

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 10. February 1986. 70p

PRINT CRISIS

6,000 JOBS
AXED

RUPERTS REWARD
FOR BEING
SUCCESSFUL



**Stop the presses:
all out strike!**

About Socialist Viewpoint

THE escalating struggle in the print industry is gathering pace even as this magazine goes to press. By the time many readers receive this issue, a major strike could well be underway which offers another chance to the whole labour movement.

But while the Fleet Street fight recalls bitter memories of the Warrington betrayal, the struggle for the victims of the biggest battle of all — the miners' strike — remains a key question for the labour movement. *Socialist Viewpoint* has been one of the few tendencies to maintain the campaign for the jailed and victimised miners and fight for the co-ordination of the many miners' support groups which continue to function. Now a major demonstration on March 2 to mark the anniversary of the end of the strike has been called. An article by ALAN THORNETT discusses the campaign, while TONY RICHARDS surveys the current situation in the unions.

With Kinnock's witch-hunt setting the scene for a possible new Wilson-style Labour government pledged to capitalist policies, we have articles on the fight back.

International coverage includes analysis of the Anglo-Irish agreement, a welcome for the new COSATU union federation in South Africa, and the announcement of a new socialist current within the Polish underground opposition. A major article of Algeria examines the abrupt switch of line by the ruling FLN which could result in wholesale privatisation of the nationalised economy.

As the Workers Revolutionary Party flounders around in search of a perspective following the expulsion and disgrace of its founder, Gerry Healy, we also feature discus-

sion on the dangers of trying to reply to political problems by organisational means.

Socialist Viewpoint is a 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 banner-waving ultimatums, introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, or as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary. Rather it must be 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.

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 are sure our readers will welcome the fact that this magazine is the third to be expanded to include more authors and wider coverage. If you feel — as we do — that it offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

Take a few copies to sell in your workplace, trade union, Labour Party or campaign work. Send us your news and information, articles, cartoons, photos, and letters. Ensure your local activities are publicised on our pages. Check with your local seller or drop us a line for further details.

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Chips are down in Fleet Street

STOP THE PRESSES!

Eric Hammond

Rupert "I liked the US film industry, so I bought it" Murdoch has set his sights on smashing the centuries-old fabric of trade unionism in the print. He has been romping about the ring for some time now, exhibiting punches that have had all the commentators gasping.

Up against this press baron — who is leading the pack of Fleet Street bosses — is the combined weight of the print unions. But for all their size and strength, SOGAT and the NGA have grown flabby and are out of condition. SOGAT in particular has been losing out heavily even in the pre-match knock-about sparring contests with the number two contender, Robert Maxwell. Sporting black eyes and bruises, SOGAT leaders have tried every way possible to postpone the Murdoch fight — or duck it altogether by handing him more than half the prize money.

Even so, many punters would have more reservations about Murdoch's chances if he did not have extra help. In the "Dirty Digger's" corner — and ready to stick the boot in to the unions should they hit the canvas — is Eric "CBI" Hammond, leader of the EETPU.

The confrontation could be historic in more than one way. Not only is the very future of printing in Fleet Street and the survival of the print unions at stake, but this could be the first major dispute in Britain in which one "union" — the EETPU — places itself at the complete disposal of management to wipe out all others in an industry.

Recruited through the EETPU's offices in Southampton, trained to steel the jobs of print workers, determined to cross picket lines, the Wapping workforce is a scab army which stands in opposition to every trade union principle.

Up to now, the EETPU had established a position so far to the right of the rest of the labour movement it was almost out of sight: it has shamelessly courted the employers and the right wing press, broken ranks on the Tory anti-union laws, signed no-strike deals for its own members, linked up with the scabs and opposed the slightest support to the miners, and buttressed the reactionary leaders of the AUEW in their defiance of TUC policies. They have for years played a scurrilous role: but not until now had they gone onto the offensive in a joint attempt with a major employer to destroy trade unionism.

The Fleet Street battle involves far more than the thousands of jobs at stake: it involves the fight against the emergence of an extreme version of US-style "business unionism", verging on the thoroughly reactionary "yellow" company unions set up in Japan and elsewhere to destroy all working class organisation.



Yet still the TUC has taken no action against the EETPU. Hovering fearfully on the edge of a major class battle, and faced with a 30-page dossier of complaints against the EETPU, the General Council decided... to *shelve* the matter, postponing for a week a decision on whether even to investigate the EETPU's scabbing activities!

Since last year's TUC pulled back from disciplinary action against the AUEW and EETPU over their breach of Congress policy on the Tory anti-union laws, these ultra right wing forces have become increasingly arrogant in their attitude to the labour movement. It is quite clear that if they are not firmly resisted, they will hogtie the TUC and step up their sabotage — focussing on the promotion of the scab miners "union" and acting as the focal point for a hard line right wing opposed to any action at all against the employers.

In this light, appeals to preserve the "unity" of the TUC amounts to a renunciation of class struggle and acceptance of the leadership of the EETPU. While unnecessary splits and divisions within the workers' movement are to be avoided, the expulsion of the EETPU over its scabbing in the print industry is now crucial to draw the line between workers' and employers' organisations.

The EETPU boasts that it is regarded by Norman Tebbit as embodying the Tory Party's view of a "progressive approach on the shop floor and elsewhere". It holds fringe meetings at the CBI conference, touts for "sweetheart" no-strike deals with Japanese and other firms, and on virtually every basic issue identifies more with the ruling class than the workers.

Until and unless the working class membership of the EETPU ousts their vicious right wing leaders, and abandons the union's role as a scab army, the organisation should be kicked out of the TUC, and stripped of any protection from

"poaching" under the Bridlington agreements. Indeed, other TUC unions should be urged to recruit EETPU rank and file members.

The Fleet Street episode has resulted in a split even between the EETPU and their right wing cronies in the AUEW, whose print industry members suffer from the Murdoch plan. While the AUEW has joined the NGA, NUJ and SOGAT in complaining against the EETPU acting "in a way detrimental to the interests of the trade union movement", other right wing unions, including the steelworkers, have warned that they cannot endorse Hammond's scabbing for Murdoch.

This is precisely the time to hit the EETPU hard and heavy with what solidarity can still be mustered by the miserable "new realists" on the TUC General Council. If they do not fight now, the door will be opened to a wholesale demolition of trade unionism.

It is equally clear that the TUC, which betrayed the NGA at Warrington, and sold out the miners' strike, is petrified of such a confrontation and will focus its efforts on defusing the fight.

But with the *Telegraph's* new management

waiting in the wings; and with Maxwell and others looking nervously at the forthcoming *Daily Shah* and weighing up their chances of following Murdoch, it is clear that to win the Battle of Wapping it is necessary to pull out all the stops, and shut down Fleet Street. Supporting action from transport workers, supply firms, shop workers and others will also be needed to halt Murdoch's scab papers which will roll out of the Wapping plant. This in turn will involve TUC unions in defying the anti-union laws and the courts by taking "secondary" action.

Any real compromises in this situation seems highly unlikely. There are two possible scenarios:

● *Either* the trade union movement will mobilise against this new challenge to its very existence, and inflict a mighty defeat on Murdoch and his scab army;

● *Or* the TUC leaders and their capitulationist "new realism" will help the employers to inflict yet another crushing defeat on the workers' movement and in the process smash the two most powerful of the print unions, with repercussions that will linger for years.

It is the task of socialists within the movement to ensure that the first scenario prevails.

Watch out! There's a democrat about!

RONALD REAGAN, sponsor of the "contra" murder gangs which are fighting to oust a democratically elected government in Nicaragua, declares a holy offensive against the "terrorist" Colonel Gaddafi.

What is Gaddafi accused of this time? Lending practical support to a misguided section of the Palestinian liberation movement, who are fighting for the right of the dispossessed Palestinians to return to their homeland which has been seized — in effect hi-jacked — by the Zionist state of Israel.

Israel's armed forces are among the most notorious exponents of terrorism in the whole world: scarcely a day or an hour goes by without an Israeli shot being fired: its military strikes against foreign targets are legendary.

To this 40-year, organised, systematic, *state terror* by a nationally-exclusive state, Reagan's response is multi-billion dollar aid. When — for all his faults — Gaddafi has the temerity to defend the other side, the USA threatens military action and seeks to impose an economic blockade!

The same logic applies to imperialist dealings with South Africa. Thatcher refuses to discuss with the "terrorists" African National Congress, which represents the oppressed black majority who daily suffer brutal violence. Instead she meets and swaps plans with Botha's apartheid regime which whips, shoots and imprisons the blacks, and which is engaged in daily armed pro-

vocations against all of the states on its borders — invading Angola, occupying Namibia, sponsoring murder squads in Mozambique and now toppling the government in Lesotho. *Who* is the "terrorist": who *are* the "democrats"?

It is almost inevitable that when they use the words "terrorism" or "democracy", imperialist governments are seeking to crush a progressive cause and promote a repressive one.

Our noble "democrats" in the Tory Party propose a most eminently "democratic" law: that those scabs who flout a majority decision of their colleagues, and break a strike, should be *exempt* from any disciplinary action! Yet when Michael Heseltine went out on a limb (or a rotor blade) over the absurd Westland helicopter scandal, he was forced out of the Cabinet! As ever, Thatcher's gang shows its own form of class solidarity and class consciousness while trying to stamp out any class response from the workers' movement.

While the servile Kinnock meekly echoes the bourgeois conceptions of individual "democracy", it is high time socialists began to focus attention on the *collective, class* action and *solidarity* which built the workers' movement in the teeth of opposition even fiercer than Thatcher. When the majority of society have power in their hands, we will give a fresh lesson in real democracy, and strike deserved terror into the hearts of today's oppressors.

Screaming Blue Murdoch!

TRAFFIC lights on the ramp of the fortress in Wapping where press baron Rupert Murdoch plans his showdown with the print unions are said to be linked to the light in nearby streets, so scab lorries can run a series of green lights through the pickets.

The truth of the story will become evident or otherwise when — as seems inevitable — the battle of Wapping begins. It ought to be true since it illustrates the degree of sheer military planning that has gone into this deadly serious attempt to break the Fleet Street unions once and for all.

The Metropolitan police claimed that last year's riots at Tottenham had been planned weeks in advance. There were lurid and unsubstantiated reports that garages had been flood-

By a **SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT**

ed with petrol ready to burn.

If the Metropolitan police commissioners are truly worried about preparations for riot they should even now be speeding in squad cars to arrest Murdoch and his management team.

At Wapping the walls are topped with the kind of barbed wire that guards military airfields. TV cameras scan the approach roads and vehicles vanish out of sight of the gates before unloading or loading their cargoes. The building includes its own helicopter pad.

The plant, built at a cost of about £60m, part of a total investment nearer £100m, is a testimony to the military style of industrial relations adopted in the coalfields in 1984 and 1985. Murdoch complains half heartedly that negotiations with the print unions broke down over the use of the new plant. The very walls of the building defy any belief that a negotiated settlement was ever on the cards.

The Wapping plant has been years

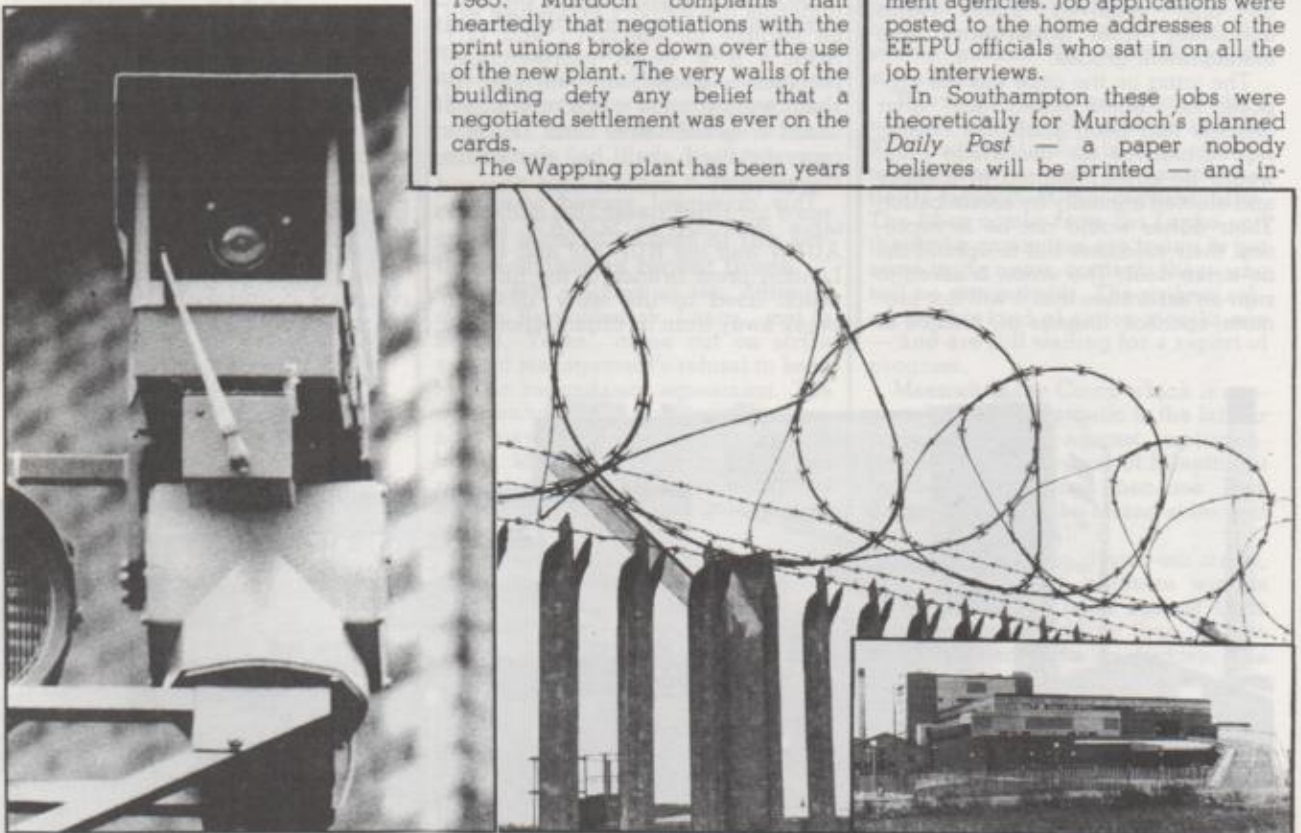
in the building and years in the planning. The print unions, foolishly complacent in the strength of their organisation in Fleet Street, did nothing to stop its development.

When in September 1985 an EET-PU official in Southampton revealed in *Socialist Worker* that mass recruitment was taking place in his area to recruit workers for Wapping, the print unions dismissed it as wild rumour and unthinkable. Brenda Dean, SOGAT General Secretary, said she was pleased to say that management had denied the rumour.

In fact recruitment had been going on for weeks and in Scotland a similar process was taking place for workers to fill Murdoch's other fortress, a converted warehouse at Kinning Park in Glasgow.

In both cases the jobs were being filled with the active help of the EET-PU. Local officials in Southampton and Glasgow were used as employment agencies. Job applications were posted to the home addresses of the EETPU officials who sat in on all the job interviews.

In Southampton these jobs were theoretically for Murdoch's planned *Daily Post* — a paper nobody believes will be printed — and in-



**THE
Sun**

THE



TIMES

**NEWS
OF
THE
WORLD**

volved six month contracts for which sums of up to £15,000 were being offered. Also on offer was a free run at 5.00am every day from Southampton to Wapping in a company coach, which picked the workers up inside the gates in the evening and made sure they never had to come face to face with any Fleet Street spies.

Workers accepting jobs in the factory were told that they would not be forced to become members of a union, but that if they did so the EET-PU would be the union recognised. At this time in theory Murdoch was "negotiating" through his sidekick Bill O'Neill with the print unions at the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun* and *News of the World*.

Negotiations — with a deadline of Christmas — were around a document which made four major attacks on the unions. It demanded the end to the closed shop, a legally binding no strike agreement, the end to the chapel structure, and the "right to manage".

The right to manage included the end to the print union's control of labour, and the right of management to change staffing levels at any time. The proposals to SOGAT included the following: "New technology may be adopted at any time with consequential reductions in manning requirement." ...and "There will be no demarcation lines". The five year deal on offer removed union rights altogether from supervisory and management grades.

The icing on the cake was the proposal for "union democracy" after chapels had been abolished. Union representatives for the whole plant would be strictly limited in number and elected annually by secret ballot. Their duties would not be to represent their members but to uphold the no-strike deal. The union is asked to sign an assurance that it will not promote, sponsor, engage in, finance or



The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP, (Former Secretary of State for Industry, present Chairman of the Conservative Party). "The EETPU not only accepts technological change, but is tackling the problems that can arise, including technical skills training. I see this as apiece with the Union's progressive approach on the shopfloor and elsewhere."

condone strike action and will "repudiate as soon as is reasonably practical any industrial action."

Employees who strike will be immediately dismissed without right of appeal. Clause 12.3 reads: "It is understood and agreed that union representatives and other officials have a special duty to enforce this section, including the obligation not to engage in any stoppage of work."

Just in case any union official hasn't got the message clause 11.3 states: "No individual who has received any formal warnings from the Employer under its disciplinary procedure will be eligible for election", and 11.7 reads: "If a union representative receives a disciplinary warning he shall cease at once to hold office as a union representative and a new representative shall be elected to replace him."

This document proved unacceptable not only to SOGAT, NGA, AUEW and the NUJ, but also to the London press branch of the EETPU, which tried in the early 1980s to break away from its organisation and



George Harris, Personnel Manager, Toshiba Consumer Products,

"Along with the EETPU we have charted an exciting new approach that cuts out futile strife and offers fair rewards for all those involved."

join SOGAT. The TUC under a Bridlington ruling, forced the members to stay with the electricians.

At this point the EETPU head office, in the shape of national organiser Tom Rice and General Secretary Eric Hammond, stepped into help its London branch overcome objections to the Murdoch proposals.

The TUC has warned print unions not to conclude separate deals with Murdoch, but the EETPU, the blood still fresh on its claws from mauling the TUC over ballot money, ploughed blithely on.

At the time this article was being prepared, SOGAT and the NGA had completed ballots on strike action throughout Murdoch's empire: the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun* and *News of the World*. Both were confident of large majorities, but seemingly not confident of what to do with those majorities. (The first supplement to be printed at Wapping for the *Sunday Times* was distributed without any action.)

The unions have been forced to come together for the first time in years, and even while still fighting an



internecine war in the provincial press. But the price of that unity has been one concession after another to Murdoch's demands. The no-strike deal has been ruled out by all these unions, but they are offering Murdoch a deal which in Brenda Dean's words would "make strikes very, very unlikely". Murdoch however is no longer interested in unions bowing the knee. He has decided to do without them — except for the figleaf of EETPU involvement.

The mood of the members in Fleet Street has swung from black pessimism towards defiance, but they are nevertheless faced with the unedifying prospect of launching industrial action against a background of a whole new production plant geared up ready to run, on a battleground of the employer's choosing and on a site which is as near picket-proof as it is possible to make a building.

The weak point in Murdoch's strategy is likely to be the chain of distribution, which by its nature is vulnerable and difficult to establish.

It would be easy to point to the crimes of the past — not least the failure of the print union leaderships to take Murdoch on when it became clear what he was attempting, and the readiness of each Fleet Street chapel to look inwards and avoid inter-union solidarity because of its own traditional strength.

The task now however is to draw up a battle plan for fighting Murdoch that will work. Part of that plan will need to be the rapid expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC.



Silentnight strike

Small-time MacGregor can be beaten!

By Diane Farmer

FOR hundreds of families of Striking Silentnight workers, this Christmas could have been very bleak. But as one of the strikers said "although a lot of the extras were missing we had a spirit and friendship which made up for it and which we haven't had before." That comradeship has been built up over seven months of one of the bitterest strikes in recent times.

The 500 workers at two different sites in Barnoldswick, Lancs., and in Sutton, Yorks., came out on strike against management's refusal to keep to a no redundancy agreement. The workers had voted to give up their annual pay rise in return for no job losses. Management promptly posted redundancy notices; the workforce walked out, and all 500 were sacked in June.

Because of its geographical isolation and the heel-dragging of the FTAT officials, the strike received virtually no publicity outside Yorkshire and Lancashire until September. Since then the strike committee have been sending speakers out all over the country to build financial and industrial support for the strike.

The FTAT officials are hostile to spreading the strike and to calling for secondary action, as they are afraid of being taken to court for breach of the Tory anti-union laws. FTAT, once a large union has been decimated by the collapse of the furniture industry. The Silentnight strike is probably the

biggest and most important strike they have had to deal with and the bureaucrats are totally inequipped to give any lead to the workforce.

The most obvious way to win the strike would be to ask other unions to impose a 100% boycott on any dealings with Silentnight and its subsidiary companies. This would include approaching suppliers of the materials needed to make the beds as well as asking workers in stores which stock the beds not to handle them. This strategy would have brought the company to a standstill months ago.

Most of the solidarity action so far achieved — like the boycott at some ports of the coconut fibre used in the beds — has only come after the strikes pushed the officials to do something.

This initial action was followed by a meeting between the strikers and the FTAT national officials in an attempt to get them to push for an international boycott of the coconut fibre. The fibre comes from Sri Lanka and the strike committee are trying to get some trade union contacts there who will be sympathetic. The strikers asked for this kind of action months ago — and are still waiting for a report of progress.

Meanwhile the Co-op which is supposed to be sympathetic to the labour movement voted against implementing a national boycott of Silentnight goods in its shops because they decided it would be taking sides and becoming political!

Despite the long drawn-out strike, the freezing cold northern winters and the massive odds against them the strikers are holding firm. No one has gone back into the factory. The picket lines are still continuing on a rota basis.

Many of the pickets, particularly on the Sutton site, have been subjected to American style industrial tactics. Scab lorries have drawn up with men leaping out swinging chains and threatening the pickets. Their caravan has been wrecked. Some of the pickets have been attacked and some of their wives have been beaten up while walking home.

Tom Clarke the owner is a powerful



and rich Tory and of course the police have yet to arrest anyone for attacking the pickets. These tactics will become increasingly common in Britain as the Tories with their press and media attack trade unionists' right to strike in defence of their jobs and conditions.

Tom Clarke is a small time MacGregor. He shares the same politics but does not have the strength and backing that MacGregor had. This strike can be won.

The order book at the factory is thinner than usual for this time of year. The inexperienced scabs cannot do the skilled work required to produce beds. The rate of returns for shoddy work is far higher than at any other time.

With backing from other workers the factory could be shut down in a matter of a few weeks and Clarke would be forced to negotiate with the workforce on their terms.

Clarke must be getting desperate. This week he accepted an invitation to speak at the local school, where many of the strikers' children go, on "industrial relations"! The strike committee organised a demonstration outside the school with many of the children joining in.

Support groups for the Silentnight strike have been set up in many parts of the country. The strikers need donations to keep the strike going and the soup kitchens functioning.

They also need strong industrial support if they are to win.

Support groups should be organis-

ing demonstrations and pickets at stores which sell Silentnight beds and they should be talking to union stewards in those stores trying to get them to raise the strike in their workplaces.

Kinnock and Hattersley both promised support to the strikers when they lobbied the Labour Party conference. Neither of course have made a trip up to the area. The TUC has done its usual propaganda statement saying they support, but have done nothing else.

The wonder is not that the strike hasn't won yet but that under the present industrial and economic conditions that workers new to trade unionism came out at all. Trade unionists must raise this strike in their branches and Trades Councils. TGWU, and USDAW branches must send resolutions through to their District and Regional Committees calling on the union to support any boycotting action and must work to get that action.

One of the leading women strikers said "we are still here, we're still fighting. He hasn't done it in seven months, he'll not beat us now." FTAT cannot afford to lose this strike. The Silentnight workers deserve to win it and the labour movement needs a victory.

Cravendale Branch 92 Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhall Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire.



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11 am — 5 pm

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ANTI FASCIST ACTION

EETPU sets the pace for TUC UNIONS LURCH FURTHER RIGHT

THE decision by the TUC to call an emergency conference, in February, to reverse its own position on ballots, is a major step. This is not just retreating in front of the EETPU and AUEW but letting these renegades dictate policy. This proposal was voted for by the right wing — but also by “lefts” like Ron Todd of the TGWU, previously a key figure in opposing concessions to the right.

There is more than just this issue at stake. It is clear that the refusal to accept Tory money for ballots was the *only* progressive thing that the TUC has done since the beginning of the miners' strike, and the *only* decision of the 1982 Wembley Special Conference which remained intact. Otherwise their record has been one of unbroken retreat and betrayal.

They have not responded to the NUM's call for a lobby of Parliament over the victimised miners, or done anything else in defence of the NUM or its members' jobs.

In the meantime the extreme right has been very active behind the scenes and they are now pulling the “left” with them.

Now, in the name of “unity” in the trade union movement the EETPU and AUEW are being appeased at the very time their leaderships are trying to bring US-style “business unionism” to Britain.

The EETPU has already signed a single union agreement with Eddie Shah. It has offered Rupert Murdoch a similar deal over the movement of his printing operations, whilst the other Fleet Street Unions are holding out against his vicious terms.

The EETPU leadership held a fringe meeting at the CBI conference, showing that its own efforts to persuade employers that it is better to have EETPU-style “trade unionism” in order to keep out the real thing.



By TONY RICHARDS

Both the EETPU and the AUEW offer single union agreements to new Japanese firms. These usually have no-strike or binding arbitration clauses. The ETU has just signed one single union agreement with a firm in Wales employing 300 workers — 200 of whom are already in the TGWU!

The EETPU is also thumbing its nose at TUC policy to have nothing to do with the bosses' “union” in the mining industry, the UDM, and defying other unions to take action against them. A stand must be taken to deal with these renegades.

But instead of standing up to this scab development in the heart of the TUC, most of the “Left” union leaders are running before it.

They are halfway to accepting the “new reality”, arguing it is impossi-

ble to defeat the Tories after the miners' strike.

So instead of fighting the Tory anti-union laws they are in fact changing their policies in line with them. The calling of a special TUC conference is the clearest example of this.

Before this, the TGWU leadership had already decided to call its own conference to change its policy with regard to election of executive members.

And for the first time ever, the TGWU and other unions involved are holding a national ballot of Ford workers over their pay deal. Until now they have always voted by mass meetings.

The retreat reaches into the public sector. At the Neasden hospital occupation, NUPE and COHSE meekly accepted an injunction that stopped their members even effectively picketing at their own place of work.

Shop floor workers bear the brunt

Meanwhile the victimised miners have been virtually dropped by the trade union movement. Even the joint committee between the South East Region TUC and the Kent miners has been ended. It has been left to the newly organised *Justice for the Mineworkers* campaign to organise a national demonstration and lobby of parliament on the anniversary of the end of the strike.

On the shop floor of industry, a massive speed-up and attack on agreements has either taken place, or is now being introduced. Alongside this are moves to break trade unionism and victimise active trade unionists. In virtually all instances union officials have supported new speed-up agreements and changes in "working practices".

Where struggles have challenged employers' moves to smash or victimise militants, they have been isolated by the leaderships of the unions involved and very little assistance given to them.

In Fleet St the SOGAT leadership said they would not negotiate under threat with Robert Maxwell. Then they proceeded to give away 200 jobs!

The *Mirror* workforce that remains will not only have to do the work of the 2,000 people who have left, but Maxwell is also talking about moving some of his northern print work down south. This is a huge speed-up.

At Fords, union leaders have not disagreed with a new "conditions of work" document that is similar to the draconian one which has slashed jobs and conditions with union endorsement in British Leyland. At Vauxhalls they have agreed a document that stipulates filling jobs of people on strike! This charter for scabbing is what the employers have been trying to get into large manufacturing industry for a long time, and represents a major victory over trade unionism.

The recent successful Swan Hunter strike on the Tyne was also about a new conditions document which, like all the others, attacked relief breaks and such things as demarcation. Again these workers had to fight it on their own — but in this instance they were victorious.

There is hardly a single engineering plant that is not under similar attack. Trade unionism is under fire in virtually every industry.

In the furniture trade, two employers — Silentnight of Barnoldswick and Morris's in Glasgow — are leading the onslaught on national agreements by moving to smash their trade unions. Similar attacks on the unions are taking place at Forgemasters in Sheffield, the Slate quarry strike in North Wales, and in the French Connection strike. All of these workers are either sacked or under the threat of the sack.

They go alongside individual victimisations, most of which never get reported, but which even stretch up



Laughing: Hammond and Laird put one over on the TUC.

to senior or leading stewards like Bob Cullen in the Austin Rover plant in Cowley. The clearest case of this attack on activists are the 550 victimised miners.

Privatisation of services and some industries is doing all these things at one go. It usually means ending trade unionism, clearing out activists, attacking all conditions, and speeding-up as well as lowering wages.

First of all it is important to show the connection between these attacks. They are not the work of an individual vicious employer but a concerted attack by the capitalist class on the working class, aimed at making us pay for their crisis.

Secondly we must recognise that this is clearly orchestrated by the Tory government. Yet we must also remember that many of these moves were first pushed by the Callaghan government prior to 1979. It was a Labour government which first brought MacGregor and Edwardes into British Leyland for example. Most of industry is only following what they did.

We must not just support these various struggles but actually bring them together. The best medium for this is the victimised and imprisoned miners. Their fight is not just a moral issue.

The battle over the miners at the Labour Party conference was about all victimised workers, and against the mind of management attacks that

are taking place in industry today. Kinnock's attitude confirms that he, like Wilson and Callaghan before him, will be in the forefront of the battle for "profitability" of British industry at the expense of the working class — and therefore the offensive will continue.

So raising cash for the victimised miners is not only more necessary because their predicament has got worse, but also the battle for their release and reinstatement has to be stepped up as part of the political fight against Kinnock and class collaboration.

With his attitude to the miners Kinnock is getting ready for a government in which he will run things for the capitalists.

This is also his reason for the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, which relies on the weight of the union leaderships. The union bureaucrats know that a class collaborating Labour government that goes against the working class will be resisted. This is the reason the GMWU and CPSA leaderships have already begun a witch-hunt within their own union. They will no doubt be swiftly followed by others. The witch-hunt will spread from the Labour Party into the unions.

It is not enough just to show that we require to develop a new leadership in the unions at all levels; this new leadership must be based on a completely different approach from that of the reformist union bureaucracy.

We do not accept the capitalist anti-union laws and state. We do not accept the right of employers to close factories or institute speed-up or victimise.

We must develop our alternative. In all the struggles we are in we must develop our programme to bring forward the struggle for workers' control and the independent interests of the working class.

In the struggle around ballots we must develop real, participatory democracy in the unions at the workplace. The Tories get credibility for their ballots solely because of the contemptuous, manipulative way that the right and left treat trade union democracy.

In the fight against the power of the state, the power of the workers' movement must be used. The power of strike action and mass pickets should be mobilised against injunctions and other legal attacks on the unions. In the process of this we will develop our own defence squads against police and thug attacks and threats to pickets like those at Silent Night.

In opposition to the reformist and Stalinist leaders who put forward class collaborationist policies to solve the crisis of particular firms, we argue for a working class solution. They put forward calls for import controls, often together with the employers. This is a chauvinist solution, lining up with "British" bosses against other workers. Such schemes usually argue to accept speed-up and some job losses to "save the firm".

In the fight against closures and speed-up, we challenge the figures put forward by the employers, and demand they open the books to elected committees of the workforce. We demand to see the full financial dealings not only of the individual firm, but of its suppliers and of the banks that lend them money.

The capitalist system is in crisis. But the "bankruptcy" of one firm often brings added profits to others, while workers carry the cost. Firms threatening redundancies or closure should be expropriated without compensation.

Instead of speed-up and job losses we are in favour of shorter working hours through a system of work-sharing on full pay. This should spread to include the unemployed.

This is where we differ from the lefts, like Scargill. They are happy to accept the limited role of the unions. This leaves them as just part of the capitalist system. This is why Scargill is opposed to workers' control.

At the same time as we are fighting for a Labour government, we are saying that only the working class policies we describe can defend workers' real interests. So we must fight for the removal of Kinnock and for the establishment of a real workers' government.



Laughing: Kinnock

The crisis of leadership in the working class goes down from the

topmost ranks to the lowest levels. There are strikes and struggles taking place all over the country, with some sections, like the teachers, who never normally take action, being involved. But the effect of the problems of leadership and of mass unemployment, a vicious government and a deep capitalist crisis, has meant that these struggles are not more widespread.

The working class is being forced to look for political solutions. They must not be left in the hands of the "professional" politicians and TUC tricksters that confine that political solution to one which advances their careers while the capitalist system itself continues to exploit and oppress the working class.

Fighting on for victimised miners

By ALAN THORNETT

ON January 1, 1986, almost 9 months after the end of the great miners strike of 1984/5, there were still 550 miners sacked and eight still in prison as a result of the strike. The imprisoned miners are: Terry French from Betteshanger, serving 4 years; Chris Tazey, Betteshanger (3 years); Clive Thompson, Frickly (3 years); Alan Sables, Armthorpe (18 months); David Gaunt, Shirebrook (2½ years); Sam Beardsman, Markham; and Russell Shankland and Dean Hancock from South Wales serving 8 years.

The labour movement has a clear responsibility not to turn its back on these miners victimised for putting up the greatest fight in defence of jobs seen anywhere in Europe since mass unemployment became a standard weapon to be used against the organised labour movement over the last 10 years.

These men are the symbol of the defeat of the strike. They have been used by the Coal Board and the



Peter Heathfield: backing March 2 demo

government to punish the miners for the stand they made. Most of them are not only victimised in the short term, they are blacklisted in the long term — some probably for the rest of their lives.

Those who have turned their backs on this problem — both in the official movement and by withdrawal from

the Support Groups — should think about what it means. This issue now goes far beyond the NUM. The ranks of victimised workers are growing all the time as other employers follow NCB methods. Silentnight and the Ffestiniog slate quarry strikes are examples of it.

If there is a lack of resolve on this issue in parts of the labour movement who should know better the NCB has not relaxed its line. Where there have been reinstatements they have been token. There have been no reinstatements in Kent. In Scotland and the Midlands miners who have won their cases at Industrial Tribunals are still not being reinstated. In Silverwood in South

Yorkshire management said they would consider reinstatements if the pit improved its productivity. They withdrew this offer after the pit broke the European productivity record.

The NUM is fighting to defeat the UDM and to restore its bargaining power in the pits. Every issue including the wage review is used to pile on the pressure. The labour movement has a responsibility to support that struggle — not least by ensuring that the UDM is ostracised from the whole movement — trade unions and Labour Party at all levels. Arthur Scargill — who represents the best class struggle traditions of the strike — must be defended against a growing campaign against him within

the NUM itself.

NUM activists need a new focus and organising centre for the left in the union after the open right wing role of the Communist Party during the strike and since. Groupings like the Yorkshire Miners Campaign Group need to be built and extended. Nor is there much time for this. NCB voluntary redundancy policy is being systematically and selectively used to tempt militant activists out of the industry and weaken the fight to re-establish the union.

Despite these problems, and pit closures which are taking place with sickening regularity, the basis for a fightback against the defeat of the strike is there. Des Duffield, a militant during the strike, has won the presidency of the NUM in South Wales. The vast majority of militants who fought for the strike are still there. Many pits like Betteshanger in Kent are holding the line against closure. Horden in Durham has won a reprieve after a vigorous campaign; so has Darfield in Yorkshire, after battling against closure for months. It can be done and the fight has to be stepped up both organisationally and politically. The struggle needs to go beyond the present profitability arguments and back to the principles on which the strike was fought.

There are positive developments in the support movement as well. The National Co-ordinating Committee of Support Groups has been strongly

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign

2nd March

for the anniversary of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike

2 years since the Great Strike began 1 year since it ended.

- over 500 miners remain sacked and some in gaol
- the NUM's assets are still held under receivership
- the NCB continues to ignore agreed procedures
- more than 30 pits have been closed or are currently threatened
- 15,000 jobs have been lost

Demonstration

1.30pm Jubilee Gardens, County Hall, London SE1

to call for

- the release and reinstatement of all sacked and gaoled miners
- reimbursement of the NUM's stolen funds
- review of cases of gaoled miners

and to show solidarity with the support movement, which has not gone away and which includes women's, gay and lesbian, and black support groups, members of other trade unions and labour movement organisations: campaigning groups of miners, and the national and international support network.

At 6.00pm banners to be exhibited can be taken to the Albert Hall

Rally

4.30pm Hyde Park

Speakers: Peter Heathfield (Gen Sec NUM), Anne Lilburn (President WAPC), Tony Benn MP, Liz French (Kent gaoled miner's wife), Martha Ossamor (Broadwater Farm Defence C'tee), Dennis Skinner MP, Roy Butlin (Coalville NUR) (to be confirmed); Arthur Scargill (President NUM), Ron Todd (Gen Sec TGWU), Eric Clarke (Gen Sec Scottish NUM), Tony Banks MP (chair of GLC), Sean Garretty (EETPU Fleet St), Ken Cameron (Gen Sec FBU)

Concert

7.00pm at the Royal Albert Hall, Kensington, London

Songs from the struggle, including those from the 'Heroes' LP produced by North East Miners Support Groups, with special guest stars. Produced by the GLC
Doors open 6.00pm. Stalls: exhibition of miners' banners.



(Top) Horden colliery and (above) Darfield Main have



established with about 25 to 30 active groups supporting it. Some groups are stepping up their activities or even coming back into existence. International support is building back up as well. A delegation from France — attending the last meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee — outlined a plan to establish a network of support groups throughout France. There is talk of wide European co-ordination.

At the same time there has been a major development in the National Amnesty Campaign — now renamed the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign.



men saved by campaigns.



Benn — promoting Justice for Mineworkers Bill.

The NUM have given the Campaign official backing and proposed a new broader structure for it. Billy Etherington, from the NUC Executive, is now chair, and Ed Fredenburgh continues as secretary.

There is a new steering committee which comprises 10 representatives from the NUM Areas; 10 from the Campaign Group of MPs; 10 from Women Against Pit Closures; 10 from the miners' support groups and 10 from other labour movement bodies. The National Co-ordinating Committee of Miners' Support Groups have two places. Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield are Honorary Presidents and there is an impressive list of Honorary Vice Presidents.

The remodelling of the campaign is linked to a new Bill for the current

parliamentary session entitled the Justice for Mineworkers Bill, which will be presented as a private members' Bill by Tony Benn on February 27. The NUM have called for a lobby of parliament on that day.

In addition to this, the campaign has called for a major mobilisation on Sunday March 2, the anniversary of the strike. There will be a march through London to a rally addressed by Peter Heathfield. In the evening there will be a concert in the Albert Hall.

These initiatives are extremely important for the whole of the labour movement. A big response could give a new impetus to an issue which will not go away and which will effect the whole labour movement for a long time to come.

Socialist Bookshelf

Reviewed by Keith White.

Epic struggle by "an ordinary man"

The case of the Legless Veteran: James Kutcher, (A Monad Press book distributed by Pathfinder Press).

"IN most respects, I am an ordinary man. I have no special talents. I never showed any capacity for leadership. In school my marks generally put me in the middle sections of my class, sometimes lower. I never rose above the rank of Pfc. in the army. Often, when I get into a discussion, I don't think of the right point to make until hours afterward. I was active in a political organization for over ten years and never made a speech in all that time. I am a 'Jimmy Higgins' by nature, the fellow who collects tickets at the door and sweeps up the hall after the meeting. People like me usually get their names in the papers twice — when they come into the world and when they go out.

And yet I have become a public figure of a sort. A thousand separate items about me have appeared in large newspapers and small mimeographed bulletins from New York to California. Hundreds of organizations representing millions of people have taken time out from their regular business to discuss and pass resolutions about me. Lawyers have labored long hours drawing up involved legal documents for or against me. The highest court in the land may some day hand down a ruling that will have important effects not only on my future but on the liberties of the whole American people. I, who used to be too shy to make a motion to adjourn, now have made hundreds of speeches at meetings and over the radio; and the astonishing thing about it to me is that while I still have no special oratorical abilities, people have shed tears, lost their tempers or risen to their feet cheering when I talked to them about my struggle with high officials of the government of the United States."

Witch Hunt News

A bulletin detailing the extent of the witch-hunt in the Labour Party. For use in trade union and Labour Party branches. Produced by Labour Left Co-ordination in conjunction with the Campaign Group of MPs. Available — 10 copies for £1 — from LLC, 57, Lofting Rd, London N1 1ES. Please send any information you have on local witch-hunts to the same address to keep future issues of the bulletin up to date.

HOW this change came about, why it was worth writing a book about and what happened in the end are the subject of the 200-odd pages which follow these opening paragraphs.

James Kutcher lost both his legs in World War II. As the witch-hunts of the post-war McCarthy era mounted he was sacked from his clerical job with the Veteran's Administration because of his membership of the Socialist Workers Party (USA) and it was 8 years later (1956) when he finally won his campaign for reinstatement.

The book shows the importance of using such openings as are afforded by the bourgeois courts, while never relying on them for a satisfactory solution to a campaign. It shows the importance of building a defence movement around the point at issue and not a set of political positions not immediately relevant.

It shows the importance of not confusing the defence of those victimised

with the need to endorse their political outlook, and it underlines the importance of avoiding the "special case" argument.

Perhaps most importantly it confirms the old slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all" — through an examination of the record of the American Communist Party which refused to fight (and indeed supported) the witch-hunting of Trotskyists — and thereby weakened the defence of themselves when their comrades' turn came round.

You don't have to agree with someone or a particular organisation before you defend their right to exist and organise for their politics.

These lessons are vividly illustrated in this most accessible and moving account of one revolutionary's fight against the witch-hunt.

The promise of the opening paragraphs (quoted above) is more than fulfilled in the rest of the book — and yet when the first edition was ready in 1953 no American publisher would risk taking it and it had to be published by the British Trotskyist movement. Such was the fear generated by witch-hunting.

The story is told in a simply straightforward style, but if this is one of the "easiest" books you are likely to read, this fact does not detract from the seriousness of the issues with which it deals or the important political lessons it can teach us.



Fightback against the witch-hunt!

By KEVIN FLACK

KINNOCK'S Labour Party leadership has launched a full-blooded witch-hunt against the left in the Labour Party.

If you listen to the media or the so-called "soft left" you will hear them claim it is just a challenge to "Militant" because they "organise in contravention of the Labour Party constitution". Evidence gathered by Labour Left Co-ordination, the umbrella group of the hard left, shows otherwise.

From Exeter to the Rhondda, from Stevenage to Scotland, there have been expulsions and suspensions of socialists in the Party. And the attack reaches far beyond "Militant". In 1985 supporters of *Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Action* and the Black Section have been picked upon, as well as a number of individual socialists trying to revitalise the Party.

Councillors have been kicked out of Regional Executives; Labour Groups and Parliamentary Reselec-

tions have been investigated or halted on the flimsiest of justifications. In Birmingham and Sheffield, even elected Councillors have been thrown out of the Party. And a new "crime" has been invented: "bringing the Party into disrepute" (which, unlike many trade unions, is not in the Labour Party Rulebook).

We need to be clear as to why the Labour Party leadership is carrying out the witch-hunt. It is to play to Kinnock's new-found friends in the media and to disguise a shift to the right on policy matters. Kinnock is willing to sacrifice the local elections in places like Liverpool and Sheffield in order to consolidate his grip over the Party.

Kinnock wants to ensure that there will be no fight at local government level this year, that at all costs Labour Councils stay within the law. Not even a challenge to capitalism or the state will be allowed.

Up to now, the soft left, including such figures as David Blunkett, have

gone along with the witch-hunt — now they are bleating in panic. Blunkett saw one of his own Councillors from Sheffield expelled by the smallest of majorities on the NEC and must now be regarded as either naive or stupid in not realising where the attacks on Liverpool that he supported were heading.

We should be clear, and particularly make sure that the rest of the hard left is clear, that there are now only two sides to the Party — the left and the right — and there can be no sitting on the fence.

The job of socialists is to defend unconditionally the right of all socialists to organise and speak out within the Party — this must be done whatever our political differences with currents like "Militant".

It should also be recognised that it is the strength of "Militant" that has led to them coming under attack. The politics and organisation of "Militant" have been well known in the Party for

Kinnock kills election campaign

HIS continual attacks on democratically-elected Labour Councillors in Liverpool; his claims that the local Party is full of "extremists" and operating in a "dishonest" manner; combined with Merseyside MP Kilroy-Silk's branding of *Militant* as "maggots" who act like "fascists" produced a result.

Labour lost the safe Old Swan seat on Liverpool Council, with the Labour majority of 900 being overturned to an SDP majority of 1,000. Kinnock and the Party leadership are so keen to remove left wing opposition in the Party that they will even repeat the Tatchell experience and commit the "heresy" of sacrificing elections.

Liverpool has borne the brunt of the witch-hunt. The entire District Labour Party has been suspended pending an NEC investigation which is gathering

anonymous charges from people both inside and outside the Party.

The inquiry has been widely — and correctly — regarded as a show-trial, as a bureaucratic method for removing from the Party Hatton, Mulhearn and other local Party leaders, who actually stood up to the Tory Government.

Kinnock clearly wants to ensure all socialist opposition within the Party is removed by the next General Election. He wants No. 10 Downing Street at all costs, and a free hand for class collaboration in government, even if that means handing local Councils to the Tories in May.

Liverpool (and to a certain extent Lambeth) were an embarrassment both to the national Party leadership and many local Councils precisely because they stuck by Party policy and fought the Government. Kinnock's attitude of obeying the law at all costs, of cowering behind the "dented shield", arguing that Labour cuts are kinder than Tory cuts, is rapidly gaining support amongst sections of the so-called "left".



The remaining pockets of resistance, such as Liverpool are being stamped out.

If the people of Liverpool now have to suffer a Tory-Liberal administration as a result of the witch-hunt, then Kinnock is willing to pay that price.

For him to accuse the *Militant* of not looking after the interests of the Liverpool working class is sheer hypocrisy. That is the lesson of the Old Swan by-election and the suspension of the Liverpool District Labour Party.

Labour activists must oppose the charade of the "inquiry" and any moves to discipline or expel socialists from the Party in Liverpool or elsewhere.

decades. Yet it is only now that they come under serious attack at all levels in the Party. It is because they are now the strongest individual organisation on the left, and their arguments won over an entire Labour Group — in Liverpool — where numerically they were very small on the Council.

The message is clear — you can put forward whatever ideas you want inside the Party — as long as no one listens to them. Once you start to win people over, watch out!

Witch-hunts are not new to the Labour party. In the 1920s, 22 local Parties were suspended for refusing to expel Communists; in 1945 Ernie Roberts, now an MP, was refused endorsement; in the 1960s came the major attack on the Socialist Labour League-led Young Socialists; and individual constituencies have been suspended since — such as Manchester Wythenshawe.

Without doubt, witch-hunts are used to try to maintain what the leadership sees as a cloak of respectability. Like Wilson in 1964, Kinnock has smelt the possibility of governmental office, and will stop at nothing in ditching socialist policies in hopes of

achieving it. Our role should be clear — to expose both the leadership, and the "soft left" who support it, for what they are; and at the same time to increase our efforts to build an uncompromising and effective hard left within the rank and file of the Party.

Keeping quiet will not make the witch-hunt go away. The only way to stop it is to build a serious base throughout the constituency parties and in the unions. For the witch-hunt in the Party is being waged by an alliance between Kinnock and almost the whole union bureaucracy; and it will soon be followed by a witch-hunt of socialists from positions in the unions in the way Communist Party members were years ago: this is already a threat in the CPSA.

We must ensure that we do not fall into the trap adopted by some on the left — arguing that defence of "Militant" means we can no longer criticise them politically. "Militant" themselves try to use the argument that anyone taking issue with them over political differences is joining the witch-hunters. Adopting this attitude does no one any favours.

We must continue to debate our differences, but unlike Kinnock and

the "soft left" — whose opposition is to any form of class struggle between now and the next election — we believe we can win our arguments with "Militant" supporters by convincing broader sections of the working class in the course of practical struggles. Kinnock's resort to bureaucratic manoeuvres to defeat the hard left is a sign of political weakness, not strength.

The witch-hunt should not be underestimated. It is a test of the real fighting strength of the hard left in the labour movement as a whole, as opposed to its ability to get paper resolutions passed. "Militant" will use it to build their support. We must use this period in a non-sectarian way to build the hard left and prepare for the struggles which will follow in the next Election and after, working with "Militant" where possible.

If you have information about witch-hunts in your area, or you want a copy of *Witch-hunt News*, a monthly bulletin with details of local experiences, contact Labour Left Co-ordination at 57, Lofting Rd, London N1 1ES.

Palestinian hunger strike in Zionist jails

By LUCY MATTHEWS

1500 Palestinian political prisoners started a hunger strike on December 4 in protest at increased Israeli repression inside the prisons. According to a press release issued by the striking prisoners, the strike was called for because "the situation in the prisons has become unbearable" and the prisoners were "willing to risk their lives in order to put an end to the "new order enforced in the prison."

The statement went on to say that: "It is no secret that the prison authorities decided to take advantage of the release of more than 1,000 political prisoners, freed in the May 1985 prisoner exchange, to recover ground lost to the prisoners over the last year. This includes the requirement to stand for a head count in Askelon Prison, the mixing of women political and criminal prisoners in Neve Terza prison and violent provocation leading to the unreasonable use of tear gas in Askelon Prison. These are only some examples of the



new order which is being imposed on the Palestinian political prisoners... The worsening of conditions is not limited to any particular area and includes the quality of food, health care, the right to receive books and newspapers and above all the violence and humiliation."

The strike, which started in the Jnaid prison in Nablus immediately spread to the prisons in Hebron and Jenin (both inside the West Bank) and to Askelon prison inside Israel. Included among the demands of the prisoners are: improvement of their general conditions; an immediate stop to the violence and verbal abuse; improvement in the quality and quantity of food; greater freedom of movement in prisons; admittance of books and newspapers, and improvement of the lighting and ventilation in the cells.

The reaction of the Israeli prison authorities has been predictable. In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, the Director of the Prison Authority Rafi Suissa characterised the hunger strike as nothing less than "an attempt by prisoners to win autonomy in the management of prisons and the conduct of routine activity there." He expressed his intention to act with an "iron fist" to break the prisoners. Exactly what this means is difficult to tell, as the prisoners are being allowed no visitors; even their own lawyers are being refused access to them on

the grounds that they constitute an "inciting element".

One thing, however, is certain, and that is that whatever further repressive measures are currently being meted out against the hunger strikers, few of them will be experiencing this sort of treatment for the first time.

The history of Palestinian prisoners — over 3,500 at the end of 1984 — has been one of constant struggles being waged in one form or another in an effort to improve their conditions and their treatment. Indeed such struggles have constituted an important part of political resistance activities within Israel and the occupied territories.

The hunger strike at Nafha — a top security prison in the middle of the Negev desert, where two prisoners died for protesting against overcrowding and bad ventilation — is one example which achieved particular prominence in Britain because of the links made between the hunger strikers of Nafha and the H-block hunger strike which was happening simultaneously.

Less well-known has been the stand taken by the Palestinian women in the Neve Terza prison, who have refused to cook for, serve, or wash up for their Israeli guards — part of their prison duties — for which they were viciously assaulted by the Israeli police who used batons to beat them and pumped tear gas into their overcrowded and badly ventilated cells leaving many with serious eye and lung problems.

While such brutal treatment tends to be reserved for more serious occasions (in this case when the strike was being spread to other prisons) the women in Neve Terza prison face long periods of solitary confinement and prohibitions on receiving visitors, books, letters and newspapers as part of their daily lives.

Stories such as these could be replicated for every prison in Israel and the occupied territories, as indeed they could for prisoners in Northern Ireland; and, given the level of oppression of the Palestinian people outside of the prisons, this is hardly to be wondered at.

But though this latest hunger strike is but one more chapter in a long history of prisoners' struggles, it has a significance beyond this. The achievement of a hunger strike of 1,500, which spread within days to prisons both in the West Bank and inside Israel, indicates a level of militancy, unity, defiance and political organisation which those who currently are trying to bury the Palestinian revolution under a so-called "peace settlement" have been vigorously denying still exists.



New union must take the lead

By HARRY SLOAN

"ONE country, one federation."

The defiant unity of the best organised sections of the black working class of South Africa is the most decisive new factor as 1986 began with further repression and resistance.

The half million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), formed at a November 30 rally of 900 delegates at Natal University (guarded by a security force of sacked strikers from the BTR-Sarmcol plant in nearby Howick), forged a united organisation which committed itself from the outset to embrace political as well as trade union objectives.

• It called for all forms of international pressure, including disinvestment, to be stepped up as "an act of solidarity with our struggle for liberation".

• It demanded the lifting of the state of emergency.

• It called for the withdrawal of soldiers and police from the townships, and unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees.

• It condemned the vicious system of bantustans used by the apartheid state to divide and rule the black majority "with a view to thwarting the just struggle for one person one vote in a unitary South Africa." It accused "tribally-based organisations" (the most conspicuous of which is the semi-fascist Inkatha movement of Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi) of killing trade unionists.

• Delegates rose to applaud the ultimatum delivered by president Elijah Barayi:

"COSATU gives Botha six months to get rid of passes. If that does not take place we will burn the passes of the black man... I want to give



(Left) COSATU President Elijah Barayi; (right) ANC support focusses on jailed Nelson Mandela and courageous Winnie Mandela.

P.W. Botha a last warning to get rid of the pass laws to to withdraw the troops from the townships before the country burns."

It is this political edge to COSATU's founding conference which is the most encouraging new feature of a joint federation whose formation had only been delayed by frictions between the various wings of the main constituent organisations.

Leaders of the FOSATU federation in particular had to a considerable extent abstained from overt involvement in political struggles except in cases of massive pressure like the 2-day political general strike in the Transvaal involving 1 million workers in November 1984. FOSATU had always argued that the broad, cross-class composition of the main anti-apartheid umbrella campaign, the United Democratic Front, ruled out union affiliation, since FOSATU favoured a "working class" party.

The failure of FOSATU to intervene as an organised force in the UDF in turn strengthened the hand of the UDF's petty bourgeois leaders at local and national level. Following the basic political line of the banned African National Congress, the UDF leaders see their task as harnessing black support to put pressure on "liberal" whites and the black middle classes in the hopes of peacefully achieving democratic reforms in South Africa.

This line is plainly losing the confidence of considerable layers of black youth, who look to the ANC and UDF, but also see peaceful march after peaceful protest brutally attacked by the armed forces of Botha's state. Even official figures

show 650 dead in 1985 — 300 of them after the state of emergency was imposed. Nearly 6,000 activists have been detained, with over 1,500 still held.

Such is the mounting level of state violence — which has escalated as whites have begun to fall victim to the struggle — that one clandestine leader of the UDF, Stone Sizani, went further than the customary line and called in December for the formation of black workers into urban militias "to protect our people". The traditional politics of the ANC focus on the role of the ANC's own armed wing to carry through the struggle — it has always strongly resisted calls for workers' militias.

Sizani however recognised the role of the most militant youth in the townships who are establishing specialist groups to combat police violence and to organise rent strikes, consumer boycotts and work stoppages.

"They are often accused by the authorities of intimidation. But we have to look at the circumstances in which they are operating. If anything adherence to peaceful change has been overdone. That's why I say we must start hitting back."

While it is hard to avoid the distinct impression that Sizani, like ANC leader Tambo, is trying to bluff Botha with threats of armed action which he knows will not yet be delivered, the growing commitment and militancy of black youth is a major factor in the situation. It is also a problem for the ANC, whose exiled leadership will find it increasingly hard to control an organisation which is clearly attracting new, independent-minded

militants.

While the ANC's bureaucratic, Stalinist influenced leaders recoil from this new development, the key task is to ensure that the new militant rank and file does not become isolated from the mass movement of black workers: it remains urgent to organise and co-ordinate the struggles across the various sectors of the black population, to build councils of action that can link the struggles of the industrial workers with those of the unemployed, and the students with the communities as a whole in the townships.

From this angle, the call at the beginning of December by the two main black unions that had not joined the COSATU federation for a general strike if Botha did not lift the state of emergency by the end of the year, could only be seen as adventurist and divisive.

The black working class needs to establish and test its new unity in common struggles. A host of issues present themselves — not only democratic demands, but material problems facing workers as trade unionists as a result of the South African economic crisis. Inflation at 17% is still rising. Food has risen especially sharply in price, with bread 25% up and maize 30%, with prices of another 3,000 food items increased in December. One black worker in four is out of a job across the whole country, with pockets of truly enormous unemployment and several key industries hit by recession.

It remains to be seen whether COSATU will live up to its pledges to link the political and economic strug-



gles of the black workers. The Botha regime for its part has made it very clear that it has no intention of peacefully relinquishing power to a black majority government which — however limited the programme and perspective of its leaders — would inevitably open the door for immediate conflict with the interests of South African capitalism.

The South African workers need a leadership as committed to their class interests as Botha is to those of the South African bourgeoisie: but they also need a conscious Marxist leadership that grasps the limitations of the ANC's cross-class political alliances, and recognises that only with the overthrow of capitalist exploitation in South Africa can the black majority establish its democratic rights and smash the trappings of racism.



Organising solidarity

THE heroic 18-month strike by shopworkers at Dunnes stores in Dublin forced the Irish government in December to impose a selective ban on imports of products from South Africa.

Eleven workers went on strike in July 1984 when one was suspended for refusing to check out a South African grapefruit at a till. They held out sufficiently long for an Irish labour court to declare that only political concessions to them could resolve the dispute. The result was a cabinet decision by

the Fine Gael coalition to ban fruit and vegetables produced by firms which use prison labour. The strikes had previously rejected as inadequate a plan for Irish supermarkets to phase out the sale of South African goods.

When they visited Britain during last year's TUC Congress, the Dunne's strikers were appalled at the lack of positive action by British union leaders in solidarity with the South African workers.

But despite this, public pressure and some picketing by anti-apartheid activists has pushed a

number of leading retail chains into banning South African goods.

First in line was to Co-op, followed by Tesco and Sainsbury which announced cutback in sales of South African products. In December five more chains — Littlewoods, Argos, British Home Stores, Next and Harris Queensway declared that they would not or did not stock goods from the apartheid state.

TUC General Secretary Norman Willis was of course quick to claim credit for this in a meeting with South African union leaders. But

TUC unions have not lifted a finger to fight British employers — least of all in solidarity with South African Blacks.

One struggle which has got underway however is the fight by Portsmouth health workers who are refusing to handle South African food for hospital canteens. Despite massive management pressure, including a £10 per week cut in pay, they have held firm, and won support from hospital drivers.

The success of the Dunnes strike

and tenacity of the Portsmouth health workers should be a sharp reminder of what could be done in the workplaces throughout Britain if the trade union leadership decided to mobilise solidarity against apartheid.

It is only by our actions in fighting Botha's allies in the British government and British multinationals, by the fight for genuine class action, that the British workers' movement can prove itself to South African workers.

● *Direct trade union action to block trade, transport and communications to and from South Africa! British shop unions follow the Dunne's strikers example!*

● *Direct links between British and South African workplace union bodies!*

● *Unmask the British firms profiteering from the superexploitation of black workers in South Africa!*

Anglo-Irish Accord

An alliance against the Republicans

THE London/Dublin inter-Governmental Accord of November 1985 (the Hillsborough Agreement) is a paradox. It represents both a considerable setback for the National liberation struggle in Ireland — but also a recognition by British imperialism of the power of that struggle. It also signals the start of a new phase of imperialism in relation to Ireland.

There is no question but that Sinn Fein's growth in recent years — its judicious mixture of "the Armalite and the ballot box", its turn towards socialism, the ground it has gained from the SDLP — has been the factor that finally drove the British Government to negotiate with Dublin. Probably the decision to negotiate an agreement was taken in principle by Britain two or even three years ago, but Thatcher had to wait for the accession to power of the present Fine Gael/Labour coalition in the Twenty-six County Republic before the process of talks could begin.

Both the present and the previous Reagan Administrations have been putting continuous pressure on Thatcher to arrive at an accord with Dublin. The Americans hope such an agreement would:

● break the Republic's constitutional commitment to Irish unity regardless of the Unionist position;

By Eileen Jacobs

● by implication weaken the 26 Counties' commitment to neutrality (thereby making it easier to bring the whole island within the inner orbit of imperialism);

● soften damaging criticism of Britain from other Western European countries, members of NATO and the EEC;

● and divide the Irish-American pro-Nationalist lobby, weakening the public expression in the US of hostility to British imperialism.

With the appearance of Garret Fitzgerald's present coalition in Ireland, the scene was set for negotiating a settlement. Thatcher's Government now had the opportunity it had been seeking to maintain partition via the compliance of Dublin rather than via the Unionist veto, and in this way to distance itself from Loyalism.

The leadership of Fine Gael wanted to destroy the constitutional commitment to a 32-County Republic and to come to some kind of accommodation with Britain in order to bring the 26 Counties into ever-closer alignment with the imperialist powers of the US and the Western European states. They saw an accord with Westminster as a vote-catching distraction from the coalition's stringent economic austerity measures, which have made it so unpopular with the working and middle classes of the 26 Counties.

Reagan's Administration saw at least a realistic chance seriously to weaken the National liberation struggle in Ireland and to strengthen the hand of the most pro-imperialist elements in the Republic. In addition, by promoting a deal which appears to provide redress for many Nationalist grievances in the Six Counties while portraying Sinn Fein as "Marxists", the Reagan Administration hopes to divide the Irish-American community, splitting the more radical elements (represented in Congress by Mario Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs, with considerable grassroots support) from the "concerned conservatives", led by the "Friends of Ireland" (such luminaries as Edward Kennedy and Daniel Patrick Moynihan).

Following a break in London/Dublin talks after Thatcher's abrupt rejection of all the main proposals put forward in the 1984 New Ireland Forum Report, White House pressure helped to ensure a resumption of negotiations culminating in the Accord.

It should now be clear that British imperialism has opted, by signing the agreement, to take its remaining money "off the Orange horse" and put it on the consensus politicians of the Dail and SDLP.

The hostility and contempt with which Thatcher has treated the initial Loyalist backlash and the speed with which Tom King was forced to apologise for his anti-Dublin gaffe in

early December (he'd alleged that the Dublin government had accepted that there was no foreseeable prospect of a united Ireland) show that the alleged tender concern of Tories and British capitalism for the Unionists is so much hogwash.

The very fact that the Agreement was negotiated secretly, without any reference to the population of the Six Counties, and is to be run by semi-secret meetings of Government ministers and by civil servants — a fact which has caused such fury among all sections of Loyalists — indicates how little regard imperialism really has for Loyalist "rights".

There can be little doubt that, were the Government of the 26-County Republic formally to agree to put the 26 Counties into some kind of "EEC Defence Union" (thereby effectively bringing the whole island under the aegis of NATO), Britain would agree to a 32-County Ireland within an EDU and would undertake a formal political withdrawal without delay. Under such circumstances the Unionists would effectively have no veto.

Such a British withdrawal would cost imperialism no loss of face and would strengthen it strategically.

Michael Mates, MP, head of the Commons inter-party committee on Irish affairs, has described the South's neutrality as "the major problem" preventing the Unionists from agreeing to a united Ireland — but whether he really means the Unionists or whether he means instead the British government is open to question. Cabinet Minutes of the first Attlee Government make it clear that defence has been the main reason for retaining the 6-County statelet within the United Kingdom.



The March 1985 issue of *Sanity*, CND's magazine, reported:

"The whole island of Ireland is regarded by NATO and the US as strategically vital... The Republic, supposedly neutral, already allows NATO access to strategic facilities such as ports... In the event of conventional or 'limited' nuclear war in Europe, planned strategic functions for Northern Ireland include the use of airfields as part of the 'Atlantic airbridge', bringing troops and equipment from the US, as well as the basing or staging of nuclear-armed bombers."

Since the current Fitzgerald coalition came to power, the Fine Gael

Ministers for Defence and Foreign Affairs have made it clear that they would favour Irish membership of an EEC Defence Union; and Fitzgerald has taken no steps to dissociate himself from them.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find an Anglo-Irish intergovernmental delegation preparing to fly to Washington DC in early 1986 to discuss with the White House, the State Department and the "Friends of Ireland" Congressional group an "aid" package of one billion dollars for both the Six Counties and the 26 Counties.

In the short and medium term, British imperialism, represented by the Tories, the Alliance and the Labour Front Bench, is backing the SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party) to work out some kind of power-sharing arrangement with the Unionists in the context of increased economic and security co-operation with the South. The aim is effectively to weaken Sinn Fein so that responsibility for economic and social affairs can once again be devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Should devolution on these terms prove impossible (as is likely), then the Agreement allows the Republic's government to put forward proposals for major British legislation and major British policy changes "where the interests of the minority community are concerned". This "safety-net" provision gives Thatcher a propaganda advantage; whatever happens as regards devolution, she can claim that she has done all possible to advance the cause of economic and social harmonization in Ireland.

Given the Unionist reaction to the Agreement, the prospect of devolution is remote. Much more likely is a scenario in which Britain agrees to cosmetic social changes in the Six



Loyalists — brushed aside by Thatcher

Couties which appear to benefit the Nationalist community (such as changes in the Northern Ireland Flags and Emblems Act, increased grants to government bodies set up to combat discrimination, possibly even electoral boundary changes and the terms of reference of the Ulster Defence Regiment), without any radical improvement in policing and judicial policy and practice.

Even if strong representations were to be made by the 26 Counties' Government at the intergovernmental Conference meetings on such subjects as the use of paid perjurers ("supergrasses"), plastic bullets, dawn raids, the strip-searching of women prisoners, non-jury courts and the denial of political status to IRA and INLA prisoners, the British Government would refuse to consider them.

Of course, the policy change which would benefit the Nationalist community — the swift, total and unconditional withdrawal of Britain from Ireland — cannot even be raised by the Republic's Government at the conference meetings. At the second conference meeting on 30 December 1985, the British Government rejected Dublin's proposals for changes in the use of uncorroborated informers' evidence in the "Diplock" (non-jury) courts, though there is now press speculation that there may be some cosmetic changes. Britain has also expressed strong reservations about allowing judges from the South to sit even in these courts.

Not that Dublin is exactly pressing hard for sweeping changes in security and judicial practice:

- the Republic's Supreme Court has already narrowed the scope of the "political crime" defence against extradition;

- the Fitzgerald Government has a record of attacks on civil liberties comparable to Thatcher's;

- and, when 18 leading members of Sinn Fein were arrested and held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on 28 December, Dublin's official response was that it would be "quite inappropriate" to comment on "standard police procedure" in the North.

It is in the area of "cross-border security" that Britain stands to gain most in the short and medium term. It is no coincidence that, for the first time since 1981, a substantial number of extra troops are being sent to the Six Counties, to patrol the border areas and supervise the building of police stations bombed by the IRA, and that the heads of the RUC and the Gardai (the Republic's police) have recently held their first joint meeting for over a year.

"Cross-border security" is a polite expression for continually increasing co-operation between the British and the Republic's police and army, for Dublin turning a blind eye to "standard" RUC procedures for a co-ordinated clampdown on the IRA and

INLA and, above all, for the likely outlawing of Sinn Fein as a legitimate political party in the 26 Counties, the Six Counties and Britain.

Implicit in the phrase is the Fitzgerald Government's agreement to sign the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism as soon as possible. This would enable the extradition of far more "terrorist" suspects from the Republic to the North for trial.

Any success by Sinn Fein in the forthcoming by-elections in the Six Counties will probably ensure that legislation will be rushed through both the Dail and the British Parliament making Sinn Fein an illegal organisation. No such measures will, of course, be taken against the Orange Lodges, the UDA or Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party — to do so would render the Six Counties ungovernable for practical purposes — but the British Government will probably take some steps to appear to control the flow of arms to the Loyalist paramilitaries, which has already swelled since the Agreement was signed.



This will not stop a rise in sectarian outrages by Orange paramilitary groups, in Loyalist intimidation of isolated Nationalists and in Unionist 'civil disobedience' (in the form of physical attacks on government buildings and representatives, sporadic work walkouts and rent/rate strikes and big street battles next summer in the "marching season").

Thatcher knows however that any attempt to rerun the Ulster Workers' Strike of 1974 will fail. Loyalist paramilitary action will be the most potent and enduring expression of Orange fear, resentment and chauvinism. We can expect to see much more covert liaison at grassroots level between the paramilitaries and RUC/UDR members frustrated by even the minimal changes in conditions of membership and operation brought about by the Conference meetings.

A change of government on either side of the Irish Sea in the next year or two is not unfortunately likely to

mean the end of the Accord. Charles Haughey and the Fianna Fail Party may have voted against the Agreement in the Dail and correctly condemned it as destroying the republic's constitutional commitment to end partition, but they will find it difficult in practice to break the imperialist stranglehold which the Accord represents.

Treaties registered with the UN and the EEC are not easily abrogated by liberal-democratic capitalist governments without the backing of the major imperialist powers. Moreover, Haughey himself put his name to the 1984 New Ireland Forum Report which proposed "unification by consent" as the ideal solution for Ireland. A Fianna Fail government would find itself in the same economic difficulties as the Fitzgerald coalition; and attempts to solve these would be its first priority.

A Labour government in Britain is likely to confine itself to reforms of a "civil liberties" nature in the Six Counties (for example, ending the strip-searching of women prisoners) **unless the labour movement makes a massive effort on the issue of Ireland over the next 18 months.** An Alliance government or an Alliance/Labour coalition would do even less, merely stepping up the number of cosmetic changes made.

Even if driven underground, Sinn Fein, as the most advanced section of the national liberation movement, will continue to grow in strength and influence after a temporary setback and despite practical difficulties. In the long run, Nationalists will increasingly desert the SDLP as its collusion with imperialism becomes more apparent. As far as the military struggle is concerned, increased state security measures may hold down the IRA in the border areas for a period of months, but in the long term are unlikely to do more than dent the IRA's armour. It is worth quoting the reported words of no less an authority than Douglas Hurd, "When I took over from Jim Prior, I could hardly bring myself to believe that the IRA had become so sophisticated in its methods." **The Accord, as an attempt to destroy Sinn Fein, will fail in the long run.**

It is the job of British supporters of the Irish liberation struggle to increase publicity and education about the partition of Ireland, the need for national liberation and the true nature of the Accord, to offer Sinn Fein where possible a chance to make their voice heard in Britain and to **fight within the labour movement against any attempt to ban it as a legitimate political organisation.**

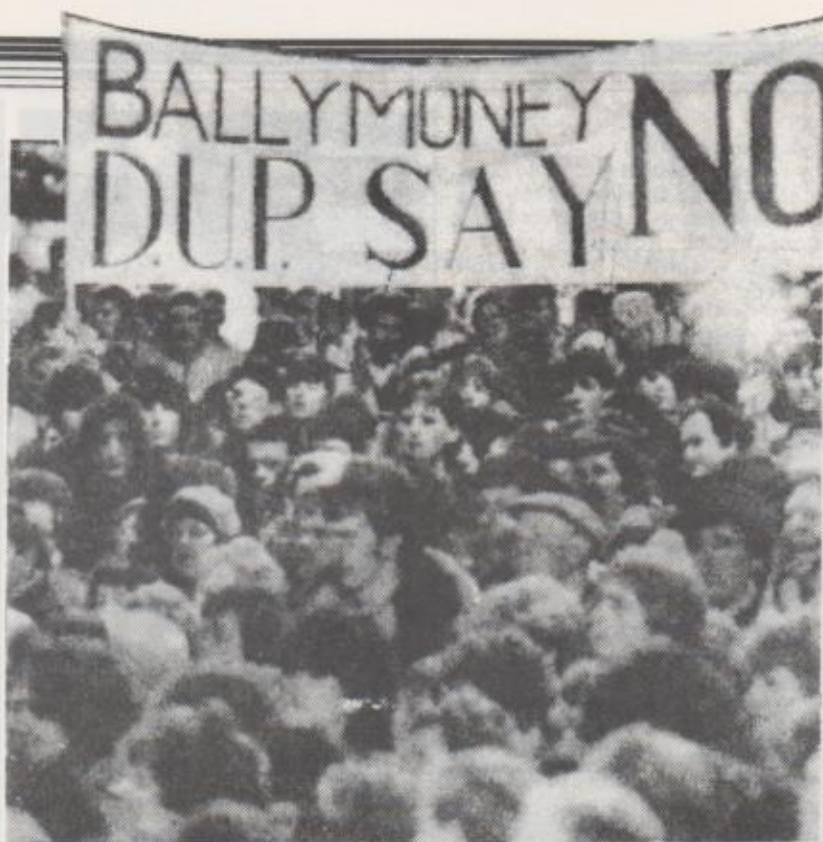
A titanic task therefore awaits the hard left of the labour movement and rank and file working class activists. The long series of capitulations to the Tories by the official leadership of the labour movement (with their history of support for imperialism) and the

desertions to Kinnock's ranks by the soft left has rendered the real left isolated to a considerable extent on the Irish issue.

Over and above this, the ever-increasing deployment of police and military force in Britain by the Thatcher Government, coupled with the daily barrage of imperialist "anti-terror" propaganda in the British media, has already done much to create a climate of fear among working class people. In such a climate, racism and fascism flourish and a government can hope to push ahead with wholesale elimination of existing civil liberties, mass imprisonment of its leading opponents and gross intimidation of minority ethnic groups.

1986 is probably the last chance for years for the hard left to challenge and break the imperialist practice and ideology of the labour movement leadership, not only with regard to the Irish struggle but also with regard to the Palestinians' national liberation fight, repression of radical peace activists and solidarity movements in the NATO countries.

It may be the last chance to intervene decisively in the Labour



What the agreement says

ARTICLE 1

If and when the "majority of the people of Northern Ireland" formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, the two governments will introduce and support legislation to bring it about.

ARTICLE 2

Sets up an inter-governmental Conference to deal with political, security, legal and judicial matters and the promotion of cross-border co-operation. It says that in the event of devolution the Republic's Government will put forward views and proposals on matters outside the scope of the NI Assembly.

ARTICLE 3

Says the Conference shall meet at Ministerial or official level regularly with frequent Ministerial meetings and provision for the attendance of advisers such as the Chief Constable of the RUC and the

Commissioner of the Garda Síochána (the Republic's police force).

ARTICLE 4

Spells out both Governments' commitment to devolution in NI "on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community" and says that at the Conference the Republic's Government "may put forward views and proposals on the modalities (sic) of bringing about devolution... in so far as they relate to the interests of the minority community."

ARTICLE 5

Covers measures to accommodate the rights and identities of the two communities, to protect human rights and to prevent discrimination, for example changes in electoral arrangements and the use of flags and emblems.

ARTICLE 6

Says the Government of the Republic may use

the Conference to make proposals on the role and composition of such bodies as the Fair Employment Agency and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

ARTICLE 7

Says the Conference shall consider security policy, relations between security forces and the community and prisons policy.

ARTICLE 8

Says the Conference shall consider harmonising areas of the criminal law applying in the North and in the South.

ARTICLE 9

Covers cross-border co-operation on security, including a programme to deal with threat assessments, exchange of information, liaison structures, technical co-operation, personnel training and operation resources. But the

Conference shall have no operational responsibilities.

ARTICLE 10

Covers economic co-operation in those areas of both parts of Ireland deemed to have suffered most over the last 16 years.

ARTICLE 11

Provides that at the end of 3 years from signature or earlier if asked by either Government, the working of the Conference shall be reviewed by the two governments.

ARTICLE 12

Says the two parliaments will have to decide whether to set up an Anglo-Irish parliamentary body, to which the two governments would give support "as appropriate".

ARTICLE 13

Says the Accord enters into force once the two Governments have notified their acceptance.

Party's policy-making on Ireland (see below) and to educate and agitate not only at rank and file level within the labour movement but among those sections of the working class not organised within the labour movement.

What needs to be done?

During the next few months, a Working Party of the Labour Party NEC will publish a Policy Statement on Ireland.

It is likely that there will be a Majority Report and a Minority Report, with the Majority Report supporting the Agreement and calling for cross-border harmonization of services and the economy, leading eventually to political unification by consent (in 50 years' time?).

The Minority Report will be based on the submission of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI), which analyses the causes and effects of partition and calls for early withdrawal under a Labour Government. The Statement will be discussed and finally voted on at Labour Party Conference.

Get resolutions through your CLPs and affiliated union branches to annual Party Conference supporting the LCI's position and any minority report based on it.

Back up resolutions with letters to the local, national and labour movement press and plenty of other publicity, which could include leafletting campaigns. LCI members must take an active part in discussions locally and nationally, including the AGM, aimed at producing the most effective labour movement campaign on the Policy Statement, culminating at Party Conference.

They must also discuss and initiate broader educational-publicity campaigns in conjunction with organisations such as the Troops Out Movement to reach and inform the many millions of working class people who



Thatcher — prompted by Reagan

are not easily accessible through the organised labour movement.

In the immediate future, it is very important to form links with trade union and working class activists, also women's groups, in both the Six Counties and the Twenty-Six Counties who are agitating against the Agreement, and to have them in Britain on speaking tours aimed at Trade Unions, Labour Party Branches and the general public, especially the Irish community and other ethnic minorities.

Labour Committee on Ireland and Troops Out Branches should make every attempt to have Sinn Fein Councillors and members to speak at public meetings, to counteract media lies and state intimidation and to show solidarity with the advanced section of the Irish liberation movement at a time when it is under grave threat.

Even if a Sinn Fein speaker is not possible, organise a public meeting in your area to expose the reality of Irish partition and the

Hillsborough Accord.

The trial has begun of Dr Maire O'Shea, and others, on charges of conspiracy to cause explosions — a major state attempt to intimidate the Irish community and discredit organisations campaigning for civil rights and British withdrawal from Ireland. Even if the worst happens and Maire is sentenced, we must go on building support for her, around an appeal.

Despite criticisms many socialists would raise on the the politics and methods of the INLA, the current campaign of INLA prisoners and their relatives for a review of the cases — which included hunger strikes — must be given publicity in order to draw attention to the use of paid informers' evidence in non-jury courts in the Six Counties and the British Government's continuing refusal to grant political status to convicted prisoners who have been active in the liberation struggle.

We must build immediately for a large and successful demonstration on Sunday February 2 in London, to demand British withdrawal from Ireland and commemorate the civilians shot dead by British troops on Bloody Sunday 1972. Help to organise transport and publicity; details are available from the LCI.

Finally, those who are Trade Union or Labour Party members should send the following model resolution without delay to the Labour Party National Executive Working Party on Ireland (it can go direct from CLPs, union branches if affiliated, women's Regional Committees, and through the LPYS:

"This rejects any return to bipartisanship over the London/Dublin Accord (the Hillsborough Agreement) which the British Government intends to lodge at the United Nations with President Reagan's approval because:

- a) the Accord tries to legitimise the partition of Ireland in international law;
- b) the Accord is another thinly disguised attempt at an internal settlement in the Six Counties, albeit with the Dublin Government allowed to make suggestions;
- c) the Accord will mean a worsening of oppression aimed at Irish Nationalists;
- d) the Accord contemptuously dismisses the demands of the Nationalist community which has suffered British repression for sixteen years, and refuses to recognise their elected representatives;
- e) the Accord will be an obstacle to Labour's goal of a united Ireland, not a step towards it;
- f) the only solution to the misery suffered by millions of working class people in Ireland is an end to partition and the gerrymandered Six County statelet by an early and unconditional British military and political withdrawal — this is the policy to which the Labour Party should commit itself."

IRISH Foreign Minister Peter Barry has joined with British Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King in condemning the present hunger strike by jailed members of the Irish National Liberation Army and Irish Republican Socialist Party.

One of these courageous republicans is joining the hunger strike each week to protest their innocence. So far the hunger strikers are Bobby Tohill, Gerard Steenson and Thomas Power. This follows their imprisonment along with 24 others on the word of "supergrass" Harry Kirkpatrick given to the traditional no-jury Belfast court.

Charges pinned on them under these circumstances range from membership of the INLA to alleged killings of police/army personnel (cited as "murder").

As repression continues under the newtangled Accord, 18 members of Sinn Fein have been arrested by the RUC without charge, among them Martin MacGuinness, abstentionist Assemblyman for Derry. These arrests have concentrated on party activists rather than the military wing.

However, of those arrested, Seamus Cassidy has subsequently been charged with possession of an explosive substance — a Brit Army flare! The arrests are an obvious attempt to disrupt Sinn Fein's campaign in the January 23 by-elections for the 15 parliamentary seats vacated by Unionist MPs.

Algerian leaders swing towards Thatcherism

By JACK GOLDBERG

AFTER three days of debate, 5,000 delegates at the Special Congress of the National Liberation Front (FLN) — Algeria's only party — on December 26 overwhelmingly approved a new charter for the country. This was by no means an irrelevant exercise in textual hairsplitting, but a fundamental rewriting of the "supreme source of the country's policies and laws."

Before the Congress even brought down the curtain, the press agency Algerian Press Service (APS) issued a lengthy statement dispelling any doubt on the credentials of the delegates — the vast majority personally handpicked by president Benjedid Chadli, Secretary-General of the party — and giving weight and legitimacy to the new Charter which will pave the way for substantial changes in the political hierarchy and the economic options: "a clear text, a precise and rich document which will modify Algeria, its people, its party and its state."

No one would doubt that the text was clear: but what was also clear were the manoeuvres of the state bureaucracy to steamroller through fundamental changes. Until the Congress, it was generally surmised that the final version of the Charter would embody the synthesis of a country-wide "exemplary democratic debate". For the first time APS revealed that the text was in its final shape long before the debate started: "The draft presented to Congress was prepared by the political leadership at the beginning of 1985 and debated by 4 million citizens." In reality the general line of the new policies has already begun to be implemented for the last few years. The exercise was an unmistakable sham to legitimise



President Chadli's new pragmatism appeals to Washington

the lurch to the right by President Chadli who orchestrated in minute detail the scope and extent of the debate, culminating in a special Congress to rubberstamp the new Charter.

So in fact the "exemplary democratic debate" in the future of the Algerian "revolution" quietly bypassed the vast majority of the Algerian masses and simply involved the FLN and its front organisations which the state bureaucracy glibly labels the "organisations of the masses." These are the UGTA (General Union of Algerian workers), the UNJA (National Union of Algerian Youth) and the UNFAA (National Union of Algerian Women).

Even within these closed circles, it would be naïve to presume that the discussions were without problems. It is more than certain that they reflected the profound impasse of the state bureaucracy. The inevitable clashes were led by old guard FLN militants who opposed tooth and nail the reorientation towards new

economic choices. They posed as unrelenting defenders of the old political order born out of the Revolution in the '60s and by former president Boumedienne. Their opposition was symbolised with a single slogan: "No to Economic Liberalisation".

Anticipating a rearguard action by hostile factions, president Chadli kicked off the debate inside the FLN as early as mid-August. First this allowed him to proclaim that a really "democratic" debate was taking place, strengthening the legitimacy of any decision taken by Congress. Secondly, his unshakeable control of the Party's apparatus and the state's mass media gave him the added advantage to expose all dissenters as "enemies of the Revolution" and manipulate public opinion to his advantage. Further it allowed him to gauge the number of his opponents and prepare more adequately for the Congress (timing, choice of delegates, etc.). So far from being a forum where he argued with and convinced his opponents of the correct-

Wage and welfare cuts and dismantling of state sector

FLN Congress

ness of the new orientation, president Chadli used the pre-Congress discussion as a sounding-off exercise to disorientate his opponents and pave the way for his own resounding victory at Congress.

Nevertheless the crisis of the bureaucracy was open and visible. The clashes, sometimes vitriolic, found expression in the public press. The minister of Industry, Messaoudi Zitouni, published in *El Moudjahid* (FLN daily paper) two articles calling for a liberalisation of the economy, making a case for free market forces, advocating a salary freeze and openly welcoming private capital from imperialist countries.

Around the same period, *Algerie Actualité*, a national weekly, denounced the welfare state and condemned the FLN as a "closed apparatus which stifled any free expression and perpetuated a monolithism that negates individual value, promotes intellectual paucity and cliquism." *Revolution Africaine* (official organ of the FLN) reacted immediately, denouncing the "theses of bourgeois reaction, a project sponsored by liberal dreamers" and reminded all counter-revolutionaries of the might of its armed wing, the Popular National Army.

It became quickly obvious that within the state bureaucracy two tendencies were shaping up: one favouring a rapid privatisation of the economy, a bigger share for the national bourgeoisie and a rapprochement with imperialism. The other clinging to the "socialist ideals" inherited from former President Boumedienne.

The crisis of the bureaucracy became more acute at a time when the state of the economy was worsening. The standard of living of workers was steadily being eroded by inflation and a sudden rise of basic commodity prices.

Most importantly, new labour legislation, the "statut général du travail" (General Labour statutes), introduced by Boumedienne in 1978, started being widely implemented in all state institutions. Its general aim was to restructure jobs in state-owned enterprises and rationalise their comparable values. In real terms, it was set to cut wages by around 25% as well as increasing national insurance contributions. Workers not only resisted the implementation of the new labour legislation but demanded large wage increases which the state bureaucracy cannot even start to contemplate.

As well as labour unrest, a wave of civil disorder is engulfing the country. Muslim fundamentalists started an armed rebellion repressed in blood by the army. Armed clashes just outside Algiers ended with twenty deaths. The main ringleader Bouali is still on the run, despite a vast police operation — which indicates the existence of sympathies among



Former President Ben Bella (left) and Boumedienne in 1963

the local population as well as connivance with sections of the ruling bureaucracy.

During the same period, strikes and demonstrations in Kabilya demanding the freeing of all political prisoners reached a peak when the whole Kabyle population struck on November 10th after the trial and imprisonment of the popular political singer Ait Margaliet. The Government has shown a staunch determination not to concede an inch.

Opponents, whether human rights campaigners or Kabyle cultural rights dissenters, are ruthlessly crushed. While in the past opponents were systematically rounded up and imprisoned without trial for several years until released as a "gesture of good will", the government appears now more sensitive on its human rights record and has devised new ways of crushing its opponents. Twenty-three members of the Algerian League of Human Rights were tried for conspiracy against the state, distribution of leaflets and illegal assembly. Despite the collapse of the prosecution case, based on flimsy evidence, they were still condemned to sentences ranging between 6 months and 3 years.

Almost simultaneously, supporters of former president Ben Bella — the first Algerian president, deposed in a coup by Boumedienne — received up to 20 years in gaol for plotting armed revolt. These show trials remained a taxing test for a state bureaucracy already isolated and whose power base is increasingly shrinking.

What is at stake for the government is how to adapt to the necessities of the economic crisis without the risk of opening a more violent crisis that the state has no immediate means to contain. While for a section of the bureaucracy, the only way to salvage the situation is to liberalise the economy — a position in itself contradictory to the maintenance of a one-party system — for the most orthodox wing — wholeheartedly supported by the Stalinists grouped in the Parti d'Avant Garde Socialist (PAGS) — what is most important is

to maintain the "gain of the Revolution, the inheritance of Boumedienne" embodied in the vast state sector and the one-party system. Only then could they avoid or, at worst, postpone any confrontation with the masses.

Fears that a spiralling down of oil prices will accelerate the crisis of the economy have thrown the ruling bureaucracy into permanent turmoil in isolation from the rest of the masses. Faced with increased working class and youth militancy, they cannot fall back any more on the option of the FLN front organisations — state trade unions, youth section and women's section — which for many years operated as transmission belts under the control of the FLN.

These organisations remain empty hulks devoid of any significance since the Stalinists who used to run them have been pushed aside by President Chadli: what is left is on the one hand workers and youth — not yet organised in any independent structure — steadily affected by the economic crisis and potentially capable of expressing their anger in an open conflict with the state; and on the other hand a beleaguered state bureaucracy bickering about what direction to take.

It is in this context that the new Charter is seen as a way out. President Chadli's line has strongly emerged as the new orientation. On the one hand it maintains the status quo on the political terrain, while on the other it has started — without conceding the demands for an immediate liberalisation of the economy — to tilt slowly away from the "socialist ideals" as devised and theorised by former president Boumedienne.

While still proclaiming his commitment to the past and to Algeria's fundamental options such as "socialism", state control and one-party system, President Chadli has now paved the way for a new economic system, one in which sloganising about socialism will sound increasingly hollow and unconvincing: the breakdown of state industries and collective farms; an increased share of the economy open to private capital; the linking of wages to productivity; and an end to the welfare state. A mighty jump from state capitalism to neo-Keynesianism, peppered with concepts such as "self reliance" directly poached from the vocabulary of Thatcherism.

Despite the success of the "pragmatic" President Chadli, the balance sheet of Congress will remain dressed in the Emperor's clothes: there is less material in them than they like to see. The economic reorientation will necessitate sooner or later a reshuffling of the different sections in power.

And it is more than certain that this will open a more naked crisis where the weight of the Algerian working class and youth would this time be of paramount importance.

Polish workers form new alliance

A NEW current has been formed within the Polish underground socialist movement; the Workers Opposition has adopted a draft platform based on the concept of an anti-bureaucratic revolution.

Copies of this platform and other documents of the Workers Opposition have been sent to the papers of the revolutionary left in Europe over the signature of Zbigniew Kowalewski, a former regional leader of Solidarnosc in the Lodz region.

Many readers of *Socialist Viewpoint* will recognise many of the positions argued by Workers Opposition as broadly similar to the Trotskyist conceptions of political revolution for the overthrow of Stalinist bureaucracies throughout Eastern Europe and the defence of nationalised property relations through workers management.

Only the explicit call for a revolutionary Marxist party to lead the struggle, and demands designed to mobilise and organise the mass movement and combat the violent repression of the state machinery are missing from these initial draft texts, which mark a substantial political advance over the am-



biguous formulations of the Solidarnosc programme.

Further material from Workers Opposition will be published in future issues of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

GENERAL INFORMATION

IN THE spring of 1985, a new socio-political current started to form within the Polish social movement. The editorial boards of four underground journals set up a co-ordinating committee that took the name "Alliance of the Workers Opposition Press" (PPOR).

They published a draft programme around which they are seeking to bring together those forces that have declared themselves in favour of an antibureaucratic revolution, waged by the working class and aimed at achieving the full liberation of the working class.

The PPOR wants to contribute to building and broadening the mass workers struggles around partial and immediate demands and the self-organisation of the workers themselves.

The following journals have joined the PPOR: *Front Robotniczy*, *Sprawa Robotnicza*, *Glosno*, and *Wolny Robotnik* (*Workers' Front*, *Workers' Cause*, *Out Loud*, *Free Worker*). The first two have been published since the summer of 1984 by groups that are working for workers self-management and identify with the revolutionary left.

In its first issue, *Front Robotniczy* published excerpts from the "Open

Letter to the PZPR" written in 1964 by Jacek Kuron and Karol Mozelewski. In so doing, it demonstrated its intent to link up with the revolutionary tradition of the Polish antibureaucratic opposition, which, by the way, the authors of that work have today abandoned.

For its part, *Sprawa Robotnicza* announced in its first issue that it considered itself "a link in the international working class community". It wrote, moreover, that it "has enemies with whom no accord or alliance can ever be concluded — they are the bureaucracy (that is, the social layer that exploits the workers); as well as the bourgeoisie, which guarantees the survival of the long bankrupt bureaucracy."

Wolny Robotnik is the organ of the Union of Workers Councils of the Polish Resistance Movement (ZRP-PRO). This organisation, which is based on clandestine groups in the factories, has operated in Upper Silesia since 1982. In a draft programme published at the start, the SRP-PRO came out for overthrowing the bureaucratic dictatorship based on a general strike led by workers councils formed clandestinely, and for establishing workers power in the state in order to guarantee the building of socialism.

Glosno is the organ of the Provisional Co-ordinating of the Mines (TKKG) of Solidarnosc. It also operates in Upper Silesia. The TKKG has made itself known in the West by its support for the British miners strike, which attracted important notice in the British left and far left press, in particular in the *New Statesman* and the *London Labour Briefing*.

The TKKG is a co-ordinating committee of the underground trade union commissions in many mines, and is in conflict with the Regional Executive

Commission (RKW) of Solidarnosc, which is representing the underground national leadership of the union.

The PPOR has formed an Executive Commission that includes a representative of each of its components and functions by consensus in order to maintain their autonomy. This commission is responsible for the publication of a common monthly bulletin called *Przelom (Breoch)*, the first issue of which appeared at the end of the autumn of 1985.

embryo of the future revolution, inasmuch as it contributes to the self-organisation of the workers. This is why the demands put forward by the workers movement in its programmatic documents must always take into account three elements:

1. They have to correspond to the needs of the working class.
2. They have to be in tune with the level of consciousness of the workers at the time.
3. They have to make possible, in the struggle itself and on the basis of its success, to raise the level of self-organisation of the working class and of the other social groups allied with it.

6. The independence of the workers movement

Today, the existence of an independent workers movement is the main form of self-organisation and the main precondition for the struggle of the working class. The fight against the bureaucracy entered a qualitatively new phase in 1980, when the strikes opened up the way for the formation of Solidarnosc, the first national independent structure representing the workers that we have seen in the history of the bureaucratic system in Poland.

Today, building and strengthening workers organisations in the plants independent from any organisation or institution outside the working class remains the principal task.

7. Pluralism within the workers movement

Pluralism is necessary within the workers movement in order for it to be able to develop politically. The right of the workers to organise freely in clubs, groups, currents, and political organisations has to be defended.

Open politicisation of the workers movement, based on clear principles, can only strengthen it. Attempts to smother this process, under the pretext that it "weakens the union" is "factional" activity, or "provocation" on the other hand, can only undermine the movement, or in fact divide it, and they involve all the characteristics of provocation.

8. Self-determination

Understanding the class character of social relations in Poland involves rejecting the nationalist imagery that reduces our fight to a struggle against the Soviet Union for independence.

The basic dividing line in our nation is not a schematic opposition between patriots and traitors but one of opposing interests among different social groups. This is why national independence, as an effect

DRAFT PLATFORM

1. The Class Struggle

The political struggle that has been going on in Poland since 1980, which has been generally termed a fight between the society and the regime, is primarily a class struggle.

It is essentially a struggle between the working class, which is subjected to economic exploitation and deprived of all political or economic power, and the bureaucratic state power, which is based on the PZPR, as well as on the military and police machine and the economic and administrative apparatus.

Only the working class has the capacity to overthrow the bureaucracy, and it is only thanks to it that the social groups can liberate themselves from the yoke of the bureaucracy.

2. Self-management

The fundamental aim of our struggle is to get the working class to transform itself from an object into a subject. This will only be possible through a system of generalised self-management.

Such a system would involve self-management councils in the enterprises, linked together by horizontal and vertical structures on the regional and national scale, as well as institutions of self-management organised on a territorial basis.

Self-management, a form of direct political and economic democracy, will thus become the principal factor in organising social and political life.

3. Political pluralism

Self-management can only function in conditions of unrestricted political pluralism. It cannot be foreseen today what will be the exact forms of the social organisations and representative bodies set up.

We cannot say exactly what will be the role of the free elections to the Diet that we would like to see. But it is clear from the start that the principle of political pluralism has to govern all forms of participation in political life for the society.

4. The revolutionary struggle

The transformation of the working class from an object into a subject is only possible through revolutionary changes. The belief in the possibility of a compromise with the bureaucracy is a dangerous illusion that could prove fatal.

In fact, there is no way to reconcile the introduction of a system of self-management, that is, the realisation of the interests of the working class, with the domination of the bureaucracy.

One course for the antibureaucratic uprising could be a revolutionary general strike turning into an active strike (i.e., a takeover of the factories by the workers), supported by actions outside the factories.

It is only in such revolutionary conditions that we could expect a part of the army, primarily ordinary soldiers, to join in the uprising of the working class, when they see that the working class forces have a chance of success.

5. Self-organisation

A revolutionary goal of the struggle requires a revolutionary strategy, that is, a strategy based on consistently advancing the self-organisation of the working class.

Such self-organisation is the common element in all the phases of the development of the workers' struggle, from the present fight for partial objectives to the future struggle for a system of self-management, in which the principle of self-management will find its fullest expression.

Every battle, even on the most limited question, bears within it an

of the struggle of the working class for social liberation represents from the standpoint of the working class, the full achievement of the indispensable right to self-determination.

9. International workers solidarity

The Polish working class is not isolated in the struggle. It has friends and allies abroad. They are the workers of the entire world.

The Polish workers movement can and must draw on the strength of international workers solidarity. The differences between East and West cannot hide the fact that the workers of both camps are linked by common interests, by a common struggle for a common end — the transformation of the working class from object into subject — against common enemies.

The question of international solidarity is one of close co-operation of the various national contingents of the revolutionary workers movement; it is one of interaction between the development of the class struggle, for example, in Poland, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain.

10. Socialisation

The indispensable precondition for the liberation of the working class is for it to lay the economic foundations of its liberty, that is, the socialisation, outside of the state and in the framework of a system of workers' self-management, of the means of production that are today statized.

It is in this way that the working class will obtain the material guarantee of realizing its interests, as well as the legitimate interests of the other groups in society. The aim of the revolutionary workers movement, flowing from the essence of the social relations against which it rebels, is not the reprivatization of state property or giving it autonomy but to genuinely socialise it.

We regard the taking of political power as a means for the working class to assume economic power.

Workers' Opposition

Joint work by radical worker activists with a view toward forming a workers opposition to the bureaucracy is essential to draw up a programme for the Polish workers movement and to gain support for the revolutionary struggle aimed at establishing a system of self-management, a self-managed republic in the full sense of the term.

By establishing co-ordination among the organisations, or in the future by building revolutionary parties, we are not opposing ourselves to the workers movement in the broad sense. To the contrary,

we want the revolutionary current, which is a component of this movement, to be consolidated within its own structures so that it can better contribute to building an independent mass workers movement.

From that flows the basic significance of this platform. That is, the victory of the Polish workers depends in the first instance on adopting a strategy for revolutionary struggle against the bureaucracy.

In practice, the advance to social self-management has to be based on a revolutionary political identification by the workers. It involves the workers becoming conscious of their social and economic interests, as well as the independence of the political-organisational institutions of the working class.

This is why it is the responsibility of those who share the ideas



Appeal

IN view of the deterioration in living and working conditions and the need for effective defensive actions and for unifying them, it is urgent to create, around a political platform, an alliance of various workers groups determined to fight for the interests of the working class, for workers self-management, and the liberation of labour.

We will open up the columns of our publications to workers groups and activists ready to take part in drawing up the platform of the Workers Opposition, which is what we call our common bloc. The name points up our political choices and the class character of our struggle.

Unlike the "national independence opposition" and the "democratic opposition", we put the fight for working class causes first. This does not in any way mean that we underestimate the importance of democracy or national independence. To the contrary, we think that the liberation of labour is only possible in a politically sovereign country, and not one subjected to economic exploitation. We think that democracy can only be achieved fully in a system without oppressed and exploited classes. Neither "actually existing socialism", or "verbal socialism", nor any version of capitalists — American, Swedish or perhaps Polish — represents such a system.

We refuse to keep silent in the face of the clear facts that this



Soviet leader Gorbachev: platform appeals to Soviet workers, not Polish nationalism.

expressed in this platform to unite their forces in the struggle for our common cause.

Wolny Robotnik, no. 30, June 1985



country — which claims that it is "socialist" or that it is "building socialism" — is becoming more and more dependent politically and economically on the West, that is, on monopoly capitalism; and on the Kremlin, that is, the Soviet bureaucracy.

We say no to a Poland reduced to the role of a colony, a source of raw materials and cheap labour, to a Poland where the only liberty would be to enrich oneself at the expense of the workers.

We think that the workers today have to take up a flag under which they can march united in the fight to defend workers' rights, without divisions because of ideological differences. Neither the PZPR nor the opposition, in its present political configuration, in our opinion can play such a role. Because of their attachment to conceptions of a unit of the entire society against the regime, the central structures of *Soldiarnosc* are not playing it either.

In a situation in which the wrong policy of its leadership has led *Soldiarnosc* into passivity and in which the preponderance of procapitalist currents in the opposition outside *Soldiarnosc* is becoming more and more clear, when the exploitation of the workers is increasing, we decided to take up the struggle, in the conviction that victory is ours sooner or later, and that it will be won by a workers movement that rejects both bureaucratic and capitalist exploitation.

Executive Committee of the Workers Opposition Press Alliance, Wolny Robotnik, No. 30, June 1985.

Winning the majority of the working class

By HARRY SLOAN

TO WIN the working class away from its traditional, reformist leaderships and organisations, and build a truly mass, Marxist party capable of leading the socialist revolution needs much more than banner-waving, propaganda and proclamations.

A new party must prove its relevance to the working class — involve itself in the many day-to-day struggles against exploitative employers, anti-union laws, police violence, racist attacks and the many facets of sexual oppression.

It must establish its credentials as front line fighters, *unite* those in conflict, sharing their struggles but not their illusions; it must play a conscious role of deepening and drawing the political lessons from these struggles, uncovering the inadequacy and betrayals of the trade union bureaucrats, reformist and "Communist Party" politicians, and putting forward consistent class struggle tactics and demands.

This might seem so elementary that it hardly merits explanation: but the small, divided and politically confused segments that represent the present-day British Marxist movement bear witness to the fact that these lessons have yet to be fully learned or applied to the British labour movement.

Even as Neil Kinnock — aided and abetted by elements from both sides of the splintered British "Communist Party" — wages a growing witch-hunt against the hard left, using the sterile propagandists of *Militant* as a convenient pretext, an objective appraisal of the size and strength of British revolutionary Marxism suggest that there is a long, long way to go before the social democratic leaders are really faced with any serious Marxist threat.

Time and again in the history of British Marxism, the urge simply to raise the red banner, substituting denunciations and propaganda against the Labour Party and union bureaucrats for serious work designed to win a real base of support in the

Fighting sectarianism and ultra-leftism

labour movement, has sidetracked groupings large and small.

Even at its highest and healthiest point, the British Communist Party never attained a scale that really merited the label "mass party" in the eyes of the early leaders of the Communist International.

All of the political weaknesses and problems of the British CP were compounded by the rise of Stalin and the bureaucratic caste he represented to the leadership of the Russian Party and the Comintern.

Yet despite the strengthening in the post-war period of a hard left in the British labour movement politically well to the left of the Stalinised CP, few of these currents have assimilated the early warnings of the Comintern against sectarianism and abstract propagandism.

The prolonged decade of deluded self-proclamation of the WRP as "the mass revolutionary party" (with at the very high point in 1973 only 3,000 members and virtually no organised work within the trade unions or broader labour movement) has partially broken with the expulsion of founding leader Gerry Healy. Meanwhile the equally wrong-headed and sectarian SWP has for years been urging militant workers simply to leave the Labour Party to Neil Kinnock, and directed their energies towards grouping trade unionists in such a way as to divert from any real political fight against the union bureaucracy. *Militant* preaches "socialism" via a Labour government passing an "Enabling Act" for nationalisation, while refusing to involve its supporters in day-to-day struggles in the unions or most of the active campaigns in the Labour Party.

The question is not simply one of size. Large numbers can — as the WRP, SWP and *Militant* have shown — be led in just as sectarian a fashion as a small grouping.

The history of the Comintern shows that even when in the massive upsurge following World War I revolu-



Lenin in Red Square

tionaries stood at the head of new mass parties formed as a result of splits in the old reformist parties and trade unions, the task of winning a majority of the working class to revolutionary action was one which preoccupied the leaders of the Communist International.

In today's situation, where the revolutionary movement is much smaller as a component of the workers' movement as a whole, and itself politically split and disorientated — lacking even the unifying authority provided by the Russian Revolution and the early Comintern — the problems of winning support for the Marxist programme are even more pressing.

But even at the high point of the Comintern the political solutions put forward by Lenin, Trotsky and others



were no panacea. No simple blueprints could be offered which would automatically resolve the political weaknesses of the new and raw leadership, thrown forward by the struggles of the mass movements of workers followed the end of World War I and the example of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution of 1917. Only through a combination of developing theory and practical experience could the necessary leaderships be steeled and tested.

Immediately after the formation of the new International in 1919, Lenin began to recognise the necessity to wage a political struggle against ultra-left and sectarian politics which led away from practical interventions and towards abstract propagandism — whether this arose from an excess of revolutionary zeal among raw worker militants (such as Gallacher and others around the shop stewards movement in Britain), or from fundamentally flawed political theories left over from anarchism and syndicalism.

In advance of the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin produced the stinging polemic *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, distributed to every delegate. Arguing from the prestige and experience of the successful Russian Revolution, Lenin took up the cudgels for the need to root the Communist Parties in all the daily struggles of the working class. He was particularly firm on the need for a sober appraisal of the mood and militancy of the working class, rejecting any superficial reliance on narrow layers of the most active and committed minority.

Left Wing Communism insists upon the need for Marxists to utilise every possible avenue to reach the masses — rejecting ultra left abstentionism from Parliamentary elections and from work in reactionary trade unions, and condemning those "Left Communists" who rejected out of hand any kind of compromise or manoeuvre with other political par-

"A parliamentary socialist organisation or a propaganda sect can remain for decades within one and the same framework which assures it a few parliamentary posts or a certain outlet for pamphlets. But the party of socialist revolution is obliged to learn in action how to fuse together the majority of the working class, utilising to this end every opportunity for mass action that opens up.

The outlived groupings and factions are interested in preserving intact and immutable all the barriers dividing the working class into segments. We, on the other hand, have a vital stake in pulling down these barriers of conservatism and in teaching the working class to follow our example. Herein lies the whole meaning of the united front policy, a meaning which derives directly from the social revolutionary essence of our party."

(Leon Trotsky: "From the ECCI to the Paris Convention of the French Communist Party, 1922", in *The First Five Years of the Communist International* [New Park ed] Vol 2 p168).

ties. Lenin continually draws the line between on the one hand *obligatory tactical, organisational manoeuvres* to create the best conditions for Marxist agitation, and on the other hand *impermissible political concessions* on matters of *principle or political programme*. The test of revolutionary leadership was its ability to distinguish between these different types of "compromise" and to build a party on that basis.

A further section on the situation in Britain argued the case for a new British Communist Party to seek affiliation to the Labour Party and rejected sectarian and ultra left tendencies among the founders of the new CP. Lenin stressed above all the impossibility of educating the masses through propaganda alone:

"Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be not merely foolish but criminal. Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the masses must have their own political experience. (...)

The immediate objective of the class conscious vanguard of the international working class movement, i.e., the Communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to lead the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position."

This, argues Lenin: "cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinarism and without a full elimination of its errors."

(Chapter X)

So even while the Second Congress tightened up the political basis of the new International, (adopting Lenin's rigorous "21 Theses" on Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, designed to purge the new Parties of reformist elements) Lenin and Trotsky were fighting for a serious perspective towards winning and mobilising sections of workers then unorganised or still under reformist leaderships.

By the Third Congress, the Comintern acknowledged the new, slower tempo of revolutionary struggle following the post-war upheavals, in a situation where the capitalist class continued to exploit each and every opportunity to inflict defeats and setbacks on the labour movement.

In this new phase of the struggle, Lenin and Trotsky continued to urge the Communist Parties to take the fight into the mass organisations of the working class, in particular the

trade unions:

"The fundamental task of the Communist Party in the current crisis is to lead the present defensive struggles of the proletariat, to extend their scope, to deepen them, to unify them, and in harmony with the march of events, to transform them into decisive political struggles for the ultimate goal.

(...)

"Whether the revolutionary movement develops in the next period at a swift or slow tempo, the Communist party must in either case remain the party of action. It stands at the head of the struggling masses; it firmly and clearly formulates its fighting slogans, exposing and sweeping aside all the equivocal slogans of the Social Democracy, which are always based on compromise and conciliationism."

(*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International*, [Ink Links] pp202-3).

This same Third Congress adopted the lengthy *Theses on Tactics* which began to elaborate a detailed series of demands centred on workers' control, each designed to link up with and develop defensive trade union struggles, giving them specific political content:

"The Communist Parties do not put forward minimum programmes which could serve to strengthen and improve the tottering foundations of capitalism. The Communists' main aim is to destroy the capitalist system. But in order to achieve their aim the Communist Parties must put forward demands expressing the immediate needs of the working class.

The Communists must organize mass campaigns to fight for these demands regardless of whether they are compatible with the continuation of the capitalist system. The Communist Parties should be concerned not with the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist industry or the stability of the capitalist economy, but with proletarian poverty, which cannot and must not be endured any longer.

If the demands put forward by the Communists correspond to the immediate needs of the broad proletarian masses, and if the masses are convinced that they cannot go on living unless their demands are met, then the struggle around these issues becomes the starting point of the struggle for power.

In place of the minimum programme of the centrists and reformists, the Communist International offers a struggle for the concrete demands of the proletariat which, in their totality challenge the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat and mark out the



different stages of the struggle for its dictatorship. Even before the broad masses consciously understand the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, they can respond to each of the individual demands.

As more and more people are drawn into the struggle around these demands and as the needs of the masses come into conflict with the needs of capitalist society, the working class will come to realize that if it wants to live, capitalism will have to die. This realization will be the main motivation in their struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The task of the Communist Parties is to extend, deepen and unify the struggle around these concrete demands."

Within these Theses are set out what were later to be taken up by Trotsky and developed as "transitional demands" in the founding programmatic documents of the Fourth International in the 1930s. And the Third Congress also adopted extensive theses on methods and forms of work among women.

Between the Third and Fourth Con-



"The most glorious page in the history of the French proletariat — the Paris Commune — was nothing else but a bloc of all the organizations and shadings within the French working class, united against the bourgeoisie. If, despite the establishment of the united front, the Commune was quickly crushed, then the explanation for this is above all to be found in the fact that the united front did not have at its left flank a genuine revolutionary, disciplined and resolute organization, capable of quickly gaining leadership in the fire of events."

gresses, the Comintern leaders pressed home the logic of these earlier positions and emphasised the importance for Communist Parties — particularly the French party and those faced with a major political split within the labour movement — *taking the initiative* in the fight for united action and a united working class front on basic issues facing the working class.

Trotsky in particular argued at length in explaining the basis for the united front:

"The problem of the united front — despite the fact that a split is inevitable in this epoch between the various political organisations basing themselves on the working class — grows out of the urgent need to secure for the working class the possibility of a united front in

the struggle against capitalism."

(*On the United Front, in First Five Years, Vol 2 p92*)

The tactic of the united front is seen here *primarily* as a means of advancing the class struggle, of enabling workers to make political development in the course of their struggles which would of course benefit the Communists, for whom the class struggle at its sharpest was home territory, while it is anathema to the reformist bureaucrats and politicians — as Neil Kinnock so ably confirms even today.

"The greater is the mass drawn into the movement, the higher its self-confidence rises, all the more self-confident will that mass movement be and all the more resolutely will it be capable of marching forward, however modest may be the initial slogans of struggle. And this means that the growth of the mass aspects of the movement tends to radicalize it, and creates much more favorable conditions for the slogans, methods of struggle, and, in general, the leading role of the Communist Party.

The reformists dread the revolutionary potential of the mass movement; their beloved arena is the parliamentary tribune, the trade union bureaus, the arbitration boards, the ministerial ante-chambers.

On the contrary, we are, apart from all other considerations, interested in dragging the reformists from their asylums [places of refuge - H.S.] and placing them alongside ourselves before the eyes of the struggling masses. With a correct tactic we stand only to gain from this. A Communist who doubts or fears this resembles a swimmer who has approved the theses on the best method of swimming but dares not plunge into the water."

(*On the United Front pp 94-95*)

Only as an incidental feature of this whole approach was the united front tactic seen as a device simply to "expose" and denounce the reformist leaders who refused to engage in joint action.

Trotsky was at pains to explain that, even though the united front tactic was ruled out only in those countries where the Communist Party was of insignificant size or where it already dominated the whole labour movement, it was not by any means simply a craving to reverse the historic split which had separated Communists from social democracy.

Marx and Engels in the early days of the working class movement had expected that the revolutionaries could operate as a distinct tendency within a single broad workers' party.

"The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which

pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

(*Communist Manifesto*, Section II)

In similar fashion to the early Comintern leaders, Marx and Engels saw the leading role of Communists being established through concrete experiences of the advanced workers in the course of actual struggle rather than simply through abstract propaganda:

"The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interest of the working class; but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of the movement."

(*Communist Manifesto*, Section IV)

But the scale and impact of the bureaucratisation of the social democratic parties, and the extent to which their leaders became sucked in to the reformist politics of parliamentary democracy surpassed the worst expectations of Marx and Engels. The mass workers' parties of the Second International degenerated from class struggle origins to a miserable class collaborationist nadir with the vote of a majority of each one of the national parties to support its "own" imperialist ruling class on the eve of World War I.

Prior to this Lenin had taken the lead in transforming the hard political theories and class struggle conceptions of Marxism into a hard organisational form with the development of what became the Bolshevik party structure, based on the discipline of democratic centralism and the principled opposition to class collaboration. At the watershed 1903 Congress of the Russian party of the Second International, the RSDLP, the break between the "Bolsheviks" (literally "majority") and "Mensheviks" (minority) took place over the apparently organisational detail of party rules and statutes. The Mensheviks then, like today's Labour Party right wing opportunists, made a principle out of their individual "rights" to follow whatever they liked, irrespective of party decisions. Lenin insisted upon a party that would have a rigid discipline in carrying out the policies of the majority and the decisions of the elected leadership, while allowing full freedom of democratic discussion within its ranks. It was Lenin's party, based on its fight for proletarian discipline, which proved itself in October 1917 as the only Marxist leadership capable of taking and holding state power and overthrowing capitalism — which the Mensheviks for the most part displayed themselves on the other side of the



Karl Marx

barricades, seeking to preserve the capitalist "Provisional Government".

The political split between reformism and Marxism was therefore no accident, and the issues involved centre on the political independence of the working class. But plainly while the majority of workers, for whatever reason, remain loyal to reformist leaders, there will be no socialist revolution. The united front policy derives from that central question. As Trotsky put it:

"If the Communist Party did not seek for organizational avenues to the end that at every given moment joint, coordinated action between the Communist and the non-Communist (including the Social Democratic) working masses were made possible, it would have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over — on the basis of mass action — the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power."

(*On the United Front*, p 93)

In answer to those who ask if the united front policy extends only to the workers, and should exclude the reformist leaders, Trotsky points out:

"If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical slogans, and skip over reformist organizations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question of the united front would not exist in its present form."

(*ibid*)

But if the Communist Parties make appeals for joint action with the reformist parties — and reformist leaders — does this not imply a "softer" line towards reformism. Is this a political compromise? Trotsky's answer was a firm "no":

"It is possible to see in this policy a rapprochement with the reformists only from the standpoint of a journalist who believes that he rids himself of reformism by ritualistically criticizing it without ever leaving his editorial office but who is fearful of clashing with the reformists before the eyes of the working masses and giving the latter an opportunity to appraise the Communist and the reformist on the equal plane of the mass struggle."

(p96)

The only way it would represent a political compromise would be if the Communist Party in any way renounced its own independent line or its right to criticise the other elements in the united front. This would be impermissible: it would in effect abandon the gains made in the original break from the reformist parties.

"We participate in a united front but do not for a single moment become dissolved in it. We function in the united front as an independent detachment."

(p96)

Indeed it is clear from the Comintern position on the united front that it is seen as a means through which the Communist Parties will grow in membership and influence, not by any means as an opportunist "sinking of differences" or peaceful coexistence with social democracy.

In the event, of course, the political degeneration of the Soviet leadership under Stalin's bureaucratic domination after 1924, and the failure of key Communist Parties — especially the German party — to assimilate the method and content of the united front tactic, meant that it was never really tested in the way argued for by Trotsky.

Though the German Communists (KPD) in 1922 successfully drew Socialist Party militants to a major Berlin conference of factory delegates, and attempted to build from this a network of "Control Committees" to supervise production, distribution and prices, a strong sectarian left wing in the KPD continued to resist the united front tactic. Events moved faster than the development of an adequate leadership of the KPD, producing a major defeat for the working class in the "failed October" of 1923.

By 1925 onwards, Stalin's influence began to make itself felt in the abandonment of the political independence of the British Communist Party to the fake "left" bureaucrats of the TUC's Anglo-Russian Committee — turning the united front from a road to the masses into a link up with the traitors of the 1926 General Strike.

In China, the abandonment of any class analysis of the bourgeois nationalist leadership of Chiang Kai Shek led to the Communist Party be-

ing ordered to dissolve into the bourgeois Kuomintang — and subsequently butchered by Chiang. The proletarian "united front" had been turned by Stalin into a parody — an alliance with the hangmen of the revolution.

The abrupt turn in foreign policy following 1927, with the proclamation that a period of relative capitalist stability had been succeeded by a "Third Period" of "class against class" heralded a further series of grotesque Stalinist attacks on the united front tactic. Social democrats were branded "social fascists". In Germany, where unreconstructed sectarianism was again given its head, KPD militants found themselves thrown into "united fronts" with fascists against social democrats! This scandalous period of political treachery divided the powerful German workers' movement in the face of Hitler's offensive.

The changing requirements of Stalin's foreign policy after 1935 brought yet another absurd caricature of the united front tactic: this time the *strategy* of the "popular front" — a supposed alliance between the workers and the "anti-fascist", "democratic" bourgeoisie, quite obviously on a programme acceptable to the capitalists. The bankruptcy of this new orientation was confirmed by the crushing defeat of the Spanish working class in 1939.

The Trotskyist movement was built on the basis of the political method



Trotsky: develop programme in practical fight

developed in the first four Congresses of the Comintern, and in a bitter struggle against Stalinism. It embraced from the outset the need for transitional demands to advance and deepen the daily struggles of the working class, the importance of the fight for workers' control, and the vital role of the united front.

But with few localised exceptions the Trotskyist movement since its formal launch in 1938 has not been able to build parties of sufficient size and weight in the workers' movement to apply the tactic of the united front as envisaged in the Comintern

documents. For a mere handful of Marxists to make grand proposals for "joint action" with mass reformist or Stalinist parties is seen by the workers as a quixotic gesture: reformist leaders by no means expose their bankruptcy by ignoring such initiatives.

The *method* however of seeking to root the Marxist movement in the trade unions and every one of the daily struggles of the working class, to win leadership positions and win worker recruits by proving our credentials in the fight, is one which remains valid for much smaller organisations. The *programme* of transitional demands, and the constant struggle to maximise the chances of workers learning political lessons in actual struggle are equally crucial to us today. The ability to work co-operatively yet on an independent political basis with other tendencies, and with sections of the left trade union and Labour leadership is crucial if the tiny forces of Marxism are to become mass forces.

Serious work along these lines, in a situation shaped by the crisis of social democracy, the political polarisation of the trade unions and the desperate plight of whole sections of the working class, can create the kind of political developments which will build the basis of a mass party — and then perhaps British Marxism can try, over 60 years on, to carry out the Comintern tactic of the united front.

WRP crisis

Only political fight can break hold of Healyism!



Expelled: Gerry Healy

By JOHN LISTER

Far from settling any political issues, the expulsion last autumn of former leader Gerry Healy from the Workers Revolutionary Party, along with his closest supporters, has opened up a fierce but politically confused factional warfare within the WRP involving sections of the old leadership.

Internally, there have been further expulsions, a succession of inconclusive special conferences, and a flurry of internal discussion documents. Publicly, there has been much bitter polemic and exchanges of insults between the WRP majority and the expelled Healyite forces. A broadside of writs fired by Vanessa Redgrave as flagship of the Healy fleet has inflicted major damage on the top-heavy apparatus of the WRP, sinking the daily *News Line*.

Healyite guns have also taken political targets in their sights: their bombardment has focussed on a public statement by long-standing WRP theoretician Cliff Slaughter. Speaking for the majority he said that the purged WRP would now open discussions with other currents on the Marxist left as part of a thorough reappraisal of the politics which led to the brutal and appalling degeneration of the WRP leadership into bureaucratism and corruption. Slaughter conceded that many had been wrongly expelled from the WRP in the past, and now had more to contribute to a discussion on the way forward than some who had stayed in.

The very notion of discussion with other left wing currents was sufficient to send the Healy group into near apoplexy, denouncing Slaughter and others as "centrists" and liquidationists" for contemplating such a course.

Under this withering fire (from such withered sectarians) sections of the WRP majority appear to have quailed and retreated somewhat from the bold stance in favour of open discussion outlined by Slaughter in the first public meetings on the split.

In any case a serious, probing and open discussion poses Slaughter and all of the old WRP leadership with considerable problems — since few if any can hope to emerge unsullied by association or complicity with Healy's violent methods of tin-pot bureaucratic dictatorship, and his grotesque caricature of Marxist politics over the years.

In this context it is to the credit of those WRP leaders who have stuck to this line that they have been prepared to submit themselves and their actions to a critical investigation — however inadequate may be their own political break from the traditional positions of Healyism.

But they have been challenged by an opposition promoted and encouraged by Dave North, leader of the WRP's American sister party, the Workers League. North, donning the barely convincing guise of a long-standing opponent of Healy, has used the remnants of the WRP's "International", the International Committee, a lever against the Slaughter wing of the movement. The WRP is currently "suspended" by the International Committee, at North's urging.

Elements linked with this opposition have called for the expulsion of Slaughter, General Secretary Mike Banda and others who were implicated in Healy's corruption. If taken to its logical conclusion, such a move could drive out sufficient members to smash the whole structure of the WRP. For North and his co-thinkers — who hold the sectarian notion that only forces within the IC are the basis of a Marxist leadership — any question of numbers or even the survival of the Party itself is secondary to the organisational

purge of those they define as "guilty" parties. They refer repeatedly and apolitically to the need for the WRP leadership to "recognise the authority of the International Committee", and stress their defence of what they regard as a "continuity" of the IC tradition.

Yet the "authority" of the IC is itself an obvious fiction. The whole IC supported every twist and turn of Healy's politics for year after year — adopting the same prostrate stance of hero-worship for Healy which left the British WRP leaders politically bankrupt. Nobody who worked that closely with Healy for so long can come out of this debacle with clean hands.

While any members of the old leadership who are now proven to have engaged in personal corruption, or carried out acts of violence or acts of conscious betrayal should be subject to disciplinary action, this must not be allowed to obscure the political task of cleansing the movement.



Goddali

There certainly is a "continuity" between those who today call for an apolitical purge and the historical stance of the IC. The profound weakness from its very inception in 1953 as one side of the split in the Fourth International was that IC leaders believed an organisational split from false political positions was the best way to resolve problems and "fight revisionism".

The 1953 split centred on real and major differences within the International over the assessment of the role of Stalinism and the political response of Trotskyists to the new post-war situation in Europe. The leadership of the FI, headed by Michael Pablo, presented a fanciful picture of the international class struggle and made crass political adaptations to Stalinism in the hopes of linking up with the leftward-moving forces which they expected to emerge within the rank and file and even inside the bureaucratic leaderships of the mass European Communist Parties.

The IC forces, on the other hand,

led by the American Socialist Workers Party, eventually took a belated stand on "orthodox Trotskyism" — but failed to offer an adequate political response to Pablo in terms of programme and perspective. Indeed the whole opposition to Pablo only took shape two years after virtually the whole International — SWP leaders and Healy included — had endorsed misleading "Pabloite" resolutions on Stalinism at the Third World Congress.

Events of 1953 in France, East Germany and the USSR brought the political differences over Stalinism to a head — while Pablo attempted to establish secret factions to promote his line in both Britain and the USA. Stung by this manipulation, the SWP leaders hit back with the "Open Letter" of November 1953, which heralded the first and most decisive split in the International.

Yet the split took place on the very eve of the Fourth World Congress: instead of waging any fight against revisionism within that Congress in front of the world movement, the Open Letter signatories — soon to become the IC — staged a sudden, purely organisational break from Pablo which left his hold unchallenged in many sections.

Did the 1953 split kill off revisionism? Did the organisational break raise the political level of the IC forces? The answer to both questions is clearly "no". The Pablo wing, later to become today's United Secretariat of the Fourth International, strengthened its political grip on the other sections, in the absence of any orthodox challenge, while the isolated IC forces stagnated politically.

By 1963 the IC's major section, the SWP, itself reunified with Pablo and the Pabloites. Then in the 1970s after years of sectarian abstentionism on international issues, Healy himself lurched into an adaptation to a lengthening list of anti-communist bourgeois nationalist leaderships and regimes in the Middle East, a line far worse than any of the positions put forward by Pablo himself!

While Pablo had based his opportunist adaptations to the Stalinist movement upon the false, empirical impression of an impending Third World War, Healy's opportunist politics rested on his wildly exaggerated and subjective notions of imminent economic collapse and impending dictatorship (and his intimidation of all voices of dissent). While Pablo (at first supported by Healy) had dressed up Tito's Stalinist leadership in Yugoslavia as "centrist" or even "revolutionary", Healy in the 1970s abandoned the Trotskyist criticism of the Vietnamese Stalinist leadership — to the extent of endorsing their murder of the Vietnamese Trotskyists!

Far from killing off Pabloite politics, the 1953 split and subse-



Healy (foreground, with Slaughter to his right) on WRP march

quent splits of the IC actually fostered its development: like developing resistance to a disease, a certain inevitable exposure to revisionism helps to develop the necessary political antibodies to fight against it in a healthy movement.

Healy's sectarian politics on the contrary were those of the isolation ward, seeking to develop Marxism by cutting off contact with every form of political disagreement. This approach is as foolhardy as trying to fight for the Trotskyist programme in Britain while making no contact with the social democratic labour movement — or trying to learn swimming without going into the water. As Trotsky warned in 1935:

"The sectarian ... generally does not want to go swimming at all, in order not to wet his principles. He sits on the shores and reads lectures on morality to the flood of the class struggle. But sometimes a desperate sectarian leaps headlong into the water, seizes hold of the centrist and helps him drown. So was it; so will it be."

(Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International)

The call now for an organisational purge, devoid of any political development on the key issues, can do nothing but prepare further confusion and splits.

A "Marxism" which depends for its survival on splitting from or kicking out every dissident tendency, and isolation from the actual struggle to develop in a living movement is a skin-deep sectarian Marxism of little value to the working class. Yet this does not prevent its advocates from vigorously defending their isolation by putting on the most absurd "theoretical" airs and graces. As Trotsky points out in the same article:

"The sectarian sees an enemy in everyone who attempts to explain to him that an active participation in the labour movement demands a constant study of objective conditions, and not haughty bulldozing from the sectarian rostrum. For



Mike Banda

analysis of reality the sectarian substitutes intrigue, gossip and hysteria."

(ibid)

In looking at the actual political continuity of the International Committee and the WRP it is impossible to miss the "haughty bulldozing", centred on the movement's obsessive and completely misguided analysis of the economic crisis of imperialism. Time after time Healy has cried "wolf", sounding the alarm for an imminent collapse of the economy. Nobody now need waste time refuting these various discredited predictions — but nobody should forget that they recurred again and again, and were used as a periodic pretext for further self sacrifice and even more herculean efforts by the WRP/IC membership. A serious reappraisal of the Healyite economic analysis is desperately needed to reorientate the movement.

Alongside this prolonged, unbroken failure to grasp the actual development of the economic crisis came Healy's cynical perversion of

the Marxist philosophical method. While Trotsky argued for dialectical materialism as a tool for analysis, providing a *guide to action* in the class struggle, Healy divorced the trappings of "Marxist" philosophy from any contact with reality. As this emperor of "theory" strutted around in his new clothes, woven from a warp of the idealist philosopher Hegel and a weft of pure mumbo jumbo, for years not one of his servile courtiers on the WRP Central Committee or the IC dared point out his embarrassing nakedness.

This "theoretical" charlatanism was nothing but Healy's cynical pretext for the intimidation of any opponent or critic and an orientation of rabid sectarianism towards the existing mass labour movement. His philosophical rantings were *not* the essence but the superficial *form*, the icing on the cake of his politics of opportunism and sectarianism.

Trapped in this same distorted framework of political thinking, many of those now arguing for a political break from Healyism keep obsessively raking through the "philosophical" ashes.

Some even argue that to expel Healy on charges of rape and corruption requires a philosophical justification: as if the need to drive bestial and corrupt bureaucrats from leading positions is something we can fight for unconditionally elsewhere in the labour movement, but only conditional on finding a "theoretical" pretext for it within a "Trotskyist" organisation!

The fight for a *materialist* dialectical method within the WRP can only come through an all-round struggle to abandon the policies of sectarian isolation and root the organisation in the real struggles of the working class. The very core of Healyism and its survival as a political force has also rested upon the longstanding total lack of internal democracy, both within the WRP itself and within the IC, where Healy removed national leaderships at will. After previously purging numerous individuals and small groups in the SLL/WRP, Healy's anti-Bolshevik ban on tendencies and factions became theorised as an established position in 1974, with the bureaucratic expulsion of the minority opposition around Alan Thornett. Two hundred members — supporters or suspected supporters of Thornett's documents (which argued for a correction of the WRP's sectarian line and a return to the method of Trotsky's Transitional Programme) — were bureaucratically expelled on the eve of the WRP conference. That expulsion, like every other abuse of political opponents of the Healy line, became a part of the tradition and political culture of the WRP — and part of the training of its new recruits. The same period brought expulsions of leaderships in Greece and the USA. One of North's predecessors, Workers

League founder Tim Wohlforth, was hounded out at this time as a result of Healy's intervention.

Yet democracy within a party — the accountability of the leadership to its members and the defence of the *right* of members to question and criticise the conduct of their leadership is the only safeguard against the emergence of a bureaucracy or an entrenched leading clique. It is the only hope for the movement to exclude the possibility of corruption.

Only by opening up serious and democratic objective debate on the political line and orientation of the organisation and the experiences of fighting for that line, can the movement guard against the impressionism that can arise from a small isolated leadership, a one-sided programme, and revisionist adaptation to alien political forces.

Indeed the necessary developments in the Trotskyist programme, to meet the particular needs and demands of the movement from sections of the oppressed moving increasingly into struggle — women, lesbians, gays and black people — and to answer the post-war developments in the struggle against Stalinism and nationalist leaderships, requires a constant possibility of free discussion and criticism within the Trotskyist organisation.

Only on the basis of this kind of democracy can the centralised discipline of the organisation be based on political development rather than blind obedience enforced by threats and ignorant faith.

The organisational demand for a simple purge of Slaughter and the old guard is not linked to any such argument for democratic centralism. Nor does it address the crying need to develop the Trotskyist programme in the light of today's class struggle.

North for example attacks Ken Livingstone for taking up the "idealist" question of women's liberation: in doing so he joins Healy in turning his back on the politics of the Comintern, Lenin and Trotsky. As if Healy's monstrous behaviour did not underline the appalling backwardness of the WRP on this issue!

Revulsion against Healy's crimes is not enough. The WRP has yet to catch up with even sections of the Labour left in recognising the special oppression of women as women within capitalist society and the necessity for Marxists to relate to every aspect of their struggle against that oppression.

Even on the issues where we might expect a more developed criticism of the old politics under Healy, there is a great deal of ground to be made up. While North correctly challenges Healy's line of capitulation to the bourgeois politics of Yasser Arafat and the reactionary anti-communist regimes of Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran, he puts forward no class

analysis of these governments, nor a programmatic alternative.

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North for example attacks Ken Livingstone for taking up the "idealist" question of women's liberation: in doing so he joins Healy in turning his back on the politics of the Comintern, Lenin and Trotsky. As if Healy's monstrous behaviour did not underline the appalling backwardness of the WRP on this issue! North correctly challenges Healy's line of political capitulation to Yasser Arafat and the governments of Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran: but he puts forward no programmatic alternative. He even evades the question of the political character of the Castro leadership in Cuba, which again exposes the long-standing theoretical weaknesses of the WRP/IC tradition.

While criticising the Healy line of politically adapting to left social democracy in the form of Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight, the advocates of a further organisational split do not question the traditional Healy concept, hardened since the mid 1960s of seeking to build a "mass revolutionary party" by individual recruitment, isolated from and in counterposition to the British Labour Party. Some even attack the WRP's recent abandonment of the daily newspaper, long after the base of support for the sale and sustenance of this paper had evaporated! The same people make little criticism of the WRP's sectarian abstention from serious work in the trade unions, or its lack of any programme of transitional demands to prepare a class conscious cadre of militants in advance of a possible re-elected Labour government. A real political break from Healyism demands a root and branch rethink on all these questions, and wholesale change of direction.

Dave North himself has also set very definite limits beyond which he insists the debate on Healy's politics must not go. One of the things he stridently *defends* from the "IC tradition" is the massive slander campaign which Healy waged in the late 1970s against the veteran leaders of the American Socialist Workers Party under the ludicrous title "Security

and the Fourth International". Long-standing Marxists Joseph Hansen and George Novack — and by implication a whole additional layer of SWP leaders past and present — were publicly accused of being FBI or GPU agents. Yet the real substance of such cynical allegations was shown when in the final stages of degeneration in the WRP/IC prior to Healy's expulsion, North *himself* was accused by Healy of being a CIA agent!

North's motives in now opposing any repudiation of this scandalous saga of slander and squandered resources are obscure: no doubt the Workers' League's shaky credibility among its US supporters would be torpedoed by an embarrassing climb-down. But North's refusal to abandon this squalid aspect of Healy's politics leaves him tied to a defence of the methods which produced it.

Socialist Viewpoint has carried articles arguing that the WRP must in effect begin afresh and reconstruct its whole political and organisational foundation if it is to break from Healyism and move in a Trotskyist direction. But the key element in this must be a *political* reappraisal, a programmatic response to the bankruptcy of the past, and a determined move to embrace the democratic traditions of Bolshevism in place of the Healy model, which replicates the monolithism of Stalin's day.

It is only by *ditching* the complacent North schema of the International Committee as some kind of "thin red line" of Marxism, and turning to a serious analysis of the class struggle in Britain and internationally that WRP members can begin to break the bounds of sectarianism and "philosophical" cant with which Healy has hobbled their development.

The turn must be not to the one-sided and often utterly barren documents of the IC but back to the real Marxist tradition of the Bolsheviks, the first four Congresses of the Communist International, the Trotskyist opposition and the Fourth International.

Healyism must be recognised as a grotesque, tragi-comic expression of Pabloism 32 years after the IC claimed to have "broken with Pablo and Pabloism for ever."

And in moving to construct a healthy tradition from the wreckage the WRP must repudiate bureaucratic expulsions and splits such as that of 1974, and open up a serious political discussion with those forces on the Marxist left who were organisationally silenced by Healy.

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