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2 YEARS OF TORY RULE ARE 2 YEARS TOO MANY

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

The People's March was organised to coincide with two years of Tory rule. But it also highlighted two years of treacherous trade union and Labour Party leadership. The 1980 steel strike could well have developed into a General Strike but for the blocking activity of the TUC General Council and Bill Sirs. Derek Robinson lost his job primarily because Duffy and Co. derailed the spontaneous strike action taken in Robinson's defence. Countless battles against redundancy all over the country have been wrecked by trade union leaders prepared to sell jobs. In the current civil servants' campaign the leaders have tried every trick in the book to avoid what the rank and file so obviously want - an all out strike.

In the battle against the cuts Labour Party leaders like Roy Hattersley have told Labour Councils not to break the law and to make cuts as well as put up the rates and rents. Within the Labour Party itself where working class pressure has forced through important democratic reforms.

Michael Foot and Denis Healey have declared their determination to reverse the historic decisions of the Special Wembley Conference. Everywhere workers turn in the fight against Thatcher we find bureaucrats blocking the way forward.

However the tide is turning. The sheer size of the People's March demonstration in London on May 31st marked a qualitative step forward. The bureaucrats cannot keep the lid on such enormous pressure. Another gigantic march is planned to take place in Cardiff on July 4th. But this shouldn't be allowed to be just another appeal for jobs. The Cardiff march must be built as an angry and aggressive demand for the bringing down of the Government. The Cardiff march must demand of the TUC and NEC that they set the national fight in motion.

The Cardiff march comes at a very appropriate time. Ambulance-men are taking action. The Railway unions are threatening action. The miners are threatening more action over pit closures. But above all at this very moment civil servants are locked into a struggle to the end with the Tories. Their campaign is

not just about pay. It raises the real possibility of finishing off the Tory Government once and for all.

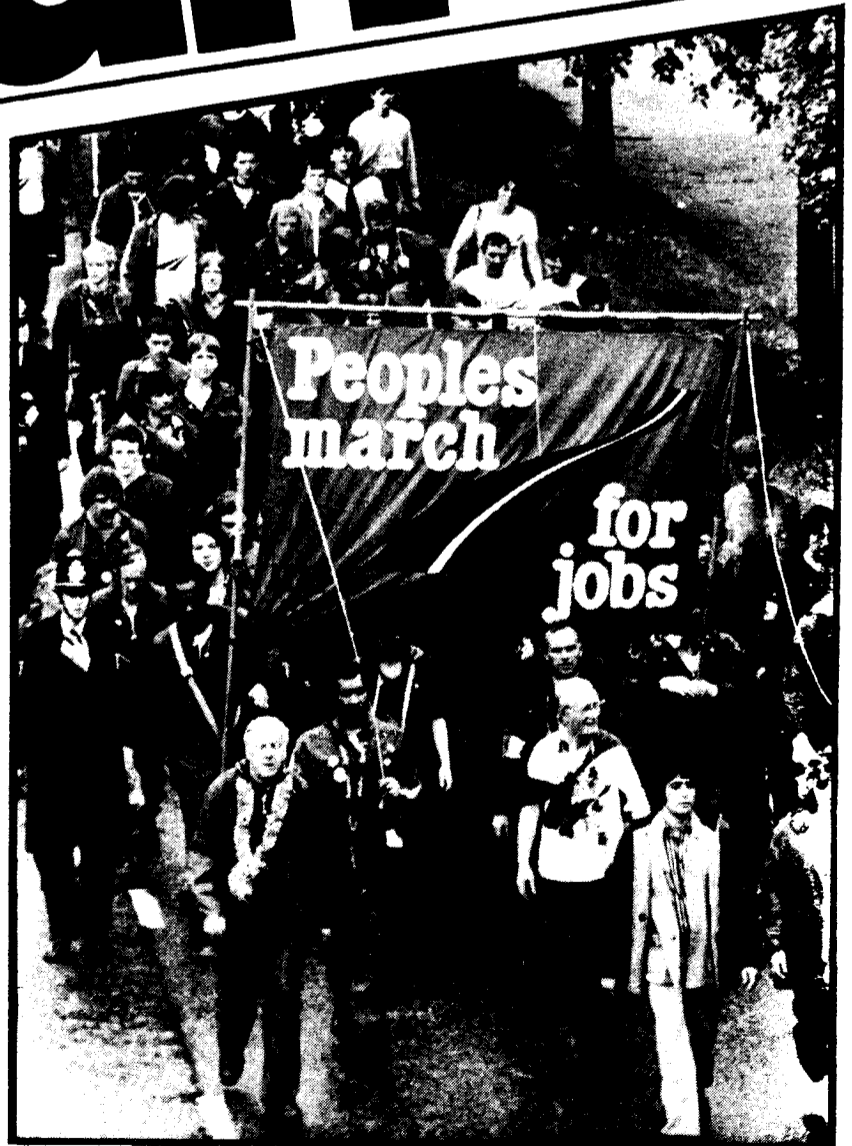
But to do this we must organise to force the Labour and trade union leaders to make a clear call for a campaign to bring down the Tories. Every strike like the civil servants' action should be a strike to cripple the Government, make it impossible for them to govern.

Central to this is the struggle in the Labour Party. Foot and Healey's campaign against Benn is more than a battle against the leader of the left. It is an attempt to block those workers who are attempting to use the Labour Party against the Tories and who are trying to make the Labour Party respond to workers' needs.

We must fight these blockers! Support Benn against Healey for Deputy Leader and strike a blow against the Labour right wing and their supporters in the leadership of the trade union movement like Basnett, Duffy and Co. who are precisely the people in the TUC who are most directly blocking the struggle to bring down the Tories.

Fight to put an end to the blockage!

Turn the Cardiff demonstration into a march to bring down the Tories!



BRING DOWN THE TORIES!

NO! to Michael Foot's Trick

Tony Benn for Deputy Leader!

Against the wishes of its national officers the ASTMS Conference voted to support Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party. ASLEF did the same, along with several other unions. Frank Chappell, true to form, railroaded support for Healey through the EPTU.

That there is widespread rank and file support for Benn was also shown on the People's March, where Benn spoke a number of times. On each occasion he received strong applause. Despite the fact that he did not call once for the March to bring down the Tories, he was seen as a key anti-Thatcher leader.

Now John Silkin has entered the race as an "alternative" left candidate to Tony Benn. Silkin has said he can unite the Labour Party. This means unity around the status quo, where the leadership remains unaccountable to the rank and file. Silkin is there to try and split Benn's vote. NO SUPPORT MUST BE GIVEN TO HIM WHATSOEVER.

The right-wing are trying to overcome mandatory reselection of MPs by the trick of having a "short-list of one". This would mean that only the outgoing MP was listed and would make a mockery of reselection. Tony Benn correctly led opposition to this in the NEC.

At the same time, on the basis of Conference policy for unilateral nuclear disarmament, Benn voted with the Labour left against Tory weapons proposals in the Commons. He was accused by Foot of breaking Shadow Cabinet discipline. What is this "discipline"? It is nothing other than Foot defending the idea that Labour MPs in Parliament can act regardless of party policy. In Foot's view, Conference policy is intended for speechifying, not for Parliament. Shadow Cabinet discipline on this basis is the discipline of the supporters of the ruling class in the parliamentary party. It must be broken. Benn is right to break such discipline to defend the interests of the working class.

Equally contentious are Benn's statements on Ireland, which have also brought down the public wrath of Michael Foot. *Socialist Newsletter* would take a different line to Tony Benn on many aspects of the Irish question. Benn says: "The real question is, how do you break out of a situation, of which at least a major part is caused by the presence of British troops, who are alleged to be there to solve the situation." The answer is clear — withdraw the troops! Benn has yet to give it. He has yet to rouse the Labour Party ranks on Ireland. He says he did argue at least for the opening of a discussion in the Shadow Cabinet and the Tribune Group and "got no support". This is an indictment of the Tribunites in the face of four hunger-strikers' deaths. In the Shadow Cabinet we expect no less than craven prostration before imperialism from Concannon and Healey and, clearly, from Foot.



Benn's challenge to Healey... is also a challenge to Foot

The answer does not lie there, but in the ranks of the Labour Party and the unions. *It is here that Benn must open the discussion on Ireland.*

Michael Foot has publicly challenged Tony Benn to run against him for leader. Since Foot is backing those who do not want Benn to run against Healey, and Healey makes speeches endorsing Foot as leader, we can see a clear anti-Benn bloc within the parliamentary apparatus. Benn's challenge to Healey is a challenge — the first under the new rules — to the way in which both Foot and Healey were selected by the PLP. In that sense it is also a challenge to Foot.

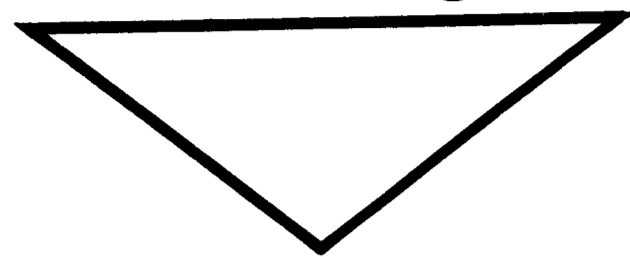
Michael Foot's confrontation with Benn is really one with the electoral college, and what it represents in the ranks of the party. The crisis which Foot, Healey, Silkin, Hattersley and others feel closing about them like a noose is not so much precipitated by Benn's politics. Benn has managed in the past to act as a loyal cabinet minister. It is the nature of the movement backing Benn that worries them. That movement is, in many respects, the core of the organised working class. It wants not only to see a more radical Labour Party programme but also to drive the Tories from office.

In this sense the bloc to stop Benn becoming deputy leader is a front to defend not only the unstable leadership of Michael Foot but also the whole apparatus which erected him as its stopgap. Behind that stands the place of Parliament and the right of an elected government — the Tory government — to savagely attack the working class for another three years.

Benn is not a revolutionary. He is a left reformist. There are limits beyond which he will not go. His programme is insufficient to meet the needs of the working class. *Socialist Newsletter* does not support Benn for deputy leader in order to blur the differences between his politics and Trotskyism. His campaign offers a chance for all militant workers, members of the Labour Party and affiliated unions, to further shake the foundations of the bureaucracy and to drive the likes of Healey out of the Labour Party.

In the run-up to Brighton we must not forget that the main task of the workers' movement — throwing out Thatcher — is being blocked by Foot and Healey. A victory for Benn would create better conditions in which to mobilise the Labour Party and the unions to finish the job.

Labour Towards Brighton



Maintain the Wembley Decisions

The fight to democratise the Labour Party, which reached a crucial stage at Brighton in 1979, has now broadened considerably to challenge many aspects of the right-wing bureaucracy's hold on the Party. Benn's recent attempt to make the Shadow Cabinet responsible to the PLP and follow Conference policy touches the very core of the problem. Foot knew this only too well when he criticised Benn in the Tory press for irresponsibility.

The Shadow Cabinet has for long been able to mask its flouting of Conference policy through appeals to the sovereignty of the PLP. The reality is altogether different. Far from influencing and informing the policy decisions of the Shadow Cabinet, the PLP is little more than a rubber stamp. Ernie Ross and William McKelvey pointed out in a recent issue of *Labour Weekly*: "The PLP as a body neither develops nor promotes Party policy in any coherent way in the Commons. The weekly PLP meetings are little short of a farce, with usually two-thirds of Labour MPs not even bothering to attend. Unlike every other organ of the Party, votes and motions are a rarity in the PLP". The functioning of the PLP is one of the questions that those fighting for democracy in the Labour Party will raise at Brighton in October. Information for Party members on the workings of the PLP, particularly regarding the production of verbatim reports and voting records, are an important component working to dislodge the hold of the apparatus over the functions of the Party.

This applies particularly to the question of who should write the Manifesto. The narrow defeat of a constitutional amendment at Blackpool last year giving the NEC final responsibility for the Manifesto, leaves power jointly in the hands of the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet. In effect, the Party leader, operating behind the facade of the PLP, can veto entire political programmes based on Conference policy, as Wilson did in 1973 and Callaghan in

1974. The fight on this principle must continue at Brighton this year. Even to get the issue on the agenda, it will be necessary to challenge the "three-year-rule" which automatically excludes previously-defeated constitutional amendments that have been resubmitted by CLPs.

The three-year-rule is clearly yet another weapon in the armoury of the apparatus — it does not apply to the NEC itself. Thus the leadership has been able to mount a fresh campaign on the central issue of Labour Party democracy — the electoral college. The Wembley Special Conference struck a decisive blow at the power of the apparatus. It is of immense importance in breaking the vicious circle whereby the PLP elects the leader who assumes absolute political control, and it opens the way for demands from the working class to cross the historic divide from Party Conference to the PLP and the election manifesto. This the apparatus cannot allow. *Indeed the very possibility threatens to explode precisely that contradiction on which the Labour Party rests*: the contradiction between the apparent control of the rank and file over the Party and its policies and the real control of the right-wing bureaucracy, who have turned this historic gain for the working class into a submissive party of safe rule for the ruling class.

The threat that Wembley poses to the future of the apparatus demands defence of these gains as a priority for all members of the Labour Party. Resolutions defending the electoral college of 40-30-30 must pour in both to Brighton and to the NEC. Delegates to Conference from CLPs and affiliated organisations must be mandated to defend Wembley.

The resolution proposed by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy in defence of the Wembley decision deserves the active support of all Party members who want to push home the advantage which was gained at the Wembley Conference.

CLPD RESOLUTION

"This Conference notes that at Wembley the new procedure for electing the Party Leader and Deputy Party Leader was carried by 5,252,000 to 1,860,000 votes, and that the Electoral College gives a

substantial voice to all sections of the Party. In these circumstances Conference believes that the present Electoral College should be given a fair trial and that this question should not be re-opened for the time being."

CIVIL SERVICE DISPUTE

in the balance

by Peter Lane



Like that of the steelworkers in 1980, the civil service dispute has become one of the longest running thorns in the side of this Tory government — indeed the longest running dispute in Britain since the General Strike of 1926. In the same way it contained from the beginning all the elements of a challenge threatening the very existence of the government.

The Tories promised to trim the fat off the civil service in an effort to 'bring bureaucracy under control and so cut taxes'. However we find at most a 5% reduction in manpower — hardly a huge success.

Thatcher's business adviser Sir Derek Raynor proposed the closing down of 120 unemployment benefit offices. Before this could be implemented — indeed in the space of 12 weeks — that figure had to be cut to eight offices, due to the massive rise in unemployment.

Why did Soames offer no increase on his 'final' 7%, thus

strengthening the hand of those calling for all-out national strike action? It has been precisely the serious talk at all the civil service union conferences about a national strike which divided the Cabinet — the 'wets', led by Prior and Soames, looking to up the 7% offer. The all-out indefinite strike, which *Socialist Newsletter* supporters have argued since January is the only way to win the 15% claim, was finally put on the agenda.

On May 26th the General Secretaries over-ruled their Conferences and decided to carry on with selective action.

Thatcher's intransigence was, and still is, a calculated gamble on the ability of the union bureaucrats to hold their members in check. An even bigger constraint for the government is the political problems that would be raised by making concessions to the civil servants after their long militant campaign.

In the midst of all this 70 militants from five different civil service unions from towns up and down the country met in Manchester on June 7th determined to organise against a leadership sell-out and for a national strike.

The phoney 'negotiations' with the government broke down on the eve of the Manchester Conference and the demand for a national strike broke through to the surface and won the day.

The Tories find themselves in a position where they dare not make concessions, after the blows dealt them by the miners, waterworkers, firemen and others. The union leaders, facing developments like the Manchester Conference, cannot simply dump the whole campaign as they would like to.

The Peoples' March for Jobs brought to a head and united the fierce resistance being shown by Thatcher's civil servants. The march was held on June 12th and was a success.

knight of the long knives

By Simon Banks

"We will continue to protect essential services and existing job-holders". So said Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Council, proposing £11 million of expenditure cuts in March this year.

On 22nd May 1981 a letter signed by Lambeth's Director of Housing was sent to NALGO informing the union of the new date for the closure of Clapham Common Northside Reception Centre for homeless people. The closure, brought forward from October to July 10th 1981, means the loss of a considerable number of mainly clerical-based jobs. Only two members of the staff have been offered comparable jobs in the Housing Department. The rest, mainly women, have been offered jobs as caretakers on council estates! The letter from the Housing Director includes a final paragraph stating: "In accordance with the provisions of the Employment Protection Act this letter constitutes formal commencement of the consultation period in a situation of potential redundancies."

Ted Knight had given assurances that there would be no redundancies. As well as the staff in Housing being threatened with redundancies, 120 architects and planners are to go. These have been offered junior clerical vacancies in other departments.

Ted Knight said when he greeted the People's Marchers near Watford: "There can be no compromise with the Thatcher government!" So much for fine words!

It is vital to build opposition to redundancies, redeployment to lower grades and recruitment freezes in Lambeth. It is necessary to channel this opposition into effective action to force the Labour-controlled Council to cancel the redundancies and to demand the

Anti-racists take up the fight in Coventry

Two racist murders, the fire bombing of an Indian temple, 'White Defence Force' attacks on the Labour Party and Communist Party HQs and NF attacks on Blacks in the City centre, all fuelled the militancy of the predominantly Asian anti-fascist demonstration in Coventry on May 23rd.

Asian delegations came from all over the Midlands, and although trade union and Labour Party banners were noticeable by their absence some 15,000 people marched into the City centre Precinct where Satnam Singh Gill was murdered by fascists earlier this year.

The Asian organisations like the Indian Workers Association raised the slogan 'Self Defence is the only way' and were obviously well prepared for fascist provocation and police harassment.

About 100 fascists appeared on Coventry Cathedral steps protected by hundreds of police. Their intent-

ion was clearly to provoke the march. The police tried to crush the anti-fascists into a tiny square in an attempt to prevent them driving the fascists off the streets.

However despite the use of horses and snatch squads the Asian demonstrators chanting 'Brixton - Belfast' forced the police to retreat and disperse the fascists under a hail of missiles.

This highly organised demonstration struck a serious blow against the fascists in Coventry and their police protectors.

We should have more demonstrations like this!

Boycott Scarman!

The Scarman Enquiry into the upsurge and battles with the police in Brixton will be a WHITEWASH. We can say this in advance because no white ruling class judge, with the trappings of a criminal law-court, can interpret the frustrations and aspirations of the Black youth of Brixton. These were born out of conditions beyond the experience of his noble lordship.

Since the battles there has been a total insistence from the police that they only did what was necessary. We have also seen various 'experts' calling for the police to be armed with plastic bullets and tear gas.

It is not enough merely to point out the social oppression of Blacks as the cause of the fighting. This explains nothing useful and nothing new. Political action by the Black community and workers' organisations to prevent the police from staging affairs like "Operation Swamp" is the only way forward.

In this connection, it is sickening to see the about-turn made by Ted Knight, Labour leader of Lambeth Council. Just after the upsurge he called for the disbanding of the

SPG, "public control" over the Metropolitan Police and an end to mass policing in Black areas. He also spoke against collaboration with the Tory Home Office-inspired Scarman Enquiry.

Now Lambeth Town Hall houses that very same Enquiry and the Lambeth Labour Group, with one honourable exception, Cllr Steve Stannard who voted against, have supported Scarman. *Ted Knight did not vote against.*

This shameful collaboration with Scarman is a betrayal of Knight's previous position, one which was shared by the Black community of Lambeth.

The Scarman Enquiry is a con-trick. Must we remind Ted Knight of the outcome of the coroner's enquiry into the New Cross fire? WE EXPECT THE SAME FROM SCARMAN.

No self-respecting member of the labour movement or anyone who values the truth will touch Scarman.

**Boycott Scarman!
Disband the SPG!
Amnesty for the arrested in
Brixton!**

Trade Unionist Against H-Block



PADDY HEALY

Paddy Healy is a 36 year old Physics Lecturer, married with two children. He has been active in republican socialist politics and in the trade union movement since 1964, when he joined the Labour Party. He was elected to the national Administrative Council of the Labour Party in 1970, but was expelled for his opposition to Coalition and his support for a 32 county workers' party before he was allowed to take his seat.

Since 1968 he has been an active member of the Teachers' Union of Ireland, and served as a member of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. As a member of the Executive of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions he was a leader of the massive tax marches in 1979.

In 1978 it was Paddy Healy, as a delegate from the Dublin Council of Trade Unions who raised the H-Block issue at the Annual Conference of the ICTU for the first time.

An active member of the H-Block campaign since its foundation, he is secretary of the Dublin Trade Union H-Block Group and a member of the National Trade Union H-Block Armagh Committee. He is a member of the League for a Workers Republic, Irish section of the Fourth International (International Committee) and a contributor to "Workers' Republic". He is an editor of the "The Irish Worker", which campaigns to re-establish the policies of Connolly in the labour movement.

Paddy Healy is a signatory to the National H-Block Armagh Committee election pledge, which calls for:

- SUPPORT FOR THE FIVE DEMANDS OF PRISONERS
- THE EXPULSION OF THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR
- THE ENDING OF THE HAUGHEY/THATCHER TALKS
- THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE TROOPS FROM THE BORDER

VOTE H-BLOCK! VOTE HEALY!

VOTE H-BLOCK! VOTE HEALY NO 1!

VOTE AGAINST THATCHER AND HAUGHEY

Four fighters for Irish freedom have died. Thatcher is responsible. Four more are dying. She must be stopped now.

Haughey did nothing to stop her. He is her accomplice. He must be stopped now.

Fitzgerald and Cluskey support Haughey against the hunger strikers.

Haughey is also responsible for unemployment and rising prices. He is responsible for the robbery of pay packets through taxation to pay to keep Britain in Ireland, to pay to keep an army on the Border, to pay to keep Ireland divided. These millions of pounds are sorely needed to provide jobs for unemployed youth.

SAVE THEIR LIVES! WIN THEIR DEMANDS!

The Hunger Strikers are dying for Irish unity, freedom and independence. They are dying for an end to poverty and unemployment, North and South. They are dying for us all. They need your support. They need your vote.

VOTE AGAINST THE PRISONERS' ENEMIES

All the Leinster House politicians support Thatcher.

Vote against Haughey, Thatcher's accomplice!

Vote against Fine Gael, who called for Thatcher's victory!

The Labour Party opposes the prisoners - show them that they do not speak for the working people, the unemployed and the youth of Dublin -

Vote against the Labour Party!

Sinn Fein the Workers' Party voted against the prisoners' demands on Dublin Corporation. A vote for them is a vote for Thatcher!

NO TO LEINSTER HOUSE

There are no prisoners standing in this constituency. I am standing to give you a chance to show your support for their demands. The prisoners are fighting for a united Ireland, a 32 county parliament. Leinster House has kept Ireland divided, it has provided nothing but poverty, repression and unemployment. I will not set foot in Leinster House.

DON'T LET THE PRISONERS DIE!

SHOW THATCHER AND HAUGHEY WHERE YOU STAND!
WORKERS, YOUTH, UNEMPLOYED, PEOPLE OF ALL PARTIES AND OF NONE -

VOTE H-BLOCK : VOTE HEALY

USE
YOUR VOTE
TO SAVE
THEIR LIVES



SUPPORT
THE
HUNGER
STRIKE
DEMANDS

NO PARTY WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT PAPER

HEALY P. 1

1000 VOTE FOR H BLOCK CANDIDATE

IRISH TROTSKYIST RUNS IN ELECTION

A number of candidates ran in the recent General Election in the Irish Republic on a basis of support for the Hunger Strikers in Long Kesh. The best publicized of these were the prisoner candidates, of whom two were elected to the Dail.

But, as well as these a number of candidates from other organizations supporting the fight for the prisoners demands went forward. Among these were two members of Peoples Democracy, sister organization of the British IMG. Paddy Healy, a leader of the League for a Workers Republic, Irish section of the Fourth International (IC) to which the SLG belongs, ran as a trade unionist against the H Blocks.

Healy stood in a largely working class constituency in the north east of Dublin. His campaign was marked by the number of working class youth who participated enthusiastically in the canvassing and street campaigning. A highlight of the campaign, which the press chose to ignore, was a ten car cavalcade round the housing estates to the sound of Irish traditional music and welcomed by hundreds of people, especially the youth. On the day of the election itself Healy's campaign machine revealed its strong side on precisely these estates. Paddy Healy's campaign was des-

igned to show that the working class of the South supports the aims of the Hunger Strike and wants to see British withdrawal and a united Ireland with a working class government.

Paddy Healy received over a thousand first preference votes and came in ahead of the two Irish Labour Party candidates in the area, who were associated with the pro-British policy of that party's leadership. The leader of the Irish LP in fact lost his seat!

Where there was a Hunger Strike candidate the working class demonstrated its support for the anti-imperialist fight in the Six Counties. It is estimated that if one had stood in every area some 200,000 people would have given first preference votes. This would have changed the face of Irish political life and been a massive challenge to the collaboration between Irish ruling class politicians and the Thatcher government.

The fact that Paddy Healy, well known as a trade union militant and a Trotskyist, got so many first preference votes on the basis of support for the Hunger Strikers shows the degree of implantation which the League for a Workers Republic has within the campaign for political status and British withdrawal in Ireland.



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to save jobs kick the tories out!

NOTES OF A PEOPLES MARCHER

The most immediately striking experience for those of us on the Peoples' March was to see first hand the destruction of the industrial base in Britain. As we marched through places like Walsall, Sandwell, Smethwick and in and around Birmingham literally every other factory was closed, was about to close or had suffered drastic reductions in job levels.

For any of us that thought otherwise this experience demonstrated that all those who talk about 'economic recovery' just around the corner are quite simply lying.

Veteran militant Harry McShane explained at one of the meetings that in the capitalist crisis of the 20s and 30s, factories would close for differing periods of time to reopen at a later date. Today industrial plants are being closed and then knocked down.

The response of the Asian community was a recurring feature of the March in those areas where the Black community is most heavily concentrated. Throughout the West Midlands and in Southall, Asians organised through political and religious organisations, welcomed the March not only with meals and accommodation but more importantly at the political level. The Asian community clearly identified with the March as an opportunity to express their hostility to the Thatcher government and their

determination to unite with the organised labour movement. More often than not the most militant speeches made at the countless rallies we attended were delivered by Asian speakers.

The biggest receptions we received were obviously in the big cities and towns. But what came as a surprise was the scale of support in the small villages we passed through. Even in the most remote location the message was the same 'Go to London and get Thatcher out!' In towns not known nationally for their Labour tradition huge turn outs greeted the March. When we arrived in Bedford Jack Dromey told us we were entering the Tory heartlands of the South East. In fact the reception in Hemel Hempstead was one of the biggest we experienced. Which just goes to show that Parliamentary patterns do not tell the whole truth about the strengths of the labour movement.

Coventry was the best reception outside London because the march directly reached the shop-floor. Several thousand workers took strike action to join the March. This showed the way and broke through a situation that was very evident in other towns, where workers clearly wanted to join the march but hesitated at factory gates waiting for a call from union officials, a call they never got.

The speakers at the rallies can be divided into two varieties. Those who sought to patronise us with talk about the 'conscience of the nation', and those like Benn, Skinner and Scargill who spoke to the march several times and made left speeches full of anti-Tory rhetoric and talk of what the next Labour government will do. However at no time did they link the March itself to the struggle to bring down the Tories. Consequently every rally including the big one in Trafalgar Square was left suspended full of potential but with no way forward proposed.

These problems were at the centre of the tensions which existed amongst the marchers. All the way down to London and especially on the Yorkshire leg the march organisers attempted to suppress anti-government slogans and turn the March into a trooping of jobless paupers who would touch the conscience of the nation. Communist Party members repeatedly argued about the necessity to keep the march 'broad' by which they meant don't link the March to bringing down the government. This totally contradicted what the thousands of workers who supported the March were saying. Indeed, the movement around the March was very broad precisely because working class people identified the March with their desire to get rid of the Tories.

was the peoples march just another demo?

As the labour movement swings into action for the Cardiff demonstration what kind of balance sheet can we draw on the Peoples March? First of all it is necessary to recognise that this was *not just another march*. All those who take such a line have failed to appreciate the scale of the March.

When was the last time the TUC Regions called a month long campaign which travelled the length of England and inspired demonstrations in every town and city it passed through, and the biggest marches seen since the war in Sheffield, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Southall?

When was the last time the TUC Regions organised 500 unemployed workers from all over the country to create a national focus on unemployment?

When was the last time 500 unemployed workers converged on a provincial town like Northampton chanting 'Kick out the Tories' in complete defiance of the March organisers' instructions not to chant anti-governmental slogans?

When was the last time 2,000 Rolls Royce workers took strike action to join a march, as they did in Coventry? What is more, the strike action taken in several industrial plants in Coventry and again in Southall represent the first political strikes against Thatcher. The workers involved clearly identified the Peoples March as a campaign against the Tory Government.

Who can deny the tremendous significance of the Asian working class in the West Midlands and Southall waging a full scale campaign amongst the Asian community to support the March?

Only recent CND marches have matched the enormous number of youth mobilised throughout the month of May.

It is generally agreed that the May 31st march in London was the biggest demonstration in the capital since 1934, including the mobilisations against Heath's Industrial Relations Act in 1972.

On top of all this the 200,000 in Hyde Park on May 31st took the opportunity to express the views of wide layers of the working class on the Labour Party Deputy Leadership battle. Denis Healey was barracked so ferociously he had to cut short his speech mid sentence, and

then had to suffer the humiliation of a tumultuous reception for Tony Benn. In fact the Deputy Leadership question became a central element of the March. Speaking to the March several times before it reached London, Benn cleverly used the March as part of his campaign.

These are the real facts of the Peoples March which are ignored only by those who believe that the working class is not yet ready and capable of bringing down the Tories.

It is true of course that the March was not without problems. Indeed, just as the March concentrated the desire of the working class to bring down the Government, it also exposed the Labour and Trade Union leadership's policy of least resistance to Thatcher. At one level the TUC General Council lifted not one finger of support. But also the TUC Regional organisers went to great lengths to suppress the desire of the marchers themselves to turn the March into a campaign to bring down the Tories. The activity of both right and left wing bureaucrats prevented the March and the mobilisations around it being much bigger.

But what has to be said is that *despite* the activity of the trade union bureaucracy, there was still a massive response from the working class which marks a qualitative development of the struggle against the Tories following up the action of the miners in February.

The effect of the Peoples March on the bureaucrats has been to widen the cracks between different wings of the trade union apparatus about how to proceed. Murray is facing strong criticism for not stepping up the fight. Already the General Council has been forced to talk of mobilising unemployed school leavers. But as Murray and the organisers of the Peoples March well know, this will not satisfy the desire of the working class to finish with the Tories.

It is in this context the Cardiff march is so important. The labour movement leaders will try to hold the march within the constraints of a relatively passive protest against unemployment. It is imperative that Labour Party and trade union members as well as the unemployed organise to turn the Cardiff march into one which openly calls for the bringing down of the Tories and in solidarity with the civil servants' struggle against the Government.



Marchers in Northampton

Socialist Newsletter waged a vigorous campaign around the Peoples' March. From the very beginning **Socialist Newsletter** supporters were clear that the March should not go to the Tories begging for jobs but should be a march to bring them down, and we organised on that basis.

In Trades Councils, Labour Parties and Trade Union branches resolutions were carried calling upon the T.U.C. to make the March one against the Tory Government, and to call for a million on the streets when the marchers reached London.

Socialist Newsletter supporters fought in the Labour movement for the sponsorship of the **THROW OUT THATCHER** banner. This banner took part in all the local support marches which greeted the 500 marchers from West Bromwich to Trafalgar Square. It received strong support from amongst the marchers, especially as it entered Greater London, from local Trade Unionists and the Asian communities in both Birmingham and Southall. The banner said bluntly and clearly what the marchers and those who met them through-

out the country were saying. . . **"MAGGIE OUT"**.

The fight to force the T.U.C. to break from their line of least resistance involved Labour M.P.s, Labour Councillors, A.S.T.M.S. and C.P.S.A. Conference delegates, Labour Parties, Trades Councils, N.U.T. members and G.M.W.U. Branches. As part of the campaign a Lobby of Parliament was organised. It was attended by Labour Party members across London, including 3 Borough Councillors, and the 12 M.P.s listed below who put their names to the banner and the call

for the Government to be brought down.

Significantly the banner also received widespread support from amongst those civil servants who are currently in dispute with the Government. As well as C.P.S.A. Branches supporting the banner many of those conference delegates who voted for all out strike action pledged their support as well.

We shall continue our campaign in the battle to build the Cardiff march and towards the Labour Party and TUC Conferences in the autumn.

SPONSORS OF THE BANNER INCLUDED:

M.P.s Frank Allun Jo Richardson
Reg Race Ian Mikardo
Alf Dubbs Ernie Roberts
Jack Straw Clive Soley
Ernie Ross John Tilley
Joan Maynard
Stuart Holland
Willie M. Kelvey
Wood Green C.L.P. 2 Haringay
Councillors 1 Lambeth Councillor
95 A.S.T.M.S. Conference Delegates
64 C.P.S.A. Conference Delegates
C.P.S.A. D.E. Central and West
London Branches.



Support for the Peoples March in Coventry.

**SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER
PUBLIC MEETING**

'The Peoples March concentrated the hostility of workers against the Tories, an all-out civil service strike could bring down the Government.' So said a prominent member of the London CPSA to a **Socialist Newsletter** public meeting at Friends Meeting House on June 12th.

The meeting was attended predominantly by civil servants in struggle against the Government, teachers involved in the campaign to elect left winger Bernie Regan against the NUT right wing who victimised the Lambeth NUT leaders, and by Labour Party members from all over London.

They heard Peoples Marchers John Ford describe the struggle amongst the marchers to turn the March into a campaign to bring down the Tories and the clear anti-governmental sentiment expressed throughout the country.

A **Socialist Labour Group** speaker described the battle of **Socialist Newsletter** supporters to win labour movement sponsorship for the 'Throw Out Thatcher' banner and the highly favourable impact amongst the marchers of **Socialist Newsletter** leaflets, the theme of which was 'Don't Beg The Tories for Jobs - Bring Them Down'.

200,000 ON THE STREETS

The response to the People's March proved once again that the working class throughout the country is willing to launch a battle to bring down Thatcher.

It also revealed the treachery of the General Council of the TUC. When the March began Len Murray wasn't even prepared to say whether or not he would support it when it came to London. As it turned out the March was so successful Murray had to turn up at Trafalgar Square.

Without doubt the dimensions of the People's March have forced the General Council to draw up plans for more action. At the moment the idea of a mass march of unemployed school leavers is being considered.

Militants throughout the working class must demand that this proposal is turned into a massive national mobilisation of youth. It is crucial that this mobilisation is not a passive appeal to Thatcher for jobs but right from the start is a campaign to bring down the Tories.

It is vital that the General Council is forced to mobilise the whole strength of the labour movement behind this march including the call for a General Strike to greet the march when it comes to London.

The momentum of the Peoples' March must not be lost. The TUC General Council must be forced to lead the struggle to bring down the Tories.

200,000 people marched and lined the streets as the People's Marchers took the final steps from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square on May 31st. There were over 70 trades councils and 140 Constituency Labour Parties.

Above all there were the trades unions, thousands upon thousands of them behind hundreds of banners. Nearly the length and breadth of Britain were represented. Their mood was militant. Their slogan was Tories Out! They came not to plead with Thatcher for jobs but to call for her resignation.

Speeches were listened to with care as the thousands waited to hear how such a mass mobilisation might be developed from the rally into a campaign to throw out the government as soon as possible. Dennis Skinner, Labour MP for Bolsover, received a tremendous ovation when he said, "I'm not prepared to allow the Tories to trample over my class for another three years". Yet this was the high point of the afternoon, when it should have led to calls from Len Murray and other leaders for a national campaign. Murray was jeered by the marchers themselves when he tried to accuse the employed for being callous and not taking up the cases of the unemployed. Most of the speakers tried to avoid the problem of what to do next, preferring instead to offer only empty rhetoric in the name of "human dignity". Denis Healey tried to use the occasion to make an attack on Tony Benn and was booed and hissed into silence by the crowd. Ken Gill told the rally that the TUC "must make sure the momentum is not lost". He is a member of its General Council, he has the power to act. Like many other speakers he left his words in the air and did not call for the Labour and TUC leaders to bring the government down. The president of the Liberal Party, who tried to speak, was howled down. This was no place for capitalist politicians.

The People's March highlighted the degree to which the traditional industries have collapsed in Britain. More than one marcher commented on the industrial wasteland they had marched through in the old manufacturing areas.

In fact, between 1960 and 1980, the number employed in manufacturing fell from 8.2 million to 6.3 million. This figure can be put down in part to changes in the methods of production - new technology - but not totally so. The volume of manufactures as a proportion of total production has also decreased. In 1965, 34% of the value of total output was in industrial manufacturing. By 1980 this was as low as 25%.

The year of 1980, the year of Thatcherite "monetarism", was the worst for a decade. Manufacturing dropped by 15%, the biggest fall since the war. As a result the industrial workforce fell by 10%.

Some argue that there is a shift from industrial to "white collar" jobs and this accounts for the decline in industrial jobs. This is relatively true. But "white collar" jobs have not kept pace with the collapse of industrial ones. To quote the *Guardian*, "Up to 1966, the absolute numbers employed in manufacturing were still rising. . . . Ten years later, more than 1.3 million people had left manufacturing industry. Over the same period, the numbers employed in the public services rose steadily, although not by quite as much as the fall in jobs in manufacturing and other production industries."

The collapse of industrial employment is not peculiar to Britain. Most of the world's industrial countries have begun to suffer from it. In the case of France, America and Britain, it was most evident from the early 1970s. In Japan,

Germany and Italy, numbers in industry rose in the early 1970s, but by 1976 a decline set in there as well.

We are living through a major crisis of industry across the globe.

The "Alternative Economic Strategy" of the Labour left, arguing from a British centred viewpoint, which does not take into account either the subordinate place of Britain in the world economy or the exporting nature of the British economy, calls for import controls. This, it says, will stem "unfair" foreign imports and allow job creation. Such a view ignores the fact that import controls, say against Japan or the USA, would bring about retaliation from our trading partners. Import controls would produce *export controls*, which would not have the desired effect of creating extra jobs.

The answer to the world recession can only be found by the workers' movement *internationally*.

Added to this, import controls would not improve the competitiveness of the generally outmoded machinery of British capitalism, which is one of the underlying reasons for the decline in the share of world markets taken by Britain and for import penetration into Britain. In 1955 Britain accounted for 20% of world trade. By the late 1970s, that was down to 8%.

The fall in competitiveness cannot be blamed on a "lazy" working class. Over the period between 1965 and 1977, jobs in British manufacturing fell by 13%. In the same period output rose by 16%.

As well as the introduction of new machines people worked harder!

The combination of the outmoded structure of capitalism in Britain, with the anti-working class policies of the Tories is driving up the numbers on the dole queue.

BOLIVIA

a corrupt and bloody regime

by Paul Glazier

Under eleven months after the coup d'état in Bolivia which brought General Garcia Meza to power, the ruling junta is faced with an insoluble political and economic crisis. The United States still refuses to recognise the government. The IMF have turned down requests for a loan to help the country through its protracted economic crisis. The military dictatorship has no popular support whatever. Last month Colonel Emilio Lanza tried for the second time to stage a coup to depose the President.

The junta came to power in July 1980 at the head of a network of paramilitary terror squads, aiming to put an end to Bolivia's short-lived 'democratic experiment' and the greater political freedom that had accompanied it. "We are going to stay in power until a new generation of Bolivians is born who may not be contaminated by Communism," promised Interior Minister Colonel Arce Gomez. Arce himself was sacked from the Cabinet at the end of February 1981 before such a project had begun, for being too compromised by Bolivia's long-running cocaine smuggling scandal and the murderous activities of his private army. In fact, February's governmental reshuffle marked a new stage in Garcia Meza's attempts to win international respectability for his regime.

A civilian veneer was introduced by the appointments of Mario Rolon and Jorge Tamayo, well-known as 'moderates' and for links with ex-President Banzer. But these moves have failed dismally, either to secure American recognition for the dictatorship or to broaden its base in Bolivia. Instead the changes have opened new fissures in the armed forces, which a year ago were united behind Garcia Meza's coup.

Already the exiled General Natusch has made two attempts to regain power. The activities of Banzer are of greater significance however, particularly in view of the new openings created for his followers by the Cabinet reshuffle. Banzerites now have strong links with the National Legislative Council, responsible for drafting the Constitution and devising an economic plan. They can also rely on an existing national political apparatus and broad support in the army and the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie. Whilst Garcia Meza has been trying to unite the army and the capitalists behind him by the incorporation of pro-Banzer elements, Banzer himself has been canvassing in Washington for his own return to power. Because of

increased tensions within the Bolivian army and the unpredictable brutality of President Garcia Meza, Banzer recently fled to Argentina to avoid being, as he put it, "eliminated physically" by the President.

The reason for the hostility of the imperialists and the Bolivian capitalists to the government has been its total failure to deal with Bolivia's economic crisis. The country is 3.5 billion dollars in debt and the junta is unable to raise a loan from the IMF, who are demanding in return a restoration of social order and an Austerity Plan. Given the sharpness of the unresolved class antagonisms in Bolivia, the dictatorship is unable to guarantee either. In an effort to economise, the cost of petrol has been increased 140 per cent, electricity 100 per cent, and bread 100 per cent, but even these measures are in-

sufficient to satisfy the IMF.

Another key factor behind the IMF's intransigence and Washington's coolness towards the Bolivian junta is the latter's deep involvement in the large-scale illegal trafficking of cocaine. Exports of the drug have doubled in the last year to about 1.6 billion dollars, and the half-hearted attempts of the Bolivian authorities to prevent the traffic are viewed internationally as laughably inadequate. This fact lies at the heart of Reagan's refusal to promise the aid and arms that he willingly supplied to other Latin American dictatorships. Revelations unearthed by the American media concerning the scale and depth of governmental involvement in the cocaine traffic have produced a scandal of international proportions. As *Newsweek* pointed out: "Garcia Meza took power on July 17th through a coup d'état that was aided and

financed by the Bolivian cocaine magnates. . . For the first time in history, the traffickers have come out of the shadows and bought themselves a government."

Above all, the isolation and instability of the government has been increased by the movement of the oppressed within Bolivia itself. Widespread terror was meted out in the wake of the coup. Most notorious was the massacre of miners and their families last August at Caracoles, where an estimated 900 people were killed, wounded or 'disappeared'. A total of 500 people are thought to have been killed, 2000 wounded and 2500 jailed since the coup. Trade unions have borne the brunt of the repression following the defeat of last year's General Strike, but the peasants, students, the Church and political parties have all been the target of the junta's barbarism. Despite this, the working class has

continued to battle against the government's attempts to inflict on it total pauperization and starvation. In November, miners struck in Huanuni and Siglo XX and in January there was a 48-hour stoppage to protest against the Austerity Plan.

For Reagan, and imperialism internationally, the removal of the discredited Garcia Meza regime is desirable and increasingly necessary. The imperialists' first choice would be to install a new administration under ex-President Banzer, who has army backing and is consciously putting himself forward for such a role. For the working class there is only one perspective: continued resistance against the dictatorship and the corrupt ruling class it represents, a perspective fortified by the militant traditions of the miners and industrial workers of Bolivia.



Workers Militia in La Paz

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

hands off the socialist opposition! release the detainees!

by George White

A new wave of arrests of human rights and socialist oppositionists began in Czechoslovakia in May. Up to now some dozens of activists have been arrested and interrogated. At least twelve of them remain in jail. The others are under threat of legal action. The charges relate to an 'anti-state plot' and carry potentially long prison sentences.

The excuse for this outbreak of Stalinist repression is said by the Czech news agency CTK to be 'a pro-imperialist plot'. Two young members of UNEF, the French students' union who are also supporters of a French human rights organisation were arrested at the border on the 28th April. CTK claimed that 4,000 German marks in their possession "were destined to pay for people seeking to conduct subversive activities in Czechoslovakia, in connection with foreign centres and also to recruit new 'auxiliaries'."

Francoise Anis and Gilles Thonon, the two French people, have since been deported without being charged.

For the human rights and socialist oppositionists in Czechoslovakia the future will not be so easy. It looks as if the Stalinist regime is planning a full-scale 'show-trial' like those of the Moscow trials in the 1930s and the Czech Slansky trials of the 1950s. Clearly the events in Poland and the fear of the

Stalinist bureaucracy that the Czech working class could itself return to the spirit of 1968, lie behind these arrests. The arrest of Anis and Thonon was merely a pretext. The publications they had, supposedly of a 'subversive' nature, had nothing to do with any 'pro-imperialist plot' or capitalist underground network.

It is worth noting that similar allegations - of wanting to restore capitalism - are currently being levelled against the KOR activists in Poland. The difference there is that militants of the KOR (Workers Self-Defence Organisation) have been closely linked with the emergence of the free trade union *Solidarity* and are afforded a degree of protection by it.

The workers' movement in Britain must quickly respond to the repression of the Czech oppositionists. We have no interest in supporting the corrupt Stalinist apparatus in government in Prague. It is not a government in the interests of the working class but one which represses them and usurps the name of socialism.

Letters calling for the release of those in jail and the dropping of the frameup charges should be sent from union and Labour Party branches. National executives of unions and Labour MPs should be asked to support the campaign. Delegations should be sent to the Czech Embassy.

No to Stalinist frameup trials!
Release the Czech oppositionists!
Drop the false charges!



Jiri Ruml



Jan Ruml



Karel Kyncl



Eva Kanturkova

YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia has not been exempted from the political upheaval which threatens the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. Although Yugoslavia is not directly a satellite of the Kremlin its regime is a bureaucracy with its origins in Stalinism. A number of problems have beset the Yugoslav state, which Tito and his heirs are unable to solve.

In particular the problem of rights for the national minorities within Yugoslavia has always been explosive. The Slovenes in the North, the most developed part of Yugoslavia, feel they are being milked to pay the other more backward areas. The very backward province of Kosovo in the south feel they are not getting sufficient aid. Kosovo is also populated by ethnic Albanians.

Two months ago Kosovo was shaken by massive demonstrations and riots as the Albanians demanded autonomy from the predominantly Serb Belgrade government. Kosovo has massive unemployment and very low incomes, only half the national average.

The Yugoslav bureaucracy has been wrestling for a number of years with its own inability to plan and develop the economy. It introduced an austerity plan to reduce a massive balance of payments deficit, coupled with an import ban. This has led to shortages in meat, butter and coffee, as well as other consumer goods and medicines. On top of this Yugoslavia suffers from ridiculous inflation - nearly 50% a year.

There is no way the Yugoslav bureaucracy can solve the balance of payments crisis without further attacks on the working class in Slovenia and the chronically poor peasants in provinces like Kosovo. Already foreign loans, the immediate way out for the government, are running dangerously high at 20 billion dollars and approaching a Polish type crunch point.

The continued crisis of the Stalinist regime in Poland reaches not only into the factories and farms, through the participation of millions of workers and farmers in *Solidarity*, but also into the Polish Communist Party itself.

Among Party branches and intellectuals a widescale discussion has opened, reflecting the contradiction between the claim of the Stalinist party to represent working people and the existence of *Solidarity*.

Solidarity has been used by the Polish working class and peasants to enforce what are, in effect, political demands. For instance, dozens of "corrupt" Stalinist officials have been made to "resign" under its pressure. It has also defended the right of the KOR (Workers Self-Defence Committee) to conduct what are seen by the Stalinists as "anti-state" political activities.

On June 3rd a leading member of the Polish CP, Kazimierz Barckowski, went on television to say that unless the "discussion clubs" within the Party stopped publicly criticising the leadership the CP was in danger of collapse. At the same time a grouping has emerged within the leadership itself called the "Katowice Forum". Centred on an ex-miner, Gerard Gabrys, known to be a very hard-line Stalinist, they issued a statement saying that the CP was being taken over by revisionists. This

challenge to the Kania executive which is trying to walk the tight-rope between Moscow and the demands of *Solidarity*.

These developments reflect the efforts of the Kremlin to ensure that no level of the Polish CP could be used as a basis for a free political discussion on the nature of the Stalinist state. They have learned from the experience of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to close down at an early stage all discussions within the Party itself. Certainly there is no question of the bureaucracy allowing the "discussion clubs" to generate a broad opposition *within* the Party.

The Polish Communist Party is Stalinist through and through. But it is a large party with many worker members and intellectuals capable of breaking with Stalinism under the hammer blows of the unfolding workers' political revolution.

There is no question of the reform of the Stalinist party. Its purpose is to repress the political self-activity of the working class, not to encourage it. The Kremlin cannot allow things in Poland to go as far as the Petofi Circle in Hungary in 1956 or the Dubcek grouping in Prague in 1968. The road for those in the Polish CP who want to represent the demands of the working class lies not towards the reform of Stalinism but towards a break with it in the direction of

POLAND

By George White

CP CRISIS LOOMS

The harassment of Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron, supporters of the Polish Workers Self-Defence Committee (KOR), has not ended. The Stalinist police are maintaining their campaign of intimidation and detention, intended to stop the KOR from voicing independent criticism of the regime. Labour Party members and trade unionists should send letters and delegations to the Polish Embassy, Portland Place, London W1, demanding an end to the harassment of Michnik and Kuron and the restoration of their right of free speech as laid down in the Polish constitution.



The election of Francois Mitterand as President of France and of the Fifth Republic opens up impossible contradictions within the French bourgeois state. Impossible because the institutions of the Fifth Republic – including the electoral system itself – were constructed by de Gaulle to perpetuate a series of Bonapartist-type administrations, which have effectively excluded the working class and the parties it supports, from power for the last 23 years.

The bourgeois statesmen of the world were quick to congratulate Mitterand formally. At the same time they were fearful for the future of the Fifth Republic in France, one of the cornerstones of the imperialist system. In France the fears of the business world were shown in a sharp downturn on the Paris stock-market.

The institutions of the Fifth Republic are fundamentally Gaullist, at a national and local level. They were intended to enable France to climb out of its political and economic impasse – by holding down the working class. But the working class was not held down. By 1968 it declared its hostility to Gaullism by the tremendous events of May-June which approached the scope of an insurrection. Only the disruptive tactics of the apparatuses in the Socialist and Communist Parties, above all that of the Stalinists, prevented the total smashing of the Fifth Republic at that time.

Since 1968 the regime has hung in the balance. It has been, again and again, the actions of Stalinism which have divided the power of the workers' movement and held it in place.



Over the last two years Giscard lost the unanimous support of the ruling class and Stalinism began to lose its hold over those millions of French workers who looked to the CP. Of these two processes the second is the more crucial. The French working class forced unity against Giscard, in spite of the machinations of the Stalinists.

Mitterand assumes office atop this upsurge. He has not planned any reduction in defence spending or any disposal of the nuclear 'strike force'. West Germany has declared its continued intention to defend the French franc, which is threatened with devaluation. The new administration intends to continue the basically Gaullist foreign policy of Giscard. But Mitterand was overwhelmingly elected by an angry working class. He will be pressed for economic reforms and

an end to Gaullist institutions and methods. It is this contradiction which worries the ruling class.

The working class now moves forward to consolidate its victory over Giscard-Chirac in the elections to the National Assembly. The ruling class parties signed a pact to run a single candidate in 340 constituencies. This did not alter the balance between the support for the SP-CP and the bourgeois parties – which is based on deep class divisions. The OCI, French section of the Fourth International (IC), ran a concerted campaign against the divisions within the workers' parties in the presidential election. They extended this to a fight for a CP-SP majority in the National Assembly and for a government of the workers' parties to consolidate and extend the victory of May 10th.

By Paul Glazier

FRANCE

Mitterand's victory challenges Gaullist institutions



Demonstration for Unity of the workers' parties against Giscard.

SLG 1981 CONFERENCE

In May the Socialist Labour Group held its first full Conference. Delegates from SLG branches and fraternal delegates from the Irish and French sections of the Fourth International (IC) took part in three days of discussion.

At the centre of the Conference was a perspective of work for the SLG, based on its own growth and the decisive turn in political relations in Britain. Of late, and especially since the threatened national miners' strike last February, all industrial struggles have tended to present direct political challenges to the government. Combined with this are the defeats suffered by the right-wing apparatus in the Labour Party, which have the outcome of the Wembley Special Conference at their heart.

In the last months Black and

Asian workers and youth have taken on the bourgeois state on the streets. These events not only confirm the fundamental weakness of this government, they open the road towards its removal.

The sharpest crisis for the Tories and their state is the upsurge against imperialism in Ireland. Around the Hunger Strikes by prisoners in H Blocks and Armagh for political status, an elemental upsurge of the workers and small farmers has unfolded in the whole of Ireland. The SLG resolved to continue its work in the struggle for political status and to prioritise the campaign to force Labour to break its pact with Thatcher on Ireland – the so-called 'bi-partisan policy'.

The SLG places this work at the centre of the activity of Trotskyists in Britain, not only as inter-

national solidarity work but as part of its fight to break up the ruling class state in Britain.

The SLG is one of 50 sections of the Fourth International (IC) across the globe. As Trotskyists we fight in solidarity with the oppressed and working people of all lands. Over the past six months we have mounted campaigns centred on the upsurges in Poland and Salvador. These events and those in Ireland reveal clearly the revolutionary nature of this period. The workers' revolution is now underway on a truly global scale. This analysis is contrasted with that of Unified Secretariat leaders like Ernest Mandel who believe the working class is fighting mainly defensive battles.

The Conference drew an important balance-sheet of the Group's work over the previous

period, the cornerstone of which is the rapid and successful transformation that the SLG has undergone from a small propaganda group to a growing interventionist organisation. Throughout the Conference, this development of the Group into the core of a Bolshevik organisation was expressed again and again: from the discussion on political campaigns, through the structuring and systematization of finances and publications, to the adoption of a constitution, regulating the rights and duties of membership of the SLG.

The Conference took a number of political decisions to be acted on immediately. Firstly it resolved to launch a campaign for sponsorship of a banner on the Peoples March which called for the bringing down of the government and for the TUC to mobilise a million on

the streets at the end of the March. Secondly the Conference called on socialists in the Labour Party to fight for backing for Benn's candidature for the Deputy leadership, and to campaign for the removal of racist Councillors, a process that is already underway in many parts of London. It also decided to build for a labour movement conference against the bipartisan policy on Ireland. Campaigns of work for material aid to El Salvador and in solidarity with the Polish workers' political revolution were drawn up, and the Group will continue the discussion on the international regroupment of Trotskyists in the Fourth International (IC) with a public discussion on the founding 'Theses' introduced by a leading comrade of the Fourth International (IC).

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Labour must end the pact with the Tories on Ireland!

SACK CONCANNON!

Merlyn Rees, once the Labour "direct rule" boss in the Six Counties of North Eastern Ireland, has hinted at an end to the "bi-partisan policy" on Ireland. Merlyn Rees is not a left winger. He introduced the criminalisation of republican prisoners in 1976. As late as last autumn Rees was defending the need for Labour and Tories to put aside party differences on Ireland.

What is the "bi-partisan policy"? It is, after all the hypocrisy has been put aside, a joint Labour-Tory approach to a problematic colony. Or more correctly, what's left of the colony of Ireland.

Labour did not always agree with the ruling class on Ireland. Under the pressure of the Irish War of Independence, from 1918 to 1921, the Labour Party declared itself against the Partition of Ireland and for the self-determination of their affairs by the Irish people as a whole. It is a long, long way from that position to sending in the troops, which happened under Callaghan. It is even further to implementing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was the work of the then Labour Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins. The withdrawal of Special Category Status for republican prisoners by Rees in 1976 was only the last of the acts through which Labour in office defended the interests of the British ruling class in Ireland.

But now Rees is alluding to a change. Foot also plays word games on the problem. *He says there is no such thing as a "bi-partisan policy". There is no formal agreement, it is merely accidental that Labour has agreed with the Tories on Ireland and vice versa. The option is always open to disagree.* True, no formal document has been signed, but Harold Wilson and Callaghan, not to mention Edward Heath, always made clear the unwritten agreement that defence of the state came before party politics.

It is only under the pressure of a most enormous upsurge in Ireland around the deaths of the four Hunger Strikers and in relation to shifts in the attitude of many in the British Labour Party brought about by this that Rees and Foot hint at



Funeral of a Hunger Striker

an end to agreement with the Tories. This change by the Labour apparatus in no way indicates support by them for political status or the withdrawal of troops. But it is a weakness which must be exploited by socialists fighting for those aims.

The Labour Party is now riddled with contradictions over Ireland. These occupy a central place in the crisis of leadership posed by Tony Benn's candidature for deputy leader. Benn defied the existing rules of the Shadow Cabinet and therefore the "bi-partisan policy" when he spoke out on Ireland. His call for a United Nations peace-keeping force is wrong. But it does pose a challenge to the Tory-Foot view that the occupation of the Six Counties by British troops is an internal United Kingdom affair and no-one else can interfere.

Benn also spoke, behind closed doors, in favour of Bobby Sands' right, as a duly elected MP, to

take his seat at Westminster. This was directly contradicted by Concannon's infamous visit to Long Kesh, where he told Sands, on his deathbed, that Labour would not give an inch. Concannon was merely acting on the basis of the "bi-partisan policy" but he was also defending the line against those in the Labour Party who want Britain to get out of Ireland. He was clearly of one mind with Thatcher in saying that Bobby Sands was a criminal and should be let die with no concessions on the prisoners' five demands. *Behind Concannon stood the shadow of Michael Foot.*

Some in the Parliamentary Labour Party and some union leaders want to wriggle out of calling for Britain to withdraw from Ireland. The "Northern Ireland Group" of Labour MPs typify this current. They hope that reforms of the judicial and prison systems and improvements in things like housing will take the edge of the rising

struggle for national independence and unity. Their suggestions are untenable while Britain continues to occupy part of Ireland. That very occupation has to be based on a system of discrimination and repression of the nationalist community in the Six Counties.

Indeed, the massive wave of anger and frustration around the refusal of Thatcher to grant the prisoners' five demands, expressed in huge demonstrations and strikes, is not about reforms. It is about recognition that the nationalists in the Six Counties are part of the great majority of Irish people who want an end to Partition and British rule.

This movement, a genuine mass movement, contradicts in every way the lie on which the "bi-partisan policy" is based - that the people of the Six Counties, Catholic and Protestant, both want Britain to stay. 30,000 voted for Bobby Sands. 30,000 votes for

British withdrawal. In the local elections in May Gerry Fitt, seen as a supporter of the British presence, was smashed by supporters of the National H Block/Armagh Committee. The same thing happened to Paddy Devlin. In Derry the supposed "non-sectarian" Trades Council candidates, heavily influenced by the politics of the *Militant* newspaper, received a pitiful few votes.

Foot now supports the Tories without any cover from the argument from Fitt and others who say that the national question in Ireland is only of secondary importance in the minds of the working class.

The upsurge in Ireland is both one for national unity and a class upsurge. It is an anti-Thatcher upsurge. Thatcher is responsible for the deaths of the Hunger Strikers. As yet the realisation that the fight is being waged by the nationalist working class, north and south of the border in Ireland, and that this fight is aimed at the enemy of the British working class, Thatcher, has not produced a support movement in the British workers' movement. But the openings are there.

Those in the Labour Party who support the right of the republican prisoners to be treated as political prisoners, or who support their five demands on humanitarian grounds, must fight for the removal of Concannon as spokesperson on the north of Ireland. *He is a traitor!* He must be thrown out as a Labour MP and treated like the pro-imperialist lackey he is. But Foot and Healey gave the go-ahead to Concannon for his statements. They must not be allowed, on behalf of the Labour Party, to continue to endorse imperialism in Ireland, without a serious challenge from within the party. The proposal of the Labour Committee on Ireland to demonstrate in Mansfield, the constituency of Concannon, should be supported by all anti-imperialists.

The October Conference of the Labour Party must take the chance to reject a continuation of the alliance with the Tories on Ireland. A wide campaign should be mounted in the Constituency Parties and affiliated unions to make sure it does so.

Now is the time to put an end to the disgrace of 12 years of Labour complicity in the armed occupation of the Six Counties and the brutal repression of the aspiration of the large majority of the Irish people - for a united Ireland.

In Swindon 16 Trades Council delegates have signed an appeal calling for an end to the Labour Party's bipartisan policy with the Tories on Ireland and for the promotion of a full discussion on Ireland within the Party with the aim of formulating an independent policy. A motion supporting the five demands of the Hunger Strikers was narrowly lost at the May GMC of Swindon Labour Party. This was after a sharp fight with supporters of Swindon MP David Stoddart whose denunciations of the Republicans as "thugs" and "murderers" can only be a source of comfort and delight for this vicious Tory government.