

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 3, February 1985. 70p.

INSIDE: News and analysis on
MINERS STRIKE and MINING
TECHNOLOGY, Austin Rover,
NHS. Central America,
Peace Campaigns.

Special feature on CUBAN
COMMUNIST PARTY.



Feature on COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS

About Socialist Viewpoint

SOCIALIST Viewpoint is a new magazine, committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, nor as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary — but as a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

Sold and produced by comrades who in many cases have their own political history, often long-standing roots in a range of unions and experience of leading and intervening in disputes, *Socialist Viewpoint* seeks to offer analysis, education and leadership as well as news and comment. We believe that, in the mainstream of the struggles in the labour movement, and in the active struggles for women's rights and against other forms of special oppression, we have a record of useful work, and a contribution to make.

In our third issue, we include a warning feature on the array

of computerised technology standing as an additional threat to the jobs of the striking miners: we also follow through with analysis and comment on the current extremely serious crisis facing the strike. Other home news includes the latest on the victimisation of yet another deputy convenor by management at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant, and a look at the current struggles in the Labour Party.

International coverage includes a round-up of peace campaign activity, an assessment of the current situation facing Nicaragua, and background material on the history of the Cuban Communist party. The present crisis of the British Stalinist Party is also followed through from our article last time.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and programme. We hope that the positions we put forward and discussion on them will persuade many readers to become *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters in the coming months.

Final copy date Jan. 21 1985
Printed by Dot Press (TU), Oxford.
Printed by Socialist Viewpoint.
BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

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Time to kick out Kinnock!



AS each day passes the need for a left campaign to replace Kinnock as Labour Party leader becomes more obvious. His hysterical attack on those MPs from the Campaign Group who caused the genteel men's club in Westminster to adjourn its sitting for all of 20 minutes is only the latest in an ever increasing list of events where the maintenance of the status quo is more important to him than directly challenging the Tories.

Many who voted for Kinnock as leader in '83 did so because they thought he would unite the Party around Conference



policy against the Tories. At the time we said they were wrong, that Kinnock was in fact out to undermine the gains of recent years, both in policy and democratic rights. We didn't foresee how quickly and blatantly he would move to prove us right.

In the space of 18 months he has attempted to degut party policy on disarmament; kept up the witch-hunt against the left (on a more subtle local basis without a national focus like the expulsion of the Militant editorial board); refused to give any backing to Liverpool Council last year and the rate-capped authorities this year (preferring to defend the "law of the land") and at last year's Party Conference narrowly lost after throwing his weight behind the attempt to undermine reselection (the "Evans amendment").

But of course the outstanding issue of the last year has been the miners' strike. Despite conference policy giving full support to the miners and condemning police violence, Kinnock has gone out of his way to do the opposite. Calling for a ballot long after this was even a tactical issue (if it ever was); attacking the mass pickets for attempting to make the picket line effective; refusing to speak on the platform at the NUM rallies (he must have known the reception Willis was going to get in S. Wales); even after the NUM delegate conference belatedly called for supportive strike action he denounced the left MPs who took up this call; and now denounces them for even trying to get a parliamentary debate on the strike.

Of course it's not an issue of Kinnock's personality (Hattersley and many others have been just as bad), but of his politics — best summed up in one word — "electoralism". He accuses the left of not wanting a Labour government returned at the next election. This is rubbish and always has been, but where we differ is in how we see that coming about and what we want such a Labour government to do. For Kinnock the answer is easy — you make a lot of noise (no specific policies, please) about some "easy" issues that will bolster your showing in the opinion polls and steer well clear of controversial ones (if necessary attacking those who take them up). In fact you end up, alongside the Tory Wets, simply arguing with Thatcher about what the level of state intervention into the economy should be, refusing to recognise that what the government is doing is fundamentally necessary if British capitalism is to become competitive again (which is why most elements of their strategy have been tried by previous Labour governments in one form or another). And there's no question that a Kinnock government would be very much a follow on from the Wilson and Callaghan ones.

A Socialist leadership would not only be

spreading the argument that what is needed is not tinkering around with various economic mechanisms but to take it out of the hands of the capitalists and place it under workers' control, but also throwing the whole weight of the Party behind those sections of the movement fighting now, whether it be over jobs, union rights, cuts, or all the other issues affecting us. And the argument that the "law of the land" is class law would be central to this.

In fact all the indications are that we are *more likely* to get a Labour government elected in this way than by Kinnock's softly softly route. Just look at the response before the last election to Shore's declaration that the way out of Britain's economic problems was to *borrow* money from the banks. Why vote Labour if their programme appears little different from that of the Alliance who seem a lot surer of their ground? In fact, why vote for anyone but Thatcher, when the state of the economy is crying out for drastic measures and no one else seems to have any?

But the message of what's wrong with Kinnock's leadership still has to sink in amongst many on the "left". Tribune under its new editor Nigel Williamson has attacked Benn and the left on the same "electoral" grounds as Kinnock. Elements of the left on the NEC (reportedly Meacher and Tom Sawyer of NUPE) are said to want to align themselves with Kinnock "to diminish the influence of the right on him", even though all the evidence is that Kinnock gives a lead to the right rather than following it. This is the logic of seeing the aim of "unity" above all else. Unity is not an abstract ideal to be chased after at all costs, but something to be entered into with those willing to actually take up a fight against the Tories. Talk of perpetual unity with the right only diarms the left against witch hunts and the erosion of clear policy. And let no-one be fooled by Kinnock's visit to Nicaragua. The reason he gave for wanting the USA to stop supporting the contras was because it would drive the government into the hands of Castro and Russia, not because of any explicit support for radical measures by that government.

The challenge to Kinnock has to be mounted at this year's Party Conference, which makes it a matter of urgency to put pressure on the Campaign Group to put forward a candidate, something they have so far denied a willingness to do. A massive campaign must be mounted as soon as possible by all organisations on the left ready to support an anti-Kinnock candidate to get the message over in every union and every CLP well in advance of Party Conference in the autumn.

Dangerous isolation for Sandinistas

New President Daniel Ortega.

By Harry Sloan

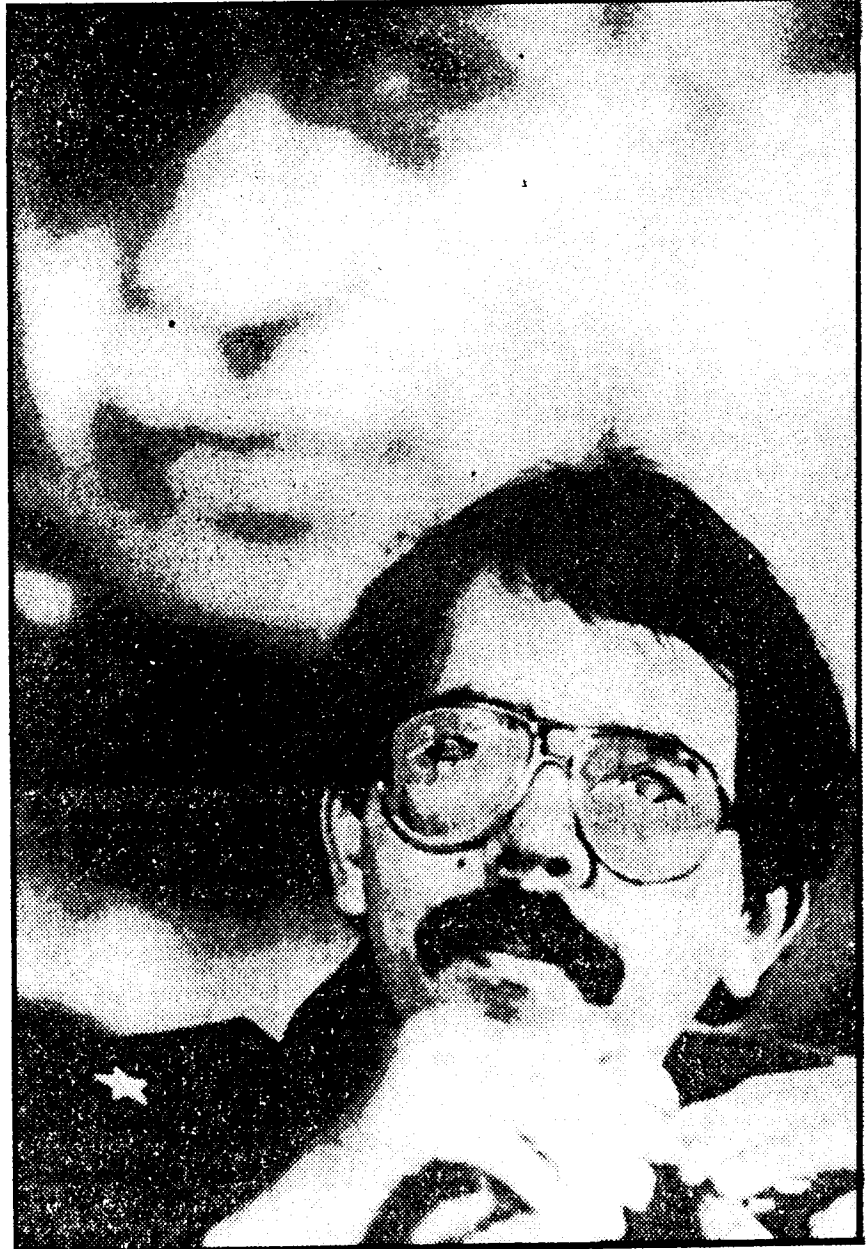
THE international boycott of the inauguration this month of Nicaragua's first-ever democratically-elected President came as no surprise. Even now, that great "democrat" Ronald Reagan is eagerly arming, organising and financing mercenary gangs fighting to restore the kind of brutal dictatorship the USA has traditionally sponsored in Central America. Washington's main Western allies have largely gone along with Reagan's campaign against the Sandinistas, with occasional feeble gestures from France and Germany towards a "negotiated" regional settlement.

But the significant absence of top-level delegations from Latin American countries, from Africa or from most of the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe, further underlined the international isolation of the Sandinistas, and must have delighted the warmongers in the Pentagon. The inauguration ceremonies were attended by heads of state from Surinam and Yugoslavia, and, at short notice, by Cuban President Fidel Castro, in a visit markedly lacking in the flourish of anti-imperialist rhetoric which coloured his last trip over four years ago.

There could scarcely be a clearer indication that the Moscow leadership, while paying token lip-service to the Nicaraguan revolution, is not prepared to offer significant extra material or military support to the Sandinistas: certainly Ortega knows he can count on nothing like the Soviet support which helped defend the Cuban revolution of 1959.

In this sense, 1985 has proved to be not so much a new phase as a continuation of the trends clearly visible throughout a troubled 1984. Gone are the heady days of December 1983, when Ortega was greeted by a tumultuous reception on his visit to Argentina for the inauguration of President Raul Alfonsin. There he met 25 heads and deputy heads of government; and the Contadora initiative for a negotiated settlement with imperialism in Central America appeared to be gathering pace, with endorsement from the United Nations, the Organisation of American States and the so-called "Socialist International".

Encouraged by this show of support, the Sandinistas made a fresh proposal for a deal with the USA: they offered to halt arms purchases; to reduce the size of their army; to end their support for revolutionary



movements in Central America; to remove foreign advisors; and to remove Salvadorean rebel leaders from Nicaragua.

Though hailed by many of their admirers as a "tactical" move to put the USA on the defensive and "call their bluff" on the diplomatic front, these moves served largely to underline the limited political objectives and the strong element of nationalism within the Sandinista leadership. And of course they failed to produce any concessions from the USA.

More effective was the Sandinistas' military response to the "Christmas

offensive" by the contras, who by mid-January had disastrously failed to secure any "liberated zone" inside Nicaragua or even a town which could be described as a "provisional capital". The military setbacks, and the rivalry and feuding between various "contra" leaders served further to divide Reagan's mercenary armies during 1984.

By February, it was plain that the Sandinistas were intent upon proving their democratic credentials by granting an exceptionally liberal electoral law, effectively guaranteeing state finance and Parliamentary represen-



The Sandinistas have proven their regime has mass popular support.

tation to any party with a measurable degree of support. It was the right wing parties, nervously recognising their lack of popular support, who began agitating for a postponement of the elections. In the event they were scheduled for November 4.

Immediately after the date for the elections was confirmed, the CIA and "contra" forces began an intensified programme of military and economic sabotage, focussed upon the mining of Nicaraguan ports to interfere with vital oil imports.

Ortega flew off at the end of March to Moscow and to North Korea, presumably in hopes of securing some minesweeping equipment. If so, he returned empty-handed. While even Margaret Thatcher came out and put pressure upon Reagan to end the mining of Nicaraguan waters, and the US Senate eventually compelled withdrawal of the "mother ship" that had been servicing the CIA mine-layers, Ortega's meeting with Soviet Defence Minister Ustinov ended without the promise of even a single minesweeper or extra Soviet military aid of any description. Even at the point of sharpest attack, the Soviet bureaucracy has repeatedly in 1984 proven itself unwilling to challenge the "right" of the USA to harass Nicaragua in its own "sphere of influence".

The following month brought continued tension, with the admission that regular US spy flights take place over Nicaragua. At the very same time, an ex-CIA agent now opposed to Reagan's policies, publicly revealed that the supply of arms from the Sandinistas to the Salvadorean guerrillas — the alleged pretext for the US funding the "contra forces" — was known to have dried up three years earlier — in 1981!

In June, the Sandinistas agreed to exploratory talks with the USA — and once again it was widely reported that they were prepared to renounce

support for the Salvadorean fighters as part of a deal for the region. The talks came to nothing, however, as Nicaragua's most right wing parties, shrinking from the challenge of the election and under heavy pressure (and outright bribery) from the USA, began to put down increasingly ludicrous ultimatums as a precondition for taking part.

A new high point of intimidation came in August with the US threat to destroy "advanced" aircraft if they were sold to the Sandinistas to defend Nicaraguan airspace against "contra" and US overflights. This same scare over "Soviet MiGs" reemerged on the very night of Reagan's reelection and made workers around the world ponder the prospect of a US military strike against Nicaragua. Once again the allegations proved to be false: the USSR has sent no such defensive equipment to Nicaragua — which sorely needs it.

The November elections brought a massive 82% turnout, and a clear overall majority for the Sandinistas among the whole electorate, though there was a surprisingly high vote for the bourgeois opposition.

The mandate sought and won by Ortega and the FSLN — which remains a complex "front" rather than an organised "party" in any traditional sense of the term — was to continue to administer a "mixed" economy and a "pluralist" democracy. In practical terms this reflects the fact that the majority of the economy remains in private (capitalist) ownership; and that capitalist parties and a particularly rabid pro-imperialist right wing press are allowed to function freely — along with the Catholic Church.

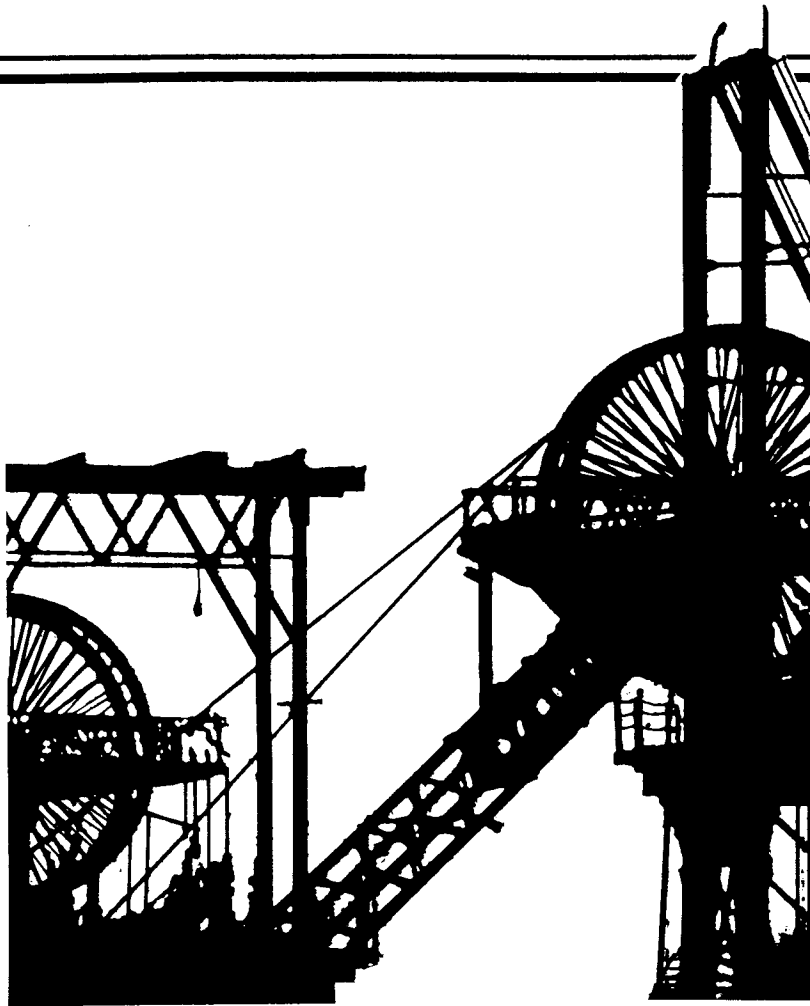
Unlike Cuba at a comparable stage of its revolution, Nicaragua has remained "non-aligned" and cemented no close relations with the Soviet bureaucracy or Eastern Europe (hence the support from Yugoslavia),

and 25% of its trade is still with the USA. The Sandinistas do not regard or describe themselves as socialists; indeed it is partly this — coupled with their cautious distance from Moscow — which has endeared them to Neil Kinnock and the reformist leaders of the "Socialist International". The FSLN correctly describe their government, with its new mandate from the electorate, as "popular democratic" (which is more than we can say of Neil Kinnock).

There is no doubting Ronald Reagan's bitter enmity to the Sandinistas. Nor is there any question that the international workers movement has a duty to mobilise class action to prevent the imperialist intervention and in solidarity with the Nicaraguan people in their struggle to defend and complete the Revolution begun in 1979.

But it is open to doubt whether the FSLN's policies of openly promising to abandon the other revolutionary struggles in Central America, eagerly and consistently embracing a "mixed" (capitalist) economy, and making continuous concessions to the reactionary bourgeois parties who are in league with the contras — represents the best means of defending and completing the Nicaraguan revolution.

The embattled guerrilla fighters of El Salvador and revolutionaries in Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica also have good reason to question the wisdom of the Sandinistas' current policy. But the low-key presence of Fidel Castro at Ortega's swearing-in as President, and the repeated declarations that Cuba supports the "Contadora" peace plan, and is itself looking to improve relations with Reagan's USA, all serve to underline one fact: by seeking a "low profile", Nicaragua is seeking to avoid conflict not only with the USA but also with the USSR and Cuba.



Mineworkers Defence Committee
National Conference

Solidarity with the NUM!

Saturday February 9, 11am to 5pm, at the Octagon Centre, Sheffield.

Confirmed speakers include

PETER HEATHFIELD TONY BENN PHIL HOLT
JOHN TOCHER BETTY HEATHFIELD

Sponsors so far include. Kings Cross ASLEF, Civil Service Miners' Support Campaign, Felixstowe Port Committee of the National Union of Seamen, Campaign Group of MPs, Fire Brigades Union, CPSA Broad Left, NALGO National Miners' Support Campaign, National Union of Seamen, Broad Left Organising Committee, Labour Briefing, Socialist Worker, Militant, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, C A Parsons Shop Stewards Committee TASS, Greenham Women for a Miners' Victory, News of the World/Sun Miners' Hardship Fund.

Delegates: 2 per trade union organisation, 1 per other organisation. Accommodation, credentials, creche: 01-981 3289 or write to MDC c/o 31 Cranwich Rd, London N16.

Amendment for Mineworkers Defence Committee February 9 Conference.

The following amendment to the Conference statement was passed by the Oxford Miners Support Group on January 22:

IT IS now crucial that the isolation of the miners strike is broken. The miners strike is now an issue of major historic proportions and concerns the whole

trade union and labour movement, yet the miners cannot win the strike alone. A defeat of the strike would have a serious effect on the labour movement for decades, yet every possibility of breaking the isolation of the strike and opening a second front has failed (although there could still be some action in Rail and in Austin Rover over the use of the courts). This has not just been

because of the hesitation of various trade union leaders but because it has been a Government tactic to keep the miners isolated.

We don't need here to restate our respect for the magnificent stand the leadership of the NUM are making against the Thatcher Government and the way they are fighting to win the strike. We don't need to restate our admiration for the rank and file miners, it is their strength and solidarity that provides the basis for winning the strike. It is on this basis that we discuss the tactics of the strike and suggest a new initiative.

The time is now long overdue for the TUC to act in support of the miners and call a general strike to ensure that the miners win. The strike is now longer than the miners lock-out of 1926, after which the trade union movement was broken in half. The consequences this time could be equally disastrous. The policy of the Government is for a total defeat of the NUM.

Under these conditions we can no longer tolerate the miners being denied the full strength and authority of the official movement by a group of right-wingers at the top who are waiting for their Peerages.

The NUM have recognised this, most importantly in the appeal made to the TUC by the special delegate conference called to consider the question of the official receiver taking control of the NUM finances. The problem was that they appealed to the General Council rather than Congress and there was no chance of their call being answered. The General Council is not only right-wing dominated but it rests on the inadequate decisions of the September Congress which did not even discuss generalised action.

The precondition for any real chance of action by the TUC is a substantial change in TUC policy at the level of Congress. We need to set out new parameters for the organisation of support for the miners strike at the level of the TUC. The present actions around the power stations and mobilisation of general support is important but we are denied the ultimate strength of the movement which is so clearly needed at the present time.

We propose the following:

- 1) That an emergency TUC Congress should be convened. That Congress should discuss both the role of the TUC and the anti-union laws in relation to the 1982 Conference of executives and also review the support the TUC should give to the miners, particularly in light of the problems with the policy of the September congress on substitute fuel in the power stations.

- 2) That the NUM should take the lead in calling for a recall Congress, backed up by a campaign throughout the trade union movement for this demand.

- 3) That if a recall Congress is convened we would urge the NUM to put down a resolution which spelled out the implications of the situation to the movement and call for a general strike.

We believe that if such a resolution was carried (and it would have the full weight and authority of the strike behind it) the movement would respond. If the TUC leadership spelled out the situation and placed in front of the movement the full historical implications involved in the outcome of the strike — as they did to some extent over GCHQ — there would be a response from the rank and file. This was also shown in the response to the call by the rail unions on January 17.

NUM must fight for a General Strike!

FORCE TUC TO CALL ACTION!

THE trickle back to work over the last two weeks does not materially alter the strength and stability of the miners' strike or in any way make it unwinnable, but it is a worrying factor which needs to be dealt with. Despite this, the solidarity of the striking miners remains remarkable. It is now the longest major national strike in the history of the British Trade Union Movement.

Although the tone of the NUM leadership — particularly Arthur Scargill — has changed to some extent to reflect the more difficult conditions the strike now faces, they are standing firm, fighting to maintain the strike and making no concession to the NCB or the government.

This determination, however, is not reflected at every level in either national or area leaderships. There is now a pretty widespread view that the strike cannot now be won and that a compromise deal should be sought to "save the union". This is the unspoken view of the Communist Party and the right wing.

The ruling class are interpreting the situation this way as well. They have felt for some time that they are on a winning streak and have used every weapon at their disposal to break the strike. The present fall in the value of the pound is clearly prominently connected to the miners strike, yet they are bluffing it out and prepared to pay the price, however heavy. They are convinced of the enormous longterm advantage which British capitalism will gain from a resounding defeat of the miners.

This means that despite what any elements within the NUM, or the TUC, or anywhere else may want, no compromise is possible. Not just because the issue itself is so black and white but because Thatcher would not accept a compromise if one were offered.

In these conditions the question of which way forward in the strike — what is the *strategy to win* — is the most urgent issue. It has been the case for a long time, and now it is hardly debatable, that the miners cannot win alone. The basic strategy of the strike — "keep it solid and eventually the lights will go out" — is



not viable.

The most important factor in the strike has been the isolation of the NUM from actual strike support from the rest of the trade union movement. One of the most important reasons for the trickle back to work is the failure to change that situation. A new strategy is now urgently needed to put new life in the strike and put it back on the offensive.

There have always been four possible ways of breaking the isolation.

• There could be straight supporting action by other individual unions or individual sections of workers in

other industries, which is the most advanced form of action and very difficult to achieve. It would require a very high level of consciousness for a section of workers simply to join the miners on indefinite strike. In most cases workers would argue that the defence of the miners and the anti-union laws are a matter for the whole trade union movement and why should it be them to take on the government.

• There could be strike action in defence of workers victimised for supporting the miners — such as the dockers and now rail workers, which

Rank and file must make leaders fight!

is entirely achievable providing the leadership of the union concerned is prepared to stand firm. The employer, however, has the option of backing down or making concessions if they think their action is resulting in a second front for the miners. The victimisation of rail workers for supporting the miners provided a possibility of this but the action on January 17 was very limited. If the BR Board takes the unions to court for damages this could provide a further opportunity.

● Another way has been for other unions who say they support the miners to stick firm on their own issues, thus creating a second front with the miners and putting pressure on the Government. This in the past has been the most achievable and had the possibility on a number of occasions of altering the course of the strike. The problem was that the union leaders concerned were weak on it whilst the Government was fully aware of the implications and have offered small concessions at the last minute. Now the next pay round does not start until the spring.

● The fourth way has been the matter of fighting to force action via the TUC. We saw this as the key issue in September — when the NUM made a serious mistake by simply asking for general abstract support and the blacking of substitute fuels in the power stations — and it has been the key to the situation since.

The action needed now, and we have to say it clearly and unambiguously, is an all out general strike in support of the miners. It is so obvious that this is the make or break issue, yet so many are hesitant to spell it out. Some argue that even if the TUC were to call for a general strike the response would not be there from the rank and file. This is not the case. Not that a general strike could just be called at any random time or in any random way. **But if the call came unambiguously from the TUC, at a time when events were taking place which clearly affected the whole movement in historical terms, and the leadership spelled them out, there would be a response.** The TUC has tremendous authority in the British Trade Union movement, as was shown with the call for a one day strike over GCHQ. They made the call, with only one working day's notice, spelled out the issues to some extent, and got a response.

There have been several major turning points in this dispute (and there will be more) where this could have been done.

The introduction of the official receiver to take control of NUM finances last December was such a time. Arthur Scargill correctly called it the single most serious attack ever on the British trade union movement. He said quite rightly that it threatened the very existence of the NUM. **A general strike call from the TUC would have had a real impact at**



A show of support from Labour Conference — but only sabotage from Neil Kinnock.

that time had the TUC spelled it out: but what happened? Absolutely nothing. Not a word from the TUC or any of the trade union leaders, left or right.

The NUM delegate conference turned to the *General Council* calling for what amounted to a general strike — and were rejected. The only people who took up the call were some of the Labour lefts: Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Audrey Wise and Denis Skinner.

The mistake the NUM made over the official receiver was to go to the *General Council* and not a *recall Congress!* The two are radically different. The General Council rests on the wholly inadequate decisions of the September Congress and nothing will shift them from that. In fact they will not even make any serious attempt to implement those. What is necessary is a *new basis* on which the fight to support the miners can take place. That involves a change in the official policy of the TUC as a minimum requirement, and that can only be achieved at a recall Congress, *not* at the General Council.

The key to a recall TUC has to be the NUM. The NUM has to be prepared to call for a recall conference and fight to achieve it. They have to be prepared to put down a hard line resolution calling for a general strike and fight tooth and nail to win it on the floor of the conference. This is the minimum necessary to change TUC policy. It is right for other unions to call for a recall Congress but without the NUM it would not mean very much.

If the NUM were to do this it would be entirely achievable — or at least a compromise resolution which would give the NUM far more support than they have at the present time. The

striking miners are by far the most influential force in the labour movement and the authority which they so deservedly have has to be turned on the TUC. It would be difficult to vote against them in a recall Congress.

There is no doubt that getting NUM policy on these lines is a difficult problem. The Scargill leadership is entrenched in its strategy and is not easy to shift. They quite rightly have the respect of their members for the unique stand they are taking. But it is a problem to which we must address ourselves, since it may well be that the outcome of the strike will depend on it.

Another argument against a general strike call is that it would end up in the hands of the General Council and they would either avoid it or call it off quickly. But that is an argument against any general strike call in Britain at any time until there is a unique radical development at the top of the TUC. We can't accept this but we have to be clear that winning a vote on the floor of the TUC Congress would only be round one. The same forces which forced that through would then have to campaign for its implementation and for control of the strike.

Concentration on the fight for a general strike must not detract from limited or localised actions — except where they are a substitute for, or avoidance of, the call for a general strike. Where links can be built between miners and other sections of workers to the extent that some action is possible, it is very important that there is a difference between generalised action which offers a strategic road to victory and limited actions which although important in building up the campaign and developing the political situation cannot of themselves be decisive.

The situation in the power stations

needs to be looked at in that context. Picketing of the power stations is a very important *aspect* of the dispute. The role of the CP, and (to some extent through them) the NUM leadership, in opposing a policy of mass picketing of power stations has weakened the strike, particularly once TUC policy was directed towards the power stations. It deprived the strike of the offensive thrust that mass picketing of power stations could give and deprived it of a very important way of jointly mobilising miners along with activists from the general labour movement in joint direct action.

Despite all this, however, there is no viable road to victory through the mass picketing of power stations alone. It is an *important aspect of the strike, but it remains an aspect.*

We have argued before why this is the case. It is because it is so difficult to get one small section of workers — coal and oil workers in the power stations — to take the decision to join with the miners and take on the government. Because of the obvious strategic importance of power supply they are placed under tremendous pressure by management which they have to face in isolation. Under those conditions they will generally ask who else is taking that kind of action alongside the miners? Is this not a matter for the whole movement? This is not to excuse workers who are flouting TUC policy, we are quite right to picket them and demand that they honour it and get support from the rest of the movement if they face victimisation, but it is necessary to recognise the real world and the problems resulting from the weakness of the original policy.

This is not to detract from the importance of the continuing struggle to get substitute fuel blacked at the power stations and the mobilisation of mass pickets to stop the oil and coal lorries. The NUM itself should allocate more resources to the picketing of power stations and challenging those workers who are flouting TUC policy. But that should be a part of the pressure towards all-out industrial action in support of the miners by the trade union movement as a whole — not a substitute for it.

Under the present conditions of the strike the Conference called on February 9 by the Mineworkers Defence Committee takes on an added importance. It is potentially the most important opportunity the support movement will get in the short term to debate the strategy and problems of the strike. This opportunity should *not* be missed this time. The collection of funds and resources for the strike is vitally important, but the support movement must also have a voice in the conduct of the strike as well. The NUM leadership is running the strike but it will listen to what the support movement — which is now crucial to the strike — has got to say.

There are many different lines being argued. Some urge us to turn to



There is no contradiction between turning to the rank and file and forcing the TUC to act.

the rank and file, not the TUC; others suggest that the NUM is not organising enough pickets. There is now even a call for the NUM to call a general strike itself — which appears to be one of the most dangerous calls yet, since it would be denounced by the TUC and militants would neither have the protection of their own unions or that of the TUC itself. All these views need arguing out in a national forum, with a policy thrashed out which could then be considered by the NUM leadership.

For our part we cannot see any contradiction between turning to the rank and file and forcing the TUC to act. The official movement is not the property of a few bureaucrats at the top who are looking for peerages. It is the property of the rank and file and we have to ensure it is used for the defence of the miners.

If that is not done we could be faced with an even bigger betrayal than 1926. Then the TUC actually did call a 10 day General Strike in support of the miners, although they then sold it out. This time we must force them to act, and stop them selling it out.

What this raises is the big question: how can the TUC leaders be forced to call such an action?

**Victory to the miners!
Build solidarity action!
Open up a second front against the government!
Mass picket the power stations!
Recall the TUC!
A General Strike to support the miners!**

Alan Thornett, 21.1.85

60 years ago: solidarity of miners' wives.

This article appeared in the November 1926 issue of *The Worker*, the newspaper of the left-wing National Minority Movement, and indicates that the solidarity of women in the mining communities is a tradition going back long before the present strike.

DESPITE the array of weapons which have been employed against the miners — starvation, police persecution, the entire capitalist Press, the defeatist tactics of the Labour and Trade Union leadership, and the waverings and weakness within the M.F.G.B. Executive and District Associations — the rank and file have remained staunch to their decision of May 1 to hold the pass at whatever cost.

Notwithstanding the realisation that all the so-called Left Wingers on the General Council (of whom they expected so much) — are but broken reeds, and that they have no wholehearted support from any official bodies except the Communist Party and the National Minority Movement, they have not succumbed to the temptation to give up the Herculean struggle.

Shoulder to Shoulder

How has this triumph of class solidarity and loyalty been achieved?

To no small extent it is due to the fact that the miners wives have stood shoulder to shoulder with their men; that they have realised with perfect clearness what the fight is all about, and what exactly a surrender will mean to them in terms of bread and margarine, clothing and boots.

In past struggles, the woman's part has been to suffer in silence at home, ignorant of causes or effects, resentful of apparently unnecessary suffering, and expressing that resentment by cajoling, imploring, or nagging her husband back to work.

This struggle has changed all that.

The attendance of women at the great mass meetings, at which the miners' case has been put in all the mining areas has been remarkable.

So has the efficient way in which they have organised the communal kitchens, and formed relief committees for the distribution of clothing.

More amazing still has been the calm and determined way in which they have tackled the problem of the blacklegs.

In countless cases, they have been the prime movers and participants in demonstrations against the scabs. Hundreds of miners' wives have been



in actual conflict with the police, many have been batoned, many arrested, fined and even imprisoned.

They will never forget these experiences.

Example to All

They are receiving a political education and practical lessons in organisation which they have never had before.

Moreover, they are realising through actual experience the class-character of the State, and the necessity of the workers entering into conflict with that anti-working class State before our goal can be won.

The miners' wives have tremendously strengthened the power and quality of the working class movement.

Their example is one that must be followed by the women workers and wives of men in every other industry.

What a chance for the N.U.R. and A.S.L.E.&F. Women's Guilds to act as a real revolutionary influence in these reactionary and apathetic Unions!

What an opportunity for the women in the Co-operative Guilds to stem the torrent of class collaboration which is slowly wresting the Co-operative Movement out of the hands of the workers and presenting it as a gift to their enemies!

What encouragement does the

spectacle of these militant women give to all who are taking part in the great campaign to recruit women workers into the Trade Unions.

Driven to It

These miners' wives have been driven by the sheer brutality of the class struggle in the mining industry to adopt their revolutionary attitude. The same intensification of the struggle will surely make itself felt in every other great industry, as capitalism sinks lower and lower in its decline.

Let us make sure that behind the railwaymen, the engineers, the transport workers, in every branch of industry where women workers are employed, there will be found a great army of women, politically educated, organised and determined to fight side by side with their men — as the miners' wives have done — in the struggle for power, for the establishment of Socialism.

The Minority Movement is the rallying ground for all the militants in the Trade Union Movement — its ranks are equally open to women in all industries and guilds.

Through its Press, its educational literature, its conferences and meetings, they can learn how best to throw their full weight into the struggle, and take a real, decisive part in the battle of the working class.

Coal Board's computerised threat to jobs

By Jonathan Winterton

SINCE 1979 the Working Environment Research Group at Bradford University has been examining the impact of new technology in coal mining. An Interim Report was prepared for the NUM executive in September 1982 and published in November 1983. Throughout 1983 educational day schools and weekend schools were organized nationally and by several area unions. A Second Report was presented to the NUM executive in July 1984.

This article concentrates upon the analysis rather than the technical descriptions contained in the two reports and highlights the relevance of technology to the restructuring programme which has caused the present strike.

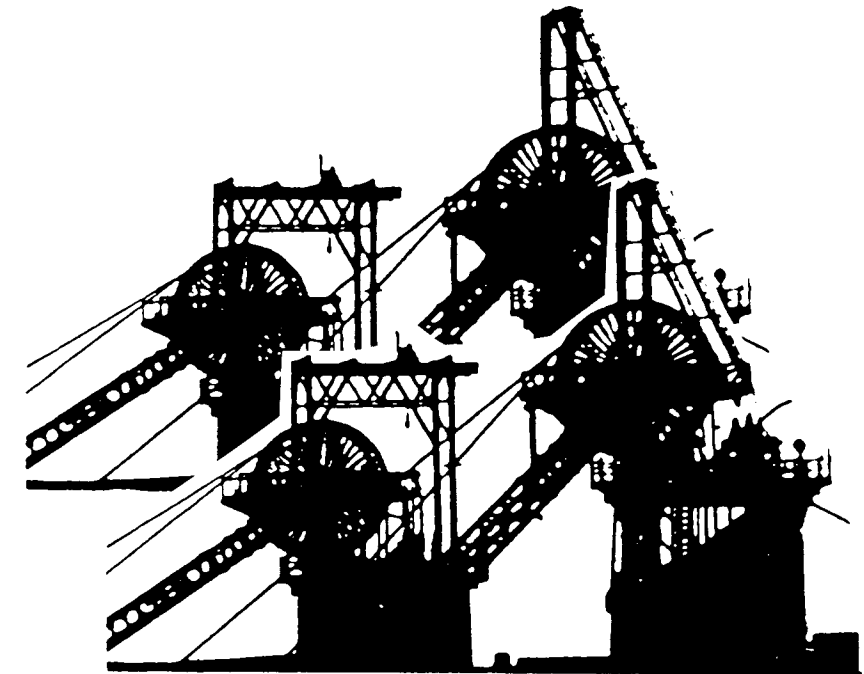
MINOS — an overview.

Following the two national mining strikes of the 1970s, the NCB designed MINOS (Mine Operating System), a *highly centralized, hierarchically organized* computer monitoring and control system. MINOS does not entail any new mining technology but is, rather, designed to *organize and control* existing methods of mining. The NCB's operations have been broken down into manageable subsystems to enable the automation to proceed, and each subsystem can be implemented independently, while remaining compatible with other subsystems. Before the strike, about 80 pits were known to have at least one MINOS facility, but the first complete MINOS installation was expected to be Barnsley West Side complex, centred on Woolley. The modular design of MINOS has enabled the NCB to install subsystems in a piecemeal fashion and this has made it difficult for the NUM to monitor technological change.

MINOS includes subsystems devoted to coal clearance, environmental monitoring, coal preparation and other colliery operations, but four subsystems deserve particular consideration because they demonstrate clearly the NCB's design objectives.

FIDO — Face Information Digested Online.

The Board discovered that one third of the available cutting time in a shift was lost through delays caused



by faceworkers taking natural breaks, and a further third was lost through mechanical breakdowns. FIDO is designed to remove the so-called "avoidable delays" by monitoring the work of face teams. FIDO operates like a tacograph subjecting face teams to management surveillance that was formerly impossible. If successful, FIDO could double machine running time.

IMPACT — In-built Machine Performance And Condition Testing.

Aimed at removing operational and ancillary delays by monitoring "machine health". Mechanization and power loading increased the technical complexity of mining and created the need for an adequate number of skilled craftsmen. By the 1970s twenty per cent of the workforce were craftsmen. The NCB now wishes to reduce the number of craftsmen and to simplify the task of maintenance in line with the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) report on the NCB (1983). Since September 1982 the NCB has been reviewing the numbers of craftsmen and area industrial relations officers have circulated colliery managers with instructions to reduce "overmanning".

MIDAS — Machine Information Display and Automation System.

MIDAS has both a monitoring and a control function. The control function is concerned with the vertical guidance of the shearer so that it does not cut into the roof or the floor. MIDAS monitors the conditions of the shearer; eventually the information will be passed to the MINOS control computer and from there into the management information system. As with IMPACT, deskilling is an intentional objective of MIDAS: these two subsystems are directed at key groups within the union — face workers and craftsmen. The immediate effect of MIDAS is on the level of output; prototype systems have doubled output per shift. The combined effect of FIDO, IMPACT, and MIDAS could enable the NCB to reduce the number of working faces given static demand for coal, and faceworkers will be exposed to more dust as machine running time is increased.

MIS — Management Information System.

This links the subsystems together into the overall system: the colliery MIS feeds its information into a na-



Computer technology threatens to destroy and de-skill more mining jobs.

tional computer network that allows the NCB to compare performance over time, between collieries, and between shifts, between faces, and between areas. Planning and control can thus be exercised rapidly and directly from the highest levels of management.

So-called "uneconomic pits" can be identified according to the criteria in force at any particular time, and the list can be revised at a moment's notice should different criteria be applied. At pit level, management can monitor the performance of particular face teams over a period of time and could use this information to operate a "blue eye" system.

Concentration of capacity.

The present strike was prompted by an attempt to continue eliminating "high cost" pits and concentrating production on the "super pits". As more pit complexes are opened with their enormous productive capacity more pits are defined as uneconomic because they are surplus capacity unless the market for coal is increased. There is also a real threat of privatization of the modernized pit complexes. The MMC Report recommendation of independent accounting for NCB areas and CEEGB demands for coal at pit-head prices could be seen as the first steps in this direction.

The plans will entail a massive job loss. The losses will be uneven between the areas because investment in new technology has been concen-

trated in the "central coalfield" of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Jobs will be lost from reorganization and automation in these areas, but the super pits created will produce so much coal that they will jeopardise the whole of the "peripheral coalfields": Scotland, Durham and South Wales in particular. For example, Selby alone will produce 10-12.5 million tonnes per year with a workforce of 3,500-4,000; the whole of South Wales and Scotland produce 13.5 million tonnes per year with 39,000 miners.

In our Interim Report of September 1982 we estimated that between 55% and 74% of mining jobs were at risk. It is now clear that MIDAS and IMPACT have been successful in reducing the operational and ancillary delays, something we did not take into account in our earlier estimates: the "best case" estimate of jobs at risk becomes 74%, while the complete elimination of all delays would result in 83% of jobs being at risk. The estimates of job losses refer to the 1981 employment levels so that a 74% job loss would leave an industry of 59,999 workers, while an 83% job loss would leave an industry of 38,000 workers.

Taking the mid-point of the two estimates suggests that the restructuring programme will enable present output to be maintained with 49,000 jobs. The Advanced Technology Mining Programme was recently reviewed with the intention of bringing together separate developments:

shield supports, electrohydraulic support control, face alignment, and MIDAS, with the overall objective of a two-man faceline in 1987.

From reorganisation alone the industry would have 93 pits plus the Selby complex producing 93.6m tonnes per annum, and employing 91,000 miners. The productivity gains from the extension of MINOS are expected to reduce employment to 79,000 by 1987/88. The employment projections shown in Figure 2 are consistent with projections made by the NUM and in our earlier report. Assuming the present rate of progress is maintained, the programme to reduce employment to 49,000 will be achieved in the calendar year 1989. It should not be forgotten that 41,000 jobs have disappeared from mining since 1981.

Role of the Incentive Scheme

The Area Incentive Schemes (AIS) are intimately linked with FIDO since delays of 20 minutes or less reduce the bonus paid: face workers either stop taking natural breaks or suffer a loss of earnings. Moreover, since it was first introduced the AIS has degenerated. Under the original scheme increased effort was rewarded with proportional increases in bonus. Bonus payments have not been adjusted in line with basic pay, so the scheme has become regressive; a 25% increase in effort is now rewarded with a bonus representing less than 20% of standard earnings. The average weekly bonus pay for face

workers in 1983 was £40-96; it would have been £56-40 had the scheme not degenerated. High earners like some in the Nottinghamshire area would have earned another £25 per week over the past year.

A recent study of the bonus payments in Yorkshire revealed differences in weekly bonus earnings of up to £67 within each of the four Yorkshire areas, and over the whole coalfield ranged from £16 to £103, a range of +36% to -15% on the national average earnings for 1983. The NUM concluded that since the NCB are aware of the disorder of internal differentials in the Yorkshire coalfield the scheme is being used as a lure to facilitate labour mobility between pits to speed up the closure programme. One consequence of the bonus variations is that surface workers at a high productivity pit receive more in bonus pay than face workers at neighbouring pits.

Shortcomings of NCB Policy.

There are two major technical weaknesses of the concentration of production into pit-complexes. The first is that all highly centralised operations are more vulnerable to disruption than decentralized ones. The second stems from the nature of the industry itself. Automated manufacturing systems require a consistency and uniformity of inputs, particularly raw materials. The working conditions in mines are notoriously unpredictable and it is only through the skill and experience of the workforce that production continues unhindered. An industry with a reduced and unskilled workforce and automated machinery is likely to run into serious problems in maintaining production.

The concentration of production in the "central coalfield not only brings technical problems, but has important strategic implications for future industrial development. There are currently reserves of about 300 years supply of coal spread through all of the coal fields. Once mining operations have ceased and pits have closed the reserves have effectively been "sterilised" because it is impossible to return to areas where the geology has been affected by the collapse of workings. Thus the reserves of coal available to the nation may be reduced by giving precedence to short term profitability, a practice condemned by Schumacher when economic advisor to the NCB.

Alternative Strategy for Coal

A Miners' Plan for Coal must confront the restructuring programme and recognise the central role of technology. Pressure for a new technology agreement grew out of a motion from South Kirby which was accepted at national conference 1983.

The union's policy on new technology now centres on the draft New Technology Agreement, which the NCB have so far refused to discuss; Mr. Dunn, NCB Director

General of Mining, said that negotiation over new technology was "not appropriate" (Newsnight, February 16, 1984). The agreement seeks to substitute shorter working time and earlier retirement for the job losses that will otherwise result from increased labour productivity. The agreement also seeks to prevent worker surveillance, maintain autonomy and improve working conditions. In countries like Sweden and Norway that have Work Environment Acts, worker surveillance through computer monitoring systems is forbidden because it is an infringement of personal liberty and damaging to workers' health.

The contradictions exposed in the restructuring demonstrate the need for a *rational energy policy* based on a consideration of the UK's energy needs into the next century rather than on short-term financial criteria. The policies pursued by the NCB and the Government represent a denial of our responsibility to future generations that cannot be justified on moral

or economic grounds.

In summary, an alternative strategy for coal should entail six elements:

1. Harbour coal resources through limiting the rate of introduction and exploitation of new capacity to the rate of exhaustion of high cost pits.
2. Negotiate a New Technology Agreement to reduce working time, eliminate computer-based work monitoring, and improve the working environment.
3. Consolidate incentive pay into basic rate to eradicate inequities between effort and reward.
4. Expand coal demand through Combined Heat and Power Schemes, fluidized bed combustion, substitution of coal for imported fuels, liquefaction and use as chemical feed stock.
5. Halt the nuclear energy programme; it is unnecessary, expensive and unsafe.
6. Subsidize coal in recognition of its strategic importance to the economy.



Fixing timber props at the turn of the century.

BL bid to smash union



By Alan Thornett

AUSTIN Rover management have carried out another victimisation of a leading trade union activist. They sacked Bob Cullen, an elected deputy senior shop steward in the Cowley Assembly Plant in November for allegedly damaging the windscreen wiper of a foreman's car on a picket line on the gates of the plant. The public statement, which we reprint here, shows conclusively that he was framed by management.

Since the shop stewards movement was weakened in BL by workers participation in the mid 1970s, and then attacked continuously under Michael Edwardes in the late 1970s and early 1980s, BL have conducted a policy of victimising stewards.

Derek Robinson was victimised in 1979; a group of stewards in Longbridge in November 1981. Alan Thornett was sacked in November 1982, and now Bob Cullen in November 1984.

There is a reason why stewards are sacked in November. BL's wage review is on November 1. Given time it gets sold out. After that there is a period of demoralisation which comes just before Christmas: the perfect conditions for sacking.

This time it was even more opportune. There was a strike for two weeks which collapsed when 8 of the 9 unions in ARG complied with the law over balloting and dimmed the strike. The workforce was deeply demoralised particularly in the main plants which supported the

strike.

This encouraged Austin Rover to go even further. Previously they sacked for trivial "offences" which would not normally be the subject of discipline — as with Derek Robinson and Alan Thornett. This time they framed Bob Cullen and sacked him for a minor incident which happened when he was not even there.

Bob Cullen has now been sacked for 3 months. He is a member of the TGWU, and his case has been the subject of a national conference after his appeal was rejected.

As we go to press, Ron Todd is to meet Harold Musgrave on the sacking shortly, and if Bob Cullen is not reinstated the matter will be put to a meeting in the plant.

Statement by sacked Cowley deputy convenor Bob Cullen.

I HAVE just been sacked after 15 years at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant having been a shop steward for many years and last year was elected as a deputy senior shop steward by ballot vote of the workforce. I have been sacked by Austin Rover management, accused of something which happened when I was not even there. This is apparently the level to which Austin Rover management is now prepared to sink in order to victimise active trade unionists and break the unions.

I am accused of bending the windscreen wiper arm of a foreman's private car outside the gate, on one of the Sunday morning pickets on the overtime ban prior to the pay strike. The incident took place on gate 16 of the plant, yet, as is well known, I was picketing on gate 10 that morning for the whole of the time.

It is a classic case of mistaken identity. The incident took place in the early morning when it was still dark. It was pouring with rain. Derek Jones, the foreman concerned, has only one eye. He did not know me at the time, and as a result has mistaken me for someone else who looks physically similar.

Derek Jones is the only witness against me. He made a written complaint after being interviewed by management. It is purely on the basis of this statement that I have been sacked.

Management have no other witnesses (they first said they had another witness and then withdrew him). I have twelve witnesses who have given written statements to the effect that I was never on gate 16 that morning but on gate 10, including the works security man on gate 10 who has said that he was standing talking to me for most of the period of the picket.

None of the security men on gate 16 can remember seeing me there. There are also two witnesses who have given written statements naming the person who was actually responsible for the incident. Management have interviewed them and

are fully aware of the strength of their evidence.

This is not to say that the person who was responsible should be disciplined in any way or has contravened works rules. The incident took place outside the plant and therefore outside of management jurisdiction. If Derek Jones had a complaint to make about damage to his car his obvious redress was to the law. Particularly since there were two uniformed civil police on gate 16 that morning, yet he chose not to report it to them. (He also chose not to report it to three works security guards on gate 16 that morning — who have no recollection of the incident having happened).

I find it inconceivable that someone could have their car damaged right next to two policemen and not report it to them. I find it even more inexplicable that he should go to management at a later date and identify me as the person responsible when I was not even there!

Why didn't management report it to the police themselves? The union has urged them to take the issue to court and they will accept the outcome but they have refused to do so. They were quick to take the unions to court over the pay strike! It can only be because they have no case to present.

I am sacked and they intend that I stay sacked. They are hoping that there will be no strike over this and therefore not too

"I WAS FRAMED!"

much publicity. Then they won't have need to justify my sacking. Their obsession is to end any effective trade unionism within the Cowley Assembly Plant, and to prevent any challenge to the dictatorial conditions they have imposed inside their factories.

My sacking is something new. Previously they have sacked active shop stewards for "minor offences" which would not normally have been the subject of discipline (in Derek Robinson's case, for example, for putting his opinions in a TU publication, in Alan Thornett's case for a lapsed driving licence).

Although they are accusing me of a minor offence the fact is that I have been framed. Management must know this is a case of mistaken identity but they are prepared to use it to sack me, because it suits their ends.

My case is not yet finalised — although I am off the payroll. Because the case is so outrageous the union have refused to accept it at the end of the disciplinary procedure and are calling, immediately after the Christmas holiday, for the intervention of the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

After that it will go back to the membership in the plant, particularly the trim shop, who I am confident will not allow this outrageous frame-up to go past.

Bob Cullen

Occupation victory beats hospital cutback

By Jo Coxhead

TO specialists in brain damage, Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre in Oxford is an internationally famous facility.

To hundreds of ex-patients nationwide, it is a centre which has helped them to lead lives of partial or complete independence after brain damage from a stroke, crash, or brain surgery from a tumour. It has re-trained them in skills mental, physical and of memory; how to read, write, walk, talk, drive; how to cope emotionally and socially. Rivermead is such a scarce facility that without it, many of these people would have been condemned to life-long partial or complete dependence on relatives or institutions — because ordinary hospitals can provide nowhere near the intensive co-ordinated therapy programme given here.

In the eyes of Oxford District Health Authority last September, however, Rivermead was a non-Hospital: it was not life-saving. Its Medical Director (a locum) came nowhere in the "pecking order" of Consultants; and its paramedical staff — physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists and social workers had annoyingly persistent inflated ideas of the importance of the work they did. Furthermore, it was sited on the "wrong side" of Oxford, away from the main hospital complexes.

So when the Government announced that Health Authorities had to find money to pay for part of the 1984 pay awards, Rivermead was an obvious target to the Oxford DHA. They decided to cut the number of beds by a third, leaving only 20. The justification was that the Regional Strategic Plan had stated (without consulting anyone) that only 20 rehabilitation beds were needed for the Region. As for the patients who came from everywhere else in the country for treatment, it was tough. If their Regions couldn't find money to fund a centre, it was not Oxford DHA's problem!

Once they had reduced the Centre to 20 beds, they could move it to one of the main hospital complexes — too bad if they couldn't provide adequate workshops there, or a hydrotherapy



pool!

"Rivermead has got to take its share of the cuts like everyone else," pronounced one DHA member. Nobody on the DHA cared that already in 1978 Rivermead had lost a 16-bed ward which was "temporarily" closed for upgrading and never re-opened — or that the Centre's waiting list for brain-injured patients last year was so long it had to be scrapped...

"I don't know why the staff at Rivermead think they're so special," the new Chair of the Oxford DHA, Ms Caroline Miles, was overheard to say at a dinner party.

Her listener was the mother of a pa-

tient at Rivermead, and told her exactly why!

Not that the DHA took any notice of such opinions. They graciously received — and totally ignored the views of — a lobby of staff, ex-patients and patients' relatives who handed in a petition of 22,000 signatures.

They turned down the staff's own offer of savings by a 5-day week (thereby cutting their own wages) saying this was "insufficient".

The DHA reckoned they could get away with this, because the proposals at Rivermead had not made headlines. Whereas on the simultaneous proposals to cut children's heart surgery they backed down in the face of a huge public outcry.

It is a legal requirement that in a major "change of use" of a hospital, public consultation must take place. But the District Officers announced that consultation would take place *after* the cut, and that it would remain permanent *whatever* the results of consultation!

The staff had an extremely active campaigning group, which organised a fight back along the lines of lobbying, publicity and protest, together



Christmas day on the Rivermead picket line.



with the (Labour) City Council and Community Health Council, getting letters to MPs and the Health Minister from referring agencies, ex-patients and relatives.

The Centre is in the constituency of the Junior Health Minister himself, John Patten, who was strangely unable to visit it when requested — until January — after the planned closure date!

Finally an official TV presenter — himself an ex-patient of Rivermead — was physically barred from filming the Centre by the District Administrator, Ian Beech.

Meanwhile, the staff had contacted the local Campaign for the Defence of the NHS and together they called a meeting with representatives from the Health Unions, the Trades Council, the Regional Health Campaign, the City Council's Health Committee, and the Community Health Council. The meeting was wrecked by this same Administrator, who sat in and refused to leave.

Maybe this was the DHA's downfall. The staff were so angered at Beech's attitude that they retired to the local pub to continue the meeting — the first of several meetings there with reps from supporting organisations that finally led up to the staff taking over the Centre in a peaceful work-in occupation.

The build-up to this was a picket of staff and supporters. The purpose was to stop contractors going in to convert a ward dayroom into a dormitory, enabling 20 patients to be crammed into a 16-bedded ward, with little space or privacy (both essential for brain-damaged patients). The picket had only a small

delaying effect, and it became clear that there was only one possible step left — occupation.

It was nearly too late. Demoralisation had spread through the staff, and fear of the Authority's power, reaching down to ward level in the person of a very hostile Nursing Sister; fear of the sack or discipline; fear that the Consultant would not continue referring patients over the DHA's limit; fear that other staff would act against the occupation.

There were no guarantees of success. What helped give the staff courage was the knowledge that it was the only chance of success left, and the account given of other hospital occupations from supporters who had taken part in them. They could give assurance from experience that there was little chance of victimisations, that patient care would be *improved* with the morale boost, and that it would probably pull many staff who were at present neutral through fear into passive or active support. The strength of an occupation would be the reversal of the normal power relationships with the staff themselves controlling their own workplace, and its perfect legality.

The core of activists were mostly in non-union professional organisations, and this last point was very important to them.

Finally, this core group decided, very hesitantly, to take the plunge. They called a meeting for all staff in the lunch hour on December 18, 3 days before the Centre's annual Christmas holiday shut-down. Two experienced supporters explained what an occupation involved and answered questions, and the core

group of staff called for support. A majority voted "to support or not to oppose" — the dreaded decision was made (nearly always the hardest part of an occupation).

The Receptionist went back to her post, and called the local press to announce proudly: "The Staff of Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre have taken control of the building to stop the reduction of beds." Three months previously she would probably have thought you crazy had you suggested she would ever be doing such a thing!

From the start, the occupation was

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made official by COHSE, who produced stickers and leaflets. Locally, it won fantastic support — enough to keep a 3-person 24-hour watch on the gate, and the publicity was at last forthcoming — including coverage in *The Guardian* and on TV.

It so happened that the previous week a new District General Manager had been appointed to the Health Authority. It became clear that he had a mandate from the Authority's Chair to get the occupation called off by promising to maintain the Centre's beds fully, during consultation. This

had been the (very modest) demand of the occupation committee. This offer was in return for a trial scheme of a 5-day week with full protection of staff wages.

There were real dangers in this second proposal, but the staff, after the Christmas break, accepted the deal, on management's written promise to refill the posts of staff who had left or been redeployed.

The occupation was duly suspended. It had lasted just 15 days and in its limited objective had won total victory: an amazing achievement for a

group of workers dedicated and determined but hitherto far from militant.

These staff are now aiming to embark on a study with the help of other supporting and professional groups of the real need for the Centre, not limited by the dictates of cash balance, and demanding national funding.

The threat remains, if consultation is treated in the DHA's usual cynical way, of a re-occupation with the workers back in control.

Drug cuts will hit children and pensioners.

A NEW government scheme to cut £100m from the NHS drug bill will do so by forcing thousands of pensioners and parents to fork out for prescriptions they have been getting free.

As of April 1, some 400 drugs on a government "hit list" will be put "out of bounds" for NHS prescriptions by GPs and hospital doctors.

Though many of these are scathingly described as "ineffective or dangerous" by the British National Formulary, they include many well-known painkillers and comforters, among them Distalgesic, Asilone, Dulmane, Librium, Dorbarex, Benlylin, Actifed, Calpol, Ativan, Multivite and Parahypon.

The "banned" list includes nearly all common painkillers (only Paracetamol or Aspirin will be left for mild or moderate pain), indigestion remedies, sleeping pills, sedatives, tranquillisers, laxatives and cough mixtures.

It is estimated that 70-80% of those who receive these drugs on prescription are exempt from prescription charges. As of April, they will face the choice of doing without, switching to a different "allowed" drug; or paying the full price of their medicine on a private prescription or across a chemist's counter.

A pensioner taking Distalgesic regularly for arthritis could be faced with a bill of £3.80 for every 100 tablets. Elderly people taking Dorbanex would need to save up £8 for 500 ml. And parents of children needing Actifed cough linctus will pay £2.50 for a 200 ml. bottle. Plainly, patients will once again be divided on the same old lines as before the NHS — between those who can afford to buy the medicines they need privately, and those who cannot.

Government ministers — abetted by the press — have dressed up this new penny-pinching policy as some new, radical swipe at drug industry



profits, claiming that the saving comes from switching from expensive, brand-named drugs to cheaper but identical "generic equivalents".

Yet the fact is that many of the "banned" drugs on the list of 400 are cheap, established generic drugs, while several on the "allowed" list are expensive patented preparations. Using the "generic" name in these instances would save no money for the NHS.

Interestingly, the most glaring examples of drug industry profiteering — antibiotics — are left untouched by the proposals, while the drug manufacturers can expect to make up through over-the-counter and private prescription sales and bolstered prices for "generic" drugs any revenue they lose from the NHS.

Though the BMA is making loud noises against the scheme, most doc-

tors will be quite happy to write private prescriptions — with some possibly looking further ahead to still more private practice in the NHS.

Once again it is the patients who will suffer from this latest mean and underhand attack; and as so often it is the poor, the elderly and the very young who suffer the most.

In opposing the latest government scheme, health campaigners should be pressing for:

- * a full exposure of drug company profits;
- * generic prescriptions;
- * a campaign for the nationalisation of the drug companies and their integration together with a research programme into a planned and expanded health service;
- * a comprehensive, objective assessment of the effectiveness or otherwise of the 3,000 drugs currently on sale in Britain — involving trade unions, pensioners and other organisations as well as doctors and technicians — with those found useless or harmful being banned from the market or manufacture in this country.

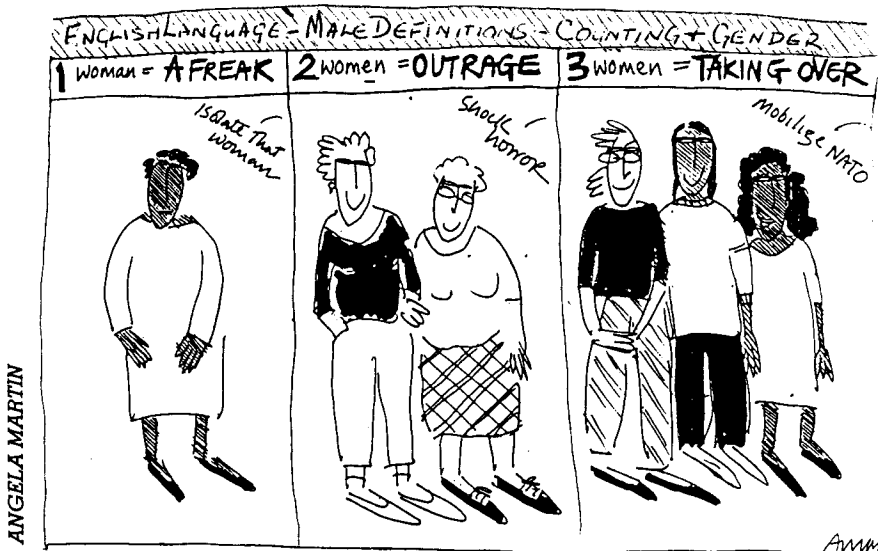
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Labour Women should apply!

By Jenny Fisher



ANGELA MARTIN

YOU might think, that with less than a dozen women Labour MPs in Parliament, the current round of Parliamentary reselections would be undertaken in a spirit of trying to redress the balance. Not so. The reselection process has barely started, but it's already proving an excellent arena for displaying the white, sexist, patriarchal prejudices the Party's riddled with.

The first hurdle we have to cross often comes from the "anti-positive discriminationists": "I'm not sexist, but I think women should be treated on their merits, or it's patronising: a good woman will get through." This is a very comforting "theoretical" argument when you feel your power's being threatened. But it doesn't fit the facts.

You can't blame the small number of women Labour MPs on the scale of the overall electoral defeat. A detailed analysis of the 1983 General Election result shows that few women came first in their constituencies; but very few came second. The vast majority were third — or lower — and often a poor third at that. Obviously, in some constituencies the Tory vote may, for the first time, have split with the Alliance, or the SDP may have taken some Labour votes, giving a new balance in the result. But you can't account for it all like that, or you'll have to start arguing that Labour voters will vote for the Alliance in preference to a Labour woman. The truth is that Labour men were given the vast majority of the safe seats, and women were left with the pickings, like mediaeval serfs allowed the scraps from the Lord's table.

Partly this is because the actual winning of the constitutional reform of reselection did not in itself challenge the prevailing Labour view that MP-ship is a career structure rather than a system of democratically selecting accountable delegates. So those who'd established themselves at the top of

the career structure (men) have to be protected. Partly, also, it's due to male-dominated GMCs, etc., incorporating their sexist prejudices into their selections.

To overcome this situation, we have to make sure that women are selected in many more safe and winnable marginal seats. That means starting now in CLPs, looking at the lists of women who are prepared to stand, contacting them, getting to know them and supporting them, as they seek nomination.

This doesn't imply that women in the Party will pre-empt the selection debate by choosing their woman candidate, getting her nominated, and then campaigning for the woman candidate. Women's Sections should set themselves a target of what they think they can manage: if your shortlist will be about 5 or 6, make sure you have at least 3 women nominated: and try for 5 or 6 if you can manage it. Then you can have a real choice of the most suitable woman for your constituency, after real debate. To get this number of nominations in most areas, some wards or union branches will need to nominate women: women's sections can organise for this, as well as concentrating on their own nomination.

The "anti-positive discrimination" argument sometimes appears in a much cruder form (I don't know if anyone else comes across this, but I do). This time *not* prefaced by "I'm anti-sexist, but..." it is merely "you can't say we should have a woman candidate, because that's sexist." This one I do find irritating.

It's time that Party members understood that when we talk about sexism, we're not just talking about a *lack of equality*. You're not "anti-sexist" just by remembering to pair off each joke about a woman driver (joke?) with one about how useless men are at changing nappies. *Nor* can you round on women who are active members of a women's section and tell them they're

being sexist because women's sections are divisive.

Fighting sexism is about fighting an oppression, an oppression of women by men, which has been going on for centuries and is one of the fundamental props of capitalism. It's about women sharing experiences in order to help define that oppression; and realising their collective strength to fight it: hence the "divisive" women's sections. Women's Sections, etc., are no more *divisive* than having a separate Party — the Labour Party — to promote working class interests as opposed to just mixing along in with the Tories.

Fighting sexism is about forcing men to question their ways and attitudes, to understand their role as oppressors; to change, and to add to that collective strength without taking it over, which would be to staunch it.

To often, the nature of the fight against sexism is by-passed, especially when the male can get away with appearing to be non-sexist by learning the right responses. It doesn't help when a male supporter stands up and says that of course the women should be able to get together (poor things), to give each other the confidence they need (timid little dears), so that one of them can come forward and stand for a post, one of the ones that isn't assertive enough to stand of her own accord.

This isn't being anti-sexist: it's patronising. Support is generated by women's sections, often helping women to do things they wouldn't have done alone. But if we won't do them alone, it's because we won't turn on ourselves and adopt the aggressive, elitist, careerist behaviour that is required if one is to be an "acceptable" woman, that is, acceptable on the men's terms by being as good at the practice which is used to keep us in our places as the men are. Some of us could do this perfectly well. It's not that we need a head start before we can run the same distance in the same time, it's that we don't like the rules of the race. And, often, we don't want to get elected for the personal glory, the thrill of that little bit of power, but we want to represent, and be a channel for, that collective strength of organised women.

If anyone still doubts that our Party is riddled with sexual oppression, listen to the stories of a few women candidates. They range from stories of selection meetings where male Party chairs were so nonplussed at being faced by a woman candidate they decided it was best to ignore her (she must have been a wife of one of the men) to meetings where men question women about why they want to be an MP, wouldn't they want to have babies soon? Presumably it's the only question they know how to ask (why don't they try asking what we think of the AES?). They don't ask them men if they intend having babies; and probably not because it doesn't necessarily take two any more these days. Even worse, this questioning will go on at a meeting where they haven't thought to arrange a crèche, either for

these potential mothers, or the men.

And candidates' experiences aren't exceptional. Women Labour Party members will come up with stories about being patronised, ignored, chatted up, sexually harassed, and, yes, even about being beaten up and raped by their husbands/partners.

We expect this treatment in everyday life — though we don't accept it. But I don't know how many times I've heard a woman say that she didn't expect it from a socialist, from a Labour Party member. Well, she should expect it in the Labour Party too; her advantage is a place to go to organise collectively against it.

The problems are serious enough when it comes to sexism against women. I can't even imagine arguing in favour of an openly lesbian candidate; I just can't begin to contemplate the furor that would cause. The difficulty would be so great, I think, because the support network for lesbians in the Labour Party is so small. The impact of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and of Labour Movement Lesbians has been far short of that of the whole Labour women's movement. That women's movement has had a very heterosexual bias overall: not only does it not promote lesbianism outwards to the Party, I'm not sure that it's considered sexuality seriously internally, though it does give token support. At least the movement to get more black MPs is very visible, because black members of the Party are being very uncompromising in their demands, though the demands are modest.

The final argument often advanced against looking for a woman candidate to support is the one which tries to prioritise women's issues over women: "Yes, let's interview some women, but let's make sure she's got the right politics; you may find there's a man on the shortlist that's better on women's issues than the woman."

At first sight, this is just insulting. It assumes that a woman's politics are likely to be less correct (i.e. left, or socialist) than a man's as a general rule. In other words, men have the monopoly of being socialists and defining socialism.

But the underlying assumption is still that men have a right to appropriate "women's issues". Well, yes, we do want men to educate themselves in the issues that Labour women put forward and see as important: we don't want to allow them the cop out of leaving it all to women. But the Labour women's movement isn't just about the issues: the issues are founded on the basis that women are powerless, and we want, and intend to take, a share in the power, the overall power. Those who argue that as long as we have men taking up women's issues we're all right, are revealing that they're still not happy to surrender any part of that power.

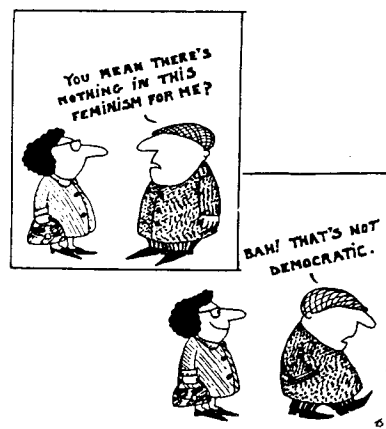
In all this fighting for more women candidates, however, there's one point we must not lose sight of? What is the actual point of being an MP? It's easy enough to forget to ask this question in the rush to get the next thing on the Labour Party agenda out the way.

The value of being an MP is something I've always been very dubious about: I'm not sure I can see any use in them. For me, the value of fighting for more women Labour MPs is the opportunity it gives to, once again, make prominent women's issues and women's interests; to put the Party on the spot, and, through the fight, to make gains. It goes back to part of the task of Labour women being to work against the sexism of the Party, so that it is in a position to unite the whole working class.

This is probably a jaundiced view, of the

value of MPs; for if there's an increased opportunity of making women's voices heard during reselection, what bigger — and more lasting — opportunity there'd be with more women in Parliament and in the PLP. But the question should be discussed. Have, for example, women Councillors been in a position to promote the interests of working class women? What lessons can we learn from them? Does the position of MPs follow from that example? How can Labour women and women Labour MPs work together and share the job? If we can do that, how can we generalise that experience, and make an impact on the Party as a whole?

Certainly, having won reselection, we should use it. But let's try to be long-sighted in our planning.



Gillick wins Appeal Court ruling: Pregnant by Court Order?

A QUEUE of people are waiting patiently to go to Heaven. Suddenly a man in a grey suit, carrying a black case and a "bleep" pushes to the front of the queue and goes straight through the Pearly Gates without permission from anyone. Some of the people who have been waiting for ages are incensed by the rudeness of the man and ask St. Peter who he is. St. Peter says: "Oh, that was God. He's all right normally; but every now and again he thinks he's a doctor!"

FOR once in our lives we should congratulate the Department of Health and Social Security. They are challenging the Appeals Court ruling on their decision to prevent doctors giving contraception (or even advice on contraception) to women under 16, without permission from their parents.

If the Appeal Court ruling is upheld by the House of Lords the effect will be noticed very soon. Whether you think women should or should not be having sex before 16, some not only are, but will continue to do so — contraception from the doctor or not.

While many of us have argued that men should take more responsibility for contraception, there has been very little response to this argument. After 15 years of the "permissive" society and "effective" contraception (taken or used by women) it's been a long time since young men have seriously thought about contraception as their problem. In fact, the Pill has been around for the whole of their lives for anyone under 16. To tell them sex is not their right and they are not entitled to something that they expect — rightly or wrongly — does not mean they will stop doing it.

It will mean an increase in pregnancies in the under 16s and with the pressure against abortion it will mean an increase in "schoolgirl mothers". So because Mrs. Gillick wants to prevent her daughters being given contraception without her permission (I assume her sons can still buy condoms over the counter at the chemists)

the quality of life of many young women will seriously deteriorate.

The last few weeks have been quite spectacular for decisions on the quality of life and who controls our right to have any. Doctors decide if we can have kidney dialysis — and they are restricted by cash restraints imposed by the state. The state is going to decide who can be a surrogate mother and the state — with the law — decides who can have the baby of a surrogate mother.

So what is the major victory that we are fighting for? While it now will be a victory to reverse the Appeals Court ruling the decision to use contraception will still not be that of the young woman: it will only be given back to the doctor. And we all know what Gods they can be...

Mary Lewis



World-wide campaigns for peace

By Dave Spencer

Australian fall-out

ON Thursday January 3rd, public hearing started in London of the Australian Royal Commission set up to investigate the effects of British nuclear tests in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s. Over 20,000 service personnel and civilians were involved and at risk in these tests.

Allegations already made include the following:

1. Safety procedures were non-existent or deliberately ignored by those in charge of the tests.
2. Personnel worked in contaminated areas (within 2.4km of an explosion) without being given protective clothing.

3. Servicemen were exposed to much greater radiation doses than have been admitted by the British government.

4. Aborigines were not evacuated from contaminated test sites.

5. Information about the nature of the tests was withheld from the Australian governments of the time.

The Australian Royal Commission was set up on July 2, 1984 because of public pressure to investigate reports of serious illnesses among its own service personnel and among Aborigines who lived near the test sites. In the U.K. over 100 claims for compensation from ex-servicemen have already been filed with the Ministry of Defence.

At first the Thatcher government

refused to recognize the Royal Commission and issued a statement in the name of Adam Butler claiming that safety precautions at the tests had always been adequate and that nobody's health should have been impaired. Now the Commission has come to London, however, with an Australian judge, Mr. Justice McClelland, in charge, they have decided to participate and have put forward a number of expert witnesses including Lord Penney — the former director of the tests. The Commission's final report will be presented in June 1985.

The allegations made above are of course extremely serious in themselves, but could perhaps be explained by incompetence or lack of knowledge. Far more serious and sinister explanations have been surfacing during the course of the Commission's investigations, however.

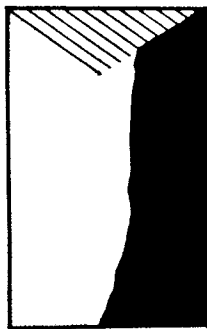
These have led the National President of the influential Australian Returned Services League to state: "It does seem from the evidence that the British used men as guinea pigs in these tests." For example, there was apparently a memo sent from the British Defence Research Policy Committee to British Service Chiefs during the Maralinga nuclear tests of 1961 and 1963 asking for servicemen to be *deliberately* sent into the test area without proper protective



clothing — to see the effects.

Aborigines in the danger zone were also apparently left there quite deliberately during and after the Maralinga tests. Worse still is the evidence quoted in *The Times* of June 20, 1984 that mentally retarded civilians had been taken from the UK and used in radiation tests in Maralinga. Former soldiers reported hearing their screams from the depths of bunkers close to ground zero as the bombs exploded.

One of the groups responsible for pressurising the Australian government into establishing a Royal Commission is the Pitjantjutara Aborigine People's Council. Their land in South Australia was used by the British government for nuclear tests. They made a film, which was widely shown in Australia last year, demonstrating the effects on their communities of radiation and also of evacuation. They were promised their land back 30 years ago but it is only recently that parts of the land have become safe enough for them to return. Even so, 300 square miles is still uninhabitable because of possible radiation pollution. Meanwhile, the loss of their land and destruction of the Aboriginal communities has led to chronic alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing among the young.



LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN for PALESTINE

**Annual General Meeting
Saturday 23 February
County Hall, London**

In the light of the rift in the Palestinian Movement and the revived activities of the Zionists in the Labour Movement, it is essential that all supporters attend.

• Membership fees: £2.50; Students/unemployed: £1.00.

Australia

A WOMAN'S peace camp has been established at Cockburn Sound, Fremantle, Western Australia. Cockburn Sound is a major port of call for US Navy vessels, many carrying nuclear weapons. Soon these vessels will be equipped with Tomahawk Cruise missiles, thus drawing Australia further into the nuclear escalation in the Pacific area. Fremantle and nearby Perth are also to become rest and recreation centres for the US Navy. The Women's camp will campaign on the social consequences for women when 40,000 US sailors visit their towns every year.

Contact:
W.A.N.D., 40, Praxis, 35,
Packenham St., Fremantle 6160,
West Australia.

Pacific Cruise

US imperialism plans to deploy Cruise missiles in the Pacific area in the same numbers as in Europe. The main difference is that the missiles in the Pacific will be sea-launched not land-based. For this reason, Reagan needs friendly countries, so that US warships and submarines can call in to their harbours carrying the deadly weapons.

Naturally enough, many people in the countries and island paradises of the Pacific are not happy about becoming sitting targets for retaliatory blasts — and vigorous campaigns have been started opposing US nuclear policy.

Fiji

IN a search for friends, Reagan has recently been wining and dining the Fijian Prime Minister Sir Kamisese Mara in Washington. As a result of the visit, Fiji has been promised substantial economic aid in return for the US Navy being allowed to dock its nuclear armed or powered ships in the harbour of Suva, the Fijian capital. One Fijian diplomat commented: "All the big powers seem to want to be in the South Pacific now. It is getting very complicated and very crowded."

One "complication" is the national struggle taking place in Fiji's neighbour New Caledonia. The 140,000 population of New Caledonia is split roughly half and half between the native Kanak people and the "Caldoches", the Franch settlers. The Mitterand government have sent in troops, police and special negotiators -- with little effect.

The Kanak people, who are demanding an end to French colonial rule, have the support of the Kanak government of the neighbouring independent island of Vanuatu/New Hebrides. Vanuatu has close diplomatic links with Cuba, the USSR and Libya.

N. Zealand

AS reported in *SV 1*, the Labour government of Aotearoa/New Zealand, elected last July has implemented a policy of refusing port visits by nuclear-armed or powered ships. This has rocked the ANZUS (Australia/New Zealand/US) "security" treaty, the Southern Pacific equivalent of NATO. With the re-election of Reagan, the US has stepped up its pressure on the Lange government. Large numbers of American spokespeople have been turning up in Aotearoa making thinly veiled threats of economic retaliation.

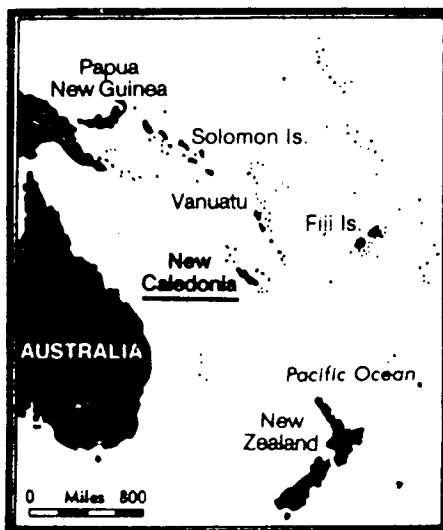
So far, prime minister Lange is holding firm to Labour's policy. He has also made promises of vigorous opposition to French nuclear tests in the Pacific Atoll of Mururoa, threatening to take a campaign of protest into metropolitan France itself.

Anti-test campaign

AN international campaign has been set up by 30 Peace groups entitled — 6th August 1985: The Day to End all Nuclear Explosions. This day is the 40th Anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. The first target date for national campaigning is March 1, 1985, the 31st anniversary of the notorious American Bravo tests which wiped out an island at Bikini in the Marshall Islands and showered the whole world with fall-out. Nevil Shute is reputed to have written his famous novel "On the Beach" as a result of Bravo.

There have been about 1,500 known nuclear explosions since Hiroshima in 1945 — an average of one a week. Despite attempts to negotiate a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the USA and USSR have continued testing at a terrifying rate. They have now been joined by other aspiring nuclear states like China, India, S. Africa and Israel with undoubtedly more countries to follow suit.

This nuclear madness shows capitalism in its starkest form — the likely destruction of the whole of humanity, the desperate waste of scarce resources, the vandalising of settled communities and ecosystems.



Socialist Viewpoint will provide more information about nuclear testing in the next edition.

For details of the 6th August 1985 Campaign, contact:

Centre for Defence Information,
303, Capitol Gallery West, 600
Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington
D.C., 20024, U.S.A.

Labrador

NUCLEAR testing is only one way in which the military destroys the environment. In *Socialist Viewpoint 1* we reported on the building of the largest NATO firing range in Europe (20,000 hectares) right in the middle of the Nebrodi Mountains National Park in Sicily. More recently the Innu people of Labrador, Canada, have complained about the NATO war games constantly played over their air space. Warplanes carry out loud simulated battles which terrify children and disturb animals in the area, particularly the caribou on which the Innu people depend.

Various kinds of chemicals are also released by these planes which have polluted the lakes and rivers of the area causing sickness among the people and affecting fish and vegetation. The Canadian government's reply to the Innu request that the war games be stopped or be played elsewhere is that Europe and America are too densely populated for such activities.

The Innu people have a petition they are asking people to sign, as follows:

"We the undersigned ask that the violation of the rights of the Innu people be halted immediately to prevent further traumatization of Innu families in the interior, to cease the ecologically irresponsible disruption of one of the world's last great natural areas, and to prevent yet more damage to the caribou and other species upon which the Innu people depend."

Innu Kanantuapatshet
Sheshashit, Labrador, Canada
AOP IMO.

Knives out as "Morning Star" Editor expelled

IN the last issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*, Harry Sloan dealt with some of the history of the British Communist Party. Since then some of the veterans of earlier unsavoury episodes in that history have once again entered the "battle" raging each day in the pages of the *Morning Star*. TONY RICHARDS reports.

IN the run-up towards a near certain total split in the Communist Party, the writing was clearly on the wall early in 1984 when the "Eurocommunist" majority on the CP Executive lost out to the pro-Moscow wing of the Party in the elections to the Editorial Board of the *Morning Star*.

The "Euros" had tried unsuccessfully to win a majority at the AGM of the People's Press Printing Society, which nominally owns and controls the *Star*, and thus to remove its pro-Moscow editor Tony Chater and his supporters on the EB.

The defeated Executive then called for emergency AGMs in a bid to reverse the decision. But this failed when they got even less people to attend the recall meetings than had voted for them at the original AGM.

By November, when the District Congresses of the CP began to take place, it became clear that Chater's supporters were in with a chance of winning control of the Party as a whole. Clearest indication of this came in the North West, when on the weekend of November 17-18 District Secretary Arthur Adlen and fellow EC member David Heywood were voted off the District Committee.

It was clear that pro-Moscow *Star* hardliners could also win at the London District Congress on November 24-25. The EC responded by deciding on November 23 not to allow the election of a District Committee because of "alleged irregularities" in the election of 10 of

the 250 London District delegates.

When the Congress convened on November 24, delegates accepted this EC decision: but they wanted to express a view on it. CP General Secretary Gordon MacLennan responded on behalf of the EC by closing down the Congress and leading a walkout of what the *Star* describes as "just under half" of the delegates. Those who remained behind passed a resolution condemning the EC and asking for a District Congress "within 3 months".

The following weekend the CP Executive decided to suspend 22 of the leading members involved for continuing the meeting. Most of those were old District Committee members. The EC then decided to replace them on the London DC with appointees nominated by the EC itself. And on December 3 the three full-time workers among the 22 were sacked from their Party jobs.

Meanwhile the new NW District Committee has not been allowed to meet, while "irregularities" in their

Congress are investigated.

On December 19 the three EC members among the suspended 22 — Mike Hicks, Maggie Bowden and Winston Pinder — made a defiant public statement, refusing to speak to the EC individually.

On January 13 the EC voted to expel Hicks and three others of the 22, along with Chater and his assistant editor David Whitfield. The effective admission of failure to win back the Party's own newspaper was linked to a decision to launch a new weekly magazine, *Focus*, reflecting the Eurocommunist line, and to be mailed directly to every one of the CP's 15,000 members. A special congress has been called in May — presumably to carry through the purge of Moscow-liners and formalise the split.

Certainly Chater's editorial line in the *Star* had got quite out of hand. 90% of the letters published have been coming from his supporters with the Moscow line receiving front-page treatment, while positions of the EC majority have been tucked away inside. But the decision by the EC to set up a rival publication must herald a determined move to destroy this weapon in Chater's hands: the paper's monthly appeal fund and sales are likely to take a pasting in the weeks ahead.

Many of the letters are from leading figures or long-standing CP members, including Bill Alexander, Bernie Steer, Tess Gill, leading members of the TGWU, print and public sector unions. The three EC members among the pro-Moscow 22 came 1st, 2nd and 4th in the elections to the Executive at the last CP Congress.

As the split widens, so the "political" basis to the animosity is emerging. On the one side, the "Euro" Executive looks unashamedly towards "broad fronts" with other forces, including the SDP and other elements. But is Chater — on the other side — any more principled?

We should remember that both sides embraced the "bishops and brickies" line of seeking out "progressive Tories" in the Peoples



Stalin — mentor of both wings of today's CP.

CORRECTION

We apologise for the editorial slip-up in preparing Harry Sloan's article on the Communist Party for publication (SV2); of course, Peter Heathfield is not a member of the CP. Thanks to all those many readers who pointed out the mistake!



March of 1983. Now Chater wheels out as the advocate of his "theoretical case" none other than 86-year old Andrew Rothstein and 94-year old Robin Page Arnot. These veteran Stalinists are hailed as "the two remaining delegates who voted for the formation of the Communist Party at its foundation Congress (Unity Convention) on July 31, 1920". They have so far had 3 articles of over 1/2 a page in length published in the *Star*.

The central point they make is that the CP Executive's real crime is its departure from "internationalism". By this, Rothstein and Arnot mean the CP's failure to give unstinting support to every action of the Soviet bureaucracy. These old Stalinist hacks defend *everything*. They quote Willie Gallacher in defence of the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary. They claim that the leadership of the British CP "knew nothing" about what was going on in the Moscow Trials. And where "difficulties" do occur over Soviet policies, they say

that British criticisms should be "really friendly":

"Between 1920 and 1939 they conveyed this type of really friendly criticism more than once, quite officially but privately."

So while the Bolshevik Party's leadership was put before the firing squad, the British CP leaders were "really friendly" to the executioners!

In fact the two authors of these articles know a lot more than they let on. They *knew* many of the old Bolsheviks who were shot or sent to the camps in Stalin's purges. Page Arnot knew even more: he was *AT the Moscow Trials*, writing the *craven reports for the British Daily Worker!*

It is conspicuous that the *Morning Star* has become less and less critical of Moscow. One day saw a 2/3 page article from these old Stalinists, together with half the front page on the Gorbachev visit, while the *whole* of another page reprinted his speech to the House of Commons! Chater is

obviously gambling on Moscow support in his battle with the Party "Euros". But the Moscow punters will watch the form a little longer before they commit themselves.

The other political issues raised by Rothstein and Arnot are equally unsavoury.

- On *democracy*, they claim that the present attacks on the minority by the Executive are "in a form and on a scale without precedent, either in our party history or in that of any other Communist Party, which has existed in legal conditions since the foundation of the Communist International in March 1919".

Who are they kidding? Have they forgotten — among many murderous purges of the Stalin era which they supported — that the *majority* of the delegates to the CPSU Congress in 1934 were *executed*? That CP was not only legal, it held state power! Have they forgotten that Stalin executed the *whole* leadership of the Polish Communist Party? The British purge

Not only did Page Arnot previously know many of the defendants in Stalin's Moscow purge trials of the mid 1930s, he had even written a book in 1923 on the Russian Revolution, which had shown Trotsky's true role. Yet a few years later he could write:

"Trotskyism is now revealed as an ancillary of fascism. The ILP is in great danger of falling into the hands of Trotskyists and becoming a wing of fascism." He claimed that Rakovsky had been in the pay of the British since 1924, and Trotsky in German pay since 1921. Moscow Trials prosecutor, Vyshinsky, however, (a Menshevik until 1920) was described by Arnot as "a credit to his calling."

Arnot, a member of the International Executive of Stalin's Comintern, survived in that position because he became a servile back for Stalin. He sat on the same Comintern Executive which in 1933 endorsed the suicidal sectarian

course of the German CP that allowed Hitler to ride to power over a divided German working class. Two years later he just as obediently endorsed the new "line" of the cross-class Popular Front.

Rothstein's record was of a similar cringing subservience to Stalin. When reviewing a book jointly edited by Stalin, Gorky, Gamarhik and Bulnov, Rothstein was tactful enough to refer to it as edited by "Stalin, Gorky and others" — because Gamarhik and Bulnov were currently facing frame-up charges.

Rothstein described the Moscow Trials as having been trials of "Nazi agents". And in his 1950 "History of the USSR" he justified the trials of all of the major leaders of the Russian Revolution as "German agents".

From this standpoint it is easy to be "really friendly" to the Moscow leadership of the day: it is hard to be anything else. These men did not criticise the Moscow Trials — they cheered them on.



is small beer in comparison: and why didn't Rothstein and Page Arnot write to the *Daily Worker* to protest these outrages in the 1930s?

● On the *State*: Arnot and Rothstein have the cheek to attack the "Euro" majority on their analysis of the capitalist state. Yet they are eager defenders of the "British Road to Socialism" which with Stalin's endorsement opted for a reformist, parliamentary "road to socialism" using Parliament as "the instrument of the people's will".

● On *coalitions*: Arnot and Rothstein argue that these should be seen as "Labour-Communist unity", not a coalition with other parties. But again they were active, leading members of the Party throughout the Popular Front and wartime periods (detailed in *Socialist Viewpoint* No. 2) and endorsed full-scale policies of class collaboration to the extent of urging reluctant workers to vote for "progressive Tories".

● *Class struggle politics*: coming from Chater and these old hacks, this is some kind of sick joke. While workers everywhere look on aghast at the TUC's refusal to mobilise action to support the miners, the "class struggle" *Morning Star* has been running headline after headline creating the illusion that they are giving real support ("TUC steps up support for the miners"). In reality the talk of "class struggle" is a means to strengthen Chater's real base of support among certain layers of trade union bureaucrats.

Yet the pro-Moscow bureaucrats are easily as treacherous as the "Euros". Ken Gill of TASS pulled out of the recent Austin Rover pay strike, insisting that the strike had not been made official — and leaving the TGWU to face the courts alone.

Meanwhile nothing makes the "class struggle" pro-Moscow wing more angry than any sign of class struggle by the workers of Poland or Eastern Europe against the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies: a major source of the current split was a big disagreement over whether or not to attack the Polish Solidarnosc movement. It is no accident that Page Ar-



Hob-nobbing with clerics began under Stalin in the 1930s and 40s.

not and Rothstein make a point of defending the 1956 invasion of Hungary.

So what of the politics of the CP majority? Any and every edition of the "Euro"-controlled magazine *Marxism Today* has offered easy meat for Chater and his supporters, who have shown it on many issues standing to the right of many left wingers in the Labour Party.

Cross-class alliances and coalition are dragged into every issue. In January's *Marxism Today*, an article on Ethiopia calls for entry work into "War on Want" and "Oxfam", and urges the left to support the International Development Agency, along with "selected (!) World Bank and IMF (!!) programmes".

It goes on to argue that "there is considerable scope for the construction of alliances, with political organisations in those European countries which have pursued progressive trade and aid policies at various times, such as the Scandinavian group and the Netherlands" (a coalition involving whole countries, lock, stock and bourgeoisie!).

ACT NOW!

An Appeal to the
Mind and Heart
of Britain

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PAGES



2D

By
THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY

But in hitting back against the complaints of the Moscow liners, the Euros make similar extravagant, lying claims. Mick McGahey, for example, complains about a letter of his not being published in the *Morning Star*:

"In the past, the *Daily Worker* and the *Morning Star* had a reputation for ensuring a fair representation of different viewpoints among readers and shareholders."

McGahey claims this was even true at the time of "the Hungarian counter-revolution" of 1956.

The reality was that the *Daily Worker* and the *Morning Star* refused to publish even the dispatches of its own staff reporter, Peter Fryer, from Hungary — because Fryer recognised the events, correctly, as a progressive, anti-bureaucratic revolution by the Hungarian workers. The Stalinists were deliberate, blatant liars then, and ruthlessly gagged opposition: McGahey and Chater both carry forward that despicable tradition today.

AS we go to press, the Executive has announced stringent new restrictions on the North West District. The new Committee can now meet only when a Political Committee member is present. The agenda has to be presented to the 3 EC members in the area (2 of whom have been voted off the Committee). All three EC members and the former Area Secretary have to be invited to all meetings; and new officers have to be endorsed by the Party's Political Committee.

Both wings of the dividing Party have announced major events for later in the year. The *Morning Star* is organising a festival to "celebrate the historic victory over fascism" — the 40th Anniversary of the end of World War 2. They wish to celebrate the period in which even Churchill was prepared to work with Stalin — and look forward hopefully to such collaboration again. Of course lit-

tle emphasis will be placed on the fact that for the first 2 years of World War 2 — until June 1941 — the USSR was in a formal alliance with Hitler: so much for the "fight against fascism".

The Executive of the Communist Party is delving even further back into the murky past of class collaboration, with a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International which in 1935 adopted the strategy of the "Popular Front". That policy had catastrophic results in the Spanish Revolution. An elaborate celebration of its 30th anniversary in 1965 was attended by a large delegation from the Chilean Communist Party — whose Popular Frontist line contributed to the vicious overthrow of Allende's government by Pinochet in 1973. What will be the fruits of the CP's latest attempts to promote the policy?

A brief history of the Cuban Communist Party

UNDERSTANDING events in Central America today calls for an understanding of the Cuban Revolution and of the present-day politics of Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership.

A new book on this question by JOHN LISTER has just been published (*Cuba: Radical Face of Stalinism*, Left View Books, £4.95). We reprint here two chapters which deal with the history and development of the Cuban Communist Party. Other chapters in the book deal with the Cuban state, its foreign and economic policies, and with the implications of the Cuban Revolution for the Marxist movement.



(1) Before 1959

When the leadership of Cuba's pro-Moscow Communist Party (known from 1944 onwards as the Popular Socialist Party) stridently denounced Fidel Castro's guerrilla raid on the Moncada barracks in 1953, nobody would have been particularly surprised. For the bulk of its period of existence, the CP/PSP had embraced a long-term strategy of cross-class "national unity", and opposed independent actions which might antagonise "progressive" sections of the capitalist class.

Though Castro's strategy also looked towards the cultivation of a broad, cross-class alliance against the dictatorship, his willingness to resort to armed struggle to lend a sharp edge to demands for democratic rights and reforms flew in the face of the Stalinist methods of passive class collaboration. It was not until Castro was plainly emerging as the winner against Batista in the closing months of 1958 that the PSP leaders began to relax their opposition and active sabotage of the guerrilla struggle. It is therefore particularly ironic that a year later Castro should begin turning to these same Stalinists as allies in controlling the Cuban workers' movement. Nothing in the PSP's history suggested that it had anything to contribute in advancing the revolution. The Cuban CP was formed in 1925, with the merger of a number of small groupings. From

1927 onwards its work focussed on constructing the Cuban National Confederation of Labour (CNOCL). Winning over some anarcho-syndicalist workers, Party members began to move into some union positions.

1930 saw mass, revolutionary strikes in Cuba, supported by demonstrations, riots, and the formation of a new student directorate at Havana University. The CNOCL called a mass strike, backed by 200,000 workers — and was outlawed. At this point the party had no more than 250-300 members, little structure, and policies which were a far cry from the prescribed ultra-left sectarian orthodoxy of the Comintern's "Third Period". Moscow intervened, with calls for the "Bolshevisation" of the Cuban CP, which led to a purge of opponents of the Third Period line in 1930.

This realignment brought forth bitter fruit in the stormy events of 1933. In July of that year, a massive strike movement grew outwards from Havana bus workers, to embrace other cities and other sections of workers including teachers, lawyers and doctors. The central demand was the resignation of the Machado dictatorship.

But the CP's manifesto issued on August 3 focussed primarily on economic demands — including the 8-hour day; payment of back wages;

measures to relieve unemployment; and the cancellation of the debts of peasants and small shopkeepers. Five days later, Machado, faced by US pressure to quit, called in the CP leaders of the CNOCL, and offered to concede most of these economic demands — in exchange for calling off the strike. The CP leaders agreed — and publicly called for a return to work!

Their pleas were fortunately disregarded by strikers outraged by mass army repression and the shooting of demonstrators the previous day in Havana. Three days later — with the CP still ready to do a deal — even the army demanded Machado's resignation, and he fled the country. His departure was followed by a growing revolutionary movement, as workers hunted down and killed hated police officers, and in some rural areas sugar mills were occupied and soviets proclaimed.

In September came Batista's initial "sergeants' revolt", in which the army's officers were declared dismissed, and the NCOs took over. Batista backed the nationalist President Ramon Grau San Martin, who for 4 months issued far-reaching decrees, manifestoes and laws including the 8-hour day; minimum wage legislation; the legalisation of all parties and unions; the right to

strike; the takeover of the US-owned electric power company; and a moratorium on foreign debt payments. A furious US administration refused to recognise the government and sent gunboats. But the Communist Party stridently attacked the Grau government in classic Third Period language as the representatives of "the big landowners and the bourgeoisie", and called abstractly for the immediate proletarian takeover and "all power to the Soviets".

Sectarian

The sectarian trajectory of the Third Period policy was ably summed up in the April 1934 CP Congress resolution, which explained that:

"The fundamental danger lies in the influence of the bourgeois-landlord parties of the "left" and its reformist, anarchist, Trotskyite agents... It is ... necessary to lay down as a specific task the unmasking of these elements and their campaigns of demagoguery."

This repudiation of any kind of united front tactic continued into 1934, when after the collapse of the Grau government, the CP in March called abortively for a General Strike. When the biggest strike of all broke out in March 1935, paralysing the country, and met by a declaration of martial law by president Mendieta, the CP was left completely isolated.

The following year the CP definitively turned its back on Third Period politics, and embraced the cross-class strategy of Stalin's Popular Front — to which Cuban CP leaders remained loyal right up to and after the time of Castro's victory in 1959.

The policy was set out clearly in a 1936 Central Committee resolution:

"The Cuban Revolution is at present passing through its national phase, and in this phase the revolutionary role played by other strata of the population besides the proletariat and the peasants must not be underestimated ... all strata of the population ranging from the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie, fraternally linked (!) by a common interest in the liberation of our country, can and must build a broad popular front against the foreign oppressors..."

Within two years, the CP was to demonstrate how "broad" this front was intended to be. As Batista — the power behind Cuban governments since 1933 — began to look for ways of building his own power base of support in the workers' movement, he reached out to the CP leadership, who despite their dismal record had retained and strengthened their early positions in the labour movement. A deal based on reciprocal support began to take shape, involving the Cuban CP with a dictatorship widely branded as "fascist" in the Communist movement. In December 1936, for example, the far from radical Central Committee of the CP USA declared that:

"... the issue of democracy versus

fascist dictatorship has been sharply raised by the putsch of Colonel Batista. After vainly trying to create a mass base for his dictatorship by demagogic methods, he has carried out — with the help of Wall St. backers and the sugar trust — an attack on the lawful Gomez government in order to destroy it, and with it every movement for real democracy in Cuba."

But if "demagoguery" failed Batista, his cynical moves to enlist the Communist Party to support his "fascist dictatorship" proved more successful. In late 1937 a CP front organisation — the Party of Revolutionary Union — was legalised. Next came a general amnesty, and on May 1 1938, the still "illegal" CP was allowed to launch a daily paper *Noticias de Hoy* (known ever since as *Hoy*), edited by Anibal Escalante. In June 1938 a grateful CP Central Committee passed its first pro-Batista resolutions, and in September the Party was legalised. 1939 saw the legal recognition of the Cuban Confederation of Labour (CTC) under the leadership of Stalinist functionaries including Lazaro Pena. The new "union" began to operate in tandem with Batista's Ministry of Labour: both were mechanisms to control the working class.

In November 1939 the CP ran in elections as part of a "social democratic" coalition of Batista supporters, and in 1940 the Party helped the Colonel draw up a new Constitution which placed wage bargaining in a structure of labour courts and the Labour ministry, with scope for direct Presidential intervention. The CP was the first to back Batista's candidacy as President in the 1940 election, and in 1942 was further rewarded for this craven support when two Stalinist leaders, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez (to-

day's Vice President under Castro) and Juan Marinello were included in Batista's cabinet as part of what they termed a "government of national unity". An obedient CP-led CTC that same year voted at its Congress to renounce any strike action for the duration of the war.

Popular Front

In 1944, following Stalin's dissolution of the Comintern the previous year, the Cuban CP changed its name to the Popular Socialist Party, and declared its *long-term* commitment to collaboration with Batista and the Cuban bourgeoisie:

"The Marxists stand for national unity and for its continuation, extension and consolidation under such conditions as may prevail in Cuba after the war. The policy of national unity, for the Marxists, is a long range policy."

Batista was fulsomely praised as a "great democrat", and "the great man of our national politics who embodies Cuba's sacred ideals." But when Batista was succeeded as President by a returned Grau San Martin, the PSP, eager to defend its bureaucratic positions in the union hierarchy, offered Grau a similar degree of support. CPer Marinello was appointed Vice President of the Senate.

In 1945, Blas Roca and Lazaro Pena, General Secretary of the CTC, issued a pamphlet entitled *Collaboration Between Workers and Employers*, the bulk of which consisted of a speech given by Pena to a banquet hosted by Cuba's National Association of Industrialists.

In an introduction to the pamphlet,



Dimitrov, leading Comintern exponent of the "Popular Front" policy of 1935. It was adopted by the Cuban CP.



Stalinist class collaboration did not end after World War 2. Stalin himself collaborated with the leaders of British and US imperialism to carve the world into "spheres of influence" — upholding capitalist rule throughout the Western "sphere".

Roca declared:

"... at present, the working class's patriotic policy of national unity is at its own initiative; workers are not prohibited from striking — rather they are rising above their petty interests (!) and demanding a policy of no strikes, a policy of maintaining production, and a policy of national unity, thus showing that they are the most patriotic, most responsible and most capable class in society today."

(p.21)

And of course the PSP in turn was the most patriotic, "responsible" and capable class collaborationist bureaucracy the Cuban ruling class could have hoped to meet.

But after the 1946 elections, Grau had strengthened his position and no longer needed PSP support. His own "Autentico" supporters were lusting for the power and privileges of heading the CTC, and in 1947 the PSPers were ousted. Their attempt to hit back by forming a breakaway union collapsed when Grau's men at the Ministry of Labour made use of the CP's own formulations in the 1940 Constitution to deny the breakaway body the government recognition it required to conduct wage bargaining.

During this period of collaboration the CP/PSP had been able to offer prestigious and lucrative perks and bureaucratic privileges to a layer of leading members in the unions and in

Parliament, and had grown in membership. It had also used its position for electoral advantage, achieving 8% of the vote in 1944 and 10% in 1946: but as the party was frozen out by Grau's Autenticos and by the pressures of the Cold War upon the Cuban bourgeoisie, this empire began to crumble. Stripped of its levers of control in the unions, the party was regarded as largely harmless. The Cold War repression saw little interference with PSP leaders or their electoral work. Even after Batista's bloodless preemptive coup in advance of his certain defeat in the 1952 elections, and after the formal proscription of the PSP in the Autumn of 1953, its leaders were allowed to pursue their work largely unhindered.

Moncada

Doubtless these Stalinists saw Castro's adventurist attack upon the Moncada barracks as a threat to this new period of "peaceful coexistence" with Batista. The PSP in August 1953 declared:

"We condemn the putchist methods — characteristic of bourgeois groups — which were evident in the adventurist attempt to capture the barracks at Santiago. The heroism displayed by the participants was misdirected and sterile."

Trotskyists, too, would be critical of Castro's politics and methods, but from an entirely different starting point. Castro's isolation from — and to a large extent indifference towards — the Cuban working class shaped his rebellion from the outset as a petty bourgeois-dominated, elitist movement. And his cross-class, popular-frontist political line and programme — more akin to that of Stalinism than Trotskyism — likewise served to minimise the proletarian component of the struggle. While giving Castro's movement critical support and defending it against Batista's dictatorship, Trotskyists should have maintained their own political independence.

The thrust of the Stalinist criticisms from the PSP on the other hand focussed on their fears that Castro's opening of the armed struggle would radicalise Cuban politics to the extent of jeopardising the PSP's own Popular Frontist relations with sections of the Cuban bourgeoisie, and outflank the PSP in winning the most militant forces of the petty bourgeoisie and working class. The PSP attacked Castro's obvious adventurism politically from the *right* — from a standpoint of opposing any real struggle; revolutionary Marxists would criticise from the *left* Castro's lack of working class politics.

After Castro's resumption of the guerrilla struggle in 1956, the PSP

again opposed such tactics, and in February 1957 restated its now familiar popular front policy of 1936:

"...the correct approach ... lies in the unity and common action of all opposition forces ... in a struggle to eliminate tyranny and achieve the victory of democratic forces."

Former Batista minister Carlos Rafael Rodriguez went even further along this cross-class road in an interview with the French Communist Party journal *France Nouvelle* in July 1958 — six months before the fall of Batista:

"To overthrow Batista, it is necessary to form a coalition reaching beyond the ranks of the anti-imperialists to include forces which are not committed to anti-imperialism... Therefore the present strategy of the PSP is based on the necessity of achieving the unity of all political parties and groups that are opposed to the government... This unity must be such as to enable men like Prio Socorras and Grau San Martin to take part in the coalition."

Nor were these differences with Castro merely the subject of academic discussion or abstract polemic. Stalinist parties have never scrupled at the outright sabotage of opposing political currents and struggles which they cannot control, and the PSP was no exception in the 1953-58 period.

Informers

The Stalinists assigned informers to disrupt and destroy the student Revolutionary Directorate (DR), which, fighting in solidarity with Castro, had proven stubbornly resistant to the wretched politics of the PSP. In the summer of 1957 one such informer, "Marquitos" Rodriguez, supplied the police with the details of the whereabouts of four leading DR members, who were then summarily machine-gunned to death. "Marquitos" was smuggled out of the country by PSPers, and was eventually received with honours as a member of the Mexican CP.

This betrayal was one of the most spectacular of what appears to have been a persistent series of tip-offs to Batista's secret police by Stalinists in the period from January 1957 to June 1958. Significantly, after the approaches of a PSP delegation to Castro and a tentative agreement between them in the Summer of 1958, there was a marked fall-off in the number of police swoops and in the quality of intelligence on which they were based.

Nor was it only on the guerrilla front that the Stalinists ruthlessly opposed the Castroites. The July 26 Movement's call for a General Strike on April 9 1958 was met with outright hostility and sabotage from Stalinist union organisers. In some instances they called in Batista's cops to arrest strike organisers: one Stalinist simply went out fingering July 26 militants to the local death squad — before himself being appropriately executed by a strike organiser. Another group



of three Stalinist strikebreakers seized two Autentico militants — working with the July 26 — and handed them over to the cops for execution. In one Havana bank, Stalinist saboteurs took refuge with management in fear of retribution for their treachery against their workmates. Meanwhile prominent Stalinist and former minister Juan Marinello was given 24-hour a day protection by Batista's secret police against possible violent retaliation for the betrayal of revolutionary militants by members of his party.

In May 1958, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Osvaldo Sanchez visited Castro in the Sierra Maestra on behalf of the PSP. There is no clear evidence of the proceedings or discussions, but it appears that from this point onwards the PSP relaxed its opposition to the J26M and that some PSP members began to play an active supporting role in the struggle.

The switch of line came from a position of profound weakness for the PSP. Its fortunes and membership had declined in proportion to its ex-

clusion from the corridors of class collaboration and from any struggle against the regime of the day. In 1942 membership had reached 87,000. Ten years later, after the Party had been elbowed out of its bureaucratic posts and its cosy links with Batista, it had fallen to 20,000. By the beginning of 1959, after six years of sabotage and opposition to Castro's struggle, the PSP had no more than 7,000 members — and was cordially hated by the most dedicated anti-Batista fighters.

Nor did the PSP drop its gradualist, collaborationist line even after Batista's flight. Throughout 1959 the Party urged Castro's leadership to hold back the Revolution so as not to provoke a US intervention. In May 1959 the PSP implicitly opposed the radical proposals of the Agrarian Reform Law. And as late as August 1960, on the very eve of the massive wave of nationalisations which were to destroy the basis of capitalism in Cuba, the Party's veteran General Secretary Blas Roca (in office since 1934) warned the PSP Congress:

"The Cuban revolution is not a communist revolution; it is anti-imperialist and anti-feudal ... patriotic and democratic... The social classes that are objectively interested in the fulfilment of these historic tasks are the workers, the peasants, the urban middle classes and the national bourgeoisie."

Fortunately Castro's decisions at that point were shaped by rather more weighty forces and pressures than the CP's "theoretical" offerings, left over from the betrayals of the 1930s.





Mass mobilisation in October 1959

(2) After 1959

Politically bankrupt though it was, the PSP had two qualities on offer which Castro was able to use to advantage: it was in effect the *only* political party with any structure and political coherence on a national level; and it had a cadre with extensive experience in controlling the highly bureaucratized Cuban "trade unions". As the Fidelistas began to look at the problems of consolidating their newly-won power, they sought to utilise the PSP, though on their own terms.

Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro announced on July 26 1961 the merger of three organisations — the July 26 Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate and the PSP. The new formation was called the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI). But the Stalinist notion of "integration" proved to be rather different from Fidel's.

Anibal Escalante, the leading PSPer put in charge of the ORI, held the view that his task was to "integrate" the Fidelistas into a Stalinist-run party. In each of the six provincial committees of the ORI and at lower levels too, Escalante appointed former PSP functionaries to leadership posts. And he called for the building of a party organisation (under his control) inside the armed

forces. Escalante's objective was to keep the machinery of the new "party" firmly in Stalinist control: from this basis the party could retain control despite a National Directorate comprising thirteen July 26 nominees, 10 from the PSP and 2 from the DR. Personal ambition was probably one factor in Escalante's actions; probably Moscow's directives were another. In any event it is hard to teach a flea-ridden old Stalinist dog new tricks — particularly if you make him the ringmaster in the circus. A further aspect of the situation was the appalling weakness of the PSP's partners in the "integration" process, which made it hard for Escalante, even had he wished to do so, to choose equally or proportionally from any cadre of July 26 or DR members.

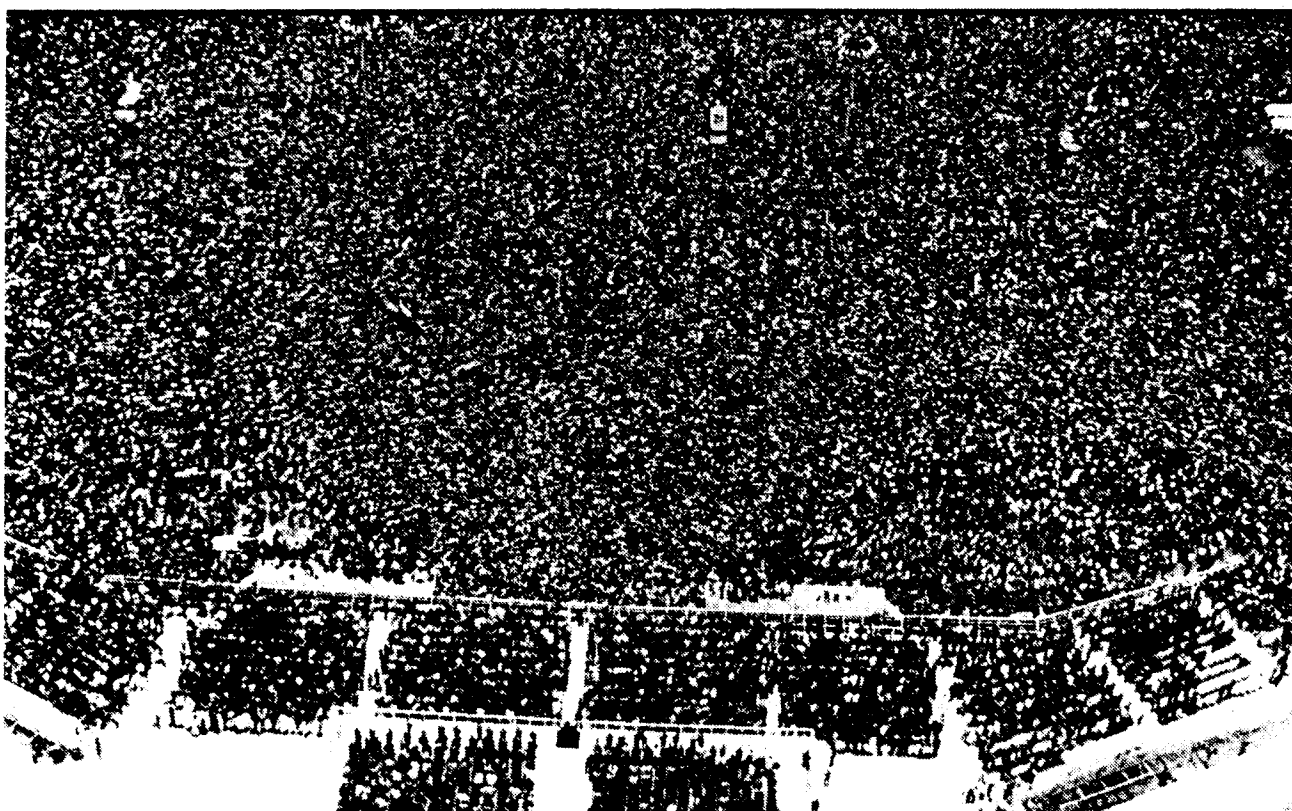
On March 26, 1962, Castro recognised what was afoot, publicly denounced Escalante's conduct and expelled him from the National Directorate. Fidel himself took over as First Secretary of the ORI at the head of a new governing Secretariat, which now incorporated only Blas Roca from the old PSP. Escalante was sent to Czechoslovakia for two years.

In February 1963, the ORI itself was dissolved and the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS) erected in its place, with a Directorate containing the same leading members (with the exception of Escalante), but a Secretariat firmly in the hands of the Fidelistas. In this

1962-63 period the party expelled about half its membership in a succession of purges.

In 1964 the Stalinists suffered a further setback with the trial of their ace informer of 1957, "Marquitos" Rodriguez, who was sentenced to death (see above). This was accompanied by the arrest, and expulsion from the party of veteran PSP leader Joaquin Ordoqui for his role in concealing the affair. Ordoqui became the second old Stalinist to be ousted from the original ORI Directorate; he later died in jail.

In October 1965 came a further change-round, with the establishment of the Communist Party of Cuba, in which political power was concentrated entirely in the hands of the Fidelistas, though PSP old-timers secured two seats (Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Blas Roca) on the six-man Secretariat, which was headed by a Castro loyalist. The new "party", which had emerged from a turbulent 4-year history, had undergone 2 changes of name, a major membership purge, and a succession of leadership manoeuvres since its origin in 1961. It was indeed a curious party: the membership held few if any democratic rights within it, and no Congress was to be convened until 1975 — ten years after the "Party" was launched! The very adoption of the title Communist Party of Cuba appears to have been more linked to Castro's jockeying for position in relation to the international Stalinist



Mass rally in Havana hears a July 26 commemoration speech.

movement than to any political or organisational links to the old Communist Party. 80% of the new Central Committee were either former members of the July 26 Movement or other non PSPers. And even while adopting a formally orthodox "Communist" label, Castro was in fact embarking upon his biggest period of political challenge to the Moscow line.

But there was a real link between the new Castro party and the more conventional "Communist Parties" of Eastern Europe and the USSR. The Party apparatus was seen in each case as a mechanism of control and perpetuation of the existing leadership, and as a means to suppress rather than facilitate the independent organisation of the working class or democratic debate on policies amongst the party's "rank and file". Castro quite explicitly argued for an elitist approach even in his denunciation of Escalante:

"We have to be a workers' vanguard party. We have to govern *in the name of the working class*, and we are making the aims of the revolution come true, and we are governing the country *in the name of the working class*, of the labouring class."

Yet the workers, whose name was being invoked, had no control or voice in the decisions of the "party", and still less in the actions and policies of the government. This model of party and state is not Marxist, but an elitist, bureaucratic, *Stalinist* model. Castro may have been at loggerheads with the old PSP leaders over the day-to-day control of the levers of power in the new party (though the old PSP leaders for the



most part joined with the Moscow bureaucrats in siding with Castro against Escalante); he may well have had a more populist and agitational means of securing support for his policies amongst sections of the working class; but on the general concepts of leadership he had more in common with Stalinism than with Marxism.

Bureaucratised

The evolution of the Cuban CP since 1965 has been towards the gradual consolidation of a bureaucratised structure in which the decisive power still rests with Fidel Castro and the men from the Sierra Maestra. There was a further purge in 1968 — once again involving Escalante, who had returned to Cuba and was plainly agitating around Moscow leaders' criticisms of Cuban domestic policies. Escalante and eight more members of what was termed a "microfaction" were purged

by Fidel and Raul Castro. Their criticisms had been wide-ranging. They claimed that there was insufficient party influence on policy (meaning that too much depended upon Castro's personal views); that there was too much emphasis on "moral" incentives, "voluntary" labour and similar devices to keep the economy moving; and that the goal of 10 million tons of sugar production was not practical. Many of these criticisms appear to have been well-founded, and Fidel was subsequently to adapt to many of them after he had purged Escalante — and in particular after the predicted failure of the "10 million tons" drive in 1970.

By the early 1970s as the regime pulled back from many of its more radical domestic and international policies, Castro began to relax the emphasis on moral incentives, and publicly acknowledged and defended the privileges that accrue to elite office-holders in the Party and state hierarchy. The elite, he began to argue, had a right to acquire first what all would eventually receive.

Castro's arguments, dressed up in a lot of apparently radical rhetoric, were contained in his November 1973 speech to the Thirteenth Congress of the CTC, where he insisted for the first time that:

"Logically, every worker's remuneration should be linked to the quality and quantity of the work he does. If he is in a responsible job, an important job, he should be paid more."

In the same speech, Fidel went on to propose increases in wages for the "personnel in charge of directing production". He specified "brigade

leaders and foremen",

"whose wages must compare favourably with those of tractor drivers and operators of other equipment."

Fidel went on to set the CTC delegates' minds at rest: they too would be in line for suitable incentives

"All these measures and their economic effects must be discussed with the labour leaders, so these agreements — which can be a tremendous tool in increasing economic efficiency — won't trigger a new inflationary process..."

And they would get their share of some newly imported cars, too:

"We're going to buy some cars to sell to technicians — we're not talking about a privilege (!) we're talking about selling cars to the technicians who need them in order to be more productive in their work. (...)

(...) You haven't said anything about this, but we're aware of the fact that the labour movement needs some cars. (...) We can't promise you immediate solutions, but we do assure you that in 1974 we're going to make an effort to provide the labour movement with a basic minimum of cars for its work."

(in Castro: *Our Power is That of the Working People* pp. 154-183)

In 1972, Cuba joined COMECON and was granted a postponement of repayments on its debts to the USSR until 1986, along with a suspension of interest payments. In 1973 the Thirteenth Congress of the CTC adopted a range of proposals to placate working class dissatisfaction with the regime's economic policies, including a revision of pay scales, limits on hours of work, pay for overtime, and compensation for holidays worked in previous years. But few of these resolutions were implemented. Perhaps more effective in mollifying workers was a distribution of 100,000 TV sets to "vanguard" workers through labour assemblies and the recommendation of union and party organisers. Refrigerators and electrical appliances, too, were distributed in this way in 1973. Technicians and union bureaucrats were favoured with privileged access to new cars imported from Argentina. The egalitarianism of the early years and the 1964-67 campaign against "bureaucratism" (which had brought the lay-off of 31,500 functionaries) had been left far behind.

In 1975 came the First Congress of the Cuban CP. It was envisaged as part of an elaborate process of institutionalisation of the revolution and its state structure. The previous year, a pilot run of elections to municipal assemblies had been carried out in Matanzas province. The 1975 Congress was to set course for a new Constitution, incorporating municipal assemblies and an indirectly-elected National Assembly (a set-up closely resembling the degenerate structures in the post-Stalin USSR). An experimental (and limited) decentralisation of governmental power from the 1975 Congress led to a pro-

liferation of ministries and state committees.

A recruitment drive preceding the First Congress had more than doubled the CP's drooping membership from a tiny 100,000 in 1970 to 202,807 in 1975. A new leadership structure, including a new Political Bureau, Secretariat and Central Committee were unveiled to the membership. If anything, the hand of the Fidelistas was strengthened as against the Stalinist old guard on the leading bodies. Ten out of 13 Political Bureau members were Castro loyalists, six out of nine of the Secretariat, together with 60% of the Central Committee members not on the PB or Secretariat. On the 31-person Council of State, 21 were veterans of the July 26 Movement, only 8 from the PSP. And even those Stalinists who held on to prominent positions were not in general in decision-making posts. As an older, fading leadership force with no prospect of renewal of their cadre, their influence as a minority on these committees was plainly limited.

Why then did Castro embark upon the changes? It appears that there were both domestic and external pressures which made a strengthening of the "party" structure — under strict control of course — a desirable move for Fidel. On the external front, the Cuban economy was in further need of Soviet assistance — particularly in view of the rapidly rising military budget, and the strains which military spending brought to bear on the remainder of the system. Castro's reform of the party was warmly welcomed by the Soviet bureaucracy and specifically acclaimed by Brezhnev as evidence of

the "growing maturity" of the Cuban revolution. They were followed up by substantial increases in Soviet aid.

At home, Castro's shifts of policy and enlargement of the formal leadership structure of the party and the state served to defuse potential opposition from influential sections of the bureaucracy in both the civilian and military apparatus, who might otherwise have caused divisive disputes. And by bringing forward no less than nine top-ranking Fidelista loyalists from the armed forces into the CP Secretariat and other key posts, Castro was able to give the appearance of broadening his base whilst blocking any prospect that potential critics or opponents might increase their influence.

Authority

The reaffirmation of the Castro brothers' authority was underlined in the run-up to the Congress by extensive personal appearances by the two men, particularly before the rank and file of the armed forces. And the decision was confirmed by a specific vote of the 1975 Congress to incorporate a ban on factions into the Party statutes.

So what was the Party's membership base in 1975? Fidel complained to the Congress that party representation was weak amongst workers in the sugar industry, basic industry, construction, transportation, education and agriculture. By deduction, it is obvious that the CP had strength only in the armed forces — under Raul's personal supervision — the Interior Ministry, and the state bureaucracy. 40% of all party



Cubans demonstrate against invasion of Grenada.

members in 1975 held administrative and political positions.

Cuban figures* indicate 41.6% party membership amongst journalists in 1974; 50% membership in the Academy of Sciences; 60% of the staff at the Ministry of the Interior in 1973 were members (rising to 70% in 1976); and no less than 85% of armed forces officers were party members in 1973. 38.5% of maritime and port workers were CP members in 1971, but interestingly only 37.4% of the "Communist Construction Brigade" were in the CP in 1972 and only 18.2% of the Centennial Youth Column were in the CP or its youth organisation.

In general, percentages for party membership in less intensively cultivated sectors of employment tend to be substantially below 20%. And, given that total membership was only 202,00 in 1975, some sections of workers must have included a truly tiny representation of party members.

Concentrated

These differential figures indicate that the Cuban CP, like its sister parties in Eastern Europe, has concentrated its energies on controlling the mass media, the Interior Ministry and its apparatus, Science, transport and the military. Indeed the armed forces have been cultivated by Raul Castro as a bedrock of political support for the party leadership and its policies at home and abroad.

The outcome of this pattern of growth is that while the Party may have a majority of members who have a worker or peasant background (as indeed did Stalin's hardening bureaucracy in the Soviet Union), many of these would no longer be employed in proletarian or peasant occupations.

The Party's representation amongst women also remained small, hovering around the 13% level from 1963 to 1974, and climbing to 15% in 1975. In 1965 only 5% of the Central Committee were women: in 1975 the proportion went up to 5.3% (though nearly half of the alternate members were women). Only 6% of all Party officials were women in 1974.

Though there have been further recruitment drives (conducted under the watchful eye of local and higher party bodies) since 1975, the fact clearly and inescapably emerges from this analysis that the Cuban Communist Party *never has been and is not now* a mass, working class party. It is not a Leninist, but a Stalinist party, in which the rights of the members are strictly circumscribed, and "democratic centralism" is implemented solely as a rigid mechanism for centralised control. "Democracy" is restricted to the right of individuals, under clearly defined conditions, to raise limited criticism

*Most figures taken from the breakdown by Jorge Domínguez.



Castro, like the East European hardliners, was hostile to Solidarnosc.



— but in no way to organise or campaign for a package of alternative policies.

Though a system of "elections" exists both within the CCP and in the municipal and national Assembly structures, these elections *specifically forbid* the circulation of manifestos, and take place on the non-political basis of a biography of each candidate. In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that widespread "discussions" initiated on certain issues by the Castro leadership are invariably followed by near unanimous support (with incidental variations) for the government/party leadership's proposals. As a system for the mobilisation and control of the mass movement, the CCP, supplemented by auxiliary "mass" organisations, has proven remarkably effective. As a genuine party, offering any mechanism of accountability and control, or acting as a vanguard force to organise and lead the working class, it has never had any real substance.

Economic Crisis

By mid 1979, a growing economic crisis had begun to make itself felt in Cuba, and many of the more cosmetic measures of decentralisation adopted in 1975-6 were to be reversed early in 1980. Ministries and state committees were scrapped wholesale; ministers and even vice presidents were sacked, and others were replaced. The May 1979 Plenum of the Central Committee had blamed

"indolence" and "irresponsible behaviour" on the part of Cuba's workers and managers for many of the country's economic problems. It called for a strengthening of the trade unions — whose task, it declared, was "to fight complacency and attempts to shrug off responsibility for shortcomings".

Discipline

In July 1979, Fidel Castro, speaking to the National Assembly, strongly criticised the "deficiencies of our system", complaining that "discipline functioned better under capitalism". Later in 1979 Raul Castro joined the attack on "indiscipline, lack of control, irresponsibility, complacency, negligence and buddyism."

In a critique reminiscent of some of the ranting of top Soviet bureaucrats (not least the late Leonid Brezhnev himself) Raul rounded on more junior elements in the bureaucracy:

"The main ones to blame for all these weaknesses and the lack of work discipline are not the workers but the managers and functionaries of enterprises who, we know, fiddle with the statistics, reporting land ready or planted when it's not, production that hasn't been done, using and abusing the prerogatives that go with their post and the resources of their enterprises to solve problems of their own and their friends. They have no standing when it comes to being demanding of others... The authority administrators have comes from a job well done, a life given over to work, a work style that is far removed from fraudulent buddyism and warping tolerance, and from living a modest life in keeping with their means..."

One does not have to read too much between the lines to recognise that a considerable degree of bureaucratism has already accumulated as a dead weight around the neck of the Cuban economy — or that Raul is intent upon evading responsibility for such parasitic outgrowths in a system which he, his brother and their co-thinkers have completely controlled since 1961. Indeed the answer of the Castro brothers to this crisis of the economy and burgeoning bureaucracy was



Cuban women's militia.

— to recentralise control more tightly in the hands of an inner circle of about a dozen people. Fidel himself took on added responsibilities for several new, unconnected ministries. This is no answer to the problems: but it is the only answer we should expect from an elitist, bureaucratised Castro leadership.

Key bodies

In reality four key institutions govern Cuba. Two are CP committees — the Political Bureau and the Secretariat; in addition there is the Executive of the Council of Ministers, and the Council of State of the National Assembly. Only three men are members of all four — the two Castro brothers and PSP veteran Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. The Castros' hand was further strengthened by the governmental shakeup of January 1980. This inner group, plus the ten or a dozen people who are members of more than one of the top committees actually make all of the important decisions in Cuba.

The Party's Second Congress in December 1980 came after the new mass exodus of political dissidents to the USA the previous Spring, and a CP recruitment drive which had increased membership from 200,000 to 450,000 in five years. The proportion of women members had risen to nearly 19%, with women comprising 10-15% of the leadership bodies of the party.

Fidel Castro's report admitted that only two thirds of the target 6% annual economic growth rate had been achieved in the five year 1976-80 plan, while the 1981-85 plan envisaged still greater loans from and trade relations with the Soviet Union and



Eastern Europe. He forecast that "the people's standard of living will experience a sustained improvement, with emphasis on personal consumption, which will grow by more than 4% annually." In particular, efforts would be concentrated on improving supplies of food, clothing, telephones, television sets, cars and air conditioning units. But such concessions would go alongside a tightening up of internal security: Castro was sharply critical of a weakening of the efficiency of cadres and "bureaucratisation" in the Interior Ministry. There had been "deficiencies in the selection of personnel and a lack of decision and firmness in confrontations with anti-social elements", Castro declared. He was apparently referring to the outbreak of anti-government slogans and leaflets in 1979, after which Interior Minister Sergio del Valle Jimenez was replaced by July 26 hardliner General Ramiro Valdes Menendez.

Castro went on to underline the extent to which these problems of discipline and bureaucratism had overlapped into the economy as a whole:

"There were increasing signs that

the spirit of austerity was flagging, that a softening up process was going on in which some people tended to let things slide, pursue privileges, make accommodations and take other attitudes, while work discipline dropped..."

In adopting the new five-year plan, the Second Congress further enlarged the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, while it drew even closer to the political ideology as well as the bankroll and military umbrella of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Drawing lessons from the Solidarnosc challenge to the Polish bureaucracy, changes in the Cuban Party leadership included the addition of leaders of the "mass organisations" as alternate members of the Political Bureau. Vilma Espin, leader of the FMC (and wife of Raul Castro); Roberto Veiga, head of the CTC; Ramirez Cruz, leader of the small farmers' organisation ANAP; Armando Acosta, chief of the CDRs, and Humberto Perez, Cuba's director of planning, were all incorporated into the Party's top leadership — along with six army leaders.

The adopted International Resolution proclaimed that:

"The basis of our Party's foreign policy is its historic, lasting alliance with the Soviet Union, based on our common ideology and goals."

As *Granma* proudly boasted, Castro's re-election to the position of First Secretary of the Cuban CP was greeted by such Stalinist die-hards as Leonid Brezhnev, Todor Zhivkov, Erich Honecker, Janas Kadar, Kim Il Sung and Le Duan, as well as Poland's Stanislaw Kania, who took time off from the struggle to contain the Solidarnosc movement to send a special message of congratulations to the Cuban leader.

The Cuban Party leadership and its press responded in kind with a suc-



Castro feted the "radical" face of American capitalist politics, Jesse Jackson, during the summer of 1984.

cession of craven speeches and messages of greeting from various Cuban dignitaries to the assorted Stalinist leaderships of Eastern Europe and Mongolia during 1981. One particularly crass example was the front page April *Granma* headline "Great enthusiasm over reelection of Todor Zhivkov as top leader of Bulgarian Communist Party" (*Granma Weekly Review*, April 12 1981).

By 1980, therefore, the Cuba Communist Party had evolved from its early unstable form as a coalition of Fidelistas and Stalinists, even in the field of foreign policy, and had largely lost its characteristics as a distinct, occasionally rebellious current within the world Stalinist movement. It had consolidated a bureaucratic structure and fully assimilated the world view of the Kremlin bureaucrats, without whose material aid, technical and military backing the Cuban regime and economy, crisis-ridden in any event, would not have survived into the 1970s.

It had developed as a party with *Stalinist* politics, operating within a state structure modelled on the degenerated Soviet Union and the deformed "workers' states" of Eastern Europe, and fulfilling many of the same functions as the "Communist Parties" of East Germany, Bulgaria and Poland.

Though arising on a distinct, unique and peculiar basis, and though continuing to function with a broad base of popular support unmatched by any of the hated dictatorial regimes of Eastern Europe, the Cuban Party had shown itself from the outset to be Stalinised, bureaucratised, and an organised obstacle to the politics of revolutionary Marxism.

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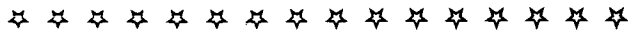
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