

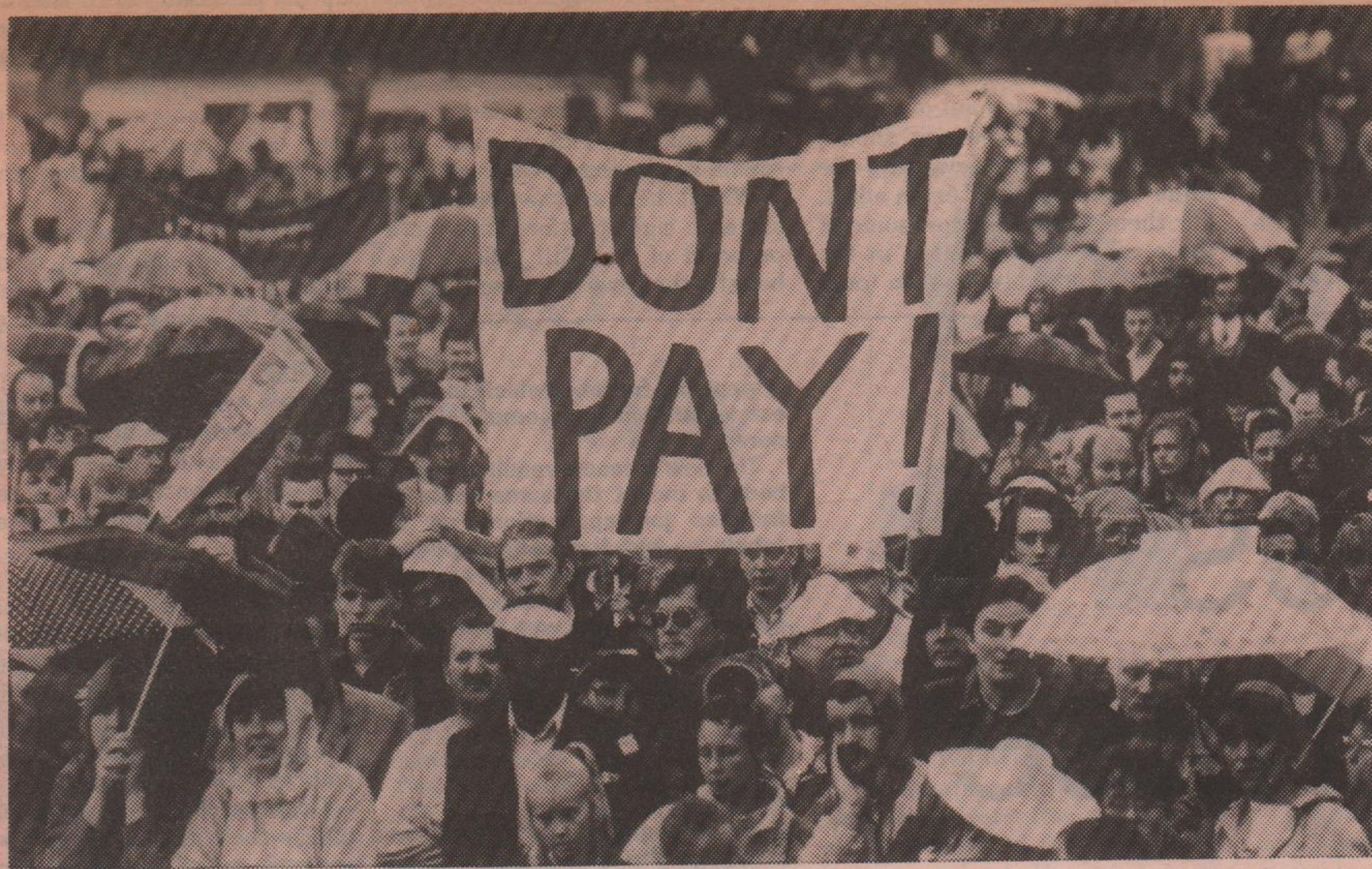
The Lawson crisis:
**THE END OF
THATCHERISM?**

See pages 3 and 5

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

SMASH THE POLL TAX!



John Harris/IFL

MILLIONS NOW know what the Poll Tax is all about. In Manchester it means another £515 to £708 per person a year! Meanwhile the well off middle classes that back the Tories won't have to pay the tax on their second homes.

But never fear. The Tories tell us, there is an "alternative" to such massive charges. Manchester City Council suggest that instead we can have cuts... £95 million worth of them. Some choice! Pay directly out of our pockets, or indirectly as we watch our jobs and services disappear.

The real choice the working class is: **sit back and take this massive attack on our living standards or build a mass campaign to smash the Poll Tax.**

And with the Tories at each other throats. The choice is easy... fight now and we can win!

Demonstrations and rallies have taken place up and down the country. Every week new anti-Poll Tax unions are set up. The Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions says the numbers of non-payers north of the border is holding up at around a million.

But the Tories are starting to pile on the pressure. A new series of adverts is trying to get people to pay direct from their bank accounts. Warning letters are frightening more and more people into registering or (in Scotland) into paying.

To stand firm against this Tory assault it is time to forge a united, working class campaign around a battle plan that can win.

Most anti-Poll Tax unions are committed to non-payment. We need organisers on every street to keep people solid and to answer the Tory lies. Non-payment must be a collective action, with regular meetings to build solidarity and prevent the Tories pick-

ing us off one by one.

In areas where large numbers have refused to register we can cause serious problems by organised mass non-registration backed up by big demonstrations and pickets.

Local Councils need to be forced to refuse to prosecute people for non-registration, and to refuse to implement the tax at all. Labour Party members should de-select councillors who do the Tories' dirty work. Local government workers and civil servants should boycott all work to do with the tax and strike if members are victimised.

If the sheriffs or bailiffs try to seize our property we should organise physical defence. Residents can blockade threatened flats or houses, and properly trained squads should be ready to give the bailiffs and police a lesson they'll never forget.

Anti-Poll Tax groups have got to organise inside the workplaces. The Tories will try to

take the Poll Tax direct from wages and benefits. Strike if they do.

Any official who'd rather have a quiet life than fight for his or her members should be replaced, and the rank and file should organise to take action without the officials if necessary.

The National conference of Anti-Poll Tax Groups on 25 November must be used to launch the fight for these demands. Everyone there must be committed to building councils of action in every area, with delegates from every estate, workplace, union and local group to build co-ordinated resistance.

Linked up nationally we should raise the call for a general strike on Monday 2 April 1990. This must be a step on the way to an all-out strike that will not just beat the Poll Tax, but open the road to sweeping away the Tories and the whole class of idle parasites that they represent. ■

● **Don't pay**

● **Don't collect**

● **Strike against
the Poll Tax**

FOR A WEALTH TAX NOT A POLL TAX!

EMBRYO BILL/ABORTION RIGHTS

New threat looms

THE EMBRYO Research Bill poses a serious threat to women's limited control over fertility. A reduction in the time limit for abortions is now more likely than at any time since 1967. The government sponsored bill will give the necessary parliamentary time to anti-abortion amendments which have previously been "talked out" by parliamentary opponents.

The Bill itself was prompted by the Warnock Report which looked into the "moral" issues involved in embryo research. Advances in the treatment of infertility involve the fertilisation of eggs in laboratory conditions.

Scientists supervising the very conception of the human foetus were thought to be on shaky ethical ground. Those experimenting on the surplus embryos which often result from this procedure were thought to be even more in need of the moral supervision of the state.

Threats

The threat to existing abortion rights comes in two main ways.

Firstly, there is an amendment to the bill which would restrict the time limit on legal abortion to 24 weeks. Although at the moment the limit is 28 weeks in reality most women find it impossible to get an abortion later than 24 weeks. Last year, only 22 of a total of 172,000 abortions were performed after the 24th week.

The Tories, honouring the promise Thatcher made to Alton when his Bill failed, have already stated

BY LUCY ASH

that they would be sympathetic to a 24 week amendment. They are even considering making support for it a matter of party line rather than individual choice for MPs.

Such an amendment would make a real difference to the availability of abortion because doctors, scared of prosecution, would generally not perform abortions after the 18th week of pregnancy.

Pledge

Anti-abortion groups such as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and "Life" have already made it quite clear that a 24 week amendment would not begin to satisfy them. Phyllis Bowman, national director of SPUC, told its annual conference at Keele that the organisation was hopeful of reducing the limit to 18 weeks.

The society has started raising funds for the campaign. It estimates that it will need £200,000 and has already been pledged £65,000 by millionaire property developer Godfrey Bradman.

The second danger posed by the bill comes from its whole approach to embryo research. MPs will have a choice of two positions. One amendment would outlaw embryo research completely (this is supported by Life and SPUC) The alternative allows it only in the first 14 days under the strictest government supervision. The second option is also based on the idea that



**FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND!
A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!**

the group of cells which constitute an embryo at this early stage of development, are so qualitatively different from other human cells that they require the state to impose unique "ethical" guidelines.

As far as SPUC and Life are concerned the embryo is a human being from the moment of conception. Each fertilised egg should therefore, in their view, have the same "human rights" as an adult. For them, the ideas that some of these cells are implanted in the mother to possibly develop (only

about 15% do) whilst others may be used for medical research is a grotesque sin.

Even more abhorrent for the Lifers is the thought that medical science could detect abnormalities at this early stage of development and only implant the embryos which were free from detectable abnormalities. This is man, the scientist, playing at God.

Whilst these are the views of the extreme right-to-lifers, the mere proposal of this Bill reflects the belief of the government and many

of its ethical advisers in the ruling class that human embryos do constitute a form of "life". The passage of the Embryo Bill therefore opens up the possibility of further anti-abortion action—legal battles over the definition of human life. If a 14 day old embryo has legal protection in the laboratory, then how long before equal rights are demanded for the protection of embryos in the womb?

The potential of research on embryos has already been demonstrated. It has enabled the detection of the cause of certain congenital defects, revealed others at the stage of the embryo, and helped infertile women to have children. Other possible medical uses of the research include cancer prevention and better treatment of some degenerative conditions of old age.

Ability

The ability to have a child if you want to is also part of the "right to choose" for women, just as the right to have an abortion is. This is just one reason why it is important for embryo research to continue.

Other reactionary bodies see the bill as their opportunity to limit women's choice. They are seeking to amend the bill in order to make it illegal for single women to be artificially inseminated. They are worried about the number of women choosing to have children outside of marriage. They have the backing of the General Synod of the Church of England who have ruled that conception outside marriage is sinful, whether it involves sex or not!

Bigots' charter

The Embryo Bill and the various amendments it is attracting really is a bigots' charter and needs to be stopped. A campaign against it needs to be built on the basis of free abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose. Such a campaign needs to be built in the labour movement rather than being simply a parliamentary lobbying organisation.

Unlike previous bills, filibustering and time wasting will be of no use. This time the government has to be forced to retreat. ■

■ *The struggle for abortion rights in Ireland—see page 11*

THE PROVISIONS of the 1989 Social Security Act came into force on 9 October. The Act is the latest in a series of legal changes aimed at forcing unemployed workers off the unemployment register and into low paid jobs or government "training" schemes. The only alternative to these options is begging on the streets—a grim reality for growing numbers of unemployed workers.

The most important changes to benefit regulations are the introduction of the "actively seeking work" test and the further restrictions on the acceptable reasons for turning down a job.

Even before the Act came into force, claimants had to show that they were available for work and were taking steps to make their availability known. Now they have to prove that they are actively seeking work for every week that they are claiming benefits.

This will mean keeping a record of all applications made and any replies from employers. This change will undoubtedly lead to more people being forced off the register with no other means of support.

Worse off

The regulations also mean that you have to take a job even if this results in you being worse off than when you were on the dole. Before October, claimants did not automatically lose their entitlement to benefits if they refused a job where the pay was below nationally agreed rates or below that paid by "good" employers.

Now, the Act has specifically removed pay as a "good cause" for refusing the job. The Minister of Social Security has publicly stated:

"I cannot say that under no circumstances would a person be expected to take a job below the level of benefit that they were receiving out of work."

BENEFITS

Tories victimise jobless

BY CAROL NICHOLAS

Similarly, with Employment Training schemes, Employment Service staff have been told that when a claimant refuses a place on ET they should "look closely at the claimant's job search to ensure that they are taking reasonable steps to find work"—in other words, suspension of benefit is even more likely if ET is refused.

The government is claiming that the changes are necessary to change unemployed workers' attitudes to job-seeking. Some Tory MPs claimed that:

"Almost an army of people sitting at home are voluntarily unemployed... some people, regrettably, have been actively unemployed and remain actively unemployed. If such people put the same activity into finding new work as they put into being unemployed, the country would be far better served."

Tell that to the Hoover workers sacked in the summer! The respon-

sibility for unemployment lies with the bosses and their political representatives who throw workers onto the scrapheap without a qualm.

Even the Tories' own research shows that these measures are not going to result in more jobs. A previous attempt to "encourage" active job seeking was the creation of the Jobclubs. Jobclub members are expected to attend the clubs for at least four half days a week and to make at least ten job applications each time they attend.

Jobclub sham

A survey commissioned by the government (which conveniently ignored the results) showed that only one in ten Jobclub members get a job paying more than £120 a week, almost half only manage to get a low paid full time or part time job and more than four in ten leave Jobclubs with no job at all.

The Jobclubs were a sham, but at least recognised the prohibitive cost

of applying for jobs, which the latest legislation has completely ignored.

The new measure requires everybody to mount the same scale of fruitless job applications as in Jobclubs—but the free telephone facilities, stationery and stamps provided in the Jobclubs are only available to people who have been unemployed for more than six months and even then there are only 20,000 Jobclub places available.

Attack

These changes are not only an attack on the unemployed, but on all workers. The virtual conscription of unemployed workers into low paid jobs and training schemes is yet another attempt to undermine the still existing national agreements on pay that were won by workers' struggles.

The trade unions have condemned the measures and unemployed workers' organisations mounted a series of demonstrations and rallies on the day the Act came into force. In some places, where unemployed workers have organised and unemployed workers' centres exist, links are being made between the unemployed and trade unionists.

These links need to be strengthened and extended. What is needed is a recognition by employed and unemployed workers that the fight for work at decent levels of pay and conditions is a fight for the whole class. Trade unions need to offer full membership rights to unemployed workers with reduced subscriptions.

The unemployed need to organise themselves into an unemployed workers' movement. It should be funded by the trade union movement with no strings and should be recognised and represented in the labour and trade union movement at all levels. We will not starve in silence! ■

EDITORIAL

Tories lose their way

This month the Tory Party will confirm Margaret Thatcher as their parliamentary leader. But in the wake of the resignation of her Chancellor of the Exchequer many are wondering whether, in the words of *The Economist*, "The day when Nigel Lawson said 'enough' may be the day that Mrs Thatcher's term in office started to draw to its close".

That there is disaffection among her backbench MPs over her "style of leadership" is beyond doubt, but that is not the real issue. Thatcher has always relied on unelected advisors and acted autocratically within her Cabinet. From the purge of the "wets" in the first term, through the loss of Heseltine and Brittan in 1985, to the dumping of Howe and the resignation of Lawson, she has formulated her own policies and selected yes men to carry them out.

But the real issues behind the Tory Party crisis are ones of political and economic strategy. And here we are not talking about disputes over conjunctural economic policies such as interest rate rises.

Thatcher's strength for the bosses of this country was her determination to wage war on the unions, press a destructive purge of inefficient industry upon the capitalist class and hand over key profitable sectors of state industry to them at knockdown prices. Since 1983 this has coincided with a world recovery in which British firms have benefited from improvements in productivity and profitability.

"Thatcherism" has come to mean this extreme liberal market approach to the economy: deregulation, privatisation, cutting back on public spending. At the political level it has involved strengthening the state both against the trade unions and at the expense of civil liberties. All this secured the backing of the boardrooms of Britain. It even got a mandate at election time because although there were often majorities against particular policies, rising living standards for most of those in work was enough to stitch together sufficiently large electoral minority to retain power.

But from 1988 this Thatcherite miracle started to look more like a mirage. In the first place Britain's industrial base is revealed to be weak and narrow, suffering from long term chronic under-investment compared with its major rivals.

A second weakness in her economic policy is her liberal market outlook on exchange rates ("let sterling find its own level"). This is seen as a piece of dogma that induces instability in the financial markets and makes investment and trading decisions by British bosses difficult. This is the issue which triggered Lawson's resignation.

Thirdly, certain pieces of privatisation (water) and policies on public spending (NHS and education) are seen as dysfunctional to the operation of British capitalism.

Finally, there is the issue of Europe. The dispute over exchange rates was a symbol of Thatcher's distrust of the EC 1992 project. She perseveres in her preference for a subordinate role at the side of US imperialism rather than as minor partner in Europe under the sway of West German imperialism. But the overwhelming majority of bosses and Tory leaders see British capitalism's future within a European bloc.

There is no question that Thatcherism in the above sense has outlived its usefulness, even though there is plenty of support for a firm anti-union stance. There are rivals such as Heseltine who are more Thatcherite than herself when it comes to the unions, or even more reactionary policies for dealing with unemployment (Heseltine favours work for dole). But Heseltine stands for a much greater degree of state intervention into directing investment and providing funds for infrastructure, research & development and education & training.

At the moment the jury is still out on Thatcher herself. Can she go beyond a different form of policy presentation and distance herself from "Thatcherism"? This is very unlikely. All her actions in the last

period indicate the opposite. There is no question that if she led the Tories to another election win then she would go soon after, having exhausted her mission.

But can she make it until then? Her only hope of survival depends on allowing the Tory Party to move towards the centre and engineering another economic recovery. If this happened then it would allow the bosses to forgive her foot-dragging over Europe and the electorate to forgive her the Poll Tax and her attacks on the NHS.

But nothing in the proposed plans for the next parliamentary session indicates a softening of the pace of counter-reforms. A further continued slide into a recession would certainly see British industry intolerant of another 1979-81 style "let it rip" approach from the Tories. They would demand that the huge budget surplus in the Treasury is put their way in the form of aid.

A recession would involve a decline in living standards and a rise in unemployment. Thatcher could not distance herself from Thatcherism enough to allow sufficient counter-cyclical measures through government help for industry. The electorate coalition of middle class and well paid workers would fragment and hold her responsible for the mess. The Tory backbenchers in the 1922 Committee would pay her a visit. Dulwich would beckon.

The working class can only rejoice to see the Tories in disarray. Thatcher's early and involuntary exit would be cause for even greater celebration. But the labour movement has no interest in an orderly transfer of power to Kinnock's Labour Party, itself now committed to whole chunks of Thatcherism. The best way of maximising the Tories' crisis is to press hard onto the attack—against the Poll Tax, for higher pay, in defence of the NHS, for the Irish resistance in Northern Ireland. We must turn uncertainty and doubt into a full scale rout. ■

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Left fails to stop BNP rally

Dear Comrades,

The coverage of the increase in fascist activities in Britain that you included in WP 123 was indeed timely. An upsurge in "legal" state racism via the Tory and Labour party quarters has given at least some of the odious master race clones the chance to cash in and crawl out from the sewers.

Recently in Birmingham the fascist British National Party (BNP) made it known that it intended holding a rally in the city in support of "white rights". Obviously this was designed to further fan the flames of racism in the midst of the Springfield school situation which was also covered in your previous issue.

A counter mobilisation was organised and among its ranks were members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), representatives of the Indian Workers Association of Great Britain (IWA) plus some leading figures from the Birmingham Trade Union Council, which holds the position of "No platform for fascists".

When the fascists failed to show up at the city square where they had announced they would assemble, the anti-fascists, currently occupying the same square, were told by the SWP and IWA representatives that this was a victory.

But this was despite the fact that roving scouts from the counter-mobilisation had returned from half a mile away to report the alternative location of over thirty BNP

supporters attempting to rally in another part of the city centre.

Workers Power supporters, along with a number of militant Asian youth, plus a group of anarchists and the more principled supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, were, quite rightly, not so sure. They argued strongly inside the demonstration that we should all march on this alternative location and prevent the fascists from propagating their poison anywhere on the streets.

Unfortunately the refrain of the Trades Council lefts, the leadership of the IWA and particularly the influential and numerous SWPers was that

"... we had won the day against the BNP by preventing them from assembling in this square where we stand..."

The fact that the BNP had a free hand to preach viciously racist, anti-working class propaganda in another city square half a mile away cut no ice with the anti-fascists of the SWP.

When the political shortcomings of the SWP inspired Anti-Nazi League (with particular reference to the fascist march down London's Brick Lane in the late 1970s) were highlighted by *Workers Power* supporters, the SWP responded with abuse and cries of "sectarians".

Who was it who said that those who do not learn from the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them?

In comradeship
A Birmingham anti-fascist



Siho Iyigüven

TRAGEDY HAS overtaken the Kurdish refugee community in North London. On 5 October Siho Iyigüven burned himself to death after setting fire to bedding in his detention cell. He had already suffered four months in prison and at Harmondsworth Detention Centre where he participated in a hunger strike. After a promise of four years residence he was subsequently redetained. Dogan Arslan, his cell mate, is still gravely ill with 30% burns.

This graphically demonstrates the brutality of Britain's racist

Kurdish Refugee dies in detention

immigration laws. Responsibility for Siho's death lies squarely with the Home Office, who were deaf to all warnings that he might take such a desperate measure.

Eight days later Halil Guzel was forcibly deported to Turkey to face possible torture and death in prison—over 4,000 Kurds have been killed in Turkey in 1989 alone. Selahattin Ozberk is suicidal in an isolation cell at Pentonville Prison after a last minute delay in his deportation on the same day. 3,500 Kurds currently in London live with the perpetual threat of detention and forcible repatriation. They face constant state harassment with large numbers in detention.

Marches against the detentions and in memory of Siho were held in North London on Sunday 15 and Saturday 28 October. However, despite a large mobilisation by the Kurdish and Turkish communities and political organisations, few labour movement bodies were represented.

In fact the single largest Turkish organisation, the Eurocommunist controlled Halkevi, failed to mobilise its membership for the 2,500 strong funeral procession on 28 October.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue. The threat of deportation and the daily reality of racial harassment affect many hundreds of thousands outside of the refugee community as well.

The campaign must be taken into the trade unions if it is really to mobilise British workers effectively in support of the refugees' demands. Successful campaigns such as those of Muhammad Id-rish, Som Raj and most recently Marion Gaima, show what can be achieved with union support.

But it is clear from all such anti-deportation campaigns that it is necessary to go beyond the case by case approach. A national anti-deportation campaign is badly needed to act as an umbrella for, and help co-ordinate and strengthen the various struggles that are going on around the country all the time—a proposal the Kurdish Refugee Support Group has endorsed.

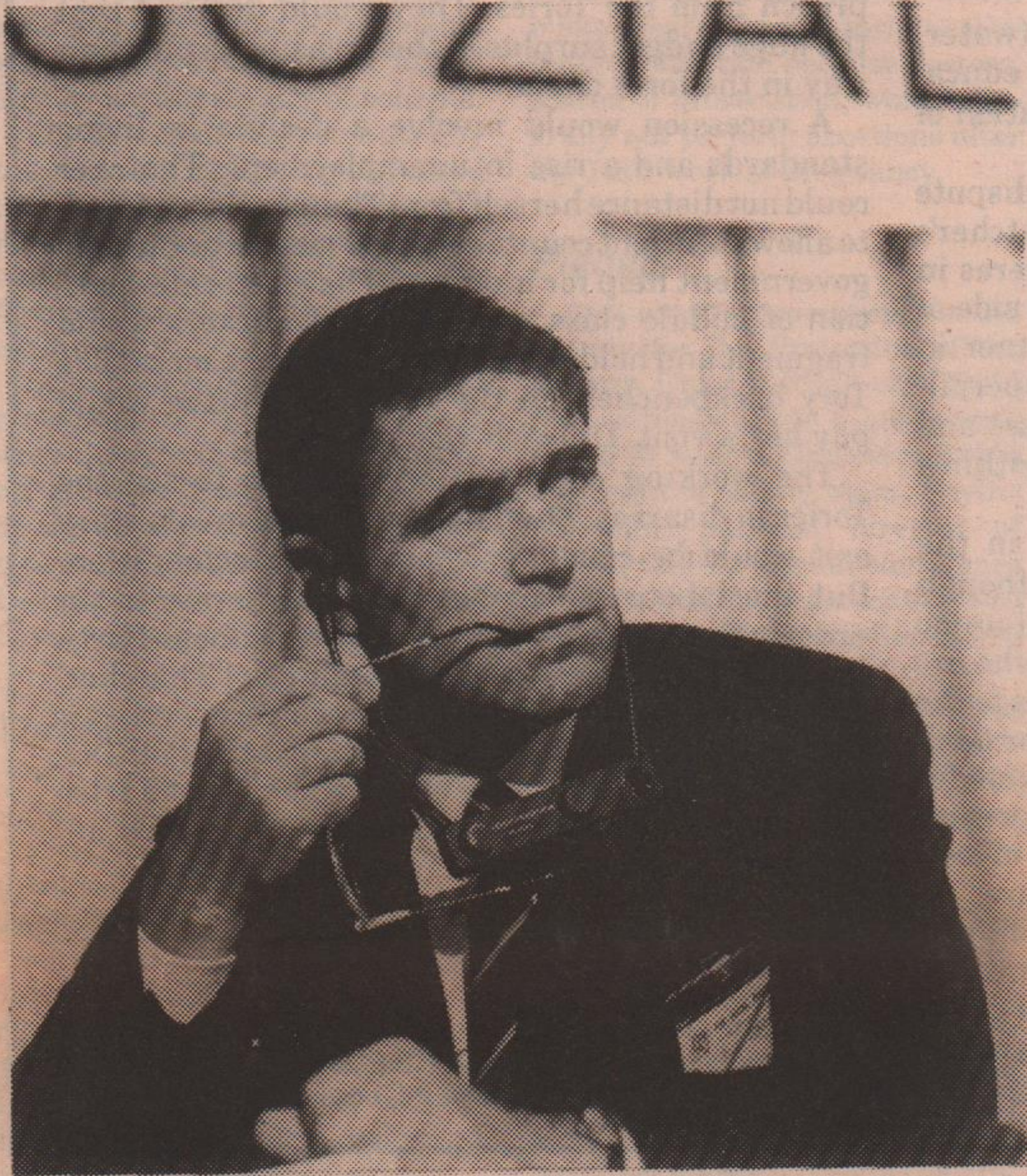
With the newly appointed racist, David Waddington, easing himself into the Home Office there is no time to lose.

- Release all detainees now!
- No more deportations!
- Smash all immigration controls!

AFA
Demonstration
Against the fascists
SUNDAY 12TH
NOVEMBER 12:00
Junction of Victoria St
& Bressenden Place
London SW1

ENGINEERS

Rank and file must control the strike



Bill Jordan—never serious about a fight

John Harris/IFL

WAY BACK in April the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) flatly refused union demands for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay.

Finally, seven months later, the unions led by the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), have called the first action on the claim. This delay was right wing AEU leader, Jordan's way of keeping the dispute strictly within the law and just as strictly under his control. So far he has succeeded on both counts.

The real cost of this needless waste of time was shown by the ballot result. From a situation of clear majorities at mass meetings in the summer at various plants, the majority for action in the ballot was tiny—8,805 to 7,576. White collar workers voted three to one against action and the majorities amongst manual workers were smaller than expected.

So instead of 24,000 workers at the seven plants marching confidently into battle only 7,000 at three plants are out, as we go to press (British Aerospace at Chester and Preston and Rolls Royce at Hillington, Glasgow). Other plants are being considered for future ballots. Jordan claimed that this was "frightening the pants off the bosses".

Far from running round without

their trousers, the bosses have gained confidence from the ballots. They are sure they can survive piecemeal action and are digging in for a long fight. The director of the EEF, Peter Brighton, spurned the chance of a last minute deal declaring, "the gap between us remains wide".

This strike can be won. A 35 hour week will benefit not only the 800,000 engineers directly affected by the dispute but potentially one million other workers as well. There is no doubt that these workers could be brought into struggle and the bosses could be brought to their knees very quickly. But for such a victory to occur the rank and file of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) need to understand the pitfalls of Jordan's whole strategy and take control of the dispute out of his hands.

Intimidation

Jordan's strategy was a gift to the bosses. It allowed them time to sabotage the ballot campaign and defuse the militancy that was there in the summer. They did this by a massive campaign of intimidation—personal letters from the management to every worker, ads in the local press, denial of the stewards' right to hold meetings and direct approaches to individual workers. All of this helped slash the numbers voting for action. It gave the bosses a big minority of potential scabs to use as the strike gets underway.

Nor was Jordan ever serious about a fight. Time and again he told workers that a "yes" vote would be a negotiating ploy, not a call to action. He stated:

"We have always said that if we get the votes, the first thing we will do is give the employers the chance to negotiate sensibly."

Decoded, this means that with a "yes" vote he might be able to negotiate a 37.5 hour week in return for productivity increases and flexible working patterns. If this is all you get by going on strike it is not surprising that many voted no.

It is still less surprising that the white collar workers, who already have a 37.5 hour week, voted against

the strike. Jordan was undermining the chances of a victory, by offering a compromise before the battle had even begun.

As the dispute does get underway the dangers lodged in Jordan's strategy will be magnified. He is aiming for a model "new realist" dispute. As he told the Labour Party Conference, the "days of mass pickets are long gone" and he does not want them to come back. So, the handful of strikers are to sit at home waiting for their £150 strike pay every week while thousands of others do nothing except pay the levy.

A passive strike—no pickets, no demos, no mass meetings—leaves workers isolated and prey to the bosses' propaganda onslaught. It leaves them powerless to oppose a sell out. Worse, the CSEU have told workers laid off as a result of the strike that they won't get any money. So workers on strike will be getting full pay while their supporters will be out of the gate with nothing. This will create disunity and division and weaken the chances of victory.

All of these dangers can be averted if the rank and file organise to seize control of the dispute. The AEU Broad Left, dominated by Stalinist traitors like Jimmy Airlie, won't lift a finger to do this. Militants in the areas must organise themselves.

Co-ordinate

We need to build a campaign, starting with those on strike, for an all out indefinite strike by all CSEU members. Workers on strike should co-ordinate their action through a joint strike committee, elected from and accountable to regular mass meetings, spread their action to every plant owned by the firms involved not wait for lay offs. Then a campaign to spread the strike throughout the engineering industry will become a real possibility.

This course of action may mean more hardship for a short time, but it will bring the bosses to their knees quickly. They are desperate to get as much profit as they can before orders collapse further. An all out strike will upset their plans. Selective action just won't hurt them enough. ■

tion over their pay claim and ballots for further strikes are on the way.

A victory at Ford will have important repercussions for all workers this autumn and winter. It will set the pace and put the bosses on the defensive. But to get it Ford workers need to organise at a rank and file level for action.

Airlie and Adams can't be relied on to do it. Even if they are provoked into leading some sort of fight, it will be more for their prestige than for what Ford workers need.

Control

Organise to fight—with or without them. Organise to control the fight—whoever sets the ball rolling. Organise to kick out Airlie and Adams—and to make the pay deal meets Ford workers' needs, not what some union bigwig reckons Ford can be cajoled into paying! ■

FORDS

No to the two year deal!

FORD HAS offered its manual workers a 15% two year deal. At current rates, that's pretty much in line with inflation. But unlike the last deal, there's no inflation proofing for the second year.

The unions were claiming an unspecified double-figure rise. This is ludicrous—"at least 10%" might as well be "10%". Or do the union negotiators Airlie and Adams really think that Ford will dip its charitable hands deep and come up with, say, 15%—when the unions have all but said they'll settle for 10%.

Once again, the claim is being pulled out of thin air by the union negotiators. What relation has it to do with Ford workers' needs? Inflation may be running at 7.6%, but interest rates are 15%! And how many workers aren't in debt for some reason or another (even if they've not been forced into buying their own home with the council cutbacks)?

And don't forget—it's the bosses who reckon up inflation at 7.6%. Been to the shops lately? Tried working out how much more you spend every week this year than last? It would make 7.6% look pretty inadequate.

Bleating

If anything, the claim is based more on what the negotiators think Ford can cough up than on what workers need. They are always bleating about last year's £673 million profit and this year's expected £710 million. So what? If Ford had made a loss, would they be negotiating a pay cut? The Ford pay claim should be based on what workers need, not what Ford can "afford" to pay.

Ford—and all the rest—will always be coming up with answers as to why they can't afford it. Their

latest whinge is to say that in West Germany workers produce 50% more cars per person than in Britain. Sounds dreadful doesn't it? So how come British plants produced 53% of last year's European profits? How come Japanese firms are opening up car plants in Britain? And how come Ford doesn't transfer all production to West Germany, lock stock and barrel? Is it love of British workers? Philanthropic ideals?

Or could it be that in West Germany those extra cars come at the cost of more sophisticated, more expensive machinery? Or perhaps West German workers are paid more, cancelling out their higher productivity? These last two are both true.

At the end of February this year, labour costs in the car industry were calculated at 22.57 DM per hour in the UK, compared with 38.49 DM per hour in West Germany! Unit labour costs are much

of a muchness in all countries—what the bosses gain in productivity, they lose in higher wages. You can bet Ford has a variation of this theme (comparing wage rates) for talking to its German workers—making out its wonderful in Britain!

This sort of argument is good for threatening workers with proposals to shift production abroad—get your heads down and don't complain or we'll shut up shop because it's cheaper elsewhere.

Echoed

It is an argument the union leaders have echoed. They join the bosses in telling workers to stop the wildcat action and boost productivity! It's all part of the new realist strategy—police the workers, make yourself useful to the bosses, get your snout in the trough. They might just get away with it for a while yet at Ford.

THATCHER IS always quick to praise the emergency services when they are coping with a disaster. After all, publicity is at stake. She's less willing to pay the workers in these services a living wage. After all, government cash is at stake!

This is why the government are holding the line against the ambulance workers. After almost two months of an overtime ban by workers in the ambulance service, there is no sign that management are prepared to budge from the miserable, below inflation offer of 6.5%.

Far from moving towards a deal the bosses are hardening their stance. Health Minister Clarke has dispatched thirty metropolitan police vans to scab on the dispute in London. He announced:

"The army are reviewing the state of preparedness of their men and vehicles."

To show they meant business London managers suspended ambulance workers for operating a work to rule. For a day they ensured that London was without ambulance cover by taking this hardline position. The bosses' concern for "emergency cover" was shown up as a complete sham when they threatened suspended workers with arrest if they tried to

AMBULANCE WORKERS

All out now!

answer 999 calls!

Although this "get tough" approach was temporarily shelved while fruitless talks at ACAS were held, it is a sign of the Tories' determination to have no repeat of the partial victories of workers in the "summer of discontent" (in rail and local government).

The ambulance workers are fighting low pay and they deserve the support of every worker in Britain. Their starting pay is a miserable £7,330. Top rates of £10,000 a year are £2000 below those of firefighters. The service itself is massively under-funded, putting enormous strains on the workers.

The ambulance drivers' overtime ban, in pursuit of their 11.1% pay claim, has been effective precisely

because the service is run on massive amounts of overtime a month—nearly double the official working week. All of this on basic rates of pay!

At the time of the *Marchioness* disaster the south east London ambulance service was supposed to have eighteen crews on call. It had just four. Two of these were crews who had stayed on after a day shift.

To win the claim the action has to be stepped up. So far NUPE, the main union involved, has done nothing to help the dispute win. The chief negotiator, Roger Poole, has based his case on pleading for arbitration. No publicity to support the workers has been produced. Not even a leaflet!

Yet the mood for action is there. When one worker was suspended in south London, others immediately declared themselves "suspended" and occupied the stations. This sort of action should be built on instead of rushing off to ACAS.

Indefinite

In every locality the argument for all out indefinite strike action needs to be put at mass meetings. Strike committees to run the dispute must be elected. Stations must be occupied so that strikers decide upon and control any emergency cover.

Last but not least, links with other workers in health must be forged. At the moment hospital technicians are balloting for action against, surprise, surprise, a 6.5% offer. United action by these two sections can link up with the struggles of all NHS workers against low pay.

We are all under attack at the moment. None of us, and all of us, are special cases. A united front can win.■



John Harris/IFL

COUNTY COUNCIL cleaners in South Glamorgan are fighting the Labour controlled authority's attempts to impose vicious new employment contracts. The council put in the only tender for the cleaning contract for schools, colleges, libraries and offices.

To try and save £4 million the building maintenance department drew up a contract that even they admit "is not as generous as the existing contract". Too true! It represents a massive attack on wages and conditions.

When the argument was put that a higher tender be offered, it was rebutted with the cry that the money would only be found by surcharging the Labour councillors. They refuse point blank to defy the Tory laws and, even in office, will not lift a finger to defend working class interests.

Under the existing tender there will be a pay cut from £2.83 an hour to £2.59. The 9.2% pay award recently negotiated by the unions will, in effect, be lost from January when the contract is due to commence. Hours per week will be cut and the total number of weeks will be cut to 45, leaving seven weeks of no pay and little chance of qualifying for unemployment benefit.

To add insult to injury the workers were originally offered no holiday or sick pay at all, but the unions forced the council to concede three weeks holiday (a cut of two weeks) and the

SOUTH WALES

Labour attacks its workers

BY CARDIFF WORKERS POWER SUPPORTERS

minimum statutory sick pay. On top of this the cleaners are expected to increase productivity by 20%.

In threatening letters sent to all cleaning staff, the council state that cleaners are "deemed to have made themselves redundant" if they don't sign by 31 October, even though their current contracts run to 31 December.

In response the manual workers' branch of GMB and NUPE, which organise most of the cleaners, called a ballot which showed a three to one majority in favour of a one day strike on 31 October. Several hundred cleaners held a noisy lobby of the county council meeting, stopping it for a time.

The mood is clearly there for a fight against the disgusting actions of the council. As a NUPE shop steward told Workers Power, "None of the cleaners scrub filthy floors for pin money, they do it because they desperately need the money".

While the council treats its workers with contempt it is quite happy to fork out £25 million on a new County Hall and pay off millions in interest to the banks. Its leader, arch Labour right winger Lord Jack Brooks, is making thousands from his involvement on the board of the equally unpopular Cardiff Bay Development Corporation.

If the cleaners are to beat these Labour bosses they must build on their one day action. The local union leaders did not call on other council workers to respect the picket lines during the action, leaving solidarity up to the conscience of individual members.

This won't do. A ballot for indefinite action must be organised now, and every council worker must be instructed to respect the cleaners' picket lines. Only this will force the council to climb down.

At the same time Labour Party members must flood the county party with resolutions condemning their complicity and supporting the cleaners' actions.■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Market rules OK?

IN HER dispute with Nigel Lawson over exchange rates Margaret Thatcher was fond of saying that "you can't buck the markets". This was meant to justify her preference for floating exchange rates. Under this system the "price" of a currency finds its natural level according to the desire of foreign investors to hold it. Too much in circulation for the demand and the price comes down. If a lot of people want to hold it at the same time the price shoots up. The law of supply and demand is king.

The idea that the market acts according to the simple rules of supply and demand is a powerful one under capitalism. But by and large it is a fiction stated in that form. In this vulgar version it is used simply as a weapon against the working class to justify closures, sackings and keeping wages down.

How many times did we hear in the early 1980s that there was no point in fighting for higher wages since we would just end up pricing ourselves out of a job? There was lots of people on the dole (excess supply) and a recession in full swing (declining demand) so it was "natural" that pressure on pay should be down. There is no doubt that many trade unionists mulled this one over in their mind when it came to the decision whether to take action for higher pay.

But a closer look at the way capitalism works in reality shows that bosses and governments intervene all the time to "buck the market", that is to stop the laws of supply and demand working to their disadvantage. Take the dispute between Lawson and Thatcher over exchange rates. Lawson insisted that the Treasury had to intervene almost daily in order to ensure that the price of sterling followed closely that of the German mark.

Central bank intervention to buy up surplus pounds or sell them when necessary, occurs all the time in order to keep supply and demand for sterling steady no matter what the rest of the market players spontaneously want. By this method the exchange rate is kept where the government wants it.

This is an example of an obvious political decision to direct the market to a particular outcome. Not only that, but such intervention is co-ordinated internationally by all the major economies in the capitalist world to ensure that everybody's rates are in line within a predetermined range.

Indeed, governments go way beyond intervention to gently nudge the market in a particular way. They can stop it all together if they do not like the result. On 13 October, during the latest stock market slump in share prices, the Japanese stepped in to close the stock exchange down for a while!

Only too happy to see share prices booming and adding millions to company assets, they stop market operations altogether if they risk losing out badly or if the foundations of their banking system are threatened.

Capitalists are notorious hypocrites about the market. Look at the question of pay. During the last few years of economic recovery the salaries of boardroom executives have rocketed. In 1988 some 41 of them got pay rises of £100,000 or more. Rises of 200% were not unusual.

How did they justify this scale of increase? Simple. Such talent is scarce and to keep them in their job they have to be well rewarded. When Lord King of British Airways awarded himself a huge increase before it was privatised, it was argued for on the basis that without it he would be "headhunted" by the private sector.

So we should expect to see the same attitude to workers' pay? Not a bit of it! Over the last few months there has been a constant stream of publicity in London for recruitment to London Underground because they are chronically short-staffed. So short that have taken to closing down stations when they have not got the statutory minimum numbers on duty.

What is the main reason for understaffing? Low pay. The obvious market solution is put the pay up dramatically and the applications will come flooding in. But this market solution does not appeal to the management of LRT because they and the Tories have set themselves financial operating targets which do not allow for big pay awards.

And here we hit on the secret as to why the bosses and bourgeois politicians have double standards when it comes to singing the virtues of the market: profit.

When there is an obvious supply of goods available and a clear demand for them, the two will only meet if the goods can be sold by the supplier at a profit and if the person who wants them has enough money to pay for them at a price that guarantees a profit. When stock exchanges are closed because share prices are falling it is done to preserve profit levels or prevent catastrophic losses.

When there is a skilled labour shortage as there has been in Britain recently, higher pay flows naturally as rival businesses compete for this short supply. But time and again they and the government complain about paying the going market rate and call for restraint because it eats into profits.

Profit intervenes in other ways too. When the Tories want to sell off more state industry they don't do it at market prices. They put shares on the market at prices well below this level in order to guarantee the big finance houses a big killing. The privatisation of British Airways was a blatant example of such fiddling with the "market price".

In short, the law of the market is one of the key means capitalism uses to dupe the labour movement. As reality it came closest to life when society was made up of small units of production based on the household: there was no compunction to make products for profit; there were few if any barriers to entering the market; and knowledge about the conditions in the market was widespread.

Under developed capitalism this does not happen. Few have the knowledge, fewer still the capital to play the market. The compunction to make a profit constantly disturbs the operation of the market forcing governments to take political decisions to intervene to "buck the market".

Holding down wages for the working class and central bank intervention to prop up failing banks for the bosses - these are the only laws of the market that operate with any certainty under capitalism!■

Kinnock left Brighton confident that his "revolution" in the party was complete. Mike Evans looks at the response of the Labour left and what workers can expect from Kinnock.

LABOUR'S SIZEABLE and stable lead in the opinion polls put the wind in Kinnock's sails at Brighton. So much so that even hard lefts like Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn tacked sharply rightwards. Their summing up of the conference was aimed at minimising the significance of Kinnock's massive policy victories and joining the chorus of optimism about Labour's improved electoral chances.

The feebleness of the Labour Left was evident yet again. The right have only to point to an election two or three years hence, to the merest possibility of winning, and these loyal footsoldiers of reformism fall into line to begin the long slog up the parliamentary road. And where does this particular road lead? These lefts do not even have the illusions of it leading to socialism. They are content that at the end of it Neil Kinnock might be in Number 10.

The lefts will protest that at least once he gets there the labour movement can and will pressure him to go further than the timid measures outlined in the Policy Review. Hence their willingness to subdue their opposition voices in the run up to any election. But are they correct to say that once in office Kinnock will be forced to go further in carrying out the demands of the working class?

Doctor Death

Far from it. It is he who will attempt to pressure the left and the whole labour movement to sacrifice any pro-working class elements in their programme, even the most limited reforms, in order to protect the Labour government. We can anticipate that those who will not stand up to Kinnock now will not do so for the next three years. Or, for that matter, for the five years after that if Labour wins. Brighton marked a "farewell to arms" for most of the left parliamentarians.

Why was the conference such a turning point and what is the secret of Kinnock's success? A key factor is the self-destruction of the Alliance as arranged and staged by Doctor Death himself. David Owen, having administered a near fatal dose to Labour's electoral existence in the early 1980s looks to have done the same, but with greater success, to the Liberals and the Social Democrats in the latter years of the decade. The Liberal-SDP collapse has restored Labour's fortunes, re-created the "normal" two horse race of British electioneering and put Kinnock in with a chance.

Dinosaurs

This coincides with a deep and perhaps lasting disenchantment of a significant chunk of the Tory voters of 1979, 1983 and 1987 with Thatcher as their mortgages soar and as the effects of tax cuts and share bonanzas wear off. A hard landing for the British economy, made more likely by the resignation of the self-serving Lawson, will further increase the numbers deserting Thatcherism.

Brighton saw the collective ditching of past policies by the leadership and past "principles" by the left. Even those who could not be seen to vote openly against unilateralism minimised its loss. The extinction of the dinosaurs was obvious as Ron Tidd and a bevy of CND worthies resigned themselves to defeat.

Another example of the stampede to the right was the loss of

Labour in waiting ...



Kinnock

votes for the left on the NEC. Livingstone's ejection probably reflected his "election losing" identification with the Irish question, one of the many questions which Kinnock aims to stop people asking. Yet in spite, or perhaps because of Livingstone's unceremonious dumping, he was the most fulsome in asserting that "we cannot go on re-opening the question [of unilateralism] between now and a general election" and that "we have emerged from conference with a vast area of agreement".

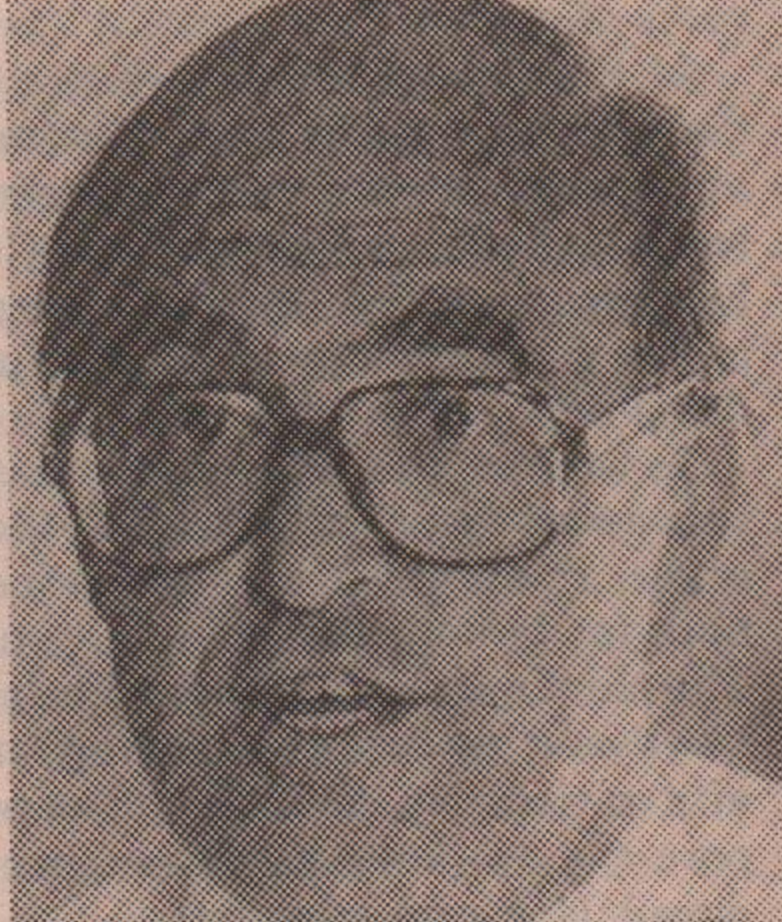
Yuppie

The bitter truth, recognised on the Labour left only by Eric Heffer, is that all the policy gains of the early 1980s have been wiped out by the Policy Review mechanism. It has served as a gigantic paper shredder of past and future resolutions fought for and won through the pressure of the working class on the Party. Worse, the constitutional gains of 1979-81 have been undermined, outflanked and turned into their opposite. Any future opposition to Kinnock will face enormous obstacles in overturning the leadership's right wing majority.

The demoralisation which has descended upon activists in the constituencies reflects these defeats of the left. And the defeats at a national level have been accompanied by the surrender of local Labour councils to the imposition of Tory cuts. The resultant slump in active members of the party is something that every ward member can testify to—despite the pathetic overall increase of 42,000 produced by the recruit-a-yuppie national advertising campaign. It is also testified to by the fact that 64 constituencies did not send delegates to conference, nearly double the figure for last year.

The internal life of the Labour Party is unlikely to generate any serious struggles against Kinnock over the next few years. Kinnock will have a free hand within the Labour Party to continue ditching any vaguely progressive policies, and bring to the conference proposals to reduce the block vote—not in order to democratise the party but to reduce its identification with the bedrock organisations of the labour movement, the trade unions.

Many workers will look enthusiastically at the prospects of a



Smith

Labour victory at the next election and will, like many on the left, feel that it is worth stomaching the anti-working class content of Kinnock's Review in order to kick out the Tories.

The questions which must be answered for workers are firstly, will the ending of "internal hostilities" in the labour movement really assist in defeating the Tories, and secondly, will a Kinnock government really be any better?

Peaceful coexistence in the labour movement is urged in order to make Labour a better electoral prospect. Taking the example of the Poll Tax such a tactic has a bad record. The pro-Kinnock line leads to the preaching of compliance, payment and opposition to active resistance.

In Scotland this has led to Labour councils calling in the bailiffs to smash into workers' homes and steal their belongings. Has their refusal to defy the law and the failure of local Labour leaders to challenge Kinnock led to an increase in Labour's electoral popularity? Far from it. The trouncing of Labour in Govan by the Scottish Nationalists proved this beyond doubt.

The issue of what kind of benefits workers would gain from the election of a Labour government is



Hattersley

always one of dispute between revolutionaries and left reformists. The defeat of the Tories by an upsurge of resistance, such as a massive defiance of the Poll Tax, strikes and occupations in defence of workers' living standards, or the victory of those fighting the British occupation of Ireland, would be a great gain for the working class.

But if Kinnock came to power in these conditions he would be supported by the bosses for one reason only—to head off the militancy and re-establish their unchallenged rule. The fight then, as now, would be to defeat Kinnock and attempt to force a Labour government to act in the interests of the working class.

Big idea

It is also possible that Labour can win the next election without such an upsurge in working class activity. Labour could represent the favoured plan of a section of the bosses for getting British capitalism out of a rut for which Thatcherism has no apparent answers.

Kinnock, Smith and Hattersley could advance measures that an increasing minority of Britain's bosses want—a whole-hearted participation in the EC for 1992

and beyond, entry into the EMS, more state funds for industrial training and big infrastructure projects.

Kinnock could also come up trumps by attacking the wages of the working class through incomes policy. If these needs of the bosses are blocked in the Tory Party by the Thatcherite mafia then 1992 could yet see the Economist or the Financial Times saying, as happened in 1964 "Vote Labour".

At the moment few if any of the bosses would choose to have a Labour government. But if the British economy lands hard then all the City Page scribblers and experts will not be able to put the Humpty Dumpty of monetarism back together again. Labour will have the opportunity of seizing the "big idea" of social marketism fumbled by Owen and Heseltine. Labour, like the European Social Democratic parties, could become the party of an integrated imperialist Europe eagerly intervening in the disintegrating Stalinist monolith.

Bandwagon

One way or another, then, the Kinnock bandwagon will gain momentum over the next couple of years. To those on the left who argue that the "aching need to get rid of the Tories" is reason for a compromise with Kinnock, we must point to the key elements of Kinnock's policy which confirms the essential core of Thatcher's "revolution".

Kinnock promises to retain most of the anti-union laws, preserve most privatised industries, hold onto nuclear weapons and defend the "free market".

The working class must resist this "new realist" betrayal. The demand must be raised now that the Labour Party abandon these reactionary concessions to capitalism, and the fight launched to force them to do so if they win office. The working class must not shut up about them to smooth the primrose path to Number 10.

Over the next three years there will be no shortage of tasks for revolutionaries. These lie, not in taking Kinnock's Tory-bashing campaign trail nor glorifying every strike as the dawn of the socialist revival, but in combining a resolute prosecution of every struggle with a merciless exposure of reformism's need to disguise its old treachery. In these tasks we have one overriding aim: building the core of a revolutionary party that settles the score with capitalism once and for all. ■



...Don't wait for Labour!

THE 1989 Labour Party Conference was an up and down affair for Ken Livingstone. Deprived of his NEC seat, he could nevertheless bask in the glow of the testimonials accorded to his new book, *Livingstone's Labour*, by many of the "grand old men" of the left.

Livingstone's "Programme for the nineties" is an ambitious book by a very ambitious man. It attempts to re-set the agenda for the left in the Labour Party.

More than this, it signals Livingstone's attempt to assume the mantle of "natural" figurehead of the Labour Party left—a role gradually slipping from the previously unchallengeable Tony Benn. And if the badly attended Socialist Movement fringe meeting at this year's conference is anything to go by, there is certainly a place for a new leader of the left.

Analysis

The strength of Livingstone's book is that it is based on a careful analysis of developments which all programmes must take account of. This in turn makes "programme" topical. He reveals the changing nature of the workforce—the core/periphery, the increasing numbers working women. He deals with the depth of the ecological movement the struggle in Ireland, the democracy movement, the anti-Poll Tax campaigns, the disarmament movement, the attraction of *perestroika* and so on. Whilst disagreeing with the programmatic conclusion, there is much valuable information well presented here.

In focusing on these developments Livingstone is targeting the "coalition of forces" he believes the Labour Party needs to attract in order to win an outright victory at the polls. He points to the women workers, the less skilled workers, white collar workers, black workers, the unemployed, lesbians and gays, pacifists and ecologists, who together constitute the vast majority of society. A majority sacrificed by Kinnock in pursuit of the elusive middle ground upon which the SDP foundered.

What is also clear, although never explicitly stated, is the position occupied by "left" trade union leaders in Livingstone's coalition. Although he exposes the machinations of the AEU and EETPU and their right wing leaderships, he quotes approvingly the GMB's John Edmonds and Bill Morris of



Meet the new boss . . . ?

Livingstone's ambition

the TGWU. Livingstone clearly prefers the "new", growing general unions over the old, shrinking craft unions, those organising the periphery over those stuck in the core, those with an expanding block vote over those with a steadily dwindling one.

But Livingstone's central thesis is that economic policy makes or breaks governments and parties. He thus sets himself the task of spelling how Labour would save the economy, preserve the health service and improve the standards of living of the worst off without alienating middle class, middle income voters. And a very plausible job he makes of it too, addressing each of the constituent parts of his prospective coalition as well as the economy as a whole.

But plausible as it all sounds, this is not a programme for the destruction of the capitalist class but a plan for managing capitalism in a more egalitarian way. As such it follows in the footsteps of generations of Labourite programmes, left and right.

Livingstone distinguishes himself from many reformist writers in his thoroughly researched and well argued exposures of the nature of the establishment in Britain (and to a lesser degree, in the USA). He details the involvement of the police, army, MI5, MI6, the CIA and Labour and Tory MPs in murder, sabotage, treason and acts of war. He reveals how the extra-parliamentary apparatus of ruling class power chokes every feeble attempt to make it answerable to

its supposed master, "the people", via parliament.

Yet how does he suggest a Livingstone Labour government would tackle any attempt by the city to resist state direction of investment into British manufacturing?

"If the city refused to co-operate then the public anger that such economic sabotage would arouse would allow Labour to take further powers to ensure that the mandate of the voters prevailed."

What powers? None specified! And if the judges intervened, as they have a thousand times before? Why, reduce the age of retirement for judges to 65, and appoint "non-partisan" judges to the vacancies which arise, creating enough peers to force the necessary legislation through the House of Lords if need be. This would "most probably be enough" to bring the judges into line! This is Whitehall farce at its worst.

Avoided

Nowhere does Livingstone even suggest that workers themselves should decide who should run the country and how. He has elaborate plans for three tier local, regional and national government, with the powers of each carefully prescribed, but no hint that there are any alternatives to his multiplicity of Parliaments. Nor does he need to. Having avoided the question of how the extra-parliamentary state can be subdued, he has no need to advance any alternative to his beloved Parliament.

This book is worth reading partly for its detailed descriptions of the working of government, but mainly as an indicator of the way reformism constantly seeks to find new leaders, new jargon and new slogans with which to dress up the same old programme. And this one even keeps the Lords, the monarchy and all!

Livingstone is clearly a man to watch. Other than his consistent attempts to get Irish republican politics discussed in the Labour Party, he has led little in the way of a left opposition of late. But he has his ambitions for leadership. With this book he is looking for an army to lead. ■

*Livingstone's Labour
A Programme for the Nineties*
by Ken Livingstone
(Unwin Hyman £12.95 h/b)

ACID!

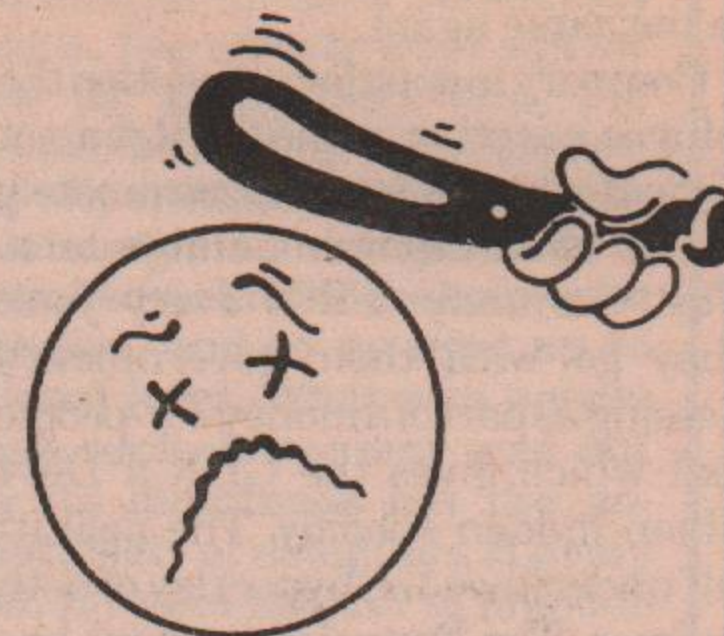
WHY IS it that three little words are enough to generate mass hysteria in the ranks of the gutter press? No, not "Lawson has resigned", but even more chilling: "acid house party".

Can it be that they object to the obnoxious spectacle of the Thatcherite yuppie organisers ripping off hundreds of thousands of pounds over night from working class youth? Hardly likely—they'd have to campaign against almost every nightclub in Britain if that were the case.

Is it that they simply don't like to see anybody having a good time? Although there clearly are people who think like that in the establishment, the fact that the House of Commons bars are exempt from the closing time restrictions the rest of us have to put up with argues against the killjoy ethic being the prime motivating factor.

What has really got them rattled is the idea that large numbers of working class youth are getting together outside of "polite" society and developing their own culture. It is this that induces the atmosphere of moral panic so vigorously promoted by the tabloids.

Although Marxists endeavour to attract youth to political ideas and the struggle for communism, we also recognise that youth culture can play a progressive role in encouraging young workers and students to think and act independently and, most importantly, gain confidence in their collective activity.



It is this aspect of acid house that has prompted the state crackdown. Despite the fact that the music itself is non-political, it is being treated as a political threat and attacked with the same weapons used against the miners. The powers the police used to stop flying pickets in 1984 are being used to stop acid house parties in 1989.

The Tories and the bosses want to remind young workers, at the raves as well on the terraces, that their main role in life is to be obedient at work and play and provide them with profits. That is why any activity geared towards any other aim is a threat to them and is vilified as "evil" in their press.

All workers and socialists have an interest in exposing the myths behind the anti-acid house campaign and opposing the "right" of the police to detain and disperse youth at will. Those youth who have been radicalised by their attempts to evade the law and the state's offensive against them must now turn their energies to organise the defence of their right to a social life free from harassment. They should aim to win control of the means to put on their own parties, running their own radio stations and making records free from the money-grabbing profiteers. ■

Fight for the forest

IN DECEMBER last year, Chico Mendes, prominent leader of the Brazilian rubber tappers' union and a political activist, was murdered by the hired assassin of a local cattle ranching family. His was the ninetieth such murder in the bitter struggle of Brazilian rural workers against large estate owners and ranchers trying to drive them off the land.

Just weeks before his death, Chico Mendes gave his last major interview, and this forms the basis of *Fight for the Forest*. This is an important book. At a time when environmental and green politics are receiving huge publicity, it gives a class perspective to the struggle to save the Brazilian rain forests.

The first rubber estates were created in the 1870s, with a system of debt bondage tying the rubber tappers (rural poor from north east Brazil) to the estate owners (*serargalistas*), who in turn were financed by mainly British banks and firms. The system still applies on many estates today.

With the export trade gradually collapsing in the early 1970s, cattle

Fight for the Forest—Chico Mendes in His Own Words
(Latin America Bureau, 96pp)

BY JACK NEWELL

ranchers from the south began buying up the rubber estates and clearing the forest for pasture. Rubber tappers were often brutally evicted, and began to organise against the cattle ranchers. The Brazilian Rural Workers Union was created in 1977, based in Chico Mendes' home state of Acre.

Its struggles developed further into a fight to end debt bondage and for better housing, health and education. The union also played a vital role in developing the use of "extraction reserves" from the forest, e.g. brazil nuts, jute, palm oil, fish etc. This was because, to quote Chico Mendes:

"We accepted that the Amazon could not be turned into some kind of sanctuary that nobody could touch. On the other hand, we knew it was important to stop the deforestation that is threatening the

Amazon and all human life on the planet. We felt our alternative should involve preserving the forest, but it should also include a plan to develop the economy."

Extraction resources have helped toward these aims, and have also forged links between rubber tappers and their former bitter enemies, the native Indians, against the estate owners.

Chico Mendes' role in these struggles was enormous. He was instrumental in the formation of the Rural Workers' Union and quickly became the president. He was also a member of the National Rubber Tappers Congress (CNS) and on the National Council of the Brazilian Trade Union Congress (CUT).

Mendes was also a political activist, joining the newly formed Workers Party (PT) in 1979. Through the PT he fought for the Brazilian government to grant meaningful agrarian reform to all rural workers and peasants. However, he became disillusioned with the right wing elements of the PT and their allegiance to the catholic church and concentrated more on trade union

work.

In 1987 he organised rubber tapper families on an estate to defy the violent threats by a wealthy cattle ranching family to drive them out. The federal government defused the situation by granting some of the estate to the tappers.

This partial victory was Chico Mendes' death sentence. After several death threats from the owner of the estate he was murdered on 22 December 1988. Over 4,000 attended his funeral, and at his graveside the rubber tappers pledged that the struggle would go on. And so it has, despite the continued intimidation of union leaders.

Chico Mendes was an inspiration to many, an heroic class fighter against the ruthless rubber estate owners, cattle ranchers and the government. He showed how militant working class methods of struggle can both further workers' interests and at the same time harness the natural resources of the rainforest in a way that helps safeguard the environment. *Fight for the Forest* is a fitting tribute to his life and work. Recommended. ■

Some 120,000 East Germans have voted with their feet this year and gone west. But many more again have stayed and taken to the streets of Leipzig and Dresden demanding reforms from the ruling Stalinist party.

Peter Main analyses the background to the refugee crisis and the prospects for the revolutionary re-unification of Germany

THE VERY existence of East Germany (GDR) symbolises the post-1945 European order. Created in 1949 in the midst of the cold war it is in many ways the lynchpin of that order. Threaten East German stability and the whole system of alliances west and east are put in doubt. The mass exodus this summer across the Hungarian border, the appearance of popular protest inside the GDR and the enforced retirement of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) chief Eric Honecker have at last destabilised this hitherto most stable of the degenerate workers' states.

In the summer of 1985, just after Gorbachev assumed office in the USSR, all 2.6 million SED members were personally interviewed by the state to be given a vaccination against *glasnost*. Now they leave the party at over 1,000 a week. Things will not be the same again.

Contrary to popular perception the refugee question in the GDR did not originate this summer. Approximately 30,000 East Germans emigrate to West Germany (FRG) every year. They go with their government's blessing as part of a money-for-people deal which gives the GDR a DM4 billion hidden subsidy. The deal itself underlines the hypocrisy of both regimes. The Bonn government has a steady supply of skilled labour and the propaganda advantage of pointing to the prison-like nature of "communist Germany". Meanwhile the Stalinists in East Berlin can maintain a relatively prosperous economy in the short-sighted belief that this will be enough to buy the loyalty of "their" population.

Contradiction

However, even its "success" reveals the deeply contradictory nature of such a Stalinist state. Police surveillance and repression of any possible dissent naturally led to working class hostility and, to put it mildly, lack of enthusiasm. To offset this, the government created a generous system of social security and state subsidies. Consequently, unlike many other degenerate workers' states, dissent is not fuelled primarily by economic hardship but by opposition to the all-pervasive interference of the state in the lives of its citizens.

This autumn the streets have reverberated with a hundred thousand voices chanting "We are staying!", "Gorby, Gorby" and the "Internationale". This trio illuminates precisely the consciousness of the East German masses at this stage. First of all suspicion of those who have left. Having taken advantage of the best education in East Europe the refugees have abandoned the struggle for change and opted for naked self-advancement.

Secondly, the enormous illusions that the process of *glasnost*, under

the pressure of the USSR, can force the SED onto the road of reform. This is also expressed in the main opposition group, Neue Forum, which originated with members of the SED and espouses non-violence and a dialogue with the Party.

Thirdly, in the affirmation of the sentiments of the "Internationale" we find a conviction—largely absent as a mass force in Poland and Hungary for example—that change must involve a deepening of "socialism" and not a return to capitalism. For all their daily doses of FRG television the East German workers sense instinctively that integration into the FRG would mean an end to their current levels of welfare and subsidies.

This combination of resistance to Stalinist rule plus defence of key elements of the planned economy demonstrates that East Germany provides the most fertile ground at the moment for the programme of political revolution. Such a revolution would overthrow the stifling bureaucracy but preserve and democratise the planned economy.

This summer's "refugee crisis" did not have a single cause. A year ago, Hungary opened its frontier with Austria for its own citizens. While Hungary is an extremely popular destination for holidaymakers from the GDR they were not allowed to cross the border with Austria. At the same time, the Soviet Union allowed "ethnic Germans" wanting to emigrate to Western Germany to go.

Several hundred thousand took advantage of this immediately and the total now is well over one million. In June of this year, Bonn, under pressure from the extreme right wing Republikaner, announced moves to limit the amount of financial and social support to these "refugees".

Although Bonn guaranteed that this would not affect East German refugees a rumour gripped many that it might not be long before restrictions were placed on them. Add to this the depression that set in when hopes in the reform of the SED were dashed by the party's praise for



Above: East Germans queuing to go west. Below: Students demonstrating for civil liberties

Prisoners of Stalin

the Tiananmen Square massacre and all the conditions for a mass flight were in place. Many East Germans in Hungary demanded to be allowed to cross into Austria although they had no visas to do this. This plea was taken up by Bonn which saw in the situation a way of testing how far Hungary could be pushed to side with the west against an ally in the Warsaw Pact.

The Stalinists' first reaction was typically brutal; to threaten to interpose themselves physically to stop the exodus. The next reaction was to allow its own population to be "expelled" from their country if they left foreign embassies! Revolutionary socialists understand the frustration felt by skilled workers and youth living under the oppressive weight of Stalinism. Precisely because of the high levels of education and skilled training many workers feel that there are few outlets for their talents inside a bureaucratic command economy.

At the present time the key focus for struggle should be agitation for basic freedoms that will allow the working class to awaken politically and its consciousness to develop. The right to strike, to assemble and organise outside of the party; access to the media and freedom to travel.

Accelerate

Revolutionaries must link them to the methods of working class organisation and mobilisation and, above all, of workers' control, to enforce them. Democratic demands can also be utilised to accelerate the break up of the Stalinist Party, whose "socialist unity" can only be maintained by its ban on factions and free speech among its members.

We must help strengthen initiatives such as the launch of a new independent trade union—Reform—which has called for the right to strike and the removal of SED cells and militia in the workplace. While

the SED cells may well operate as spying nests on militants it would be better to fight for the freedom of political trends to organise at the workplace with no privileges for the SED and no recognition of its "leading role".

Over the next few years the GDR's economy cannot continue to escape the fate that has beset the other degenerate workers' states. The cost of benefits and subsidies in the GDR was partly offset by western credit and preferential access the EC. Now, with many Comecon enterprises allowed to deal direct with imperialist suppliers, much of this advantage is disappearing and the GDR has to find ways of reducing costs and increasing productivity. The writing, so to speak, is on The Wall.

For all that it is one of the ten most developed economies in the world, the GDR is going to face economic difficulties. As these arise revolutionaries must campaign for working class action not only to defend

For revolutionary re-unification

EASTGERMANY (the GDR) has its historic origins in the defeat and break up of German imperialism after 1945. Political questions of any importance in the GDR eventually all lead back to the question of the existence and legitimacy of the state itself. The German "national question" is now posed point blank.

For decades, the question of the re-unification of Germany has been largely a concern of the extreme right in German politics. To the extent that the German left wrongly equated the question itself with the Nazis' solution to it, they allowed the right to present themselves as the sole defenders of the integrity of the

German nation.

The division of Germany is best summed up by its most emotive symbol—the Berlin Wall. Until it was built, in 1961, there was an annual drain of up to 200,000 people from the GDR to the Federal Republic. This entailed a serious loss of skilled labour and was accompanied by illegal currency dealings which undermined the stability of the East German Mark. The construction of the Berlin Wall was a classically Stalinist answer to the problem of disaffection amongst the workers: lock them up. We support the right of the GDR to take the necessary military defence measures against imperialism. However, the building of the wall was neither designed for this nor can it be an effective security measure.

Over the last forty years the West German bourgeoisie has never relinquished its claim to see Germany united again under its rule. All GDR citizens have an automatic right to West German citizenship. The bourgeoisie sense that in the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost* they may be witnessing a terminal crisis of the Stalinist states and economies. All the imperialist nations recognise that a reunified Germany is once again not a pious declaration but is firmly on the political agenda.

Expansion

However, it is not yet top of that agenda. The reasons are not hard to see. Even the suggestion of a future re-united Germany caused a few hearts to flutter amongst West Germany's allies. Delors, head of the EC Commission, has been vigorously insisting that the question should only be considered after the consolidation of a really united EC. In this he expresses the fear of unilateral German expansion into the whole of Eastern Europe. Hitting at the same idea, Andreotti of Italy has made the famous remark, "I love Germany so much that I prefer two of them".

Indeed, the West German bourgeoisie itself is wary of the implications of re-unification in the short term. On the one hand, it would threaten to destabilise the existing balance of power within NATO. On the other, the rewards of unification even on the basis of capitalism are by no means clear to the West Germans. Certainly the GDR has some expertise in printing and textile machinery, and even certain areas of electronics, but they are not proven world beaters. Over a decade it is calculated that a unified capitalist Germany would only enlarge the greater German GNP by one seventh.

In many ways the present situation suits the West German government. They do not have to take responsibility for preserving the high levels of state welfare provision in East Germany which at the moment runs at over 60 billion East German marks a year out of an annual GNP of 269 billion East German marks. Yet they can cream off, for a small down payment, some of the best of the GDR's skilled labour. In the future they can expect even more privileged access to East Germany's markets and the choice of its industries if *perestroika* ever leads to privatisation.

Revolutionaries do not accept the right of the Stalinists and the imperialists to enforce the division of Germany. However, the consequences of that division have included the

creation of a degenerate workers' state in the GDR. The destruction of capitalism in East Germany was achieved by the counter-revolutionary intervention of the USSR. It was done against the prevailing consciousness and desires of the working class. It was followed by a period of intensive oppression of the East German workers as the Soviet government extracted massive reparations in the wake of the world war. This led to the rebellion of East German workers in 1953.

The sense of national identity, the opposition to what is regarded as external intervention in their destiny, is an important element of workers' consciousness in East Germany. But communists cannot undo history. The overthrow of capitalism, however it was achieved, is an advance which must be defended. Therefore for us German re-unification has to be posed in class terms. Is it to be achieved to the advantage of the working class, or the capitalists?

A re-unification under capitalist control would mean the destruction of the gains the working class of East Germany presently enjoys. It would also establish a formidable German imperialism whose needs could only be satisfied by the reduction of whole sections of Eastern Europe to the status of semi-colonies. Communists oppose that.

However, a re-unification against capitalism, the combined overthrow of the Stalinists of the GDR and the imperialists of the FRG, would be a massive blow to those enemies of the world working class who dwell in the Kremlin and the White House. It would be inconceivable without a revolutionary restructuring of the whole of Europe and, for that reason would be opposed by all the established states and would have to call on the support of the whole European working class.

The revolutionary resolution of the national question, therefore, lies at the heart of the revolutionary programme in both parts of Germany. Far from being downplayed or dismissed as a Nazi fantasy it should be championed as a central element of the European revolution!

The most important aspect of the national question is the re-unification of the German working class. Revolutionaries must agitate and propagandise for the right of working class organisations to build across the border at every level, from factory to national party and trade unions.

- For the right of free access to all parts of both states for the workers of both states.
- For the right to take solidarity action with workers across the border.
- For the opening of the books of companies and the states to reveal the true extent of cross-border collaboration between Stalinists and imperialists
- For the opening of the archives of both states to reveal the secrets of their security police and the involvement of the Nazis in the consolidation of power in the 1940s
- For the expulsion of foreign troops from both states
- For workers' councils and a workers' militia throughout Germany and the convocation of an all-German Congress of Workers' Councils as the organ of state power of the Workers' Republic of Germany
- For a socialist United States of Europe!

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Whose democracy?

AS THE ever-growing demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and elsewhere show, the question of "democracy" lies at the heart of the political turmoil sweeping the Stalinist states.

The experience of the USSR and Poland where, despite bureaucratic restrictions, elections have clearly weakened the grip of the Stalinists over society, has strengthened the belief that real political freedom means parliamentary democracy. The pro-capitalist media of the west delight in this apparent proof that, in the so-called "socialist states", the workers want their very own Westminster. Behind this is their belief that "communism" is dead and that "democracy" means capitalism. Hey presto! Pro-democracy equals pro-capitalism.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that the masses in the Stalinist states do have illusions in the parliamentary systems of the imperialist states, of the west. But is the only alternative to the unchecked rule of the Politburos a daily dose of Prime Minister's Question Time on Soviet Radio, and five yearly elections dominated by the images and propaganda of an East German equivalent of Saatchi and Saatchi?

The whole problem lies in the concept of "democracy" being bandied about by both the Stalinists and the propagandists for capitalism. Neither of them bother to answer the question of whose class interests democracy should serve—the workers' or the bosses'?

Parliamentary democracy serves the interests of the bosses. Take Britain as an example. Under our "democracy" a ruling government, elected by a minority of the population has been able to carry out policies—anti-union laws, the Poll Tax, the savaging of the NHS, the abolition of local government democracy—which are clearly against the interests of the majority of the population. The reality is that parliamentary democracy serves as a smokescreen for the real—and profoundly undemocratic rule—of a tiny handful of capitalists. Through their economic power they are able to pressurise elected governments. Denis Healey's memoirs reveal this clearly. Labour was elected in 1974 committed to expanding public services. The bankers of the IMF decreed that the opposite was required and they used their control of the levers of the economy to force the cowardly reformists of Labour to go along with them. Nobody elected the IMF. Nobody can call the bankers or the big industrialists to account.

As important as this is the fact that while Parliaments are at liberty to chatter on endlessly about anything under the sun, real decision making, real power, lies outside of the debating chamber. Every set of memoirs ever published by Labour ex-ministers reveals that even their lukewarm attempts at reform were thwarted by forces outside of Parliament's control—the top civil servants, the judges, the military chiefs of staff, the police chiefs, the Bank of England and so on.

All of this highlights the reality of parliamentary democracy. It is a facade to pacify the majority and facilitate the rule of the minority. And if parliament gets in the way of this rule either its powers are reduced (as happened in Britain during both world wars) or it is scrapped altogether (as happened in Chile in 1973).

An extension of parliamentary democracy in the Stalinist states will prove a cruel deception for the masses. This "separation of

power" between the apparent equality of parliament and the hidden but real inequality within society, is not possible within the degenerate(d) workers' states because the economy is not privately owned.

In order to achieve the same end result—the denial of the rights of the majority of society to control over society—the Stalinists had to resort to blatantly rigged elections and the bureaucratically imposed "leading role of the Party". Not surprisingly, the first demands of an increasingly confident proletariat is for this fraud to be scrapped and a "real" parliament be put in its place.

A freely elected parliament would sound the death knell of Stalinist control—but it would not herald the victory of the proletariat. This does not mean that revolutionary Marxists are against democracy. It means we are in favour of working class democracy. A five yearly election of a few hundred MPs is no vehicle for the exercise of such democracy. In our daily lives we are faced with the need to decide what to do, at work and in our communities. How can production be controlled to ensure everyone has a job? How can we ensure that elected representatives act in our interests?

Making decisions on such things for ourselves means developing a far more direct and accountable form of democracy. Originally the soviets, built by the Russian workers and peasants in 1905 and again in 1917 were the best models for such democracy to date. The soviets were assemblies of delegates from the workplaces and the communities, on a city wide basis. In turn such soviets elected delegates to a central soviet for the whole town or region, and so on right up to national level. What was unique about such democracy was not only its directness but the accountability of delegates at every level. All were subject to immediate recall by the people who elected them. All were subject to regular re-election. None were paid any more money than the workers they represented, or received any special privileges. The soviets debated policy, decided on policy and executed policy. They removed in one stroke the intricate separation of powers so beloved of the professional politicians of capitalism. What is more they controlled their own named force—the workers' militia.

This system of democracy enabled the working class to rule. It was a thousand times more representative and more efficient than capitalist parliamentary democracy. The tragedy was that in isolated and backward Russia such a regime could not survive. A European revolution that could have bolstered it did not materialise. The result was that the Stalinist bureaucracy, in the 1920s, first usurped political power from the workers and then brutally destroyed every vestige of working class political democracy only to replace it with its own rule. The irony is that Stalinism triumphed by imposing a parliamentary constitution on the masses.

It is not surprising that in the Stalinist states today the "soviets"—a grotesque parody of the original workers' and peasants' councils—are hated by the masses. But the alternative is not to turn the clock back to capitalist "democracy". It is to build completely new councils, as the basis for a completely new workers' democracy, a democracy that can and must triumph through a political revolution against the bureaucracy. ■

STALINISM IN CRISIS

East Germany will be the focus of one of the workshops at Permanent Revolution '89 - see page 15 for details.



inism

subsidies and jobs but to assert control, inspection and veto over every level of the economy, from the factory to the national plan itself.

The East German Stalinists have always made the mistake that you can buy the loyalty of its people to "really existing socialism". Surrounded by major imperialist powers capable of sustaining material wealth for two-thirds of its workforce and a bourgeois democratic system, this is impossible.

The corrosive effect of being surrounded by such states can only be combated effectively by ideological conviction that the working class is building a society in which inequalities are diminishing; that material shortages are offset by the existence of genuine workers' democracy and that the revolution is being spread internationally.

This Stalinism is incapable of. It stands in fundamental contradiction to it. It needs to be overthrown to make it possible. ■

THE LONGEST WAR

SWP: TIME TO CHANGE

IT WOULD appear from the letter by Dominic Carroll, leading member of the Irish Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) to the October issue of their paper, that there are at least some principled anti-imperialists in that organisation. He at least is not afraid to speak out against the Zimbabwe-style solution advocated by Paul Foot, a leading member of the British SWP, in his pamphlet *Ireland: Why Britain Must Get Out*. (Reviewed in WP 121)

Josh Clark's review on the other hand in the previous *Socialist Worker* (Ireland) refers to it as "the best contribution to the present debate on the British presence". Ann Rogers in the July issue of *Socialist Worker Review* praises it, and the SWP's advert for the pamphlet dishonestly claims that it puts the socialist case for "Troops Out Now".

The fact is that, despite the SWP's "formal" commitment to "Troops Out Now" and "Self Determination for the whole Irish people", Foot's pamphlet fails to argue for these slogans. Nor does it argue why British workers should distinguish between the violence of the oppressor and the oppressed or why they should critically but unconditionally support the IRA against the British Army.

Instead it is yet another solution to the Irish conflict which appeals to the self-interest of the British imperialist ruling class and which is based on the assumption that Britain can have a positive role to play in Ireland.

In the pamphlet the SWP's much vaunted commitment to "Troops Out Now" was "popularised" as "The British government should declare that it intends to withdraw its troops from Ireland forever... set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal and at once convene a constitutional conference at international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished and what contribution Britain should make to a new united Ireland."

Despite Foot's subsequent admission (in Dublin) that this was an "unfortunate" formulation, not a word of repudiation has appeared in the pages of the SWP's press. And this is not surprising since Foot's pamphlet was no aberration. It flows from the SWP's adaptation to "Time to Go!" (TTG).

The TTG Charter, to which Foot was an initial signatory, was drawn up to avoid offending that chauvinist sentiment which exists within Britain and which is demonstrated through opinion polls which have consistently reflected over 50% support for British withdrawal. The justification for TTG was that, in the SWP's own words, it took "the Irish issue out of the left sectarian ghetto".

The SWP therefore saw the "Time to Go Show" as a success because it "brought together the biggest and politically broadest gathering to discuss the Irish issue yet". "Yet a quick glance at the evidence they themselves produce is enough to give the lie to this. Despite claims that TTG succeeded "in tapping into a new audience" the SWP admit that:

"local rallies were usually initiated by ourselves, and we made up much of the audience."

At the much vaunted "Time to Go Show" the SWP made up 150 of the 500 who attended.

On the August demonstration itself the SWP had "1,500 plus people out of 6,000". This compares to their own estimate of the 1987 Bloody Sunday demonstration: 4,000 of which the SWP had "a good contingent of 400". On their own figures the TTG demonstration attracted only 2,000 more than the 1987 Bloody Sunday march, of whom at least 1,100 were SWP members!

In 1987 the SWP argued that "we have to clearly explain that while we go on such marches we recognise that the issue is confined to a fairly narrow layer of the political minority and that it is impossible to broaden that in current conditions."

So what has changed in "current conditions" to allow the SWP to suddenly become so high profile on Ireland? Simple—the Tories are on the run. Thus workers' spontaneous militancy can achieve more, more struggles erupt, the class is more confident and the general level of political culture is raised. Ireland can now be included on the agenda for action and agitation as well as general propaganda.

And should the level of class struggle subside again? The history of the SWP on Ireland gives us the unequivocal answer; it will be back to business as usual and a much smaller SWP presence on any Irish demonstration.

Campaigns to build "broad based withdrawal movements", of which TTG is only the latest have always been at the expense of undertaking the difficult but less prestigious work of building a solidarity movement rooted in the trade unions. It has to be built around principled anti-imperialist demands which will not fall apart every time a soldier is shot or a bomb explodes.

It must be tempered and trained to stand firm against the pro-imperialist policies of both Labour and Tory governments, the reactionary nationalism of British workers, the complacency and silence of the trade union leaderships.

No-one doubts that many people were enthused by the creation of TTG. They saw it as an opportunity for mass campaigning and big names. However to turn that enthusiasm into a rationalisation for why TTG is a success which "can provide an important vehicle for raising the question (of Ireland) and mobilising around it (in the future)." is to compound "tragedy" into "farce".

It is not only Foot's book that is, as Carroll rightly points out, "riddled with factual errors" and his "analysis of the politics underpinning partition" that is "seriously flawed", it is the whole of the SWP's political method.

It is the SWP's formal position of support for Troops Out Now and Self Determination that is a constant contradiction to the practice of the SWP, not the position of Paul Foot who's position flows from the practice of an organisation which historically has tailed the chauvinism of the British working class from the days of Aldershot, Guildford, Woolwich and Birmingham. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

Settlement or sell-out?

The road from "talk about talk" to "comprehensive settlement" is a long one. Joan Mayer examines the dangers along the way.

THE NEGOTIATIONS juggernaut keeps on rolling inside the apartheid state. After the release of Walter Sisulu and the senior ANC Rivonia trialists last month, the De Klerk regime has put the ANC on a different kind of trial. Can the leadership keep the movement in good order in return for the effective unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela? Can the working class live with elements of repressive legislation as long as the ANC is allowed to operate at the head of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)?

Some MDM leaders have made all too clear what their attitude is to a continuing campaign of mass action. Even at the height of September's Defiance Campaign, churchman Allan Boesak was advising restraint:

"I am telling students and other people I meet that the time has come to conserve our energy... Negotiations are going to be the important issue now in South Africa."

Discussing

For some time now the ANC has been discussing with "liberal" members of the white capitalist class. More recently they have had talks with leading Afrikaaners close to government circles.

All of these discussions are part of the preparation of a negotiated settlement with De Klerk. While the released leaders have insisted that they will not compromise on "one person, one vote" even this aim leaves room for a deal well short of thoroughgoing democracy. Behind the talk of compromise and "partial victory" lies the Stalinist policy of the South African Communist Party (SACP). SACP leaders speaking about their recently revised programme told *Work in Progress*:

"The bottom line of any negotiated solution must be a readiness to accept the principle of majority rule in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. If this is accepted as a starting point there should be room to toss around such questions as the institutionalised protection of individual rights of culture, language and religion, and

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Walter Sisulu arriving in Soweto

the interim mechanisms needed for giving effect to an orderly transition." (WIP no 60)

Now while the insistence on the "principle" of majority rule may be a long way from the National Party's constitutional proposals which give the black majority only a small minority share in power, the area of talk and negotiation over "interim mechanisms" opens up a dangerous vista of a counter-revolutionary "solution" to the South African crisis; namely a power sharing arrangement which would not meet the needs of the black majority but which could be used to demobilise the revolutionary struggle to smash apartheid.

There is now much talk of making sure that negotiations are not "undemocratic". The *New Nation* argued that:

"A campaign to discuss the Constitutional Guidelines [of the ANC] can deepen our contact with the masses and allow our representatives at the negotiation table to speak with authority about what the people want." (NN 20-26 October)

This does not mean that the South African masses will articulate demands and hold their leaders to account. It means that the ANC recognise that they will need to "consult" the masses in order to legitimise their role and sell any eventual deal. Moses Mayekiso has taken the issue of accountability and control further when he argued for:

"... structures which insure democratic involvement in decision-making through accountability, mandates and reporting back." (Weekly Mail 20-26 October)

This needs to be turned into reality with COSATU unions themselves taking the lead. Already last July's COSATU Congress reflected the feelings of workers in a resolution that insisted that there should be no "strategic alliance" with representatives of big capital. But this has not stopped the ANC manoeuvring precisely in this direction.

The key question in negotiations is whether unprincipled political concessions are made. It would be a betrayal to renounce violence in principle as a method of struggle in order to get talks underway. It

would be a betrayal to renounce, even in the short term, the goal of universal, equal, direct suffrage—a slogan that cuts through the ambiguities of "one person, one vote". Anything less would involve the preservation of privileges for a white minority and there can be no concessions on this, whether the talk is of "phased solutions" or "comprehensive settlement".

The longer the endless process of talks about talks continues, the greater the danger of sapping the fighting spirit of the class. Black workers face a summer of overcrowding in the townships, falling real wages and a shrinking job market. Over the last two years, union organisation has ensured that in most sectors wages have kept pace with or overtaken the rate of inflation. But the regime has managed to put in place its Thatcherite Labour Relations Act (LRA).

Illegal

This allows courts to ban strikes that they deem to be illegal or unfair. Sympathy and repeat strikes, as well as those that have not been called through set procedures, are all unlawful. So far, worker resistance has succeeded in preventing many employers using the Act, but the experience of British workers acts as a warning that if the laws remain, the bosses will seek to use them when the balance of forces tilts in their favour. And if the working class movement stands still, awaiting the outcome of talks about talks, this is exactly what will happen.

While the power of the big monopoly capitalists remains untouched, huge inequalities and discrimination will continue, fueling the cheap labour system that guarantees super-profits. Whether reaction comes in the form of proposals for a new constitution, or in the form of bloody repression, the working class must be prepared. That is why those forces opposed to the betrayal and opposed to the imposition of class peace while the leaders talk, must come together to hammer out the programme for a new revolutionary workers' party. ■

BRAZILIAN ELECTIONS

Diego Mocar and John McKee explain the Brazilian Workers' Party's slide towards reformism

BRAZIL, THE largest country of Latin America, is staring economic chaos in the face. In September alone inflation was 36%. Predictions for inflation over the whole year put it as high as 1,000-1,500%.

The bosses' answer to this hyper-inflation is to savagely attack the working class. A series of "stabilisation plans", masterminded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were launched. Their main objectives were to sack thousands of public sector workers and slash the living standards of the entire working class. In the first half of this year real wages dropped by almost 50%.

Despite these measures the economic crisis has gone from bad to worse. And this crisis is the background to the forthcoming elections—scheduled for 15 November. With the coalition government of President Jose Sarney a discredited force—registering 3.5% in the most recent opinion polls—the Brazilian bosses are getting increasingly anxious at the growth in popularity of the Workers' Party (PT). One leading industrialist in Brazil warned that "800,000 businessmen will leave Brazil if Lula wins". Luis Ignacio da Silva, popularly known as Lula, is the PT's presidential candidate.

In reality what the bosses fear is not so much Lula, but the militancy of the working class that has supported him. Over the last two years the workers have waged massive struggles to defend their living standards.

Autumn

From the autumn of 1988 a wave of strikes spread across the country. Oil workers, civil servants and municipal workers all struck. In November the army was sent in to crush a strike by 20,000 steel workers at Volta Redonda, killing several strikers.

This wave of action culminated in the massive general strike in March 1989. Called by the CUT, the militant trade union federation linked to the PT, and the traditionally more moderate CGT, the general strike involved an estimated 35 million workers including thousands of agricultural workers in the poverty stricken north east of the country. In the spring of this year another strike wave spread involving stevedores, bank workers and the metal workers of São Paulo. Union leaders estimated that 2 million were on strike by early May.

It is these struggles that led to the growth in the influence of the PT. The PT was formed in 1979, out of the mass strikes and workers' struggles of the late 1970s which marked the beginning of the end of the old dictatorship. It is now a mass workers' party with over 600,000 members.

Onslaught

In last November's municipal elections, which came directly after the onslaught on the steel workers, the PT made dramatic gains. It jumped from having 170 municipal councillors to over two thousand. More importantly it won control of almost all the major cities in the most industrialised state of São Paulo, including Brazil's largest city, São Paulo itself. These victories were accompanied by Lula's increasing popularity in the opinion polls as a potential presi-

Workers' Party moves right

Despite this massive support and growing militancy the PT has been unwilling to lead a revolutionary assault on Brazilian capitalism. Despite the popular anger at a system which condemns the vast majority of the population to grinding poverty while 10% of the population plunder over half the national income, and despite the obscene and ostentatious concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling class, Lula and the PT have been busy trying to prove themselves to be responsible "socialists" and loyal servants of the bourgeois constitution.

Under Lula's leadership the PT is establishing itself as a reformist party, committed to working within the capitalist system. Lula has been at pains to distance himself from any sections in the party which call for revolutionary struggle, and to stress his commitment to "peaceful" reform and to gaining power only through the ballot box.

Prevent

He tried to prevent Erundina de Souza from becoming the PT's candidate for Mayor of São Paulo because she came from the left of the party, was willing to support land occupations and even spoke of the necessity of armed struggle as a means of gaining power.

As it turned out he needn't have worried. This self-same "left" has shown itself incapable of developing a revolutionary perspective. Like *Militant* in Liverpool or Ken Livingstone in the GLC, once in power in the municipalities, the radical talk of the PT left gave way to a practice of working within the constraints of the capitalist state. Instead of using the positions gained in the municipalities to mobilise the Brazilian workers in struggle against the government, the PT has increasingly carried out the bosses' dirty work for them.

Erundina de Souza rapidly lost her taste for "extra-parliamentary action" and "people's councils" as she struggled with the virtually bankrupt São Paulo authority. The PT mayors reneged on their commitment to form a common front not to pay the crushing burden of debt (the central government offloads a proportion of its massive foreign debt onto the municipalities).

Rejecting a call from rank and

file supporters of the São Paulo PT to tax the rich city residents to pay for subsidies for transport, Erundina increased prices to meet operating costs! Other PT mayors did the same, as well as laying off thousands of public sector workers.

At a national level Lula's campaign offered more of the same. Instead of repudiating the foreign debt of \$120 billion, which cost the Brazilian people \$17 billion merely to service interest payments last year, Lula would only promise:

"The suspension of payments of the external debt, and with that money we will create funds for developing the agrarian reform, agricultural policies, education health, technological development that could be a guarantee for our future development."

Even this weak call for "suspension", that is a promise to pay the imperialists their blood money in the future, should be taken with a pinch of salt given the record of the PT controlled municipalities. Moreover the PT leadership puts forward no plans for dealing with the immediate imperialist blockade which would inevitably follow even a unilateral suspension of payments.

The PT offers similar reformist

solutions on the burning issue of the land. A virtual land war exists in many parts of Brazil, with the big landowners murdering peasants and attempting to drive them off the land. Yet Lula has refused to take up the demand for the expropriation of these landowners, for land to the tillers, for an agrarian revolution. For him it is a question only of how to use the existing totally insufficient state or unproductive lands as the basis for an "agrarian reform".

It is little wonder that given these reformist policies and the record of the PT in Municipal office that the upsurge in support for the PT of last year has not been sustained. From a leading position in a field with many candidates, having achieved 15% support in the polls at the start of the year, the PT had declined to 5% and was lying in fifth place by September. He has won back some of this support as the election approaches, but his rivals have been gaining momentum.

Part of the support Lula did lose has gone to Fernando Collor de Mellor and his party the National Reconstruction Party (PRN). He is now the front runner in the presidential elections. Collor, an ex-Governor from the state of Alagoas with a reputation for "clean government", has made much of his campaign to end the endemic corruption in the state and federal governments. His image, though, was not helped recently when it was revealed that at least 26 of his bodyguards, who carelessly beat up some reporters at an election rally, were in fact military police from Alagoas. They were all on paid leave for the duration of his campaign!

Denationalisation

Collor combines his populist anti-corruption position with various right wing policies. He is a self-proclaimed admirer of Thatcher and is committed to a programme of extensive denationalisation in the interests of "efficiency" and campaigns against waste. Only "strategic" state companies such as electricity and petrol will stay in state hands if Collor gets his way.

Another potential victor in the Presidential race is Lionel Brizola of the "Democratic Workers' Party" (PDT), a party which is neither democratic nor working class. Brizola traces his roots to the not-so-radical Brazilian nationalism of bourgeois figures like Vargas and Goulart, a nationalism which was brought to an end by the mili-

tary coup of 1964. The PDT has caught the "mood" of the bourgeoisie and shed most of its radical rhetoric of the 1960s, even accepting the need to dismantle some state industries and impose a tight monetary policy.

If neither Collor nor Brizola gain more than 50% of the vote in November a run off will take place between the top two candidates. Brizola will no doubt offer various promises to the PT, including possibly ministries, if the PT support him. In 1985 the PT quite rightly refused to give its support in Congress to elect Tancredo Neves, from the bourgeois Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), to the Presidency. Given that since then Lula has declared this position an "ultra-left mistake", such a deal with Brizola is quite possible.



Erundina de Souza

Brazilian workers, faced with a choice between openly bourgeois candidates and the PT, must clearly vote for Lula and give no vote in the second round to any bourgeois candidate. However, illusions in the reformist leadership of PT must be broken. Revolutionaries must use the campaign to mobilise the workers in struggle for their burning demands and to commit the PT to supporting them.

Such demands must include the struggle to protect wages against inflation through the sliding scale of wages, through the fight to place the state industries, the food industries and the supermarket chains under workers' control, breaking the power of the bureaucrats and the corrupt military managers. Workers' and peasants' committees must be built to control food pricing, distribution and direct exchange of goods.

To end the crushing burden of interest payments, which the masses are forced to bear the cost of, it is vital to fight for the repudiation of the foreign debt and the nationalisation of the banks and the multi-nationals without compensation.

The military special forces regularly used against strikers must be dismantled. The workers' and peasants' organisations must be armed to defend themselves against repression and death squads.

Distribution

Brazil's "future development" can only be guaranteed by a revolutionary onslaught on capitalism which places on the agenda the nationalisation of the major industries under workers' control and without compensation. In the countryside the expropriation of the large estates and the distribution of land to those who work it is a burning necessity to end land hunger and starvation.

These are some of the core demands that a revolutionary Workers' Party, a Trotskyist party, must fight for. They are demands that workers and peasants, through their own councils and militia could take up as part of a real struggle to overthrow Brazilian capitalism through the establishment of a revolutionary government of the workers and poor farmers. ■



Lula addressing mass rally



the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

PODER OBRERO

Tribunal on debt

THE ISSUE of international debt repayments is of paramount importance for the semi-colonial countries of the world. It represents a constant drain of wealth which prevents rounded development of industry and commerce in those countries. It leads directly to massive unemployment and hyper-inflation.

An international conference to discuss ways of fighting the stranglehold of debt is therefore to be welcomed. Such a conference recently took place in Peru and was attended by our comrades in Poder Obrero (PO). Held in the city of Lima between 21 and 24 September it attracted over 200 delegates from many organisations around the world, particularly from Latin America. It took the form of a tribunal with witnesses only for the prosecution Nobody spoke up to defend the debt!

During the workshops and plenaries the comrades from PO intervened energetically and were well received by a number of groups, selling hundreds of copies of LRCI publications in Spanish, French and English. They were able to get the Tribunal to endorse a motion of solidarity with comrade Eleuterio Gutierrez, a member of the LRCI's fraternal group in Bolivia, who has languished in jail for three years after being framed for a petty crime. His real crime was to have been a trade union activist in the Bolivian mines.

The tribunal endorsed a proposal (from Nicaragua) for a 24 hour continental protest strike against the debt burden, but the aim of such action was to seek relief and annulment from the IMF through negotiation. This was the favoured course of the bourgeois nationalists present and one pandered to by the conference organisers—the Latin American supporters of the Pierre Lambert group in France. They have made a speciality over the years of reducing the Trotskyist programme to a series of bourgeois democratic demands. Reformists such as the Peruvian United Left argued for a system of limited payments. The most that centrist forces such as the PUM from Peru, could advance, was a moratorium on debt repayments.

But, as PO argued, a moratorium is only a promise to pay in the future. Against this they insisted that it was important to break with the IMF and World Bank and unilaterally repudiate the debt. This strategy needed to be combined with an anti-capitalist programme within the semi-colonial countries, hitting at imperialist assets in finance and industry as well as the servile bourgeois rulers of these countries that help chain the masses to the IMF. As a next step PO called for an international conference of working class and poor peasant representatives to mobilise strikes, aimed at forcing the repudiation of debt upon their respective governments. ■

GUIA OBRERA

COB conference

THE COB is Bolivia's equivalent of the TUC. But this comparison is unfair to the COB in many ways. Not only does it not have a Norman Willis but in the history of the Bolivian labour movement—and especially in the stormy years of 1952 and 1971—the COB has acted as the focus for the aspirations of the Bolivian workers for revolutionary change.

They have been disappointed because, despite its less bureaucratic structures and its openness to delegates from the rank and file of many industries the COB remains a trade union federation and not a council of action. However, when it convenes a Congress it is an important event allowing revolutionaries to test the fighting spirit of the working class.

Its eighth, much postponed, Congress started on 18 September. Comrades from Guia Obrera (fraternal group of the LRCI) intervened around a bulletin which outlined their analysis of the last four years. These have been years of retreat for the working class during which the right has been strengthened and the left parties in decline. Guia called for the closing of ranks in the labour movement around a programme of action to defend wages and extend provisions in health, housing and education in this one of the poorest countries in Latin America. ■

IRISH WORKERS GROUP

Test for the left

THE FIGHT for abortion information in Ireland (see article, right) has put all the left groups to the test. Throughout its brief existence the left groups in this campaign, especially the Socialist Workers Movement (fraternal group of the British SWP) and the PD group (USFI), opposed the motions of the IWG which sought to give a political direction to the fight. At the founding meeting of the campaign, supposedly open to all groups, student leaders ruled out of order the IWG motion for mass mobilisations in the colleges to build defiance and defence.

Throughout, the centrist left opposed IWG attempts to give the fight a clear political direction around the demands to scrap the 1861 Act and the Constitutional Amendment. Such demands are too advanced they say! But with no perspective beyond defending the court case brought by SPUC, the student leaders were easily able to shut down the whole struggle after only the first round. An offensive struggle is urgently needed to decriminalise abortion in Ireland. ■

The LRCI

Arbeiter/Innenstandpunkt (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 LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

IRISH STUDENT leaders faced imprisonment last month because of their open defiance of an injunction sought by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC). The injunction was to prevent student unions from distributing information on abortion referral services. Their courageous action posed a significant challenge to the forces responsible for a wave of attacks against Irish women in the 1980s.

Abortion remains illegal in Ireland under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, though there has not been a prosecution since the 1950s. Since the British Abortion Act of 1967 many Irish women have gone to England for abortions. In a bitterly contested referendum in 1983, right wing forces allied to the Catholic church launched a vigorous campaign resulting in an amendment to the Irish constitution equating the "right to life of the unborn child" with the right to life of the mother.

What this meant in practice became clear in 1985 when SPUC successfully took two Dublin based clinics to court to stop them offering a non-directive pregnancy counselling service. Justice Hamilton's infamous ruling stated:

"The qualified right to privacy, the rights of association and freedom and the right to disseminate information cannot be invoked to interfere with such a fundamental right as the right to life of the unborn."

Illegal network

The clinics closed their services and an illegal information network was created. This had all but collapsed when the student unions became the target of SPUC because they published telephone numbers for abortion information in their guide books.

In a Supreme Court ruling last July, SPUC's role as self-appointed moral guardians of the constitution was legitimised. SPUC can now seek undertakings from any individual to desist from action associated with aiding a woman to get an abortion. If the individual refuses to give such an undertaking SPUC can apply for an injunction. Jail is the penalty for defiance.

This was the prospect facing student leaders on 9 October at the High Court. Surrounded by masses of chanting students, they entered the court proclaiming their contempt for the injunction.

In court SPUC's case was surprisingly thrown out by Ms Justice O'Carroll on the flimsy grounds that newspaper reports of student defiance did not constitute contempt! At the same time she referred the matter of the right to information on abortion to the European Court, on the strained pretext that EC rules require services, and therefore information, to be available across national boundaries.

This unexpected result has been

IRELAND

Abortion campaign

Whilst the Embryo Research Bill threatens women's limited abortion rights in Britain, in Ireland even the distribution of information on abortion is illegal. A member of the Irish Workers Group discusses the struggle for abortion rights in Ireland.

greeted as a victory by campaign activists. Certainly it indicates that sections of the Irish ruling classes had no real stomach for a fight with the students, nor for the full logic of SPUC's holy war. But now SPUC are appealing to the Supreme Court. In the meantime, abortion referral is still criminalised in Ireland.

Although the illegal dissemination of abortion information is necessary as an emergency measure and as a weapon of struggle, much more needs to be done. What women need is *legal access* to information on abortion. That means smashing the 1861 Act, the Constitutional Amendment of 1983, and the Hamilton Ruling.

SPUC's temporary setback has not dented the law. Since the referral to Europe, the Irish Censorship of Publications Board threatened to ban *Cosmopolitan* magazine unless it withdrew advertising for abortion in its pages. *Cosmo* complied in its Irish editions! Incredibly, at the same time, the Irish Family Planning Association faces a court action by the moral police for selling condoms to youth in a big city record store—this in the EC country with the highest rate of growth of AIDS!

For the moment, however, the student leaders, congratulating themselves on a victory, have all but disbanded their "campaign for abortion information". They have called off a planned national demonstration which could have been a focus for mobilising many women and sections of the numerous trade unions which have passed resolutions against the Hamilton Ruling.

Repeal

The IWG fights to re-mobilise students around the goal of decriminalising abortion information and abortion itself in the Republic, defying the existing laws but fighting explicitly for their repeal. The fact that 80,000 Irish women have had abortions in England is just one measure of the objective

basis, and the need, for an urgent campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion.

This can be a unifying focus for a real struggle for abortion rights in Ireland, even while the mass of students, women and workers in Ireland remain unconvinced that abortion facilities should be provided for more than limited therapeutic needs. In that ongoing debate the IWG will fight openly for *free abortion on demand*. ■

An IWG speaker will be discussing the abortion struggle in Ireland at PR89 – see page 15 for details ★

USA

Solidarity with striking miners

MINERS IN Pittston, West Virginia have now been on strike against their union-breaking bosses for seven months. Alongside their families and supporters the coal miners have faced an army of scabs, police, private security thugs and state troopers all determined to smash the strike.

The brutal use of force by these bosses' goons has not dented the solidarity of the workers one bit. Nor have the court rulings against them and their union—rulings that have led to \$25.4 million worth of fines against the United Mineworkers of America.

Time and again the miners, and thousands of their supporters, have braved the picket lines in the face of these attacks. Time and again the workers have been arrested, imprisoned and fined.

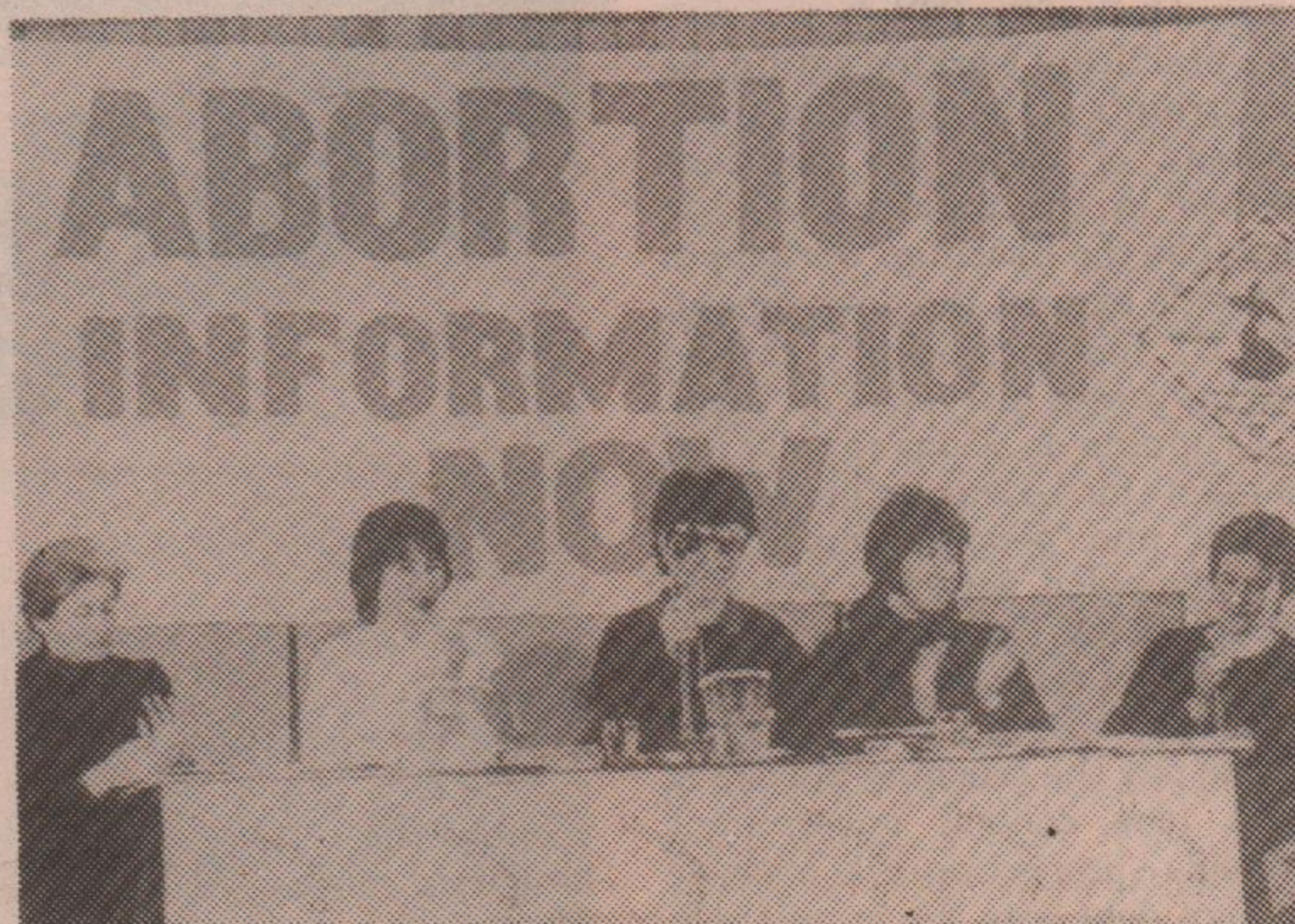
When the British miners faced a similar reign of terror in 1984-85 solidarity was vital in maintaining the morale of the strikers. The US miners need solidarity too. The Greater London Association of Trades Councils have called a picket of the US Embassy to demonstrate British working class support for their North American brothers and sisters. We urge readers to support the picket. All trade unionists should send money and messages of support to the Pittston strikers.

Picket the US Embassy

Monday 6 November from 5pm
Grosvenor Square, London W1

Bring union banners

★ Send donations and messages of support to:
Pittston Miners UMWA District 28
PO Box 28, Castlewood,
Virginia 24224 USA
or phone the strike headquarters on
0101 703 762 5537



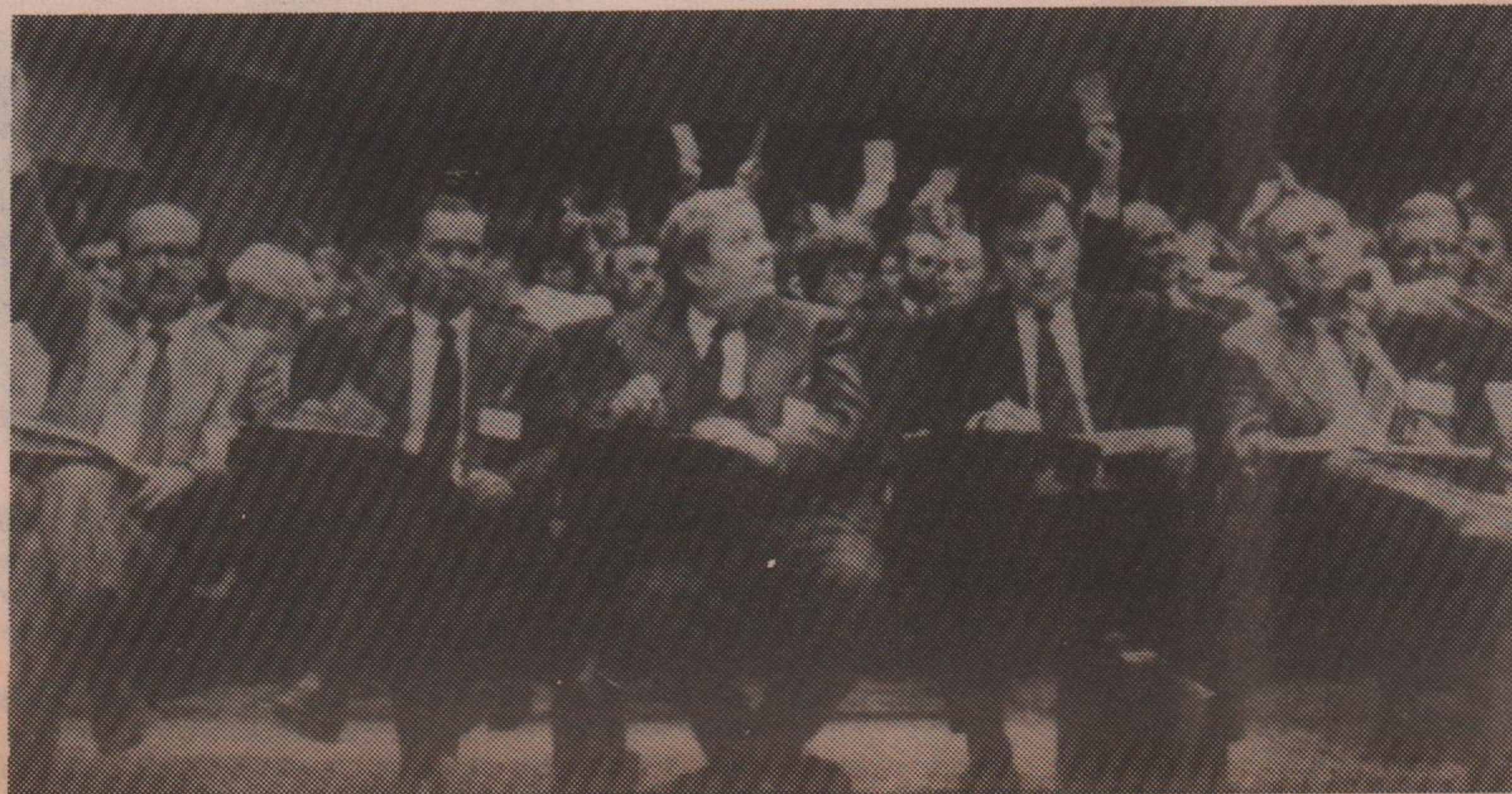
Launch meeting of the information network, November 1987

Derek Spiers/Report

HUNGARY

In the vanguard of restoration

Can bureaucrats turn themselves into a bourgeoisie? Mark Abram argues that sections of the Hungarian ruling caste are intent on this.



The Hungarian Communist Party—indulging in collective suicide?

HUNGARY HAS the highest official rate of suicide in Europe. Perhaps, then, it should have been no surprise to see the 1,000 plus delegates of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) commit collective political suicide early in October when they voted to dissolve their party.

At first sight what the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) called "the truly amazing move towards a multi-party democracy" by the Stalinist bureaucracy does seem extraordinary. A plurality of parties will freely contest elections with no reserved places in 1990, with virtually all singing hymns of praise to capitalism and the market. The hundreds of thousands for whom party membership brought privileges, plus the thousands of state and party officials whose jobs ultimately depend on state control of the economy, seem intent on throwing it all away.

In fact, having brought Hungary to the brink of economic collapse, the bureaucrats are now trying to save something for themselves from the wreckage.

Mismanaged

For more than ten years, Hungary has lurched from crisis to crisis. Like the other bureaucratically mismanaged economies, Hungary's growth rates steadily declined in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1978 and 1987 they averaged only 1.8%. This year industrial production has declined by 0.7% as a whole and 5.7% in light industry.

Hungary was one of the first of the Stalinist states to try to borrow its way out of crisis. Now, despite a draconian austerity programme since the early 1980s, external debt is smothering the economy. Hard currency earnings on exports barely cover the interest charges on the \$17.8 billion outstanding to western bankers.

National income was stagnant this year and last and is predicted to grow at only 0.2% p.a. for the next few years. State investment has fallen by 10% in the last decade while inflation is at 15% and rising. Meanwhile it is common for people to hold down two, or even three jobs, and yet 20% of the population lives below the official poverty line.

Within the ruling bureaucracy no one has the slightest idea how to improve the working of the existing system. Put bluntly the game is up. This is what the likes of Poszgay and Nemeth in the leadership of the newly-launched Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) have recognised. Their sole concern now is to use their remaining power to ensure that they are able to take advantage of the return of capitalism to Hungary.

Transition

Their first task is to hold on to political power for as long as possible so that sections of the bureaucracy can effect the transition to membership of a new capitalist class. For this they must be seen to be taking the initiative in preparing for restoration and not allow the non-party opposition to steal a march on them. Their objective is to see Poszgay elected President this month and to form a major part of a coalition government after the parliamentary elections next spring.

In the longer term, this section of the bureaucracy intends to oversee the restoration of capitalism and to install itself as part of a comprador bourgeoisie operating in alliance with western imperialism. They hope to act on behalf of, and increasingly to merge with,

the already significant layer of managers and small capitalists which has been formed by past concessions and market reforms. Those who cannot expect direct entry to the new bourgeoisie hope to be able to find profitable roles for themselves in the commercial banks, the holding companies and on the boards of directors of the new joint-stock companies.

Poszgay and friends fully intend to use the new laws to ease their own path to prosperity. In January of this year, for example, the privatisation law allowed the League of Young Communists to "buy", for mere pennies, a range of conference centres and recreational facilities. This huge real estate was thus transformed from an object of privileged use by the ruling caste into potentially very valuable hereditary wealth in the hands of the sons and daughters of the bureaucracy.

The social democratising Poszgay is not unopposed in the HSP. He was able to rely on only 30% of the votes at the October Congress. Ranged against him are whole sections of the party. First of all there are the less radical reformers led by General Secretary Karoly Grosz. Behind him stand the more hardline Stalinists of Robert Ribanszki's Marxist Unity Platform.

Such opposition within the party, and its growing desperation, stems from a recognition that not all the present bureaucrats can expect to find a place in the sun in a capitalist Hungary, especially in one that is quickly reduced to being a semi-colonial client of the imperialist powers. They know that massive cuts in state spending, both civil and military, spell doom for hundreds of thousands of privileged parasites.

Their weakness comes from the obvious fact that they have no alternative to Poszgay's plans. Their only tactic is to try to subvert and delay the social-democratisation of the Stalinist party and the dis-

mantling of the Stalinist state apparatus.

The question remains whether they could marshal more sinister forces, especially within the military, to reassert central control. Ribanszki's group has close connections with the reactionary Ferenc Munnich Society and the Friends of the Workers' Guard (the old HSWP party militia).

Could they bring the terror of Tiananmen Square to the boulevards of Budapest? This is by no means clear. The Hungarian army, ever since 1956, has been a less reliable arm of the state than, for example, its Polish counterpart. It seems unlikely that the 65,000 Soviet troops would intervene to stop the reformers, or stand by and watch Hungarian troops do it.

Undermining

In fact the reformers are already actively undermining the military and the internal security police. Horvath, Minister of the Interior, has declared his office beyond party control and subservient only to parliament, and is in the process of dissolving the Workers' Guard. He also removed leading figures from the police force last June.

With political reforms proceeding apace, and no indication of any plans by Gorbachev to intervene to halt the process, how long will it be before Hungary is a fully-fledged parliamentary democracy? What is the timetable for capitalist restoration?

The EIU reported recently that, "Hungary's image as the pioneer reformer in Eastern Europe is attracting considerable interest among western banks and businesses". This is hardly surprising when one considers that the bureaucrats have just sold these same banks a 49% share in Tungram, probably the most successful of Hungary's companies. Moreover, if they are unable to sell the shares on the stock market within three years the Hungarian government

guaranteed to reimburse them everything!

Currently Australia is lining up the brewing industry and Canada the chemical plants. Many other sectors are also on the imperialists' shopping list. However, to sustain the enthusiasm of the banks and go beyond the present couple of hundred joint-ventures Hungary will have to cross the Rubicon. She will have to allow market forces to start restructuring her economy. The Bankruptcy Law will have to be rigorously implemented. Loss making companies, whose numbers climbed from 179 to 282 last year, will be obliged either to "shape up" or go to the wall.

Indeed, all this is envisaged in the three year plan due to begin in 1990. A menu of privatisation and liberalisation has been drawn up to whet the appetite of potential investors; the provisions for starting up limited liability companies and converting state assets to them has been simplified.

In 1991, the country will switch to hard currency accounting in trade in order to attract foreign capital, and there are plans to open a stock market (an essential ingredient implying the free movement of capital). Taken together this shows Hungary to be on target for full conversion back to domination by the law of value in just a few years time.

The process cannot be swifter since some of the measures that imperialism requires counteract others. To reduce the debt they must increase hard currency exports but privatisation and rationalisation will cause disruption and, therefore, a reduction in exports. However, if the reform plans are implemented on time then, by 1995 when Austria and Hungary jointly host the World Fair, the latter may already be a semi-colony of the former.

Of course, all this presupposes that neither the conservatives in the bureaucracy, nor more impor-

tantly the working class, intervene in the whole process. However, such interventions are inevitable. Nobody, least of all the capitalist roaders, is seeking to hide the coming storms. By stressing these difficulties they hope to demoralise the working class in advance. Thus, Imre Tarafas, First Deputy President of the Hungarian National Bank, argued recently of the large mining and food sectors:

"The world market is certain not to buy the products of these sectors at a price sufficiently high to provide coverage for the Hungarians' living standards . . . a significant part of these activities will have to be terminated . . . this will imply suffering and conflicts."

Social costs

The social costs, in terms of unemployment, reduced living standards and disunity within the working class, will be awesome. In the approaching presidential elections, both Poszgay and the Democratic Forum candidate will be insisting that it is all inevitable, the cost of the failed "socialist" experiment. They will try to take advantage of a widespread demoralisation and passivity to be elected to lead Hungary through difficult times.

Although some elements of the HSP demagogically claim to want to defend jobs in threatened industries, Poszgay does not. There is no evidence that the working class is expecting him to act as its defender. Consequently, there are no grounds for proposing a tactic of "critical electoral support" for Poszgay on the grounds that he is the candidate of a bourgeois workers' party (like West European Social Democrats or Labour) against an open capitalist party.

The Democratic Forum, largest of the opposition groups, offers no alternative to the HSP. Theirs is simply a less "welfare statist" version of capitalist restoration.

Reject

Hungarian workers should reject both roads to the restoration of exploitation and abstain from voting in the presidential elections. There is no need to endure the scenario painted for them by the restorationists.

There is an alternative to both bureaucratic dictatorial planning and the restoration of capitalist slavery. The working class must seize as its own the true heritage of the 1956 Rising to which the restorationists lay claim. The heart of that rising was the creation of workers' councils and a workers' militia.

To defend itself against the coming onslaught, the workers of Hungary must reconstruct themselves as the vanguard of the force that can put paid to restorationist and bureaucrat alike and open the way to the construction of a revolutionary workers' state. ■

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN

Last spring the Communist Party of Britain launched its re-draft of the *British Road to Socialism*. This month the party's Congress meets to finalise the new programme. But rarely can a political programme have been so out of date by the time of its official launch. Colin Lloyd explains why.

Re-surfacing the "British Road"



Derek Robinson points the way to 97,000 redundancies at Leyland

THE COMMUNIST Party of Britain (CPB) was formed out of currents breaking from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The new party believed that the 1977 draft of the *British Road to Socialism* (BRS) led to the "revisionist" rot in the CPGB. The CPB's goal was to redraft an "orthodox" version of the programme.

In fact the new BRS shares with the 1977 version the fundamental departures from Marxism contained in every edition of this programme since it first appeared in 1951: that there is a specifically national road to socialism in Britain, that it is a peaceful, parliamentary road, and that for the foreseeable future the workers will march along this road in alliance with "progressive" sections of the British bosses.

It is these fundamental tenets which mark out the CPB like the CPGB as a reformist party, no less loyal to capitalism in practice than Labour. At the very heart of its new programme lies the old Stalinist doctrine of socialism in one country.

The programme's perspective is based on the belief that socialism already exists in the USSR and the other Stalinist states. More, it is being strengthened all the time. *Perestroika*, *glasnost* and the various other reform processes in the "socialist countries", "... do not in any way herald a return to capitalism, as forces hostile to socialism would hope". (BRS p7)

Disproved

Indeed "comrade" Gorbachev's reforms are being carried through, "to strengthen and fully realise [socialism's] democratic potential". (*Communist Review*, spring 1989) This perspective is being dramatically disproved by the crises wracking the Stalinist states today.

The entire perspective, however, is not simply wrong. It flows from the CPB's deliberate distortion of the reality of the Stalinist states.

There are two fundamental lies contained in the perspective of the BRS. First is the idea that the Stalinist states represent the achievement of socialism. Second is that "the balance of world power continues to tilt away from imperialism and towards the forces for progress and socialism". (BRS p7)

According to the CPB, "Today socialism embraces more than a third of the world's population". This has, "laid the basis for genuine equality of opportunity and freedom of initiative for all people and has provided for substantial material and social gains".

No sooner was the ink dry on this declaration than the workers and students of China were met with bloody repression for exercising their "freedom of initiative" and the Soviet miners had to launch mass strikes for the "substantial material and social gain" of soap to wash with after work.

Difficulties

"Of course", admits the BRS "there have been difficulties in the development of socialism". Some of these were "understandable"; others involved "crimes which had serious consequences for the whole socialist movement". But not to worry. Having dealt with seven decades of Stalinism in as many lines the new BRS assures us that: "... the Communist Parties of the socialist countries have had the courage and honesty to face these harsh realities, to uncover their causes and take steps seeking to overcome them." (BRS p7)

The Beijing massacre, the banning of strikes in the USSR, the creation of an openly pro-capital-

ist government in Poland, the transformation of the Hungarian ruling party into a "western style socialist party" and Honecker's brutal repression of pro-democracy demonstrators in East Germany have all taken place since the draft BRS was published. Courage? Honesty? Or the actions of crisis ridden bureaucracies striving to save their own necks?

The role of the ruling bureaucracies in creating the potential for the restoration of capitalism reveals the truth the CPB cannot acknowledge. The Stalinist states are not socialist. They are states in which the potential of post-capitalist property relations is strangled by a parasitic bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy does not simply block the path to socialism. The "enemies of socialism" who hoped reform would lead to capitalist restoration are finding key sections of the ruling CPs to be amongst their staunchest allies. To remove the bureaucrats, to halt the threat of restoration, the workers need a political revolution which replaces bureaucratic rule with workers' council power.

In addition to its soothing message about the Stalinist bureaucracy the BRS cites the victories scored in the late 1970s, from Nicaragua to Zimbabwe, combined with recent "negotiated settlements" in Central America, Southern Africa and South East Asia, as examples of the favourable global balance of class forces.

In fact the 1980s have seen the reversal of the advances made in the late 1970s. By imposing an arms race on the USSR imperialism has helped provoke the current economic crisis and stagnation. In turn this has prompted the bureaucracy to turn to the capitalist banks, and "market mechanisms" in general, to solve their crisis. It has enforced a strategic retreat on the Soviet bureaucracy in the international arena.

By maintaining counter-revolutionary guerilla forces in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Angola, the USA has forced Gorbachev to conclude a series of reactionary peace deals in these areas. The anti-imperialist struggles are being cynically sacrificed by the Soviet bureaucracy like so many pawns in a chess game in order to preserve "peaceful co-existence" and "socialism in one country".

The international policy of the BRS is clearly tied to the interests of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies. As such it embodies class collaboration, pure and unalloyed. Needless to say when they turn to Britain, notwithstanding their fulminations against the CPGB, the CPB also propose a programme based on class collaboration.

Their point of difference with the Eurocommunists is not whether there should be an alliance with sections of the bosses. It is merely over the "leading role" of the working class within that alliance.

So, the new BRS generously offers "non-monopoly" capitalists a place within their alliance. Of the smaller capitalists, it states:

STALINISM IN CRISIS

"There is therefore an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in these sections of the capitalist class." (BRS p23)

Of course the draft is unable to provide us with any examples of where the smaller capitalists have been on the side of the workers. The "non-monopoly" bosses who run the sweatshops, the non-unionised engineering firms, the scab transport and construction outfits and so on don't have a particularly good track record in assisting the struggle for decent pay and conditions, let alone for socialism.

The very idea of an alliance with some capitalists against others opens the door to practical betrayals of the working class. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of CPB leader and former British Leyland convener, Derek Robinson. He sided with the "patriotic" bosses of British Leyland in the 1970s, in order, in his own words, to "make Leyland successful". He explained his rationale for this in *Comment*, the CPGB's old discussion bulletin:

"We have to see British Leyland as an important and integral part of our manufacturing base... The short term threat comes from Europe, not Japan."

In fact, the short term threat came from the British bosses that Robinson was in an alliance with.

They sacked him along with 97,000 other Leyland workers in the space of four years. Scant reward for Robinson's role in betraying a series of strikes in the 1970s.

This is the real logic of the CPB's policy of alliances with the bosses. In order to justify their policy of class collaboration the CPB claim that while Britain needs socialism, socialism is not currently on the agenda. To overcome this problem the anti-monopoly alliance has to fight for an Alternative Economic and Political Strategy (AEPS) in the here and now. As the new BRS admits "the AEPS is not in itself a socialist programme".

But it is "a bridging strategy, linking the defensive battles of working people to protect their immediate interests, with a more offensive array of struggles that can challenge the fundamental power base of monopoly capitalism". (BRS p20) The AEPS does nothing of the sort. Its demands are a series of reforms applied to the capitalist economy centred around "a deflationary programme aimed at boosting the economy".

This mixture of reformist demands includes some points we would agree with (e.g. national minimum wage), but others that are reactionary and nationalist (e.g. import controls). At a certain point the CPB believe that these reforms come into conflict with the economic and political power of the capitalist class. The capitalists' extra-parliamentary resistance will call forth working class resistance and "the fight for the AEPS flows into the fight for socialism itself".

No Marxist would deny that a government of working class parties implementing far reaching reforms and nationalisations would meet stiff resistance from the ruling class. The bosses will use their courts, their armed forces, the monarchy, the civil service to sabotage such a government.

But it is exactly at this point that the programme and method of the CPB become not a "bridge" but a road-block in the struggle for socialism. Every revolutionary situation of this century has proved that in such a crisis the working class has to smash the state power of the bosses and replace it with its own kind of power: the rule of workers' councils.

From beginning to end the new BRS rejects the need for this, nec-

essarily violent, overthrow of the capitalist state. The original BRS of 1951 claimed that:

"The people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real people's democracy, transforming Parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people." (BRS 1951 p14)

The language of the new BRS rings much less with the phraseology of wartime patriotism and much more with "Leninist" phraseology:

"The necessity of revolution therefore, the taking of state power by the organised working class and its allies, is a fundamental precept which is not open to question." (BRS p21)

But closer reading reveals that by "taking state power" the authors mean taking control of the present capitalist state machine. They will:

"... enforce changes in the top personnel and the structure of state bodies to ensure that they begin to carry out their function in the interests of the working class." (BRS p21)

Not a word is said about the workers' councils, the general strike, the armed workers' militia and the insurrection which would be needed to counter the capitalist backlash. This silence lulls workers to sleep and it exposes the BRS as a blueprint for defeat at the hands of a Pinochet-style coup.

Bridging programme

Against this Trotskyists fight for a real "bridging programme". The Transitional Programme, recognising the eventual necessity of workers' councils, militias, control of production, aims at sowing the seeds of such organisations in the day to day defensive struggles taking place now.

Even in Britain, where we are not in a revolutionary situation, it becomes possible and necessary to agitate for transitional answers to workers' problems. Against the Poll Tax; councils of action and a general strike. Against picket-busting police; picket line defence squads. Against the bosses' "right to manage"; workers' control of all aspects of the production process.

These demands allow genuine communists to build a real "bridge" between today's struggle and the struggle for power. But they find no place in the BRS.

Instead of workers' councils it is the bureaucratized trade union organisations which the CPB relies on to resist a capitalist backlash. Instead of organised picket line defence the BRS advocates a "democratised police force". Instead of workers' control there should be "a comprehensive system of planning agreements".

Reject

The CPB reject genuine transitional demands because in the first place they accept that the British class struggle will not overstep the limits of reforming capitalism. In the second place they are determined that, should the abolition of capitalism come "onto the agenda" it will not be accompanied by workers' democracy but by the kind of repressive bureaucratic system which passes for "socialism" in the CPB's world view.

There is nothing new about the programme in the "new BRS". It contains no answers to the crisis of leadership in the British working class and nothing but a cover up of the crisis facing the Stalinist bureaucracy. And as a guide to world politics it is well past its sell-by date. ■

PERMANENT REVOLUTION



**WHERE
WE
STAND**

Here we publish the programme for Permanent Revolution '89. More details and tickets can be obtained by writing to us at BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

We urge all our readers to come along and participate in what will be a lively, informative and thought provoking weekend. The theme of the weekend is "Stalinism in crisis" but as you can see there is much more going on besides.

The plenary session on Sunday morning featuring a report of recent political developments in the USSR is a highlight of the weekend that nobody should miss.

SUNDAY SPECIAL SESSION

10-00 am: Plenary

The USSR: an eye-witness account

A report of an extended visit to the Soviet Union examining the crisis of *perestroika*, the rise of working class opposition and the growth of the national movements.

SATURDAY

10 am: Registration

11 am Debate

Stalinism in crisis: glasnost or political revolution?

With the Revolutionary Communist Party and Socialist Organiser.

1-30 pm: Lunch

2-30 pm: Workshops

Poland

China

East Germany

5-00-7-00 pm: Rally

The LRCI and the struggle for a new International

WITH INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS:
The struggle for abortion rights in the Irish Republic
The fight against austerity and repression in Garcia's Peru
Centrist "Trotskyism" and the challenge of the 1990s

SUNDAY

11-45 am: Workshops

Women's liberation and socialism

Perspectives for the Latin American revolution

Trotskyism and World War Two

1-00 pm: Lunch

2 pm: Workshops

Marxism and ecology

Northern Ireland: republicanism at an impasse

South Africa: towards a sell out?

3-30 pm: Plenary

Britain in the 1990s: the bosses and the labour movement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AN OPEN LETTER TO SOCIALIST ORGANISER

A recent article in *Socialist Organiser* attacking *Workers Power* included a groundless accusation that we had threatened to denounce an Iranian ex-member of *Workers Power* to the Iranian state. After writing to *Socialist Organiser* protesting against this slander only a small fraction of our letter was printed (SO 419). We reproduce it here in full to expose the full extent of O'Mahony's slander to all our readers and to any *Socialist Organiser* supporters who may have been taken in by it.

10 October 1989

Dear Comrades,

The article in the 28 September issue of *Socialist Organiser* (SO) marked a new low for John O'Mahony. It was a characteristically wordy, but politically vacuous, polemic. Its main purpose was to give cover for his libelous accusations against a member of *Workers Power*. Since he accuses the comrade of threatening "to inform on an Iranian ex-comrade to the Iranian 'anti-imperialist state' which has slaughtered so many thousands of Iranian socialists", and offers not the slightest evidence for this we demand the right to reply in your paper. Further we demand that O'Mahony substantiate this charge, withdraw it or be branded as a liar.

We had, and have, no wish to denounce the Iranian comrade concerned to anybody—certainly not for leaving *Workers Power* and joining SO. That is his political right. But whilst the comrade was a member he never once indicated his sympathy for the politics of SO. He resigned without explaining his political reasons or that he was going to join SO.

Whilst this course of action does not speak well of the comrade's political seriousness or courage that is not our complaint. As a member he voluntarily committed himself to observing our constitution which says clearly that internal bulletins are and remain property of the group. Comrades who resign are expected to return them for reasons of security. The need to be protected from the witch-hunters in the labour movement and the press is dear to us as indeed is the desire not to see harm come to an Iranian leftist. For that reason his branch organ-

iser asked for the return of the originals which he refused to do. Of course we have no sanction against such a comrade except to make clear to other left wingers who know him and us that this constitutes disloyal behaviour. What our organiser said to him was that we would brand him on the British and Iranian left as a thief, a liar and having joined a pro-Zionist organisation.

SO took this question up with us claiming that the Iranian comrade had understood this to mean forces loyal to the Iranian government. The branch organiser and a national representative of *Workers Power* then phoned the Iranian comrade and clarified beyond a shadow of misinterpretation that nothing of the sort was either said or intended. (The manufactured "quote" about "let anti-imperialism take its course" with its implied threat of physical force is a bare-faced lie.)

The comrade expressed himself satisfied with this clarification and offered to return the IBs. Martin Thomas likewise expressed no objection to our guarantees. Nevertheless the comrade has still refused to return the material. Frankly, we do not know whether the comrade is merely passing through SO on a journey further to the right, so we remain alarmed about the final destination of our internal material.

But John O'Mahony is immune to facts. The slander of the accusation is clear from the text of the article. It shows the logic of the amalgam—perhaps learned in the school of post-Trotsky Trotskyism from such teachers as Gerry Healy. This is how it runs: *Workers Power* believes Iran is an "imperialised country". Khomeini is the leader of Iran. Therefore *Workers Power* must consider him an anti-imperialist.

Anti-imperialists are leftists. Khomeini-ites must therefore be Iranian leftists. Our Manchester branch organiser threatens to denounce a comrade "to the Iranian left" and bingo there you have it. *Workers Power* denounces Iranian Trotskyists to the mullah regime.

The only problem with this whole tissue of fabrication is that it disintegrates at the first breath of truth. Firstly, "imperialised nation" is not a theoretical innovation. It may or may not be a terminological one but what we mean is that Iran is a semi-colony. Yes—we plead guilty to this piece of "kitsch-Trotskyism" (Leninism actually!). Secondly, it does not follow that if you defend a semi-colonial country against an assault by an imperialist country that you regard the bourgeois or even clerical reactionary regime as anti-imperialist—let alone leftists.

O'Mahony could not cite a word from our dozens of articles on Iran before or after the Iranian revolution to indicate that we regard Khomeini or his followers as genuine anti-imperialist fighters let alone leftists. Quite the reverse. But the whole logic of the argument is faulty. Trotsky did not regard Chiang Kai Shek as anything but a bloody butcher of the Chinese workers and peasants and a tool of US imperialism to boot, but he thought China was a semi-colonial country which had to be defended against Japanese imperialism.

So why does O'Mahony make the ludicrous charge—known to be false by any well informed British or Iranian leftist—that we support the regime or would be likely to denounce anybody to it. Why, because he cannot produce even a charge from the Iranian comrade which says "You said you would denounce me

to the Iranian government". He has to turn what may or may not have been a sincere misunderstanding into a threat by amalgamating it with our supposed softness on "anti-imperialist forces".

But anyone who knows our actual stance even towards movements that clearly are fighting imperialism (and the Islamic Republic of Iran clearly is not)—the Sandinistas, the IRA, the PLO guerrillas etc—will realise that we have an independent working class standpoint which means that we give no political support to them and certainly would never denounce a Trotskyist to them.

To round off his amalgam O'Mahony tries the "have you stopped beating your wife" argument. The comrade couldn't have said Iranian left because there is no Iranian left that doesn't agree with SO's pro-Zionist position. We must leave a reply on this to comrades in *Socialism and Revolution* and to the other Iranian leftists. But we do not believe that because *Socialism and Revolution* have attended an SO dayschool we can simply identify their line on the Israel-Palestine question as identical to SO's. Perhaps we are wrong but we certainly won't take SO's word for it.

In conclusion perhaps we can hazard a guess as to why after ten years silence on *Workers Power* John O'Mahony gave way to this outburst. We can only assume that some comrades in SO are getting tired of the pro-imperialism on Northern Ireland, on Palestine; that they are getting tired of the demolition job on "kitsch-Trotskyism" and its replacement with Shachtmanism. Perhaps O'Mahony hopes to scare them away from reading *Workers Power* and discussing with our comrades by suggesting we are some sort of re-run of Healy's WRP. Go near us and your photographs might end up in the Iranian Embassy!

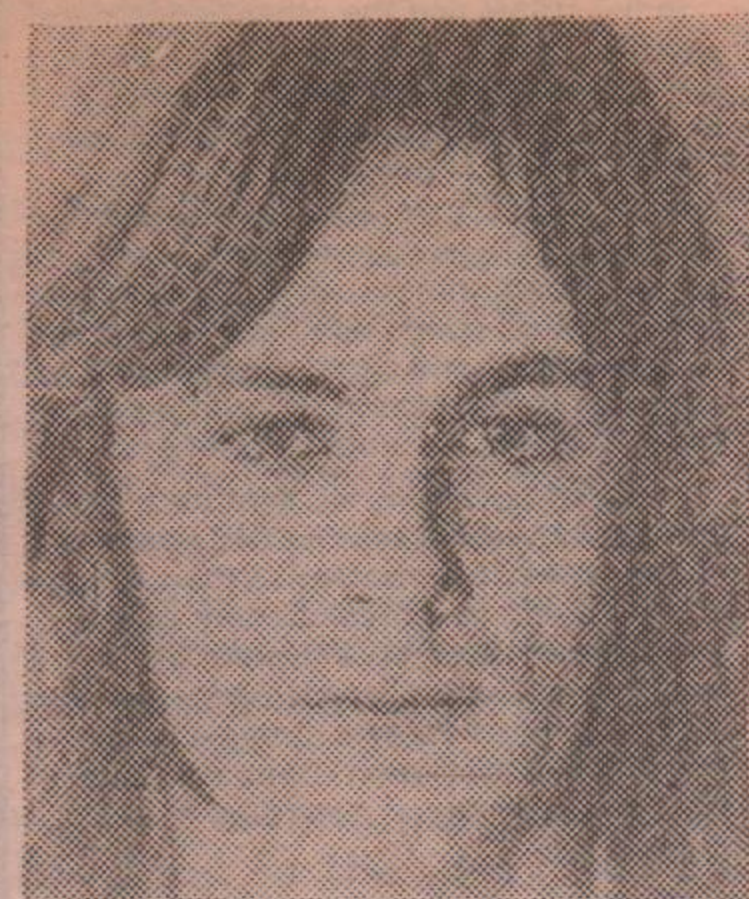
Catch yourself on comrade!

Yours fraternally
Dave Stocking (*Workers Power*)

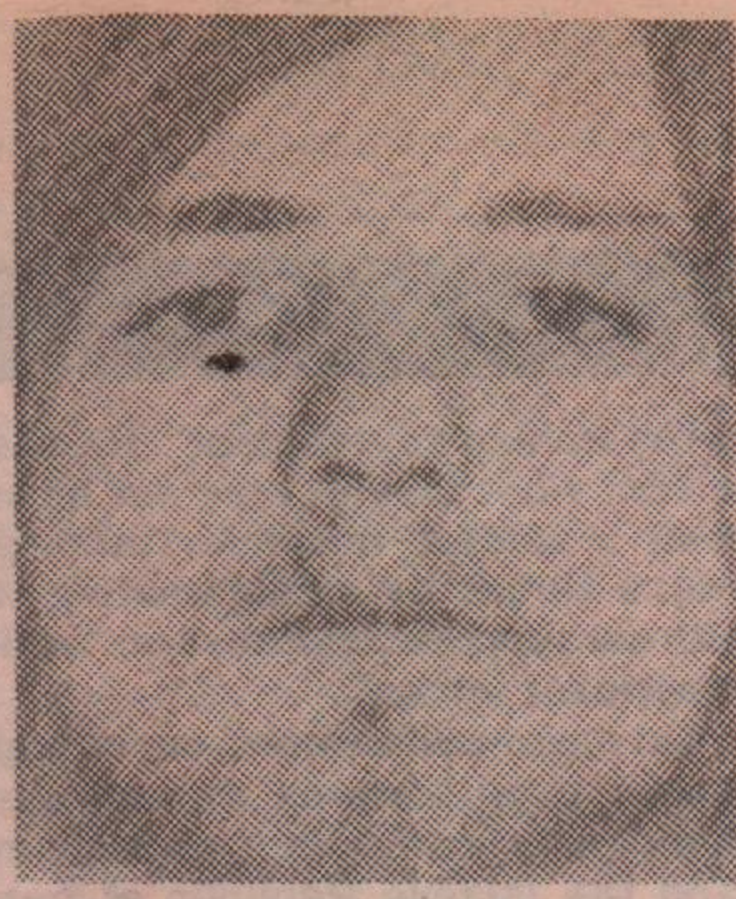
Workers Power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!



Paul Hill



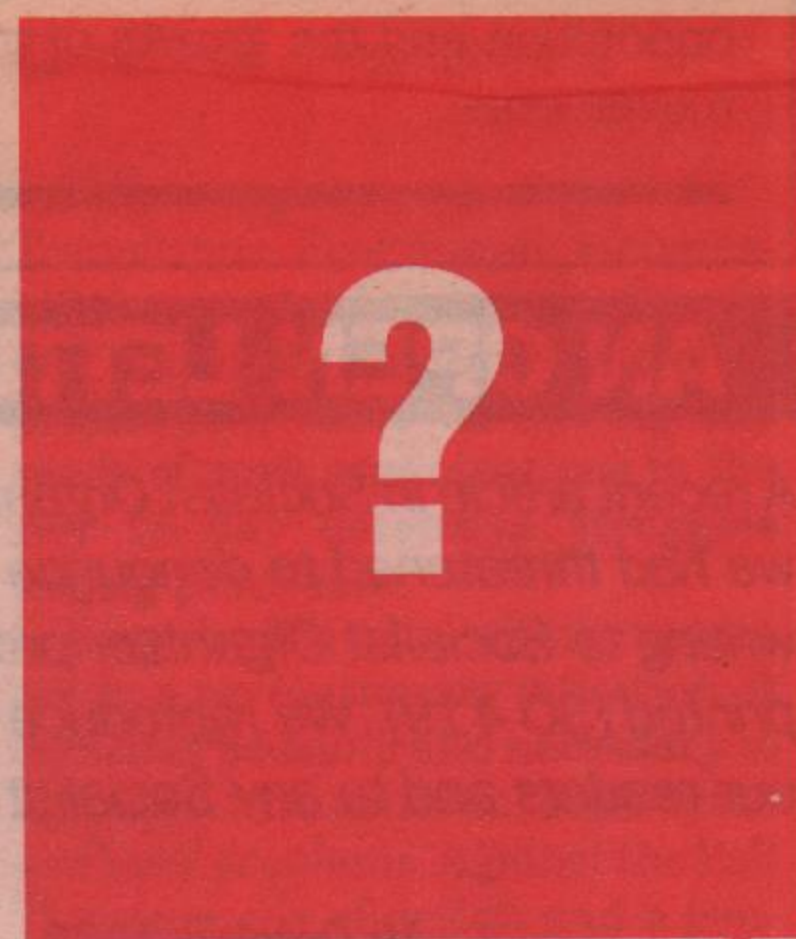
Paddy Armstrong



Carole Richardson



Gerry Conlon



Who next?

THE RELEASE of the Guildford Four has been met with an explosion of joy amongst the Irish community and socialists. The British press and bourgeois politicians have been forced to admit that, in the words of Lord Lane, "police officers seriously misled the court. In fact they lied".

Attention has rightly focused on the continued imprisonment of the Birmingham Six and other Irish prisoners convicted on "confessions" whilst in the hands of a police force accused of lies, torture and corruption.

The Guildford Four were locked away for 15 years. Paul Hill was brutally beaten whilst in detention and spent 1,400 days in solitary confinement. Another of the four, Gerard Conlon, had to suffer the pain of his father—also convicted on the same "evidence"—dying in prison.

We are told that the Guildford Four were victims of a "miscarriage of justice". The television and press would have us believe that this case is an example of our otherwise fair and impartial legal system making a rare mistake.

This is just a continuation of the basic lie that kept the Four locked away for so long. The whole British ruling establishment wants to keep from the working class the

real background to this grisly affair: a systematic conspiracy extending upwards into the highest layers of the British state.

We can be sure that the only people brought to task will be low and possibly middle-ranking police officers who fabricated or withheld evidence. But what about Peter Imbert, now head of the Metropolitan Police, who carried out interviews with Paul Hill following his arrest?

Flimsy

What about Sir Michael Havers, former Attorney General who, as chief prosecutor of the Four, must have known how flimsy the evidence was? And why did it take so long to examine the police file which proved the innocence of the Four?

No judicial enquiry can be expected to answer these questions. Why?

Because in the early 1970s all those fighting British im-

perialism's occupation of Ireland faced a huge co-ordinated propaganda campaign against them. The police were told to get convictions irrespective of who they arrested. And as Gerard Conlon, one of the four said after his release, "If you're Irish and you're arrested for a terrorist, political type of offence, you don't stand a chance".

The continued military occupation of the Six Counties of Northern Ireland makes the whole range of repressive measures necessary for Britain. Censorship, paid informers, detention without trial, non-jury courts, torture or plain murder, it's all the same to Thatcher and Labour in quelling the revolt of the anti-unionist Irish.

There are many more victims of British "justice" rotting in jail, notably the Birmingham Six, the Winchester Three and Tottenham Three—all banged away on uncorroborated confession evidence of frame-ups. All these should be released im-

mediately and unconditionally.

But when it comes to the attitude the working class should take to the bosses' system of injustice, we should not just call for the release of people who were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and are not responsible for the deeds for which they were convicted.

Resistance

Britain has no right to rule occupy and repress the Irish people, as it has done for the last 800 years. The resistance of the Irish people, including the armed struggle of the IRA is justified. We should demand the release of all political prisoners in British jails.

Building on the outrage generated by the release of the Guildford Four, such a campaign needs is urgently needed. We need to fight not just the conspiracy to "pervert the course of justice" but the conspiracy against the Irish people as a whole. ■

INSIDE

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... **HOW MANY MORE?**

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Stalinism in crisis

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