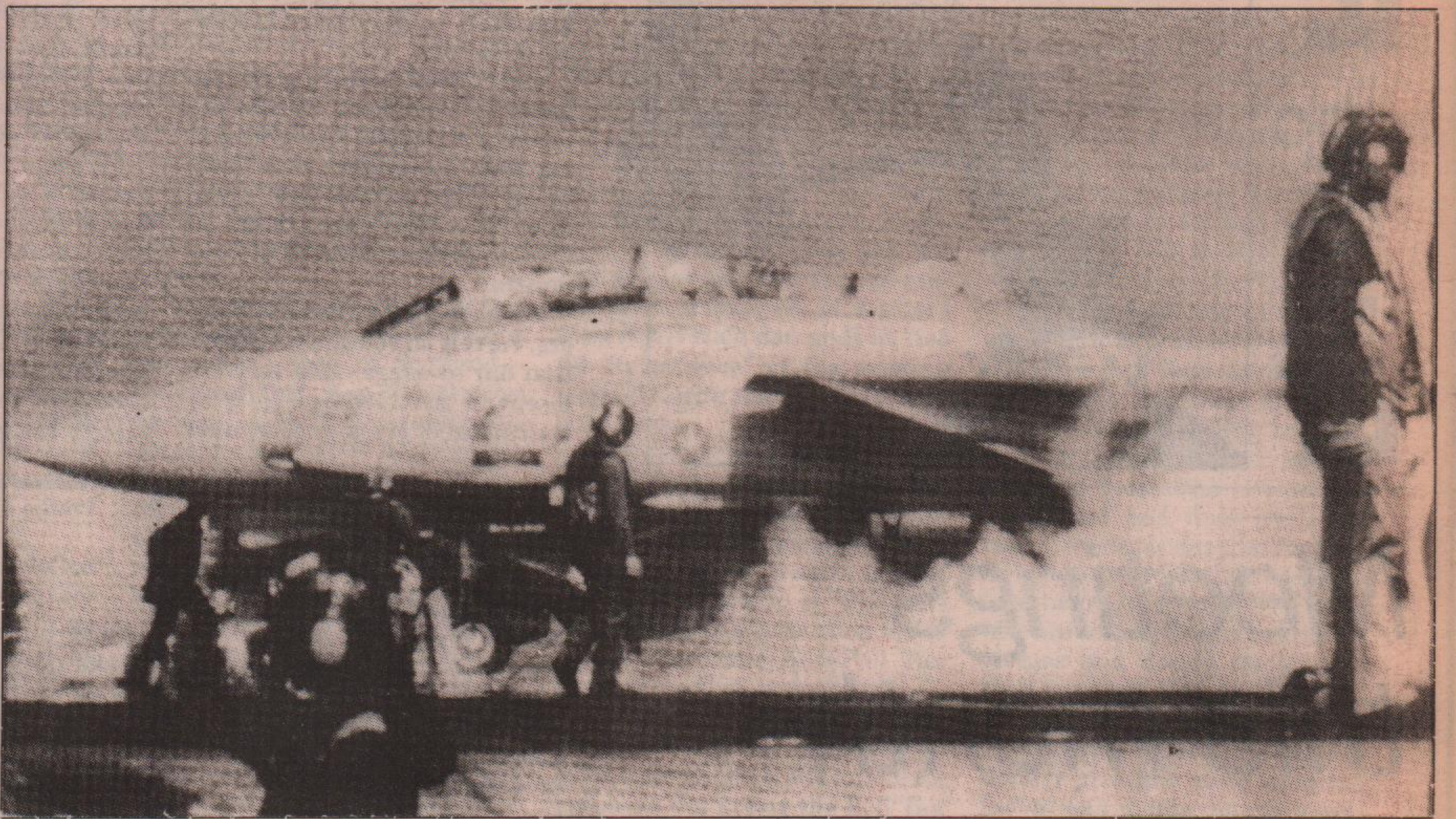
This time it is not so certain a raid will be carried out by the US. Counsel is divided in the US. Dr R Kupperman a Middle East advisor has urged:

"The first thing to do now is take out that Libyan chemical warfare plant. In a sense it does not matter who was responsible for the [Pan Am] bomb."

But others are more cautious, and Thatcher is not keen on a 1986 re-run. After all, the 1926 convention governing chemical weapons does not ban production and storage. Moreover, the US did not propose sanctions against Iraq for actually using them against Iran and the Kurds. And Reagan's lecture to Qaddafi does not square with the USA's refusal to pressure Israel into observing the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty!

It is more likely that the present furore is designed to create a political atmosphere in which Israel itself could take out the plant, just as in 1982 when it blitzed an Iraqi

LIBYA UNDER FIRE



nuclear reactor.

Meanwhile the US and Israel will continue to work behind the scenes for Qaddafi's downfall. Both countries back the so-called National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL). The NFSL was formed in 1981 and is made up of a rag-bag of warring opposition groups. They led an unsuccessful attempt on Qaddafi's life in 1984.

Now the NFSL has plans

to build up a US/Israeli trained force, 2,000 strong, in Chad on Libya's southern border.

Class conscious workers in Britain must reject the lies and half-truths of Reagan and Thatcher. Libya, unlike Syria, for example, is less able to mount an effective military defence against US and Israeli aggression and for that reason is constantly picked out for rough treat-

ment. Irrespective of responsibility for any individual actions, Libya is singled out as a way of demonstrating US imperialism's determination to safeguard its political and economic interests in the Middle East.

For the US, safeguarding the supply of oil and trade routes is paramount, as is demonstrating that any resistance to imperialist exploitation will be met with an

iron fist. Workers have got nothing to gain by allowing Bush to continue this Rambo-style foreign policy in the Middle East. Quite the reverse. Blows to US troops, such as those in the Lebanon in 1983, strengthen progressive opposition to imperialism at home and abroad.

- Hands Off Libya!
- US ships out of the Mediterranean!