

# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International



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## Don't wait for Labour

# FIGHT THE TORIES NOW!

**THE SPECTACLE** of the Tories going for each other's throats is a pleasure to see. After their Euro-election debacle the search for scapegoats was on.

Thatcher has made it plain that she is planning another reshuffle of her Cabinet. In Thatcherspeak "reshuffle" is a codeword for compulsory redundancies. Rumours abound that Howe, Lawson or both, will be the victims of Thatcher's next purge.

This in-fighting is not simply the result of the Tories' Euro defeat. It has deeper causes. Problem number one is the economy. It is a headache that threatens to become a migraine. This is why Lawson's future is being questioned by the bosses' press.

### Recession

Inflation, continuing high levels of unemployment and the threat of an international economic crisis hitting the still frail British manufacturing sector, all threaten the British economy with a new recession. Added to this Thatcher fears that 1992 will undermine London's role as a financial centre, a capital of capital.

As if this wasn't enough the working class is showing signs of being far from down and out, despite the defeats that have been inflicted during the 1980s. The impending dock strike, the strikes on British Rail, the London Underground and buses, the strikes in the civil service and the BBC, are all examples of the will to fight.

Faced with soaring prices and mortgage payments, faced with the prospect of inflation rising to 10% by August, and faced with the unofficial pay norm of 7%—a

wage cut—workers across industry have decided that actions speak louder than negotiations.

For the first time since the miners' strike there is a sense that the Tories can be taken on and beaten. This, like the economy, is giving Thatcher's gang the jitters. Now is the time to press home the advantage. Now is the time for workers in dispute to forge links, across the industries, and face the Tories and bosses down with a united front of struggle.

### Obstacles

There are real obstacles to this happening. Every militant in struggle today needs to face up to them and overcome them. The biggest obstacle is in our own ranks—the trade union leadership. They are now moving into top gear to try and stop the links being forged. They are limiting action to drawn out campaigns of one day actions. They are playing on sectional interests, especially in transport, to stop the links being made.

And, in the face of the bosses' anti-union laws—now being used to try and outlaw every dispute—they are urging that we all obey the judge's rulings and sit on our hands while our pay, condi-



## THE ROT SETS IN ...

tions and jobs are hammered.

The fact that the judges finally ruled in favour of the dockers and the rail union should fool no-one. On the docks the bosses played for time and won. On the rail the judges reckoned that a one day action could be allowed without too much damage.

Indeed the rulings were in many ways a gift to the union leaders. They strengthened the argument that we should obey the law by "proving" that the men in wigs would see fair play done after all. No matter that the damage had been done. No matter that the bosses will get judgements in their favour the minute the struggle really heats up.

The bureaucrats will now

be in a better position to tell workers not to listen to the "wildcats" who have been prepared to take unofficial action. And they will heave a sigh of relief if Fowler adds the banning of unofficial strikes to the battery of anti-union laws that already exist.

The other danger we face is the message being peddled by Kinnock and his new model Labour Party. Having helped sabotage the dock strike back in April and having kept his distance from the transport disputes he is using Labour's Euro victory, its boost in the polls, its by-election victories to say "hold on, don't take on the Tories in struggle, wait for me to get into Number 10".

If we listen to these pleadings for peace and submission we will face pay cuts, a new round of job cuts, a massive productivity drive by the bosses, the Poll Tax and the savaging of the NHS over the next three years.

Even if Labour did manage to win the next election we would face a government committed to a toned down version of Thatcher's policies. Labour's policy review means that our livelihoods will be still be under threat. Neither Kinnock's "caring capitalism" nor Thatcher's "market free-for-all" can mean anything other than attacks on those exploited by capitalism, the working class.

Thatcher has been in trouble before. In the early

1980s she was one of the most unpopular leaders ever. During the miners' strike and immediately after she was riding low in the polls. On both occasions the Labour leadership told us to hold back, told us not to try and get rid of her by using "industrial muscle", told us to obey laws which meant it was legal for courts to ban strikes on a judge's whim and steal our money, our union funds, if we took action they didn't like. The result—three terms of Thatcher.

This is why, in the present round of struggle, we say loud and clear:

- Don't wait for Labour!
- Into battle now!
- Defy the anti-union laws!
- Unite the fightback!



# They are all welcome here!

THE DOUBLE standards behind all immigration laws, their class as well as racial bias, has been starkly demonstrated by the furore over the Hong Kong Chinese people.

Of the six million who live in the territory only 3-6 million qualify for British passports. So worthless is the Hong Kong British passport that it does not even entitle the holder to live in Britain!

Many Hong Kong citizens are fearful of their future in 1997 when the colony passes over from British to Chinese rule. Many of those will be Hong Kong workers who have fled previous waves of Stalinist repression in China. Some are rich Hong Kong capitalists who have made massive profits out of the sweated labour which creates the wealth for which Hong Kong is renowned. These entrepreneurs fear that their assets might not be safe under Deng's "two systems, one country".

This second type of "refugee" need not fear because Thatcher has announced she is quite prepared to welcome them to Britain with open arms—as long as they bring their cash with them. She has indicated that the present immigration laws can be applied "more flexibly" for those Hong Kong Chinese who bring at least £150,000 into Britain. For the rest, the average Hong Kong

wage is £6,233 per year; enough to buy an air ticket but not a passport! They will have no choice but to swap British imperialist dictatorship for Stalinist dictatorship.

Under British control Hong Kong itself has taken a hard line on immigration. It has shown no mercy to those attempting to enter from mainland China. People caught trying to do this are repatriated in 24 hours or less without any investigation into their circumstances.

The hundreds of Vietnamese boat people who arrive in Hong Kong every day, risking their lives on unseaworthy craft, are also treated disgustingly. They are kept in camps and interrogated to see if they are genuine refugees. More than six hundred of them are now on hunger strike against their appalling treatment.

The British Labour Party has little constructive to say on the issue of immigration from Hong Kong. Their foreign affairs spokesman, Gerald Kaufman, has criticised Thatcher's bias towards the Hong Kong capitalists arguing that it was "Obscene to allow rich people to buy their way into Britain."

However, he went on to argue that there was a "serious problem" for Britain in absorbing the 3-6 million people with Hong Kong British pass-

ports. He went as far as condemning those MPs who had argued for the right of entry.

It is clear that the Labour leadership is still as content as ever to pander to the racism and nationalism that exists within the British working class.

British imperialism has made, and will continue to make, massive profits out of the Hong Kong working class. But this entitles the Hong Kong working class to neither a say in how the colony is governed nor anything more than a worthless piece of paper, rather than a genuine passport.

We should make no distinction between those who hold the British passport and those who do not. We should have no truck either with the argument that says it is "the motherland's" duty to look after its loyal subjects. The Union Jack is stained with even more blood than the flag of Deng and Li Peng.

To argue that Thatcher is deserting the moral values symbolised by the Union Jack is a sick joke on the people of India, Bangladesh, Burma, Malaysia etc. It is class solidarity, not misplaced illusions in the honourable pledges made by the British Empire, which demands that British workers fight for the right of entry of all Hong Kong Chinese. ■

● Now turn to pages 10-11

*Liz Wood and G R McColl look at Britain's immigration laws and the plight of refugees at the hands of the Tories.*

BRITAIN'S IMMIGRATION laws are racist. An array of laws and regulations has virtually stopped so-called "primary immigration" from Britain's former colonies. Meanwhile one million white South Africans still have the right to "return" to Britain—though they may not even have visited this country.

In addition the last decade has seen a growing onslaught on the rights of political refugees in Britain. Britain's treatment of the Kurds, the deportation of Viraj Mendis, the furore over the rights of Hong Kong Chinese demonstrate the hollowness of British capitalism's claim to represent justice, democracy and freedom.

Britain's first immigration law, the 1904 Aliens Act, was explicitly racist. It excluded Jewish immigrants fleeing for their lives from the pogroms of Russia and eastern Europe. Britain's reaction to Jewish immigrants was no better, even during the Holocaust. During the Second World War the small number of Jews who escaped the concentration camps and came to Britain were rounded up on arrival and placed in camps complete with armed guards for the duration of the war.

## Backlash

After the war the British bosses were forced to put aside their opposition to immigration to meet a growing labour shortage. But as the economic boom faltered and a racist backlash gained strength a new round of racist legislation began in 1962. The 1971 Immigration Act led to the virtual prohibition of black immigration except for the families of those already settled here. The 1981 Nationality Act removed the right of settlement for Chinese, Asian and Afro-Caribbean British passport holders overseas by creating three types of British nationality. This particular law has brought untold hardships to black families.

The Act automatically removes the right of children born to the black people who migrated to Britain during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Some of those denied citizenship may well have been born here and lived here all their lives. At the same time proof of having one British grandparent is enough to ensure the citizenship not only of a million white South Africans, but also millions of white Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders.

Added to these harsh laws and their notorious enforcement through dawn raids, deportations and virginity tests, is a new onslaught on these seeking refugee

status.

Prime Ministers regularly cry crocodile tears about the Berlin Wall. Yet black people who come to Britain in an attempt to escape persecution have begun to meet obstacles just as savage and obscene.

The United Nations defines a refugee as someone who has a genuine fear of persecution in their own country because of race, religion or political views. The UN requests its members to waive immigration controls and give such people the right of asylum.

Britain's record on refugees is so bad that most elect to flee to other countries. Last year only 5,000 refugees entered Britain; less than half the number who asked for asylum in much smaller countries like Denmark, and less than one tenth of those entering West Germany. Constantly having to report to the immigration authorities, having to prove their cases are genuine, life is a nightmare for many refugees. Those who arrive in large groups are subjected to detention in camps or even prisons and the constant threat of deportation.

At present there are 8,000 refugees suffering the uncertainty of waiting to be sent back to persecution in Iran, Sri Lanka or Turkey. The deportation of Viraj Mendis, a Sri Lankan leftist who feared for his life at the hands of Sinhalese chauvinists, signalled a new attitude on the part of the British state.

## Deported

"Now the word is to go out and whack them. Its going to be like Mendis—snatched and deported within 48 hours" one immigration officer confided to the press.

At present fifty people a week are being deported, including refugees and so-called illegal immigrants: those arrested in dawn raids on sweat shops, those accused of not being "genuine" dependents or spouses of their partners etc. Whilst campaigns have mushroomed around individual cases, there is a chronic lack of a national campaign and a clear strategy to link the fight of refugees and deportees to the struggle against the immigration laws in general.

The capitalist economy is a world economy. Capital moves freely from country to country, opening a factory here, closing one there. But labour has no such rights. Even when economic conditions propel masses of migrants from one country to another they face severe restrictions on their citizenship, and meet with systematic racist violence and discrimination.

British workers have no interest in restricting the right of entry to Britain. Not only should we fight for immediate asylum for the Kurds, the Hong Kong Chinese, the Vietnamese boat people etc, we should fight for the repeal of all immigration laws.

It is not immigration which causes unemployment and poverty but capitalism itself. Black and white British workers share a common enemy with the Kurdish, Chinese and Vietnamese refugees. Immigrant cultures have not "swamped" Britain but enriched working class life and become an integral part of it.

British workers have nothing to fear from immigrants and refugees but everything to lose by siding with the reactionary racism of the British ruling class. ■



Vietnamese refugees in a ferry moored near Hong Kong

## KURDS

THE FLOW of Kurds, desperately seeking asylum in Britain, continued in June as another 1,000 arrived at Gatwick, Heathrow and Manchester airports. They join more than 1,000 Kurds who came in May hoping to escape from brutal repression and forced relocation policies in south eastern Turkey.

On 23 June Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, slammed the door on this persecuted national minority with the imposition of visa requirements on Turkish passport holders. In the wake of the new visa restrictions the Kurdish refugees held in Dorchester, Exeter and Winchester prisons will probably be released by early July only to face the prospect of likely "removal" (deportation) back to Turkey. The Home Office made good on its threat to imprison new Kurdish arrivals even in the

face of overwhelming medical evidence that dozens of the men examined had been victims of torture.

Many of the jailed Kurds responded to this barbarous treatment with hunger strikes. They have won some concessions from prison authorities and unconditional leave to stay in Britain for a handful who were seriously ill. As many as forty others remain on hunger strike at the Latchmere detention centre in Surrey, though the authorities have operated a virtual media blackout.

While Tory stooges such as Timothy Renton hope to stir racist reaction against "job seekers" and "economic immigrants", the full horror of the Kurds' plight in both Turkey and Iraq has come into sharper relief.

Iraqi troops have driven up to 300,000 Kurds out of Iraq's northern tip, killing several thousand in the process.

Survivors have sheltered in squalid, overflowing concentration

camps on the Turkish side of the border, often without access to any assistance from international relief agencies. A report screened on ITV confirms that over 2,000 Kurds in the camps were intentionally fed poisoned bread, killing some and leaving many paralysed. In the south east of Turkey where the majority of the country's Kurds now live the Ozal regime has begun a programme of deforestation and forced resettlement to make way for tea plantations owned and operated by a subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever. Combined with their enthusiasm for Turkey's early entry into the European Community, the reasons behind the Tories' hatred of the Kurds become obvious.

Most of the refugees have found accommodation in church halls or community centres in three north London boroughs. The campaign to prevent any further deportations and to gain asylum and adequate state

provision for Kurds and their families continues. To date, the local authorities, all Labour-controlled, have paid lip-service to the Kurds' case but coughed up very little cash.

While numerous trade union branches and NALGO's national conference have offered some support, much more argument and activity in the labour movement are clearly needed not only to win the Kurds' immediate demands but to smash the whole range of racist immigration laws which has compounded their misery.

The Kurdish Refugee Support Group is building for a major demonstration on 29 July at 12.00 from Clissold Park, London N16, to Hackney Town Hall. We urge trade union and Labour Party activists to win sponsorships and delegations for the demonstration.

For further information contact:  
Kurdish Refugee Support Group  
(01-249 8680/249 6930).



# China: their communism and ours

IN THE weeks since the Chinese crackdown the media has presented us with a succession of chilling images: the executions, the confessions beaten out of captured protesters, the students betrayed by their own families, the skillful TV campaign of lies and distortions.

The message the western media has hammered home is simple: this is what socialism and communism leads to.

But Deng's regime has nothing in common with socialism or communism.

Capitalism, which had starved and pillaged China for decades, destroyed in the early 1950s following the 1949 revolution. The Chinese Communist Party, which led the overthrow, replaced capitalism with a replica of the USSR's social system. It was a bureaucratic not a revolutionary abolition of capitalism. Stalinist China is a brutal dictatorship in which the ruling bureaucratic caste strangles the potential of the state owned economy and of rational planning. It excludes the mass of workers and peasants from political decision making and periodically resorts to the most savage acts of repression when its mismanagement provokes mass revolts.

The upheaval in China is just the latest and bloodiest example of the profound crisis that is gripping Stalinism worldwide. That crisis will deepen and intensify in the coming decade.

The western press likes to depict Deng and co. as outdated "hard liners" who have nothing in common with their new found friend Mr Gorbachev. But for the last ten years the Deng clique has been the advance guard of the "reforming" wing within world Stalinism, cultivating links with the imperialists and opening the Chinese economy to foreign capital.

The road Gorbachev has taken, full of smiles and friendly waves in the direction of "democracy", is the same road (though minus the glasnost) that Deng has trod for the last decade. Deng's crisis reveals that road to be a dead end. That is why Gorbachev has refused to condemn Deng's coup.

Fidel Castro's Cuban regime, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria have all hailed Deng's suppression of "counter-revolutionaries". These regimes supported Deng even though historically they have sided with the Kremlin in the "great divide" between China and the USSR. The reason for their fraternal embrace of the Beijing butchers is clear. They want to signal to their own workers, and any pro-reform wing of the bureaucracy, that they too will readily drown a workers democracy movement in blood.

This comes as no surprise given the record of the Czech and East German ruling parties of repressing

mass movements. Those who thought Fidel Castro was somehow different must now realise what genuine Trotskyists have argued all along: he is a dyed in the wool Stalinist and Stalinism is always and everywhere incompatible with real workers' democracy.

Gorbachev and the most market-oriented Stalinist regimes have been muted in their support for Deng, but still "refused to condemn" the crackdown. Gorbachev does this in the name of "non-interference" in the affairs of other states. What is the real reason?

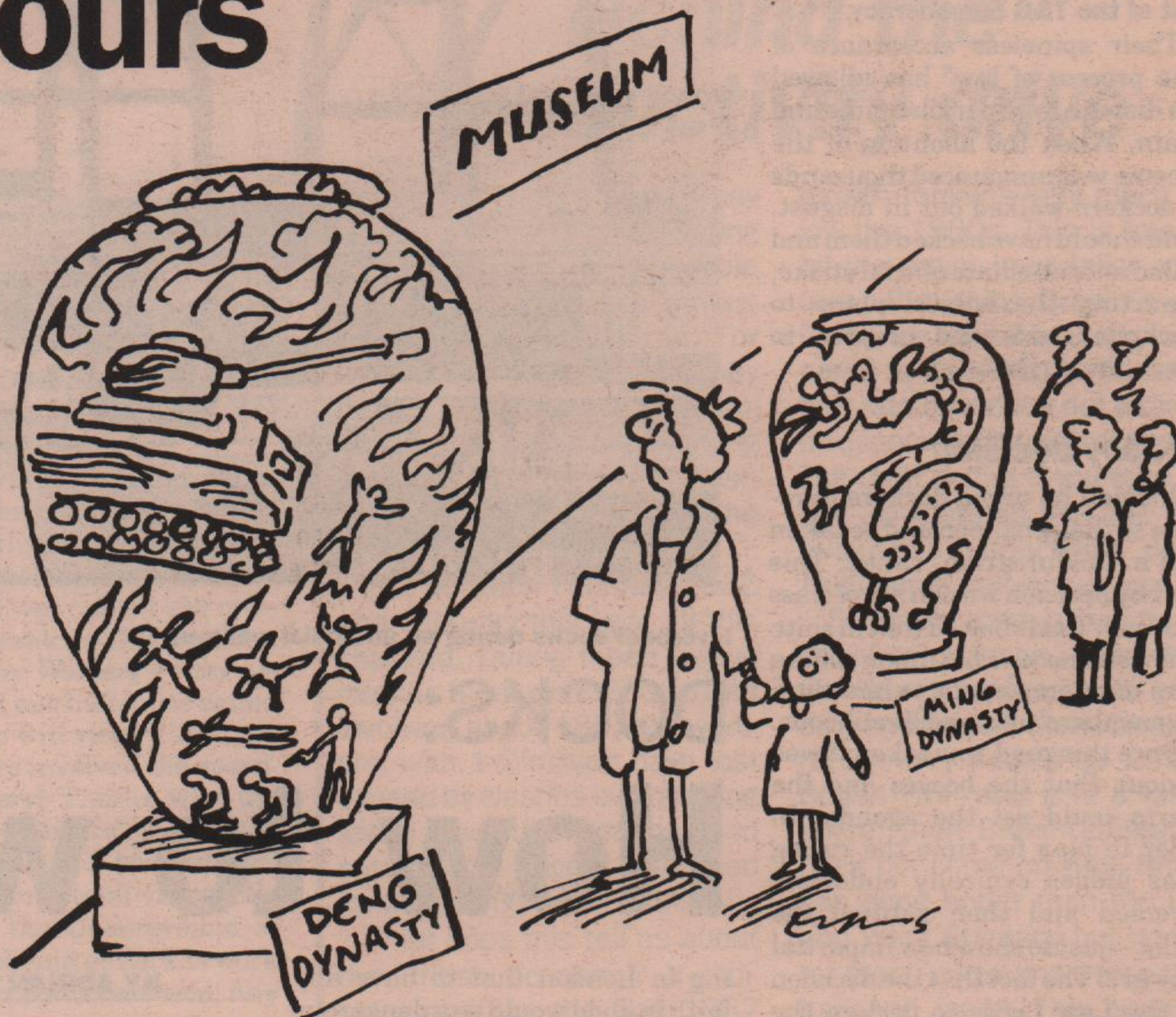
On the one hand the "market socialist" schemes of most of these regimes rely on some measure of aid from imperialist governments and banks. They do not want to jeopardise this through too enthusiastic support for Deng Xiaoping.

On the other hand they dare not create the precedent of criticising a military crackdown. There is a very real chance that they will be obliged to mount their own crackdown if they continue down the road pioneered by Deng. They want to keep their options open.

Soviet troops have already shed the blood of demonstrators in Georgia. They are being used in Uzbekistan and Khazakstan at present. Yugoslavia and Romania have used their troops against protesting national minorities. And the Polish regime, the most market-oriented of all at present, only eight years ago mounted its own military crackdown against Solidarnosc.

The scale of bloodshed that the Chinese Stalinists resorted to is testimony to the massive contradictions that have opened up between the project of "market socialism" and the maintenance of Stalinist political rule.

As these contradictions deepen, the working class of the Stalinist states will face unparalleled oppor-



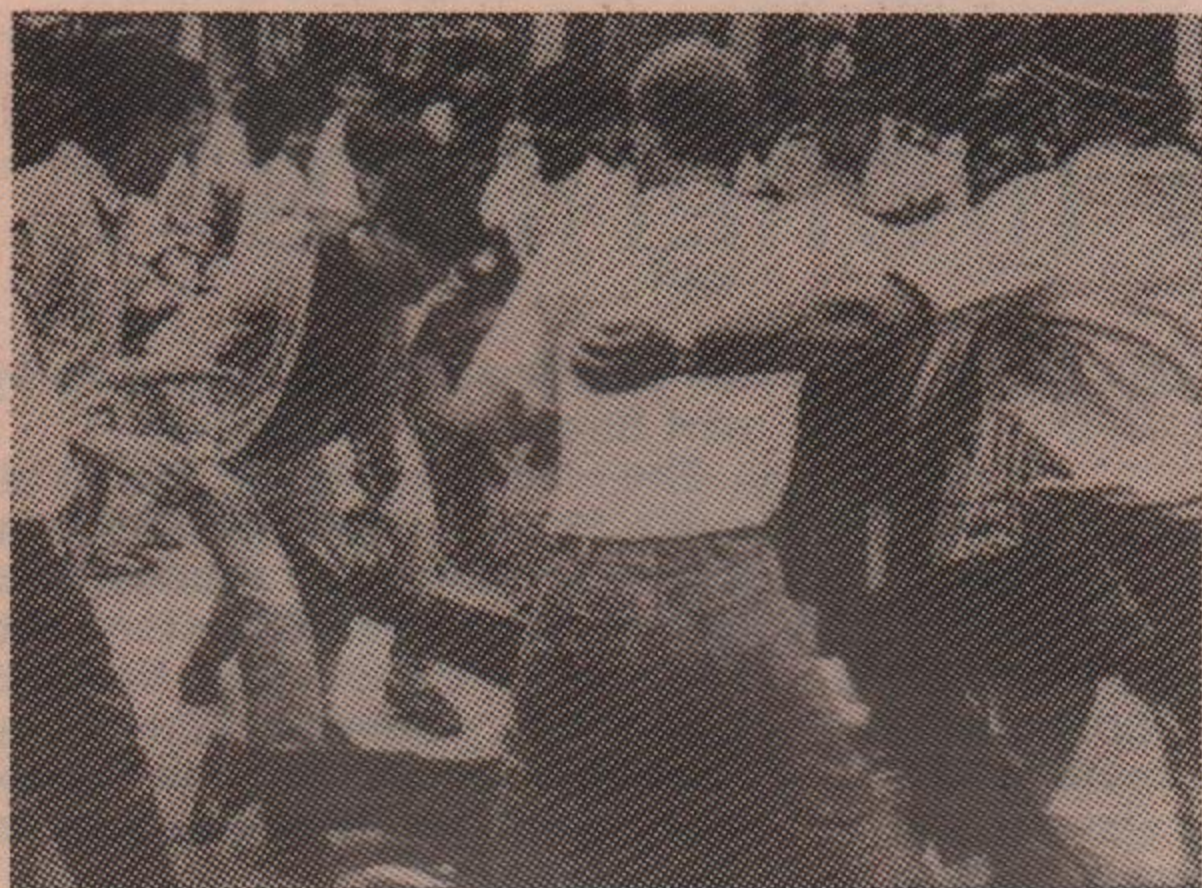
tunities to overthrow the bureaucracy once and for all.

The bureaucracy is storing up a powder keg of mass resistance to the results of "marketisation". From the struggles against unemployment, shortages, inflation and corruption can and must arise a movement for political revolution.

Workers' control of production, workers' price setting committees and tribunals against corruption must be fought for. The real workers' democracy of workers' councils protected by the armed workers' militia must be built in the day to day struggles against bureaucratic misrule.

Against reliance on any wing of the bureaucracy the workers must form their own party, dedicated to the seizure of power and the democratic rule of the working class. Only working class power can unlock the planned economy's enormous potential, so that humanity can once again set its sights on the goal Deng, Castro and Gorbachev have long since abandoned and obstructed: a socialist world! ■

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## WOLVERHAMPTON, BRADFORD, DEWSBURY...

# Support black self-defence!

**THE LAST weeks have been ones of increasing police harassment of the black community in general and of its militant youth in particular. And behind this wave of police brutality the fascists are raising their ugly faces once again.**

Late in May, on the pretext of a drugs raid on the Travellers Rest Pub, the Wolverhampton police occupied the Heath Town estate, harassing its black residents with racist abuse, physical beatings and arrests for no reason.

This has been followed by two successive police attacks on black youth in West Yorkshire.

The first took place in Bradford where two hundred white racists attacked an anti-Salman Rushdie demonstration. When black youth fought back the police indiscriminately laid into them using riot shields and truncheons. Of the fifty arrests made, most were black youth. But only a handful of the white racists were lifted and they were released almost immediately.

What was at issue was not Salman Rushdie but the fight against racism itself. We are against the banning of Sotonic Verses but we are for the black community defending itself against racist attack. It was when the youth fought back

to defend themselves that the police waded in against them.

The police attacks, coupled with Kirklees Labour Council's capitulation to 26 white parents who waged a racist campaign to take their children away from a predominantly black school created a fertile climate for the fascists to increase their organised activity in West Yorkshire. The British National Party organised a deliberately provocative rally in Dewsbury for Saturday 24 June in a bid to cash in on mounting racist activity in the area.

Against the fascist activities the Black Workers' Group organised

their own anti-racist counter-rally. It was attended by about a thousand, mainly black youth with a lamentably small turn out from the left and the labour movement. As the rally dispersed and set off to confront the fascists in an organised fashion it came face to face with the racist thugs at the town hall. The police moved in and penned the anti-racists in an enclosed piece of ground where the fascists attempted to attack them.

Just as happened in Bradford the week before the police response was to set about the anti-fascists with truncheons and riot shields. The fascist thugs started to defend

themselves against attack. It was the anti-fascists who bore the full brunt of the police attack and subsequent arrests.

The police attacks will give even more heart to the fascists and racists. So too will the pathetic attempts of Dewsbury's Labour MP Ann Taylor to blame "outsiders" for the violence and her failure to blame the violence on the racism her party has helped spawn and on the police, and to openly to defend the victims of that violence.

In the face of this new wave of violence the black community must physically organise itself against racist and police attacks. Only through organised self-defence can we prevent a repetition of the attacks and arrests. And the whole labour movement must organise to fight the rising tide of fascist and racist activity. The appalling turn out of the, predominantly white, left organisations will have boosted the confidence of the fascists. A labour movement campaign must be built to support black self-defence against racist attack and to actively assist in that defence. It must mobilise the labour movement to stop the fascists marching and put an end to the racist harassment of the black community. ■



**THE TGWU is now re-balloting registered dockworkers for an all out strike starting on 8 July. That this has been necessary is entirely due to the prevarication of Todd and the rest of the T&G bureaucracy.**

Their spineless acceptance of "the process of law" has allowed the dispute to be derailed time and again. When the abolition of the scheme was announced thousands of dockers walked out in disgust. Todd should have backed them and called an immediate official strike, thwarting the bosses' plans to stockpile goods and prepare to break the strike.

### Shabby decision

Instead he urged dockers to return so that a ballot could be taken and a "lawful strike" called. This shabby decision was an act of class betrayal. Todd showed that in spite of his left rhetoric his union coffers were more important to him than his members' jobs and livelihoods.

Once this road was taken it was obvious that the bosses and the courts could set the agenda. In order to play for time the ruling class judges cynically endorsed, reversed and then ratified the ballot—just to show how impartial they are! The fact that the decision by the Law Lords to declare the strike legal came after the 28 day period during which the first ballot was "legally" valid was, of course, sheer coincidence!

The other major player in the dispute was the National Ports Shop Stewards' Committee (NPSSC). This unofficial, but officially tolerated, organisation has a long and proud history of solidarity and class struggle. From Pentonville in 1972 to the attempts to get action alongside the miners in 1984 they have seen the need for class wide action and acted accordingly. However, it must be said that serious flaws have been shown up in the fight against the abolition of the dock labour scheme.

In the week after the abolition of the scheme was announced Workers Power argued at a public meet-



Liverpool docks during an unofficial walkout

John Harris/IFL

## DOCKS: How to win

BY ADRIAN SWAIN

ing in London that to have any faith in Todd would be a dangerous illusion. Stewards from Tilbury at the same meeting refused to agree that an open fight against Todd, Morris and Co was necessary. Instead their line was that as disciplined members of the union they would play it his way for a while and then "do the business themselves" later if necessary.

This has proved to be a serious mistake, as we warned. Successive meetings of the NPSSC in London agreed to play a waiting game in the hope of getting an official strike call. Only after the High Court upheld the National Association of Port Employers' application for an injunction did they finally agree to call an unofficial strike.

This was endorsed by three of the major ports (Tilbury, Liverpool

and Bristol) and several smaller ones. However the failure of Southampton and Hull to follow the call was a serious blow. This, together with the fact that up to one quarter of registered dockworkers are rarely represented at NPSSC meetings meant that only about one third of the dockers came out on strike.

### Undermined

This points to the fact that despite all its good work over the years the NPSSC can no longer claim to automatically speak for all dockers. Instead it was obvious, particularly at Hull, that their influence had been undermined by local T&G officials. This extended to allowing T&G members other than registered dock workers to vote at the mass meeting and even refusing to allow a replacement delegate to the National Docks and Waterways Group. Such facts have to be openly and honestly pointed out so that the divisions and setbacks can be overcome in the new round of action looming.

Obviously all dock worker militants should be working flat out to ensure that there is an overwhelm-

ing vote in favour of action in the current ballot. However this task has been made all the more difficult by the previous delays and also by the fact that within a week of the official strike date of 8 July the scheme will have finally been abolished. This will mean not only that the bosses can "legally" bring in scab labour, but also that previously registered dockers will be able to be sacked at will and lose up to £35,000 in severance pay in the process.

Many workers may be tempted to cut and run or vote against action in the hope that this will safeguard their jobs. Such a course of action would be disastrous. Already the bosses have indicated their desire to decimate the work force. At Tilbury 200 out of 600 from one section are threatened. At Ipswich they are looking for savings of up to 50% on wages and a reduction of between 20-25% of the workforce. In terms of severance, a regular income until retirement is far better than £35,000 with no guarantee of ever working again.

Clearly the only way to go forward is for the dockers to strike and win. Despite setbacks this is still possible. And it is necessary if union organisation in the ports, once the scheme is abolished, is to

be maintained. But the right tactics need to be used from day one.

Picketing will be essential to sustain and spread the strike. This will inevitably mean battles with the picket busting squads of the state—the police in riot gear. The experience of the miners' strike and Wapping show that strikers cannot just dodge the long arm of the law. They must be prepared to defend and sustain effective pickets against the inevitable violence of Thatcher's bootboys in blue.

The support of other workers will be needed to do this. Appeals for support for mass pickets must be made throughout the labour movement in order to stop the bosses using scab labour.

Speakers must be sent throughout the labour movement to argue for solidarity. Dockers will be faced with further legal attacks if picketing is effective. Their speakers need to explain that the use of the law against the dockers is a class-wide issue and requires a class-wide response.

In the first place it is likely that the bosses will try to use the non-registered ports to keep trade moving. Pledges of blacking must be honoured, but more than this, dockers must act to stop all cargo coming in or going out. This means, once the strike is underway, fighting to bring out the non-scheme ports.

### Industrial action

Solidarity should not just be financial—important as this will be—but must include industrial action alongside the dockers. We must not allow the TGWU leadership off the hook. Dockers must demand that Todd and the Executive place all the resources of the union at their disposal and instruct all TGWU members to refuse to handle scab cargo and honour all picket lines.

To organise these essential tasks each port must open up its shop stewards' committees to all the militant activists to turn them into strike committees, elected by and accountable to regular mass meetings of all strikers. These committees must have majority representation in any future talks to stop Todd negotiating a sell out.

- Vote Yes to action in the ballot!
- Organise mass pickets to spread the strike!
- Defy the law if necessary and fight for solidarity action!
- For a total shutdown of every port!

## Sheffield unionisation struggles

### Eversure Textiles

WORKERS AT Eversure Textiles in Sheffield walked out on strike on 18 June when the management refused to recognise their union, the TGWU, and sacked 28 workers.

Attempts in the past to unionise this sweatshop firm have failed. This time though, incensed by the starvation wages - £67 for a 38 hour week - and the management's unilateral withdrawal of the bonus scheme, the Eversure workers are determined to win.

Management clearly did not believe that the workforce was prepared to fight. They told their customers that the firm had closed for a week's holiday! But this holiday week ended, the workers stayed out, and an anxious boss went on the radio to offer talks to the workers.

This is an important strike. It could set a precedent for the countless small, non-unionised firms in Sheffield and throughout the country. If the strikers win other workers will be encouraged to take up unionisation struggles and end the tyranny of the sweatshop managers.

★ Messages of support to:  
Eversure Strikers  
Meadowhall Road  
Sheffield

### Keeton's

2 JULY marks the third anniversary of the strike at Keeton's in Sheffield. The strike started when management moved to sack 38 workers following a two to one majority for strike action in a secret ballot over conditions and safety procedures. The strikers, members of the AEU, have fallen in number since 1986 but a hard core of 20 remain solid without strike pay and without benefits of any kind. They only survive on the basis of collections organised by themselves and other labour movement bodies.

For some time now, secret talks have been taking place with Keeton's management. This has happened partly as a result of pressure from the local chamber of commerce who don't like the "good image" of Sheffield business to be undermined by "one rogue employer".

Rather than relying on other local employers and local dignitaries to exert pressure, the AEU and local trade union movement should act to stick the boot into Keeton's. An all-Sheffield day of strike action to mark the third anniversary would have been a step in the right direction. In the meantime it's vital that strikers continue to receive financial assistance.

★ Send messages of support and money to:  
Keeton's Strike Committee  
AEU House  
Furnival Gate  
Sheffield

## Tories target firefighters

BY A WEST MIDLANDS FIREFIGHTER

FIREFIGHTERS ARE now being threatened with an attack on their pay and conditions every bit as serious as that being faced by the dockers.

The immediate target is the pay formula, won after the 1977-78 strike, linking pay to higher industrial earnings. A letter to local authorities from Home Office minister, Lord Ferrers, makes clear the Tories' intentions. He stated that if the pay formula is not abandoned the "Government will not hesitate to legislate".

In the fire service, pay and conditions are negotiated nationally at the National Joint Council (NJC). The Tories have never liked this body.

In the past, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), often with threatened or actual industrial action, had succeeded in gaining the support of some local authority representatives on the NJC to defend pay and conditions against the Tories.

Also in his letter, Ferrers threatens that if local authorities and the FBU refuse to co-operate the "Government would have to take the matter forward with those prepared

to discuss the issues with us". The real meaning behind this threat is that the Tories have decided now is the time to implement the proposals laid out in the 1980 Green Paper to cut fire service costs by half.

To do this they aim not just to attack the pay formula, but to replace existing national conditions with a series of locally imposed ones. This is the purpose of the recently set up "working party" to "review" the fire service.

Target number one for this "working party" will be the overtime ban which has been in place since 1974. With this gone, the way would be clear to drastically reduce the number of full-time fire fighters. Existing shift patterns could then be abolished and these full time firefighters would be expected to be "on call" on their days off.

Instead of the largely full time national fire service with laid down standards of fire cover as now exists in Britain, we will have a new set-up based on the Dutch and German models—a small core of

full time fire fighters backed up by part timers and volunteers.

The plan must be resisted at all costs. Unfortunately, the FBU Conference, after an impassioned speech by General Secretary Ken Cameron on behalf of the National Executive, narrowly agreed by 21,000 to 18,500 votes to "co-operate" with the government on its "working party".

The words of the West Midlands Conference delegate must be heeded by all: "The Executive Council is already running scared before we have started—watch the Executive Council, I don't trust them."

At the first mention of changing conditions in return for a pay deal, the FBU should withdraw from the "working party". At the moment this body is due to make its first report in the autumn—when the Tories hope to have resolved their "problems" with the dockers and transport workers.

We can't allow the Tories to pick us off one by one any longer. We must bring our dispute to a head now. To fight now alongside the dockers and transport workers will give us the best chance of victory!



# Now for an all out strike!

**SOLID! WEDNESDAY 21 June** saw Britain's first national rail strike by the NUR in seven years. In London, Underground and bus workers also struck, halting all public transport in the capital for the first time since the 1926 general strike.

British Rail workers are fed up to the teeth with their pathetic wage packets—£115 a week basic for station staff, £160 for drivers. Many staff have been forced to work 60 hour weeks regularly in order to cover the costs of mortgages pushed ever higher by soaring interest rates. The BR Board's drive to end national bargaining and its imposition of the 7% pay rise—in fact a wage cut given inflation—was the final straw.

On London Underground train-staff have already staged a series of one day strikes over pay. On 21 June they united with other Underground workers to strike against two proposed productivity packages: "Action Stations" which mainly affects station staff and the parallel productivity measures aimed at trainstaff dubbed by the workers the "slaves charter". In fact "Action Stations" with its "blue-eyed boy" promotion system and its "unsatisfactory attendance procedures" would affect train drivers as well.

As with the BR workers, London Underground workers are fighting, not only against vicious new working conditions, but also for decent pay.

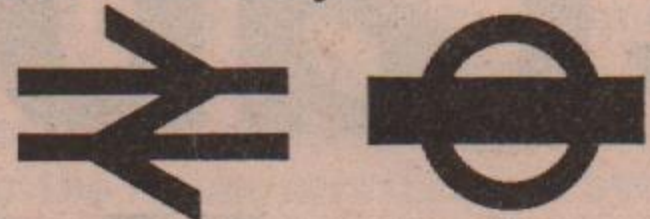
Trainstaff have made their claim—£6.43 for drivers and £5.50 for guards—but the NUR has yet to put a figure on the claim for station staff. At present ticket collectors get a measly £2.77 per hour! *Workers Power* has argued in its strike bulletin for a minimum £200 a week with a 15% increase for all grades already above this figure.

Wednesday's action drew a swift response from the bosses—BR suddenly found that it could offer more than the final 7%. This came as no surprise to the 100,000 workforce who have been made well aware of the board's glee at record profits of between £300 and £350 million. However the 0.9% extra offered still falls way below the cost of living. And London

BY AN NUR MEMBER

Underground has said that it will drop "Action Stations". Though as it turns out they mean change the name, not the package.

These offers are not good enough. But they do prove that the only thing that will change the bosses' minds is strike action. The real problem is that the NUR only has plans for more one day actions. They hope that these will pressure the bosses into arbitration at ACAS and get them something they can offer to the workers—below the full claim—that can end the rank and file militancy.



This won't do. It amounts to a sell-out. The vitriolic language of the bosses in the face of the shut-down shows that much more pressure needs to be mounted if we are to win an outright victory. Their attacks on strikers as "unjustified", "ungodly" and less sociable than Rottweiler dogs, need to be answered by a solid response. They are suffering the jitters. We must go for their jugular.

We hurt them not because the "public" was inconvenienced. The management of public transport has been inconveniencing the public for years with their cut-backs of the service. No, we hurt them because we hit their profits. BR lost £10 million, a further £3 million was lost on London Transport, £30 million in the shops and undisclosed millions in related services and industries like the Royal Mail! By making them lose more we can get them to meet our claims in full—quickly. We need an all-out indefinite strike now on BR and the tubes.

The bosses are far better equipped to deal with one day strikes than workers. Provisions are made by companies, like Lloyds for example, weeks in advance to get key workers into work. The fact the enemy know how long the attack will last means they can ride it out, as the bosses' paper the *Guardian* put it:

"Actually, it [Wednesday 21] did not seem that bad. In fact, as long

suffering days go, it was really jolly good... If Mr Knapp and his coincidental allies think that more of the same [one day strikes] will bring the nation to its knees, they are clearly deluded."

Not only will the bosses ride out one day actions, not only will this lead to wheeling and dealing and sell-outs at ACAS, they will also exhaust and wear down the militancy of the rank and file workers.

This is why *Workers Power* argues that all out indefinite action is the way to win victory. And the more workers involved the speedier the victory! This is why the magnificent start of the united railworkers should be built on, indefinitely until total victory. No sector—BR, the Underground or the buses—should go back to work until all the disputes are won! Any settlement negotiated by the unions must be ratified by workers at mass meetings.

If workers are told it's the best we can get by their unions, the strike should press ahead, unofficially if need be. Yes, the strike will damage our bank balances. But they will be damaged a lot more if we cannot secure a living wage that protects us from the ravages of inflation. And, in a strike we must get strike pay to minimise the damage to our side.

After all strike pay is what we donate our subs for. It is what union assets should be used for—fighting funds, not sources of privilege for our leaders.

The message at every meeting now must be, all out action can win. A coordinated national transport strike—alongside the dock strike if that starts in July—can win in days, not weeks.

● All out indefinite strike now!

## London Buses



**STRIKE ACTION** by London's busworkers on 21 June ensured a hat-trick for transport workers. The capital city ground to an almost complete halt.

Busworkers had rejected the management's "improved" offer of 8%; 0.5% up on the offer made two weeks prior to the strike. They are still fighting for the full 14% claim.

That the action was so effective and so solid showed the anger on London's buses. But had it been left to the TGWU leadership the strike might never have taken place. They have kept fruitless negotiations going and called off planned actions so as to prevent unity between the bus, Underground and rail workers developing.

As it was the action wasn't called until the night before the strike when garage reps met. They decided on action and, although there was some scabbing, they did manage to get a relatively solid strike.

But further delays or last minute decisions will squander the anger of busworkers and give management the chance to regain the initiative.

To stop this, to win the full claim and to put an end to the Tories' cuts and privatisation schemes for the buses an all out strike, united with the other transport workers, especially on the Underground, is needed—now!

*What's going on?  
What the hell do you  
think we pay you for?*



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

### Behind the productivity drive

Before the current crop of pay disputes erupted in the spring there had been a noticeable change in the causes of strikes during the previous year. For most of the 1980s the key battles were over pay or redundancies. Disputes over working practices amounted to, at most, 10% of all disputes until the last year or so.

But between February 1988 and February this year all this changed. During those twelve months there were 270 strikes involving about 180,000 workers, with 1.2 million days lost caused by clashes over staffing levels, work allocation and supervision. These accounted for about 40% of all strikes.

What does this tell us about the British economy? It indicates that as the post-1982 recovery deepened the key battle front that the bosses were pushing on was productivity. In fact for a whole period, until the recent surge in inflation, British bosses were prepared to cough up wage rises without too much fuss as long as they were paid for by increased productivity. Put another way as long as output per worker hour was outstripping labour costs then this was tolerable for the bosses.

But if we look behind the productivity figures and see what British business has gained as a result of these victories over staffing, then the picture is not particularly good for them.

There are two ways of increasing productivity. A manager can force fewer workers to produce the same amount as before or make the same number of workers work harder and get more out of them. This way focuses on labour.

Alternately, a business can re-equip with up to date machinery which can pump out more goods with the same effort or number of workers as before. This way emphasises capital improvements.

Through a combination of these methods productivity in Britain has undoubtedly improved over the Thatcher years. In the economy as a whole productivity has improved by about 3% a year during the 1980s. The record for the bosses is even better when you look at manufacturing. Between 1980 and 1988 productivity increased at 5-6% a year. This is faster than any major capitalist economy except Japan.

That's the good news for the bosses and it expresses in cold statistics the victories they have achieved in the last ten years over the working class. But every other statistic or comparison should bring them down to earth.

First, there is the historical comparison. As against the boom years before 1973 the Thatcher "miracle" does not look very impressive. Whilst it is an improvement on the dismal 1970s the productivity

growth remains very much below the 1960s. This is true for all the major imperialist countries. But since Britain's performance then was poor, compared to its rivals, to be below that rate now does not indicate an especially dynamic economy. The truth is that if you take the last 30 years as one unit then business productivity under Thatcher is below average.

Secondly, there is the international comparison. If we study the figures for the whole economy and not just manufacturing (which only makes up 25% of British GDP and it is a falling share) then British capitalism does not come off well. Britain has done better than the USA and West Germany but no better than France and worse than Italy and Japan. This bodes ill for Britain's international competitiveness at a time when the trade and balance of payments gap is already surging ahead.

And despite the better annual growth rates in productivity this decade British capitalism has not closed the productivity gap on any of its major rivals. When it comes to output per person hour in manufacturing Britain is bottom of the league. The US produces over twice as much per person hour than Britain. France, West Germany and Japan are not far behind the US. Finally, it is well documented that most of the productivity gains achieved so far this decade have been due overwhelmingly to "improvements in the use of labour", rather than as a result of massive new capital investments.

All this forms the background to Britain's bosses' current offensive on conditions and productivity. It explains why they have provoked a whole number of disputes on this issue in the last couple of years. It suggests that now that wage costs are beginning to outstrip productivity growth they will be determined to hold the line on wages but redouble their determination to get the changes in working practices and staffing levels they needed.

As public sector services such as transport were forced to make profits then one by one they have become battlegrounds over productivity. The buses and now London Underground are typical here. Industries that have been or are due to be privatised face the same issues. In engineering the employers are playing the same old tune: no major pay awards without further concessions on working arrangements.

No trade unionist should be under any illusion that British bosses will rest content with the gains of the 1980s. The international pressure on them is too intense. It will take similar determination on behalf of the rank and file in the trade unions to repulse the renewed productivity offensive. ■



With the policy review complete Kinnock has given the bosses an electable and loyal opposition again. But they want more, reports Mark Abram.

LABOUR'S POPULARITY is soaring. After its victory in the Euro-elections, Vauxhall and Glasgow, the party has continued to notch up big leads in the opinion polls. Millions of workers are waking up to the fact that the Poll Tax, the NHS review, the water and electricity sell-offs are a frontal attack on their living standards, and that Lawson's "anti-inflationary strategy" makes them pay for the government's economic mess.

### Shift

Added to this there is a clear shift amongst the bosses and the media, not towards support for Labour, but in favour of acknowledging Kinnock's move towards Thatcherism on most of its fundamental tenets.

This began cautiously when Labour published its policy review. The *Economist* argued that faced with the Tories' present difficulties: "Britain needs an electable opposition; the best chance of getting one lies with Labour." (13 May 89). More recently the *Financial Times* editorialised in the wake of Labour's Euro-election victory:

"It is looking less wild, more in the centre ground and more electable than it used to...that should be the main lesson for Mrs Thatcher and the Tories from the European elections: there is beginning to be an alternative government." (20 June 89)

Are the key supporters of Thatch-



Neil Turner/Insight

# "An electable opposition"?

erism beginning to abandon her in her hour of need? Not quite.

That the Tories are in substantial mid-term political difficulties is beyond doubt. Inflation is at a seven year high and rising, in turn provoking a series of industrial disputes. The Tories' NHS proposals are meeting with general hostility even amongst historic middle-class allies. Most recently, the open split within the Government over

its attitude to the European Community produced confusion, ridicule and an electoral debacle.

But none of this means that the decisive sections of the ruling class have lost their nerve and want Labour in office. On the contrary, Thatcher is a tried and tested anti-trade union warrior. Her government plans even more restrictions on legal trade unionism. Labour's review on the other hand is silent

on picketing, promises restrictions on the legal actions open to employers against the unions and even suggests some rights for workers at work. Sir John Hoskyns—leader of the Institute of Directors—remarked on these policies that they:

"could be the first step to the bad old days and a licence for free collective mugging".

This expresses the bosses' con-

tinuing distrust of Labour on the fundamental question—its relationship to the organised trade union movement.

Thatcher has inflicted substantial damage on British trade unionism. The bosses hope it is irreversible. They recognise that Kinnock has made substantial "progress" in seeing the world Thatcher's way: his conversion to the social market, abandoning unilateralism and wresting complete control of the party machine from the left and the constituency activists.

On all this Britain's bosses find room to congratulate Kinnock. But they still urge at least one more major change on him: an end to the decisive power of the unions in formulating Labour's policy through the block vote.

At the moment the leaders of the trade unions—steeped in new realism—are Kinnock's poodles. Even so the bosses have found them unnervingly capable of responding to the pressure of their members, whether on pay (NUR, NALGO etc), the docks (T&G) or scab unionism (AEU).

### Dismantle

The circumstances in which the bosses might have to live with a Labour government—two figure inflation, world recession, the need for an austerity programme—leave no room for effective trade union pressure on Kinnock. That is why the bosses want Kinnock to use the next two years to dismantle any effective mechanism of trade union pressure on Labour.

While profits and productivity remain buoyant, outweighing the effects of inflation and the trade deficit, while the Tories grudgingly respond to the demands for the renewal of roads, rail and other infrastructure, then Labour will continue to wait in the wings.

Should Thatcherism no longer be able to deal with rising class struggle and discontent, then the bosses will turn again to their allies within the labour movement—the Labour Party and its leadership—safe in the knowledge that Kinnock is prepared to guard and extend their major gains of the last ten years.

## Green Party: alternative Tories

BRITAIN HAS been the last of the major European countries to witness the electoral rise of the Greens. In 1981 the first Green MPs in Europe were elected in Belgium, followed by 23 German Green MPs two years later. In those years most environmentalists in this country existed in a loose national coalition of campaigning groups—Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and so on.

Membership of these various groups has doubled in the 1980s, not least due to the impact of major environmental disasters from Bhopal through to Chernobyl, not to mention the effect of the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*. But, paradoxically, the "conversion" of Thatcher to the Green cause in September 1988 did most to boost the electoral credibility of the Greens in Britain.

Thatcher's speech to the Royal Society that month was a cynical ploy by the Tories to harness the growing disaffection of middle-class voters with their record on the environment. But in many ways it backfired—provoking a concerted counter-offensive from Labour and Democrats alike. They focused on the actual record of the government in areas such as beach and water pollution, which have put Britain near the bottom of the European table. This, together with further grumblings from traditional Tory voters unhappy with the government's handling of the economy, led to a sizeable protest vote for the Greens in the recent elections.

The various Green Parties in Europe all registered gains in the Euro-elections. Together they succeeded in doubling their representation in the Strasbourg parliament.

But the greatest advance was made by the Green Party that got no MEPs—Britain's. From under 2% in the 1987 general election the Green Party captured 15% of the vote in the Euro-poll. This compares with only half a percent of the vote in the last Euro-elections five years ago. Steve Prior analyses the flowering of the Greens.

However the size of the Green vote in Britain should not be seen as any kind of victory for the left—despite the crowing of some of the soft left and the smears of the right. The unpleasant truth about the British Greens is that they are further to the right than most of their European counterparts.

In Germany, for example, the Socialist Party of Germany (SPD) was for many years the natural party of government and the right wing of European reformism. The German Greens emerged partly as a radical petit bourgeois force hitting out at the complacency and conservatism of the party of the German working class over the capitalists' destruction of the environment. In the absence of a vibrant left wing in the SPD many confused socialists and trade unionists looked to the Greens.

In Britain, matters have stood differently. Labour and groups to its left have kept the loyalty of most of

the radical, pro-working class strata of the middle class, leaving the Greens to mop up those more solidly pro-bourgeois and anti-working class elements.

At their best the Green Parties of Europe have alerted the labour movement to the destructive effects of capitalist production in a situation where trade union officials and the Socialist or Communist Parties have colluded with the bosses to hide pollution and other hazards.

But the Greens, home and abroad, have failed to identify the cause of this short-sighted destruction of the environment. It lies not in industrial growth in and of itself, but in the pursuit of profit above all else. The bosses have no over-riding interest in the future of the planet or the planned utilisation and conservation of its resources. Even in the short term they can use their wealth to avoid suffering the consequences

of their own destructive appetite.

But the working class has no such luxury. It is workers who suffer on the front line of industrial hazards and dangerous work processes. It is working class families who have to live in full view and smell of noxious emissions and toxic wastes.

It is the working class who, both at work and in the community, have the interest and power to force the capitalist class to bear the cost of radically improving health and safety measures. These issues, as much as the fight over pay and jobs, are susceptible to the struggle for workers' control over production.

In short, it is the waging of the class struggle over these issues that will secure meaningful reforms just as it is the overthrow of capitalism that will be necessary to secure irreversible gains.

In direct opposition to this view Green Party spokesperson Jonathon Porritt has insisted that "this country is paralysed by the redundant polemic of class warfare". We have heard this all before. In terms of its voting base, its programme and its composition the Green Party is a bourgeois party. Like the Liberal Party before it, it has a vocal left wing and attracts young, angry militants, as well as a large and growing middle class base. But that should not blind us to the fact that its votes do not mark the demise of the bourgeois centre, but its temporary reconstitution around a different axis.



## Revolution and repression

was directly related to the AWO. On Tuesday 30 May its leaders were arrested and the workers of Beijing were specifically ordered not to take any further part in the demonstrations.

This was the beginning of the bureaucracy's offensive and followed the victory, behind closed doors, of Deng and Li Peng, supported by Qiao Shi, the head of the security forces, over their opponents. By this time Beijing was already ringed by troops who had been kept in isolation from the population after fraternisation had undermined their discipline in the first days of martial law.

Much has been written about splits and open conflicts within the different army groups. Such divisions must have existed since the Army High Command is very closely integrated into the party leadership and the latter was visibly divided. However, there is no evidence yet available to prove any conscious and directed interneccine military operations.

Confusion, inexperience or regionalisation of the army could all account for reports of armed clashes. What is clear is that, at the end of the day, it was the faction prepared to use force against the bureaucracy's enemies that was victorious.

Again, without a revolutionary

party this was unavoidable. To divide an army requires convincing elements of it that they can win in battle against the existing regime. That conviction could only come from seeing the mobilisation of a social force capable of forcing back the bureaucracy.

In China that is going to mean either an insurgent working class or a concerted counter-revolutionary movement for the restoration of capitalism. Neither existed in Beijing in the first week of June and, therefore, hesitation and doubt amongst the soldiers were not transformed into the certainty and courage needed to side with the civilians against other troops.

In the aftermath of the Beijing massacre, the working class of all China responded with remarkable uniformity. In city after city, general strikes, demonstrations and barricades defiantly expressed the solidarity of the workers with those who had been butchered and those being hunted down. Without political leadership this movement could not raise itself to a counter-attack against Deng and Li. It is, nonetheless, a magnificent pledge for the future overthrow of everything they represent. Despite all the propaganda and re-edited video film, millions upon millions of workers in China know the truth.

The divisions within the bu-

reaucracy stem from insoluble economic problems, not from the advanced age of the leadership. Those problems have not been altered by the massacre and repression, they have been made, if anything, worse.

Whatever the bureaucracy attempts, whether it be further marketisation, a return to isolated autarchy, a fake "purge" of the corrupt elements under a new reformist leadership or an opening to the Soviet Union in order to gain access to economic modernisation, political splits within the bureaucracy and continued hostility from the working class will combine once again to create political crisis. 1989 has shown how quickly such crises can develop into armed confrontation.

As the workers of China ponder on the defeat of the "Democracy Movement", it is the duty of revolutionaries throughout the world to do everything in their power to explain and propagandise for the revolutionary lessons from this tragedy.

Stalinism, as a world phenomenon, is in its dotage. But it will not pass away of its own accord. It must be despatched, and for that the weapon of the revolutionary communist party is indispensable. ■

## What kind of solidarity?

**AS THE Beijing Stalinists move from indiscriminate mass slaughter to systematic repression and judicial murder so it is necessary for the solidarity movement to develop from spontaneous demonstrations to organised and directed work.**

For revolutionary communists, the duty to do everything possible to aid and support the victims of repression cannot be separated from the political task of building an international revolutionary party. This means arguing for forms of action and organisation that focus on the organisations of the working class and stress the need for working class political independence. Nowhere is this more important, at present, than on the question of sanctions.

Around the world, millions of people, horrified by the scenes of the massacre, will have thought immediately that something should be done to cut off vital supplies to the Beijing regime. This was given expression by the calls on Thatcher, Bush and company to impose "economic sanctions". We oppose this.

The ultimate cause of the conflict in China was the opening up of its economy to the world market dominated by the main imperialist powers. The long term strategy of imperialism is to dismantle the statified and planned economy which, despite Stalinist political control, has protected employment and living standards in China. If the imperialists succeed the Chinese economy will be wrecked and the dead will be counted in millions as unemployment and starvation take their toll.

Whatever actions Thatcher and her ilk take will be calculated to serve imperialist interests. For the solidarity movement to demand that they do anything would be to mislead the millions who want to help the workers and peasants of China. Indeed, Bush's statement that relations with China will be, "guided by America's long term interests", accurately represents the criterion for all imperialists. We can expect it to mean continued trade coupled with specific conditions related, in all probability, to what they will call "human rights" issues.

To not call on the imperialists to bring down the Stalinists, however, does not exhaust the question. The regime must be brought down and millions around the world could be mobilised to ensure that this is done without aiding imperialism's plans. Economic pressure can help to open up the obvious rifts that exist in the Beijing bureaucracy. Every step in that direction is to be welcomed as creating breathing space and room for manoeuvre for the opposition movement inside China.

Especially whilst the open repression continues, the imposition of *workers' sanctions* can achieve everything that is positive about the demand to cut trade links; it

demonstrates most vividly the repugnance of the world working class for the massacres and repression; it signals to the workers of China that their true allies are the workers of the world. It even reveals very clearly the hypocrisy of the imperialists who will want to carry on their trade in the interests of profits.

For these reasons we are in favour of direct action by trades unionists to impose an embargo on all trade, all commercial and financial links and all links with the "official" Chinese trade unions. How long such an embargo should be maintained will depend on the developments in China. We would not propose it as a permanent blockade. It is a protest action, a demonstration of immediate solidarity, not a strategy in its own right.

Apart from the demands for workers' sanctions, the main focus of the solidarity movement should be attempts to establish links with the underground movement in China and to disseminate information in the labour movement about developments relating to China. The building of a movement of this sort, oriented primarily to working class organisations will, no doubt, be opposed by many who are influenced by the anti-communist, pro-capitalist "democracy movement" in Hong Kong.

OUT NOW!

### CHINA: the road to Tiananmen Square

A new pamphlet from  
Workers Power  
Includes MRCI resolution on China  
£1 including P&P from  
BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

The existence of such a current is not to be wondered at given the age-old denial of democratic rights by the British state and the visible barbarity of the "Communists" in China. Genuine communists, i.e. Trotskyists, especially British Trotskyists, need to be extremely sensitive in relation to those who have spontaneously become involved in the solidarity movement via this current.

Every attempt should be made to propose actions and campaigns that can involve Chinese community organisations in solidarity with the workers and peasants of the Chinese mainland. For example, demanding of the British state the immediate and unconditional granting of democratic rights in Hong Kong and the right of abode in the UK, and the right of all Chinese students to continue their studies here with financial assistance from the British state.

Although the tempo of solidarity work is bound to be affected by events in China it is to be expected that the first wave of mass, spontaneous, mobilisation is now passing and that solidarity work will become dependent on organised groups of activists. Within this milieu communists will argue for the adoption of democratic forms of organisation, with clearly stated objectives, elected, accountable and recallable leaders and regular meetings and forms of communication to keep all supporters and activists informed of decisions and proposals.

As soon as possible local groups need to be co-ordinated into a national structure committed to an agreed set of objectives and methods of campaigning. Workers Power will be to the fore in proposing and initiating such work wherever possible in the labour movement and, in the longer term, will argue for a campaign to affiliate working class organisations to a national solidarity movement. ■



Youths during a riot near Tiananmen Square, 4 June

Bob Gannon/Insight

THE EVENTS in China have had major repercussions in Hong Kong which threatens serious problems for the British ruling class (similar problems face the Portuguese and Macao authorities). While spouting about "communist dictatorships" and the need for "freedom and democracy" the British imperialists have happily denied the masses of Hong Kong even the semblance of democracy for 150 years.

The 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration agreed by Thatcher with Deng Xiaoping was an agreement made between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the British Tories over the heads of the Hong Kong workers. It aimed at a "smooth" handover of a capital-

## For a Hong Kong workers' commune!

ist Hong Kong to Chinese rule, the CCP offering long term guarantees for continued capitalist exploitation, while continuing the denial of even basic bourgeois democratic rights to the people of Hong Kong before or after 1997.

The mass demonstrations and general strike protest involving over a million Hong Kong people out of a population of six million (actions themselves illegal under the Hong Kong Public Order Ordinance!) have shaken the Deng/Thatcher agreement and thrown the Hong Kong capitalists into disarray. The so-called

"pro-democracy movement" in Hong Kong, a largely petit bourgeois led formation which only calls for half the legislature to be elected by 1997, is similarly in danger of being overtaken by events.

Revolutionary communists must seize the opportunity to build a movement which not only mobilises concrete solidarity with mainland Chinese students and workers, but also aims at destroying the Deng/Thatcher agreement and mobilising the Hong Kong workers for power.

● Down with the Deng/Thatcher agreement!

- No to a capitalist Hong Kong under a Stalinist dictatorship!
- Immediate elections to a constituent assembly of Hong Kong!
- One person, one vote!
- Forward to the Hong Kong workers' commune!
- Solidarity in struggle with the mainland workers and students against the blood-soaked Deng regime!
- For political revolution in China!
- For the revolutionary re-unification of all China including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao under workers' democracy!



# the MRCI

## NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

### ARGENTINA

## Solidarity with the Argentine left

RUNAWAY INFLATION in Argentina has led to looting on a mass scale. For some workers this has been the only way they can obtain essential items such as food.

This has led to a government clamp down and the mass arrest of workers. The government have especially targeted the left and key trade unionists.

Over 1,000 prisoners are still being held including leaders of the movement Towards Socialism (MAS) and the Workers Party (Partido Obrero). The latter organisation has had its offices closed down and is forced to operate semi-legally. Members of the MRCI have been involved in solidarity activities.

In France Pouvoir Ouvrier joined an eighty strong picket of the Argentinian Embassy in Paris called by Latin American organisations.

In Britain, Workers Power was involved in the setting up of the "Campaign for Argentinian Political Prisoners". The Committee organised a picket of forty people outside the Argentine Embassy to protest about the arrests.



### ARBEITERSTANDPUNKT

## Hungarian intervention

ON 18 JUNE the AST attended the reburial of Imre Nagy who was executed in 1957 for his part in the Hungarian uprising of 1956 (see page 12). The AST distributed thousands of copies of the MRCI's first leaflet in Hungarian.

The AST have also had a high profile intervention into the student union elections, selling more than 400 copies of their *Flugschriften* (bulletin) and distributing three leaflets over the course of a several week campaign.

AST comrades attended the 400 strong demonstration which protested about the treatment of Chinese workers and students by the Stalinist butchers.

They managed to sell over a hundred copies of the *Flugschriften* which contained an article on the Chinese events. This means that no less than one quarter of the demonstration bought MRCI material!

### MRCI

## Conference discusses China

DELEGATES FROM the GAM, Ast, IWG, PO (France) and Workers Power gathered in London over the weekend of 17-19 June. The main item for discussion was of course China. The meeting adopted an extensive resolution on China which deals with the nature of the Chinese state, the roots of the present crisis, role of imperialism as well as examining how the Chinese working class can come to power.

This resolution will be published in the third issue of *Trotskyist International* in July. It is also available in Workers Power's new pamphlet, *China: the road to Tiananmen Square* (see pg11 for details).

## FUND DRIVE

PRESENTLY THE MRCI Secretariat is undertaking extensive discussions with our new section Poder Obrero (Peru) and our fraternal group in Bolivia—Guia Obrera. This is essential preparation for the Congress of the MRCI to be held later this year.

We are pleased to register a donation of £1,000 from a comrade in Workers Power who has recently won some compensation money after being wrongfully arrested. But to finance the travel of delegates from Europe and Latin America requires even more than this. If you value our work please send donations to:

**MRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX**

The MRCI Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)

Guia Obrera (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

# Hungary: reclaim the revolution!

BY SIMON MACINTOSH

ON 16 June Hungary re-buried, with all due ceremony, its former communist prime minister, Imre Nagy. On 16 June 1958 he had been hanged and buried face down in an unmarked grave, reviled as a "traitor and counter-revolutionary" for his part in the 1956 uprising.

Alongside his coffin were those of four other members of his government, including Pal Maleter, hero of the uprising and its military resistance to the subsequent Soviet invasion. A fifth coffin was empty, symbolising the thousands of unknown workers who perished in the suppression of the uprising and the repression that followed it.

Nagy, Maleter and the rest are gradually being re-habilitated, at least by the Hungarian bureaucracy. The uprising itself has changed from a "fascist counter-revolution" to a "popular uprising" in official pronouncements.

The rest of Eastern Europe is not so penitent, although many states were represented at the ceremony. Romania went so far as to suggest that the funerals became "unambiguously fascist and anti-socialist".

### Demonstrations

The reason for this less than whole-hearted welcome is not hard to see. The 1956 events were sparked off by the re-burial of Lazlo Rajk—a Stalinist turned on, imprisoned, tortured and killed by his own party—as Nagy and his supporters were to be. In the wake of Rajk's funeral mass demonstrations and strikes broke out in solidarity with Polish workers (themselves pressing their own government for political and economic reform) snowballing into open, armed rebellion. The parallels too with China, where the Democracy Movement was sparked off by the funeral of the disgraced Hu Yaobang, are all too obvious.

But the Hungarian Stalinists have rival claimants for the mantle of Nagy, Maleter and the spirit of 1956. Just as in 1956 there were a

handful of fascists who attempted to utilise the uprising for their own ends, so in 1989 the disintegrating Hungarian party has spawned out and out campaigners for a resoration of capitalism.

It was such restorationist elements who, at the funeral, attempted to paint the hardened Stalinist bureaucrat Nagy as a Hungarian patriot and anti-communist. Patriot he certainly was, but an anti-communist (in the sense of being against the ruling Stalinist party and bureaucracy) he was not.

His role was to usher in the reforms demanded by Moscow in the wake of Stalin's death. His misfortune was to be the reluctant hero of an insurgent people who placed more hope in him than he could ever fulfill without breaking from his whole previous life and training. He wanted reform, they wanted revolution. So he couldn't succeed without them, and they couldn't succeed with him. They were both dragged down together.

Nevertheless it is the working class of Hungary that must claim the genuine heritage of 1956. It was they who dealt with the fascist Arrow Cross agitators and provocateurs in 1956, in no uncer-



1956, the workers armed

tain terms. It was they who organised workers' councils throughout Hungary within days of the first outbreak of shooting in Budapest. It was they who organised massive general strikes again and again even after the armed resistance had collapsed. The workers seized weapons from the army and formed the militia that fought the Soviet invasion. They blunted the edge of the first Soviet troop deployment by fraternisation. The working class turned units of the Hungarian army sent to destroy them, most notably the tanks led by Pal Maleter, into units of the new militia. Nagy was forced to power by working class pressure. And it was the working class who made it impossible for capitalist restoration to gain a foothold in 1956.

### Proud history

The Hungarian working class has a long and proud history. From the ill-fated 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, through the resistance to the pre-war fascist regime of Horthy, to the 1956 revolution, they have shown themselves capable of independent organisation and of arming themselves for revolutionary struggle.

As the Hungarian regime crumbles in the face of mounting economic and political pressure, the Hungarian working class must once again look to this tradition. But this time it must draw the lesson from 1956, and from China in 1989. No wing of the bureaucracy can be trusted to consistently side with or lead the insurgent workers to victory.

The working class must forge their own party—equally hostile to Stalinist repression, corruption and economic mismanagement as to imperialist exploitation. They must form their own government—based on workers' councils and an armed workers' militia. And they must resurrect their 1956 slogan—echoed by Nagy and Maleter on the scaffold—for an independent and socialist Hungary! ■

# Polish elections solve nothing

BY HARRY WALL

legislation they can block it.

This sits at odds with their project of economic reconstruction based on a strategy of privatisation (see letter on page 15) and the elimination of price subsidies. So despite their formal refusal to join the government it is Solidarity's economic advisors who seem to be making the running in planning the new austerity drive.

There is no doubt that Solidarity will use its massive electoral support to promote itself as a necessary partner in any "national recovery" plan. Nor is there any doubt that the full brunt of this sacrifice will fall on the backs of the Polish working class.

There were signs during the elections of growing divisions within Solidarity itself. As the Solidarity leadership around Walesa increasingly acts as a Catholic political party and less as trade union leaders, these splits will deepen. The task of militants in Poland today is to ensure that these splits do not remain simply at the level of different shades of opinion in the leadership.

Solidarity's working class base has shrunk considerably from its 1981 high point. Nevertheless it is these forces that must be won to

opposing the austerity plan, and the Walesa leadership. They must prevent themselves from being used merely as a prop for Walesa's political ambitions. That he is content for this to happen is illustrated by his remark that Solidarity "will never be 10 million again". For his ambitions, it does not need to be.

The worker militants of Solidarity must regain the initiative if they are to regain the power to defend their living standards and challenge the regime. The call for a Solidarity congress, at which the base units could hold the leadership to account for their drive towards austerity, needs to be taken up and argued for. That was the potential for working class political power could be unlocked in Poland. ■

### JOZEF PINIOR

In *Workers Power* 118 we reported that Jozef Pinior, a leader of the PPS(RD), had been refused a passport by the Jaruzelski regime. We are happy to report that, following protests by the international workers' movement, he has now been granted one, and will be addressing a fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party Conference.



After the death of Khomeini the fragile unity of the ruling clergy is set to blow apart. Mark Hoskisson explains the issues behind the unfolding crisis

FEW KIND words were to be found in the obituaries of the western press for Ayatollah Khomeini. His journey to the next world has been eagerly anticipated by the western governments for several years now.

For them Khomeini was the Iranian revolution. He symbolised its Islamic fervour and its intransigence against the "great Satan" (the USA) and the "lesser Satans" (Britain, France, West Germany, etc). His death, they hope, will smooth the path towards the reintegration of Iran into their world order of exploitation and servitude.

Khomeini's reign of just over 10 years was a bloody lesson proving the hostility of a supposedly "anti-imperialist" bourgeois leadership to the real interests of the oppressed masses. In reality he was the personification of the counter-revolution in Iran.

Yet Khomeini's reactionary dictatorship, and even, in the end, his Islamic fervour, were not the reasons for the west's hostility to him and his regime. Carter, Reagan, Bush and Thatcher were all friends with an equally vile Islamic dictator, Zia, in Pakistan. They were indifferent to Khomeini's slaughter of the left. They welcomed his programme of breaking up the workers' control movement in the factories (the shoras). And they couldn't care less about the tragic plight of the Kurds his regime persecuted.

What really antagonised them was Khomeini's refusal to return to business-as-usual with imperialism. They hoped they could continue to exploit Iran economically and use it militarily to guarantee stability in the oil-rich Gulf. Khomeini not only refused to succumb to their wishes, he repeatedly thwarted them.

### Rushdie

His interventions in the Palestinian conflict, his prolonged war with Iraq, the activities of his supporters in the Lebanon, his toleration of the holding of US hostages from the Embassy in Tehran for 444 days all obstructed Iran's return to "the international community". The death sentence on Salman Rushdie was the latest example of this policy of inflaming relations with the imperialists.

Despite this, in no sense could workers politically support the Khomeini regime as "anti-imperialist". Having come to power as a result of an anti-imperialist revolution, Khomeini unleashed a bloody counter-revolution. In order to maintain mass support for his Islamic Republic, he had to utilise anti-imperialist demagoguery. He had to prolong the bloody, and after 1982, futile and reactionary war with Iraq, to maintain the unity of his mass base. And with this mass support he was able to oversee the reconstruction of Iran as a thoroughly repressive, capitalist country within which his key bourgeois supporters were able to amass fortunes.

Out of the power struggle that has begun in Tehran today the imperialists are hoping for the emergence of a moderate faction that they can, at last, do business with. The war wreaked havoc in Iran. The reconstruction of the country could provide fat profits to the western capitalists. Deals are already being struck. France and West Germany are now sending their ambassadors back to Tehran. Others will follow. But the signs are that the path to reconstruction will be bumpy.



## Iran after Khomeini

Khomeini has left behind him a crisis-ridden country. The economy is the government's biggest nightmare. Industry is operating at 25% of its pre-revolutionary capacity. Inflation is officially 22%, but in reality nearer 70%. The masses are paying dearly for this high cost of living. To rent a one bedroom flat in Tehran costs 100,000 rials a month—the average wage of a teacher is 50,000 rials a month! Food coupons and rationing have led to massive shortages and stimulated a huge black market. Out of a workforce officially numbered at 13 million (women are excluded), some 4 million are unemployed. The oil revenues which fuelled the war cannot offset these economic ills. They now barely cover the costs of Iran's \$13 billion per year food and armaments import bill.

Khomeini preserved a degree of unity inside the ruling class in the face of these difficulties by acting as a Bonaparte. That is, he stood above the different factions and played them off against each other, limiting or extending their power and influence in order to maintain a balance between them. Against any opposition—such as came from his once designated successor Ayatollah Montazeri—he used his mass base among the urban poor. Montazeri was deposed and his supporters executed. Through this balancing act, this Bonapartism, a relative stability was maintained. Now, with the Bonaparte gone the stability could die with him.

### Factions

In broad terms the principal factions within the regime are the "pragmatists" around Rafsanjani and the "radicals" around Khomeini's son Ahmad and the Prime Minister, Moussavi. Hitherto the pragmatists, and Rafsanjani in particular, were looked to by the west as potential allies. It was Rafsanjani who engineered Iran's acceptance of the ceasefire that has effectively ended the war with Iraq. It was he who negotiated with the USA in the Iran-Contra dealings. It was he who initially appeared to moderate the calls for Rushdie's death. Most important, Rafsanjani, a millionaire capitalist himself, favoured a private-enterprise dominated Iran in which investment from the west would be welcomed.

Ranged against him stood the "radicals", the very epitome of the fundamentalist fanaticism that is associated with Iran. These are the forces who, mindful of the need to retain mass support, demagogically champion the interests of the poor, favour nationalisation of the economy and urge the maintenance of the most brutal aspects of the Koran's legal and moral strictures.

The problem for the imperialists, however, is that Rafsanjani is a real and skillful pragmatist. While this can episodically endear him to them it can also destroy

their plans completely. In order to consolidate his own power he is more than ready to out-shout the radicals. Hence his recent call on Muslims to kill five westerners for every Palestinian killed in the *intifadah*. Hence his recent turn—which he claims Khomeini endorsed on his deathbed—to cultivate relations with the USSR.

Formerly it had been the radicals who favoured negotiating economic ties with the eastern bloc. Now Rafsanjani has delivered the goods, with the USSR promising aid for power stations, steel mills, dams and reconstruction projects. He was given the red carpet treatment on his recent trip to the USSR. In typical fashion, he has told Britain and the USA: "The west must act as the USSR and then relations will improve".

He is, pragmatically, playing the USSR off against the imperialists in a bid to secure economic aid for Iran.

His project is to replace Khomeini's Bonapartism with his own. He is speaker in the Majlis (parliament) and has already secured command of the armed forces. He has close links with, and can probably control Khomeini, the current president, chosen by the Assembly of Experts to be Khomeini's successor as supreme leader.

He is himself likely to become president after elections in August. The constitutional review underway will transform this post from a largely ceremonial one into a really powerful one. The post of prime minister, currently held by Moussavi, a radical, is to be abolished. And there are plans to give Khomeini the power to dissolve the Majlis, the main base of the radical clergy.

How far Rafsanjani will get in this project will depend on whether the radicals organise themselves for a fight. A planned demonstration against Khomeini's appoint-

ment by the radical-led *Komitehs* was called off in the name of unity. Already Khomeini's supporters in the army have replaced radical influenced Revolutionary Guards at a number of key installations. Rafsanjani's brother controls the state radio and TV network and the radicals have not yet started using the platform provided by prayer meetings to argue their case.

### Conflict

Despite this apparent passivity there is every possibility that the scale of the economic crisis will plunge the regime into internal conflict. All Rafsanjani's pragmatism will count for nothing if the masses continue to be deprived of bread. A new turn to the west would lead to further struggles against him.

Given this uncertainty there is the real prospect that Iran will, once again, be plunged into revolutionary turmoil. When this occurs the masses will, as they did in 1978/9, take the road of life or death struggle. There will be no shortage of people from within the regime claiming Khomeini's mantle and attempting to use mobilisations for their own ends. There will be no shortage of reactionary exiles, from pro-Shah monarchists through to bourgeois liberals like Bani Sadr, waiting to try and make Iran habitable for imperialism once again. The masses need to learn the lesson of the last ten years, that all such leaderships will betray their fundamental interests.

A new leadership will be needed for a new revolution—a proletarian, revolutionary party that is prepared to seize the opportunities presented by the impending crisis. Only this can ensure that this time a socialist Iran, a workers' not an Islamic republic, is the outcome of the struggle. ■

## US miners battle union busters

BY ARTHUR MERTON

LATE LAST month a teenager was shot in the head and seriously wounded in West Virginia, USA. The sniper that fired the shot aimed to kill. The youth was a striking miner, a soft target for the company thugs who have been paid handsomely to frighten miners back to work.

In 1988 the Pittston Coal Company set out to break the miners' union, the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA), and clear the way for a reduced workforce, paid below union rates and working in inhuman conditions. The company refused to abide by a union contract and for 14 months workers at Pittston's pit in south west Virginia tried to negotiate.

In April, after no progress had been made, 1,700 miners went on strike. Their struggle is one of many being fought by miners to stop union busting throughout the industry. At other pits in the region mining corporations like the New Beckley Coal Company have also torn up contracts. They too have been met with strike action. The rank and file of the UMWA are saying they will not take any more attacks the coal owners.

In response to the Pittston strike the bosses withdrew medical aid to retired miners and widows. This act of meanness had the effect of uniting the whole West Virginian coalfield against the bosses. A "people's movement" organised support and relief for strikers, their families and the retired miners and widows. Crucially wildcat strikes throughout the Appalachians took place and created the conditions for reversing the defeats that the

union has suffered since the great coal strike of 1978.

The union's campaign of picketing quickly showed that the vicious coal bosses were not alone in wanting to break the UMWA. The state government sent in police and troopers to smash the picket lines. Over 2,000 miners and supporters have been arrested since the strike began. Three union organisers were imprisoned. The UMWA was hit by the courts and faced fines of up to \$1,000 million for organising pickets. And now, in the tradition of the coal wars of the 1920s and 1950s, the company have sent in gun toting goons to kill strikers.

### Onslaught

The West Virginian miners are amongst the toughest and most militant workers in the USA. In the face of the company/state onslaught they have organised pickets, demos and traffic convoys to block roads. As the violence is stepped up they will have to add militant mass pickets, defended by organised workers' militia, to these tactics. They did it in Mingo county in the 1920s and fought a war with state troopers. They will need to do it again today. The Pittston miners have already secured combat jacket uniforms—a militia is the next step.

The key to victory, though, lies in spreading the strike. For years the coal bosses have been able to pick off heroic but isolated sections of miners in their campaign

against the union—Duke Power in the 1970s, A T Massey in 1984-85, Pittston and New Beckley today. The surest way to put an end to this piecemeal onslaught is for an all out UMWA strike. After all, other disputes around similar issues are, or have been, raging in numerous states across the country.

Yet the union leadership, under president Richard Trumka, are holding back. They are abiding by court rulings, calling on miners to pursue non-violent civil disobedience tactics, urging consumer boycotts and federal mediation, and limiting the action to selective strikes. This is a recipe for the slow death of the union.

By building on the widespread sympathy and solidarity that exists, the militants at Pittston need to press forward for a quick victory. Links between existing strikes must be built. Pickets must be dispatched and every coalfield closed. This way the bosses' union-busting plans can be stopped and the possibility of unionising the vast number of open-shop mines across the USA will be created.

More than this, with a solid strike at Eastern airlines still going on, a national UMWA strike alongside it can turn the tide for the whole US labor movement. The defeats and decline that characterised the Reagan years can be decisively reversed. Bush's anti-working class plans for North America can be thwarted before he has a chance to begin implementing them.

- Victory to the Virginian miners!
- All out in the UMWA!





Massive revolutionary upheavals, like the Chinese events, always expose an organisations' politics to the severest test. They demonstrate, like nothing else can, the weaknesses and flaws in the theoretical and programmatic basis of an organisation. Nowhere has this been clearer on the British left than in the case of the Socialist Workers Party with its "state capitalist" analysis of China and its disdain for "programme" as Stuart King explains.

THE REAL weaknesses of this organisation are all glaringly exposed in its coverage of the Chinese events: its inability to analyse the dynamics of the crisis of the Chinese bureaucracy, its helplessness when faced with developing a concrete strategy for a revolutionary struggle and finally its ability to "forget" the question of the revolutionary party.

At the end of May *Socialist Worker* was correctly pointing to one of the key weaknesses of the Chinese movement, its failure to throw onto the scales of battle the enormous economic power of the working class. An editorial in *Socialist Worker* pointed out that despite the numbers of workers involved in the protests, "With a few exceptions they organised in their neighbourhoods and estates not in their factories and offices..."

Forcing the regime to make real concessions needed a different kind of power, the power workers have to bring the economy and its rulers to its knees. This could only be done by strike action and workers organising collectively in the factories and offices... As a result the government could reassert its control of the streets which could never have worked against factories occupied by workers." (*Socialist Worker* 3 June)

While the question of strike action to paralyse the economy was key to the struggle, to suggest that somehow it would have prevented the government from "reasserting its control" in the factories, is to disarm the masses. As long as the army remained a reliable instrument of the bureaucracy the burning task was to organise armed defence by the workers' and students' organisations. Strike action, even massive general strike action, can be crushed if the workers do not form their own militias. But scour the *Socialist Worker* coverage of China and you will not find this question raised. As usual it remains firmly in the "Where We Stand Column", not as an operative demand to be fought for.

### Army

Connected to this was the question of how to deal with the army. Again *Socialist Worker* offered no way forward for the movement. It was left to John Molyneux in the "Teach Yourself Marxism" column to raise the question, and only in the most general sense, of working class revolutions needing to "break the rank and file of the army from the control of the generals and ruling class through mass confrontation".

But what did this mean concretely in the Chinese events? How were the Chinese workers and students to do it? Again *Socialist Worker* remained silent.

The need to turn fraternisation into systematic work amongst the troops in the barracks, raising the soldiers' demands and grievances against their officers, setting up rank and file soldiers' organisations, putting across the case of the workers against the corrupt bureaucrats, these were the key tasks of the movement. In the struggle to break up the army as an effective disciplined force and win over the rank and file, arming the people and forming an effective workers' militia, is crucial.

Units have to be defeated, demoralised; only the armed work-

# SWP: no answers for the Chinese working class



Student demonstration in Tiananmen Square before the massacre

Bob Gannon/Insight

ers can do this. As the rank and file soldiers come over to the masses, so they have to be drawn into the workers' councils. Without such councils organising the struggle and drawing in all sectors of the masses, the movement could only go backwards.

Why was the SWP incapable of raising these crucial demands drawn from the arsenal of Marxism? Because these are programmatic demands, they are part of the programme of political revolution, and the SWP hates programme. It prefers to swim with the spontaneity of the masses rather than fighting to give the movement direction. It has built its organisation on the basis of rejecting the *Transitional Programme* and its method. As a result it is incapable of putting forward a strategy that can win, especially in a revolutionary crisis.

### Vague

While the SWP recognises that there was a failure in the movement to develop demands to mobilise the workers it offers only the vaguest suggestions as to how it should have been done.

"Calls for democracy and an end to corruption were absolutely right... but these calls had to be linked to the fight to defend living standards from inflation and economic chaos."

But how? Where were the demands that addressed these questions? The question of workers' control in the factories, the struggle to break the bureaucrats' hold on the plan and place it under the direction of the workers, the demands addressed to the grievances of the poorer peasants etc. All this is far too "programmatic" and therefore absent.

Marx, Lenin and Trotsky in-

sisted on programme not because they thought the incantation of a few magic words can absolve revolutionaries from addressing the concerns of the masses. On the contrary they recognised the need to focus the needs of the masses on strategic goals, to give a clear answer to the question "what next". This was the function of the action programme for the revolutionary Marxist tradition. It is a method explicitly rejected by *Socialist Worker*.

No socialist could have failed to be moved by the enormous upsurge of the Chinese masses. The mass student demonstrations in the face of bureaucratic threats, the transport strikes and blocking of railways, the popular fraternising with the troops and the willingness of the workers and students to risk their lives again and again in front of the tanks and armoured cars of the bureaucracy were all a source of inspiration.

Yet for revolutionaries there was also a feeling of frustration. Frustration that so powerful a movement lacked the direction and strategy which could have ensured its victory over the Chinese Stalinists. Only a revolutionary party of the proletariat could have provided such direction—a party forged, of necessity, in this mighty struggle—rooted in the student and workers' movement.

Such a party would have been built precisely on the programme and strategy it argued within the masses in the course of these events. It would have had to combat the illusions of the masses and student leaders in this or that section of the bureaucracy, in the "People's" Liberation Army, in notions of peaceful change through "people's power".

*Socialist Worker* is proud of its party profile in Britain, it constantly exhorts workers and stu-

dents to join it and build it. But what about China in the midst of a revolutionary crisis where the question of party, class and leadership was posed so dramatically? We find only silence.

Scour *Socialist Worker's* coverage of the Chinese events again and you will find no argument for the necessity of the Chinese movement to build a revolutionary combat party. Characteristic of the state capitalist tendency is not only its rejection of programme but, inextricably tied up with this, its failure to recognise the political importance of the party in revolutionary crises. As an afterthought, when the immediate struggle had already been defeated, *Socialist Worker* had this to say:

"Socialists must hope some of the activists survive the repression, draw the lessons of the defeat and keep some form of organisation alive even if underground."

### Confession

What a confession of bankruptcy! The major lesson of the defeat was the need to build a party independent of the bureaucracy, one that could develop a programme and with it organise the masses to take power and smash the bureaucratic caste which at present rules China. The SWP "hopes" "some form of organisation" survives. What form? The student movement? The independent workers' organisations? Neither are sufficient. These dyed in the wool liquidationists dare not raise the question of the party—the hallmark of a centrist.

"But [this or that SWP hack will reply] we cannot raise everything in *Socialist Worker*". True, but the eight page article on China by Charlie Hore in the June *Socialist Worker Review* (SWR) only provided the same confusion, in depth. The article brings out graphically

how the SWP's state capitalist analysis leaves them incapable of finding the roots of the Chinese crisis.

For the SWP, divisions within the bureaucracy merely reflect arguments over how much or how little state capitalism and state direction should be allowed in the economy. While they correctly point out the economic dislocations and chaos caused in China by the introduction of the market, they fail to see the implications this has for the bureaucracy and how it effects their actions. Because they do not analyse the bureaucracy as a ruling caste, whose very existence depends, in the final analysis, on the survival of post-capitalist property relations, they cannot understand the contradictions which rack this caste. Rather they see the struggles as "various factions of the Chinese ruling class vying for power" ("May of the Masses" -SWR June 89, p11).

This sociological analysis of the regime leads to a dramatic overestimation of the fragmentation of the bureaucracy and an underestimation of its determination to preserve the basis of its rule in times of crisis. Charlie Hore's article presents a picture of a Chinese economy out of control of the bureaucracy, of a central bureaucracy unable to control the local party bureaucrats, managers and even the army:

"The anarchy of competition which now characterises the Chinese economy means the state has lost control over the army and of lower level officials and managers who run the economy day to day" (SWR p14).

### Bankrupt

The troops rolled into Tiananmen Square only a few days after the article was written. Rarely can a group's analysis have proved so bankrupt so quickly!

The bureaucracy is indeed wracked with crisis, but it the crisis of a degenerate workers state based on post-capitalist property relations. It is the crisis of bureaucratic command planning, which, because it has driven the workers from any political power and control of the plan, is failing to develop the economy.

The introduction of the market, using the profit motive and competition to improve productivity, is a dangerous road for a bureaucracy whose rule is based on a different form of property. It is not likely to allow anything that seriously undermines its position without striking back, even if this means exacerbating the stagnation and decline of the Chinese economy.

The SWP is incapable of understanding this dynamic, blinded as it is by the need to analyse China as a capitalist country with a capitalist ruling class. The events of the past month have shown once again just how bankrupt that analysis, and the political method that goes with it, really is. ■







# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

## POLL TAX:

# DON'T PAY! DON'T COLLECT!

THE POLL Tax is the flagship of the Tory third term. With the Tories reeling from their Euro-election defeat, with the economy in trouble, with a wave of strike action underway, now is the time to sink Thatcher's flagship.

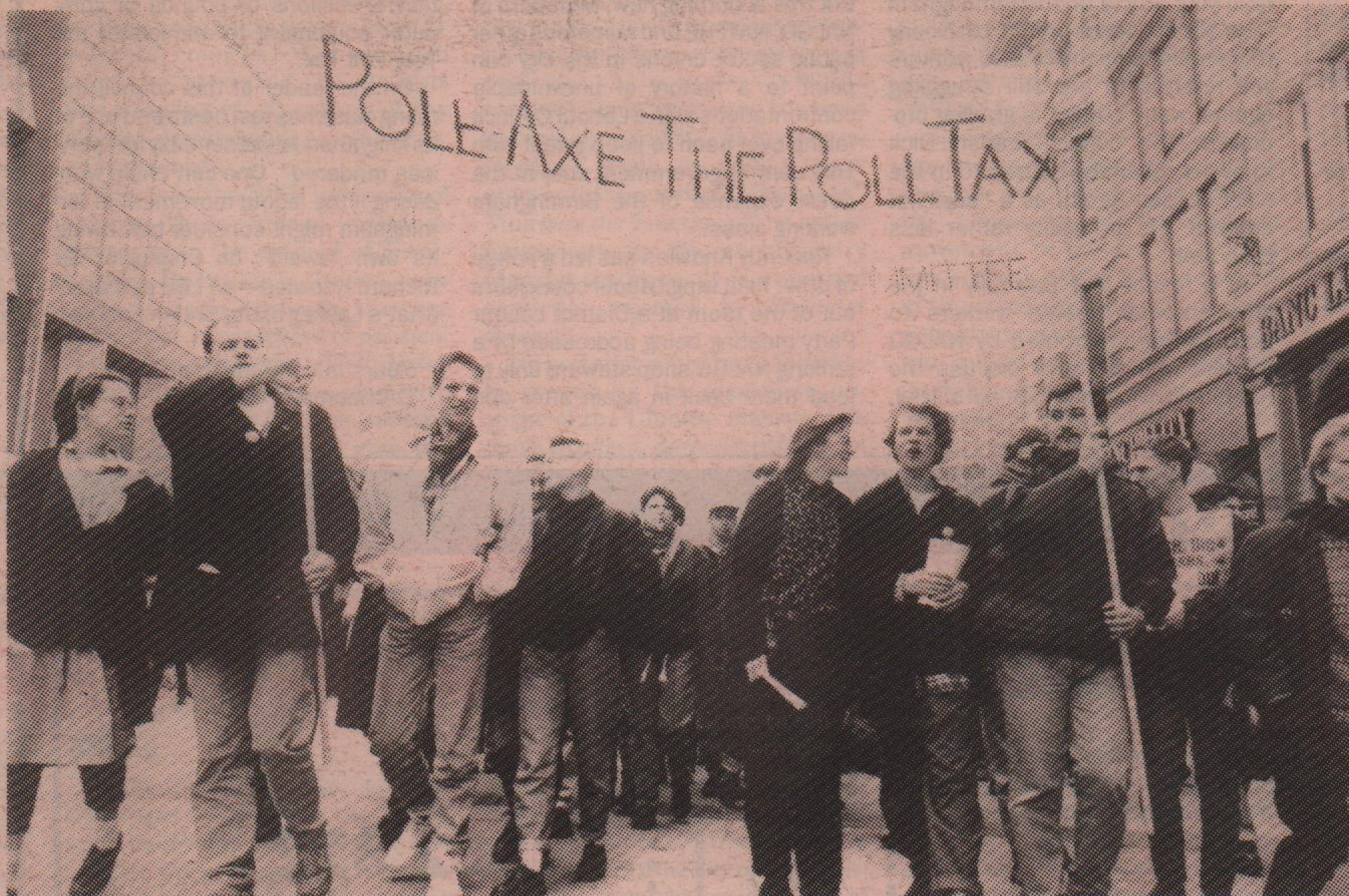
The Poll Tax systematically robs the poor to pay the rich. The average bill for every individual over 18 is working out at upwards of £600 a year.

The Tax is an assault on what few services Labour still provides in local government. If the Tories implement the Tax successfully they will launch a massive propaganda campaign to show voters how their payments could be reduced: by councils slashing services to the very bone in working class areas.

That is why the Poll Tax must be stopped.

At present the Scottish anti-Poll Tax campaign has reached a crucial stage. Over 700,000 are reportedly refusing to pay the Tax.

In England and Wales it looks likely that, as in Scotland, the Tories will succeed in registering most people through a combination of threats, fines and snooping. But the registration forms falling onto the doormats in the last few weeks have been alerting working class families to the crippling and un-



Steve Wride

just cost of the Tax.

The Scottish campaign has rallied hundreds of thousands to non-payment despite the bitter opposition of the Labour and trade union leaders. At its height their "campaign" has amounted to a few newspaper ads, with stars like Glenda Jackson telling us: "I'm outraged by the Poll Tax".

The problem is that millions of working class people will be more than "outraged"

by the Tax. Their living standards will be hammered by it. Even the unemployed will be forced to pay one fifth of the charge. For them a campaign of petitions, of big demonstrations that lead to nothing, is useless.

We can beat the Tax only if we organise to break the law.

In every area and estate there should be a local anti-Poll Tax union. These local groups should be fighting to build city-wide action coun-

cils of delegates from the areas, the workplaces and the trade unions. Together they should organise a mass campaign of non-payment and non-collection.

Councils and council trade unionists should be won to refusing to handle Poll Tax work. So should all those workers the government will have to use to collect the Tax, from postal workers to pay clerks.

Regular mass meetings in

the localities should be organised to keep the non-payment campaign solid.

The moment a single one of those resisting the Tax is hit by the law, whether it be fines for non-payment, or injunctions under the anti-union laws for non-collection, workers should organise the biggest possible mass strike action and the occupation of the Council offices, not just in Scotland but throughout the land.

## BUILD THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST CONTINGENT

on the Time To Go

### MARCH AND RALLY IN LONDON

Saturday 12 August  
11am Whittington Park

Holloway Road, near Archway tube

Sponsors include: South London Year of Action, Revolutionary Internationalist League, Workers International League, Workers Power

THIS AUGUST sees the twentieth anniversary of British troops arriving on the streets of Belfast and Derry. It is therefore essential that there is the biggest possible turnout on the demonstration called for 12 August in London to mark the anniversary of this event.

The troops arrived in August 1969 under the pretext of defending the nationalist population from loyalist pogroms. Instead they introduced internment, torture, daily harassment and shoot-to-kill against anyone who resisted British rule.

Britain's policy has never been aimed at bringing about

a peaceful solution. Both Labour and Tory governments have tried to smash the anti-imperialist resistance to British rule.

In Britain, through the use of the PTA frame-up trials, they have carried out a campaign of repression against the Irish community.

During the last twenty years British workers have not been won to the building of a mass challenge to British rule in Ireland. The central responsibility for this rests with the Labour Party and TUC leaders who have upheld a bi-partisan agreement with the Tories throughout this period. Labour governments were responsible for the introduction of troops in 1969 and the SAS death squads in 1976. From the hunger strikes of 1981 to the Gibraltar shootings in 1988, the Labour leadership has continued its treacherous, chauvinist role.

The slogans of the march organisers: "British Withdrawal From Ireland—Time To Go" accommodates to this chauvinism in the hope that they will give the demo fake mass appeal and by presenting withdrawal from the point of view of Britain's best long term interests.

There can be no political basis for a withdrawal movement founded on these backward sentiments. Such a movement would be unable to withstand the intense pressure put on it by British imperialism and its agents in the labour movement.

#### No short-cut

There can be no short cuts to making Ireland a popular issue. Illusions that exist in the working class about the neutrality of the British state, and the bigotry that exists towards Irish people must be challenged head on.

Work within the trade unions has been relegated by Irish solidarity organisations to a tenth rate issue. That must be changed. There must be a clear recognition of the need to rally the working class as the only force in Britain that can effectively unite with Ireland's republicans and socialists to force the troops out.

That is why any campaign to get the troops out must be based on the labour movement. It must be unambiguous and state clearly that Britain has no progressive role to play in Ireland and therefore the occupying troops must go—NOW! It must make clear that the only people who have the right to decide the future of the Six Counties are the Irish people as a whole. They were deprived of this right in 1921 when Britain partitioned the whole island against the express wishes of the majority of the population.

It is for these reasons that we are calling for support for the anti-imperialist contingent on the 12 August demonstration around the demands:

- Troops out now!
- Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole!