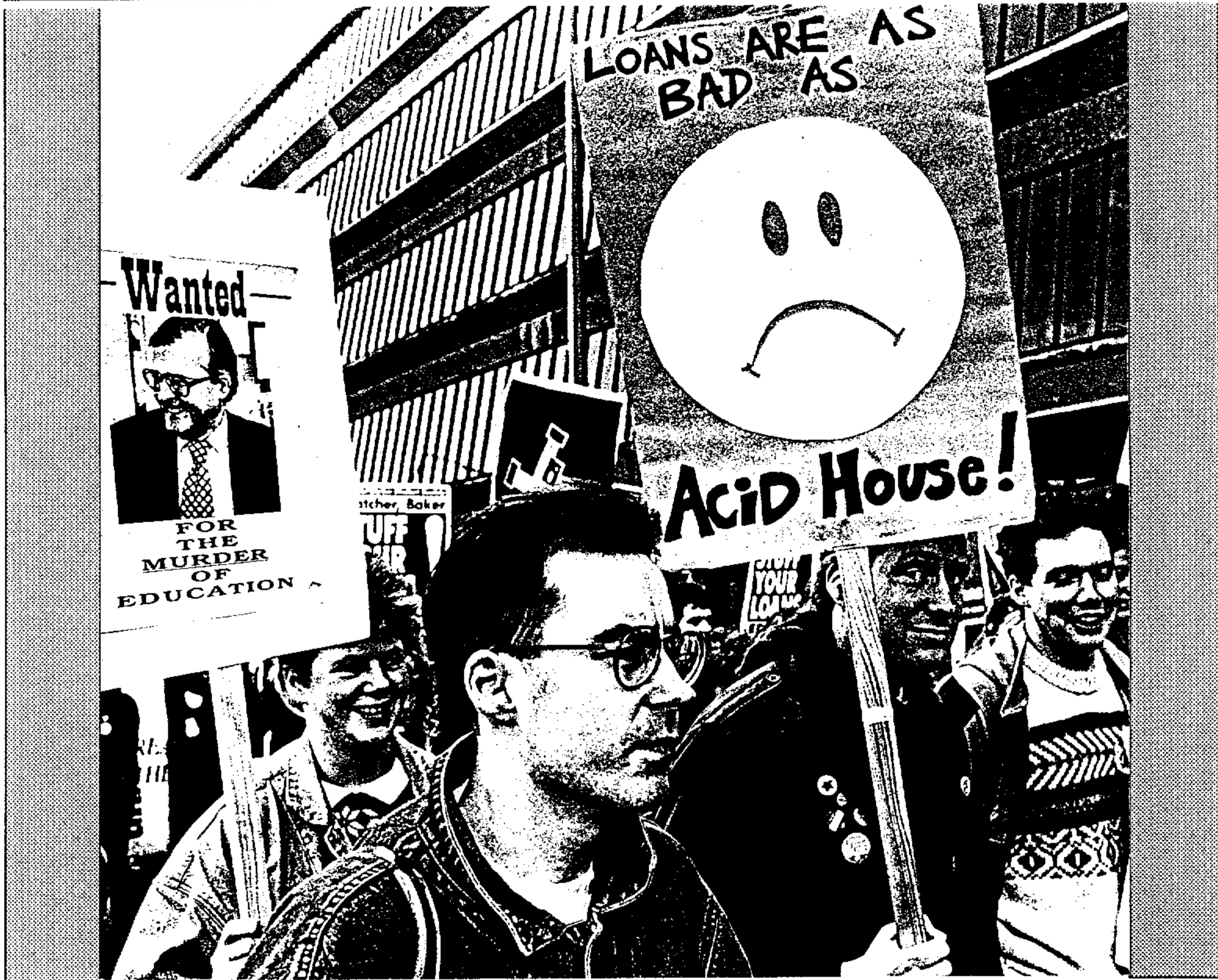


SOCIALIST VOICE

Journal of The International Socialist League
British Section of The IWL (FI)



In This Issue

Youth and Students

The Struggle Against Deportations

Interview with Nicaraguan Workers' Leader

Editorial:

Immigrant Communities Living in Fear

The increase in deportations amongst the immigrant communities of Britain is an outrage that should be fought throughout the labour movement. It is more than that, it is the reaction of a desperate Government seeking to attack the working class at one of its weak points. It fully understands the human misery it causes.

The dawn raid, common place in South Africa or the occupied territories of Palestine, is now common place in the cities of Britain. There is fear on the streets.

Such raids by the police are, of course, not new but what has changed is their number and the rapid deportation of those fingered by immigration officials and picked up by the police. 'Overstayers' never had any rights, even under a Labour government, but the police are now authorised to use their powers to the fullest extent.

These official attacks give succour to the racist and fascist forces in Britain to increase their attacks and make them more open.

This repression has to be opposed by the labour movement. The failure of the trade union movement and, of course, the labour leadership to build an effective answer to these attacks in the past places a great responsibility on the left and all those who have fought against deportations. But in general there is silence from the left. When they are part of a movement in which many leaders have supported immigration controls it is a crime to remain silent. What is demanded now is a rigorous campaign against these attacks.

There are many similarities between what is happening to the immigrant communities in Britain and the repression of republicans and the nationalist Irish working class. For instance after Home Office Minister Douglas Hogg said, in January, that some northern Ireland solicitors were "unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA", Mr

Patrick Finucane, a prominent republican defence lawyer was shot dead by loyalist forces. Afterwards Tom King, northern Ireland minister, supported the statement by Hogg.

The comparison goes deeper. The new level of attacks is reminiscent of the onslaught on Irish workers in the wake of the Pub bombings and the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act by a Labour Government in November 1974. Police had a heyday attacking Irish communities in Britain. Any protest, they were told privately by the police, would mean some being imprisoned, just like the innocent ones already behind bars. The Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4 remain incarcerated, victims of state frame-up.

All this means that those fighting deportations or frame-ups should seek seriously to build a united campaign against the Government.

There are many similarities between what is happening to the immigrant communities in Britain and the repression of republicans and the nationalist Irish working class.

There is a purpose behind this apart from the terrorising of sections of the population in Britain. The immigration laws and the new practices of the Home Office seek to divide the working class.

Socialist Voice believes that all workers from any country have the right to come and stay in Britain. No if's or but's. No history lesson that says we owe only a certain section of workers this or that because of the barbaric way they were treated by British Imperialism in the past. No, all workers have the right to move as they wish. Imperialism and its

supporters move as they wish, no one stops them. We demand an end to, and will fight alongside any who want to defeat, the Immigration Laws.

Racist attacks are increasing not only in Britain but also in Germany, France, Holland and throughout Europe. The rise in unemployment and the crisis of capitalism is linked with attacks on 'guest workers' or immigrants.

In West Germany the Turkish workers are the main target but others such as the Vietnamese boat people have also been attacked. In France it is the Algerians and North Africans. In Denmark Iranians have been attacked. The list is long, in fact any sector of the working class which can be singled out as 'different' is now open to attack.

It is no accident that these developments are taking place as 1992 approaches. One thing that a single European Market does not stand for is a development of European democratic rights. The opposite. The multinationals require a European workforce that are in fear and divided. They do not want British workers to link with German workers or Irish workers. They want a divided European working class and the class in each country divided. They want workers divided by colour, country and religion. Europe is becoming a battle ground for the multinationals. They hope their first cannon fodder will be the immigrant worker.

Only by seeking to build international links with workers abroad can the British labour movement deal with the racism here.

The October Revolution of 1917 addressed the same questions. In the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (that is when the Third International was still internationalist and seeking to break all barriers between workers throughout the world) the Resolution on the Eastern Question stated: "The Communist Parties ... must conduct a vigorous campaign against restrictive immigration laws and must explain to the proletarian masses in these countries that such laws, by

International Socialist League

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Socialist Voice

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inflaming racial hatred, will rebound on them in the long run.

"The capitalists are against restrictive laws in the interests of the free importation of cheap labour and with it the lowering of the wages of white workers. The capitalists' intention to take the offensive can be properly dealt with in only one way - the immigrant workers must join the ranks of the existing trade unions of white workers. Simultaneously, the demand must be raised that the immigrant worker, pay should be the same as the white workers' pay. Such a move on the part of the Communist Parties will expose the intentions of the capitalists and at the same time graphically demonstrate to the immigrant workers that the international proletariat has no racial prejudice." (In this quote we have changed the old word 'coloured' for 'immigrant'.)

Trotskyism, which has fought to continue the revolutionary way of the early Third International, was and is built in the struggle to find a road to the mass movement in all countries. Our international today, the International Workers League, consists of workers the majority of whom come from neo-colonial countries. As revolutionary workers of a 'white European oppressor nation' we have the duty to fight racism in all its forms. Today, in Britain, there are many anti-deportation campaigns and there will be even more. Some of them are actively seeking to build links openly with the other campaigns and calling for national meetings against the Laws.

We think all these developments are vital. All those that have fought campaigns should make available all their experiences and contacts to those now in struggle in the labour movement, those trying to build against the racist attacks.

The type of mobilisation that is possible amongst just one sector of the immigrant community was shown by the Muslim demonstrations against the author of one book - Salman Rusdie. If these communities developed the campaign against deportations with the same energy and sought to build a united movement with other sections of the working class in the process, then this itself would produce a mighty blow against the immigration controls. It is this possibility, of a determined and united campaign, that really worries the Tories. It is this which all victims of Tory law should seek to build.



Build a European Trotskyist Leadership

The First National Conference of the International Socialist League

Members of the International Socialist League (ISL), British section of the International Workers League (Fourth International), met for their first conference at the beginning of February. It was a year since a group left the British Workers Revolutionary Party to form the ISL.

Conference began by receiving international greetings from the International Secretariat of the IWL and from national sections of the IWL in Sweden, Italy and France.

A vital experience for the ISL was the presence in the conference of a member of the Spanish section of the IWL. Comrade Enrique participated in the discussion and reported on the Spanish General Strike and the development and growth of our section in Spain, the Socialist Workers' Party (PST), through the General Strike and around the campaign to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International. He also reported on the developments in Poland, particularly on the emergence of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP).

Here was a practical example of what Trotsky meant when he wrote that "...it is absolutely unthinkable to build new Marxist, revolutionary parties, without direct contact with the same work in other countries".

Both Comrade Enrique and the members of the ISL gained immeasurably from a living interchange of experiences.

Comrade Frank Fitzmaurice, who moved the document on "British Perspectives" declared: "The left leadership and trotskyist groups who want to believe that the working class is demoralised are themselves an obstacle to the development of the class".

The comrades at the conference were very clear that the scepticism among the left and revolutionary leaderships in Britain arose because the sharpening contradictions of capitalism posed international questions of struggle. They all thus expose the weaknesses of national trotskyism and British empirical opportunism.

A shop steward from a General Motors factory, who has worked there for twenty years, spoke about the consciousness of the workers in his factory:

"Demoralisation? Certainly not" he said "Thoughtfulness, Yes! The bulk of the working class has not been pushed back. In fact, the strength in the factories like ours is that they have so far maintained their wages. But they know that to fight in a certain way will lead to defeat. They are wary of their leadership and wary of being isolated. They work for multi-nationals who, in one way, do us a favour in posing the question of struggle on a world scale

"We have to concentrate internationalism into specific demands" he concluded and suggested

that a unifying factor might be a struggle across frontiers for a reduction in hours of work.

The perspectives, adopted by the conference, declare that Britain is now entering the experience that many other countries have gone through: "A deterioration of conditions of life for the mass of the population - with inflation, worsening education, health, housing; attacks on benefits, workers organisations; and corruption. All this means a steady lowering of the conditions of life for the mass of the people while at the same time a small circle of the ruling class increase their wealth enormously".

The conference discussed the developments towards the European Integrated Market in 1992. Comrades drew certain conclusion: That 1992 will not mean the increasing strength of a united capitalist Europe but will mean Europe becoming the cockpit of all the contradictory conflicting world forces. The struggle between Germany, Japan and the United States will be fought here in an increasingly sharpening way, while British capitalism will be driven to the wall.

In the light of this the comrades of the ISL felt the urgent necessity of the expansion of the IWL on the European continent. They posed the need of a conscious plan for the development of a European leadership to drive this expansion forward.

The perspectives adopted by the conference states: "As a small group, we have some obstacles to overcome in our development in Britain. We turn to those tasks with a force that generally has spent a number of years in the old movement".

"However, we did conduct a struggle against old sectarian, propagandistic and national trotskyist methods into which the movement sank. That struggle was not ended by our battle for correct ideas in the WRP but the advance there will be consolidated by hard experience in going into the working class. We do also have certain old connections with the mass movement and can truly claim to stand on the best traditions - and there are a number of very important ones - of the British Trotskyist movement. Above all, we we have sought to take as our own, the traditions of the IWL(FI)."

The feelings of comrades at this first ISL conference were expressed most movingly when, in recognition of fifty one years membership of the Trotskyist movement, Comrade Rachel (Rae) Hunter was adopted as Honorary President at the beginning of the meeting.

"Now when I am seventy one years old" she said in a brief reply to the conference, "all the things I have fought for are coming alive with developments in the IWL and in the Soviet Union. I am pleased to be living now and to have stayed in the movement till this time".

Unions - Open Your Doors to the Youth!

Sue Gwyer

The Tories are depriving the unions of their last vestige of control over the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in ending their right to approve the schemes.

The essence of the schemes has been, of course, not only to massage the unemployment figures but to attack wages and working conditions and inherently union organisation with the objective of conditioning the mass of people into accepting the low wage economy.

Instead of fighting the YTS and all schemes that have come before it the unions have served only to glorify them. In accepting, in the last fifteen years, every government cheap labour scheme from both Tory and Labour governments, the unions have helped manage them and police the youth on behalf of the bosses. They have never opposed the schemes in practice.

They have had no programme to fight for proper training under trade union control with union rates of pay.

Alongside the introduction of Employment Training (ET) - work for your dole plus £10 - for over 18 year olds last September the YTS was made compulsory. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) remained silent, as did all its affiliates. Some youth became destitute within days as they committed the crime of being between 16 and 18 years of age and unable to find a YTS work placement.

Since that day of craven capitulation from the TUC their days of vetting YTS were numbered. They have simply become defunct in the eyes of the government. The Tories no longer require the paid service and support of the unions to impose starvation and discipline on the youth. They know they can rely on them to do the job without payment!

The Department of Employment's Training Agency has said in a letter quoted in the Financial Times: "The Training Agency is seeking quicker approval decisions and greater informality in approval procedures. The new arrangements do not conflict with trades unions who support YTS continuing to have a valuable role in developing YTS in the future."

Even if the unions withdrew it would be like an injury on the football field; off they go, sent to the side lines, criminal bystanders in the governments attack on youth.

Central to this is the role of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) and the left within it. The T&GWU is the main recruiter of scheme workers.

Supposedly it is controlled by the 'Broad Left'. Who are the Broad Left and how are they fighting the youth slavery schemes? What is their programme?

We may ask whither the Broad Left? Certainly without the turn to the working class youth, organising them on the YTS and ET schemes and without a programme on which to fight they will achieve little or nothing.

Where is the fight to open the doors of the union to the young and unemployed? - The only way to reverse the membership

decline in a living and real way.

What mobilisations and struggles of the youth have the T&G leadership led? or even the Broad Left leadership? As is the history of the institutionalised left in the unions in Britain they reveal themselves as very very broad and not at all left. At what cost is the 'unity' amongst the T&G Broad Left maintained?

We can state quite categorically that the only way to defend the union is to integrate the youth into its ranks.

The right wing and Ron Todd, pulling the so-called Broad Left behind him, move closer to Kinnock and the bureaucracy of the single European market. The plans of the multinationals for the working class and the youth will be horrific. The union bureaucracy, including the institutionalised Broad Left, grow closer to the bureaucracy which has and is developing to facilitate these plans.

Build an Education Union Alliance

Kevin Townsend

Over 2,000 students took part in a noisy and lively march through the centre of Liverpool on Wednesday 22nd February to demonstrate their opposition to the Tory government's plans to phase out student grants and introduce loans.

The march and rally was the culmination of a week of action that was to have taken place by students on Merseyside and was one

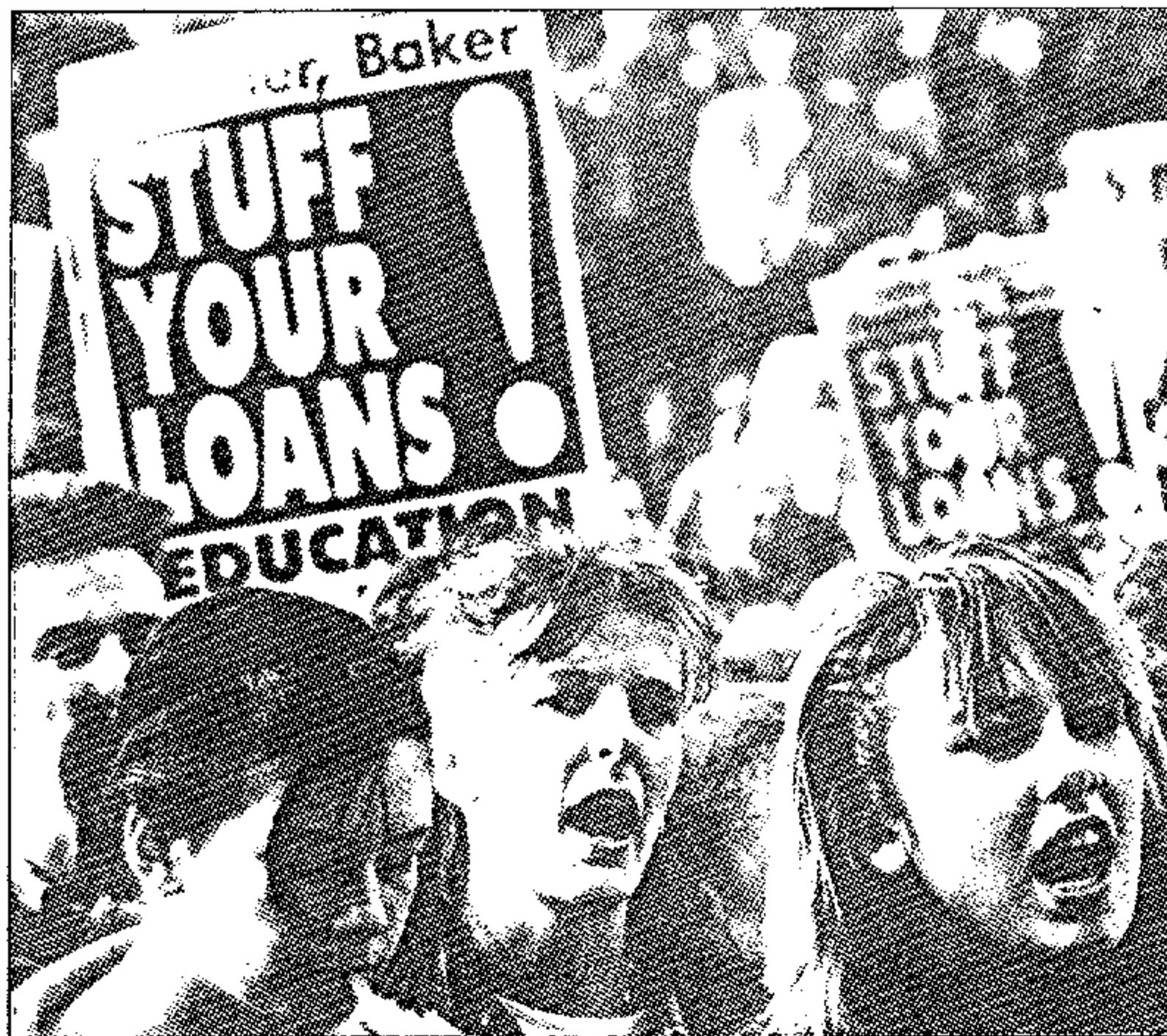
of the largest regional demonstrations this year.

Despite the torpor of the national executive of the National Union of Students (NUS) and their unilateral decision to change the date and venue of the national demonstration, the bitterness and anger against student loans will not disappear so easily.

The day started off with a 24 hour strike of all educational establishments on Merseyside which was supported by school students,

young workers on Youth Training Schemes (YTS) who walked out of their workplace to join the action and by some sectors of campus workers, in particular low paid workers threatened by future college privatisation plans.

Students now have to develop a programme of action to continue building the links and to spread the mobilisation to all the areas, to forge links with international students and



No to Regional and Performance Pay

Last years National Conferences of the two largest Civil Service trade unions, the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS), voted almost unanimously to oppose regional pay and performance pay.

The National Executives of both unions are now proposing to overturn these policy decisions and to ballot on acceptance of a Long Term Pay Agreement which incorporates both regional pay and performance pay.

Regional pay means that the Tories can take advantage of the high unemployment in many areas of the country and use it to drive down the levels of pay of all Civil Servants. They have already started moving jobs out of London and have recently announced that a

Peter Money

further 34,000 jobs are to be relocated.

Performance pay has nothing to do with improving pay levels but is a way of dividing the workforce by giving a bit more to a few whilst holding down the pay of the majority.

The decision of the union executives to go straight to a ballot is also an attack on union democracy and the right of workers to organise. **They are treating delegate conferences like Kinnock treats the Labour Party Conferences: for consultation pur-**

poses only! It was this decision that led to four of the NUCPS executive, from important sections of the union like Scotland and the DHSS, to vote against the majority.

Socialist Voice condemns this betrayal of civil service workers. The "left" led NUCPS has joined the right wing CPSA leadership to sow the pernicious idea that pay and national pay bargaining can be protected by reaching agreements with the Tories. The leaderships of both unions are claiming that the deal protects the low paid and national pay bargaining. But what they mean by protecting national pay bargaining is that by accepting regional pay and performance pay the Tories will allow them a role in administering the scheme. This is something that they have been desperate for ever since they were denied this role by the Tories when they withdrew from the old Pay Research Unit which led to the big civil service strike of 1981.

National pay bargaining is a right that workers throughout the world have won over many years of struggle against employers who always sought to keep workers isolated and divided. It can only be defended in the same way. The argument of the bureaucracy, that it is no use civil servants taking action because no-one supports them, is rubbish. This was clearly demonstrated by the thousands who took action against the sackings at GCHQ and even more powerfully by the successful general strike in Spain in December which demanded, amongst other things, a wage rise for civil servants and for their right to organise.

This is what the executives are running away from. **They fear the power and strength of the organised working class more than the fear the Tories.** That is why they are breaking the unions' rules and refusing to put their agreement to conference.

We support completely the demand of the Broad Left for a Special Delegate Conference.

NO ACCEPTANCE OF REGIONAL PAY!

DEFEND UNION DEMOCRACY!

NO TO THE PLANS OF THE TORIES AND THE BUREAUCRATS !

DEMAND A DELEGATES CONFERENCE!

End Loans and Fight Cuts

learn from their victories and to organise a wide democratic campaign involving as many students as possible in the mobilisations and decision making.

The action on Merseyside was not the total victory that it could have been. This was not because of the students, who were in the forefront of the actions, but because of the national and some regional bureaucratic leaders of the educational trade unions.

Cleaners, canteen workers and some lecturers refused to cross picket lines despite being instructed not to support the strike. But the bureaucracy of NALGO, GMB, TGWU and NATFHE all refused to officially recognise the strike and left the decision of whether to cross picket lines down to individual union members. These bureaucratic leaders refused to give official backing to the strike using the excuse that the NUS was not recognised by the TUC, this was really just a smokescreen for their refusal to face, head on, the Tory anti-union law banning secondary action.

We have to counter the manoeuvres of the trade union bureaucracy by highlighting the attacks upon the principle of free education as a class question.

The lessons of Merseyside is that every strike, occupation, march, demonstration, rally and meeting must seek the active support of workers in the colleges, schools, hospitals and factories. Meetings could quite easily be

held in the communities in a similar way to the anti Poll Tax meetings.

Sympathy exists amongst the rank and file of the trade union movement and how to turn this solidarity from passive support to active support must become the concern of the students movement. The other weakness of the 24 hour shutdown was that we assumed that we had total support, or would gain the support of the campus workers on the day. However this was not the case because many of the workers not only lacked instructions from their leaders but, on top of this, they were also ill-informed in regard to the strike action from the NUS. Students should propose joint meetings with all the unions for future action against all the attacks whether on students, cleaners, canteen staff, administrative workers or lecturers. This is the best way to break down divisions amongst campus unions. But this must be done well in advance of any future action.

As the speaker from South Africa at the Liverpool rally pointed, the enormous movement of the workers in Spain (8 million supported the General Strike action at the end of 1988 forcing the Gonzalez government to back down over the introduction of the Spanish version of YTS) was sparked off by the role played by the students in 1985 to 1986.

British Justice is Joke Justice

Model Resolution for Trade unions and other labour movement organisations

This Branch notes:

1) That on the 13th December 1988, the Court of Appeal refused leave for Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghup and Winston Silcott to appeal against their convictions for the killing of PC Blakelock on Broadwater Farm during the Tottenham Rebellion in 1985.

2) That their convictions were based solely on uncorroborated confessions, extracted after hours of oppressive interrogation, highlighted by Amnesty International in their report of February 1988.

3) That the Independent Inquiry headed by Lord Gifford QC called the convictions "a terrible miscarriage of justice".

4) That 16 Labour MP's and the leaders of 7 Labour councils recently signed a statement expressing their deep concern that justice had not been done.

This branch therefore resolves to mandate its officers:

1) To affiliate the branch to the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, which brings the families of the framed prisoners together to campaign for justice and to encourage other branches to do likewise.

2) To raise this matter in all appropriate forums and particularly at higher levels within the union or party structure, eg Regional or District Committees.

3) To call upon the Home Secretary to implement the recommendation of the Gifford and Amnesty reports and review the cases of Mark, Engin and Winston and all the other youths convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained while in incommunicado detention, with a view to granting them a full pardon.

Letter from Winston Silcott

Hello Broadwater Farm,

I am writing to let you know that me, Mark and Engin are still strong as ever even after the predictable outcome from the so-called appeal courts mad discretion. The BWF campaign should demand that the three judges: Lord Chief Justice Lord Lane, Justice Steyn and Justice McCowan be sacked because they don't have any common sense. That's what the rubbish nonsense so-called cases add up to. We'd also want to thank everyone for turning up on the demonstration on Sunday 11th, 1988. I hope you all heard us shouting back.

On Tuesday just before the corruption took place in the so-called appeal court we were all told to move cells to the other side away from the prison wall. The so-called appeal court has given the police more of a licence to bring frame-up cases to court without NO EVIDENCE what so ever. Since I've been in this nasty jail more and more inmates have been locked up without evidence. What happened to beyond reasonable doubt. I forgot you don't need beyond reasonable doubt when looking for revenge. The government has given the police more of a free hand to do their evil and wicked deeds, to help the government to justify the heavy handed new laws the government want to bring out to oppress all people especially black people. British Justice is Joke justice. These judges don't come from ordinary backgrounds. There isn't any top black judges. That's why there is so much blatant racism in these so-called courts. The police are linked together with the judges through their secret lodges of the free masons. Anyway the fight has just begun against these evil and racist elements.

I see the P.C.A. - Police Complaints Authority - still haven't released the police report. Probably the government have put a "D" notice on this report to cover the truth up. We the Tottenham Three are an embarrassment to the so-called British courts. Our show trials show up the courts, judges and police. Justice in England is only a word not a reality in political cases like ours, the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six. There are many more. It looks like because the great British empire no longer exists the people with the power and are in control of this and only have strength for black, Irish, working class and the poor also homeless peoples.

Once again thank everyone for their support and I hope you get this letter of mine. As some of my letters seem to not reach their destination please let me know if you received this letter.

Take care and be strong,
British Justice is Joke Justice,
W. Silcott.

Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign
c/o No. 79, Tangmere, BWF Estate, N17. Tel: 885 3752

SATURDAY MARCH 18TH

Assemble 12 Noon

Tottenham Green, Tottenham Town Hall,
Tube: Seven Sisters.

Buses: 243, 123, 279, 259, 149, 73, 41, 76.

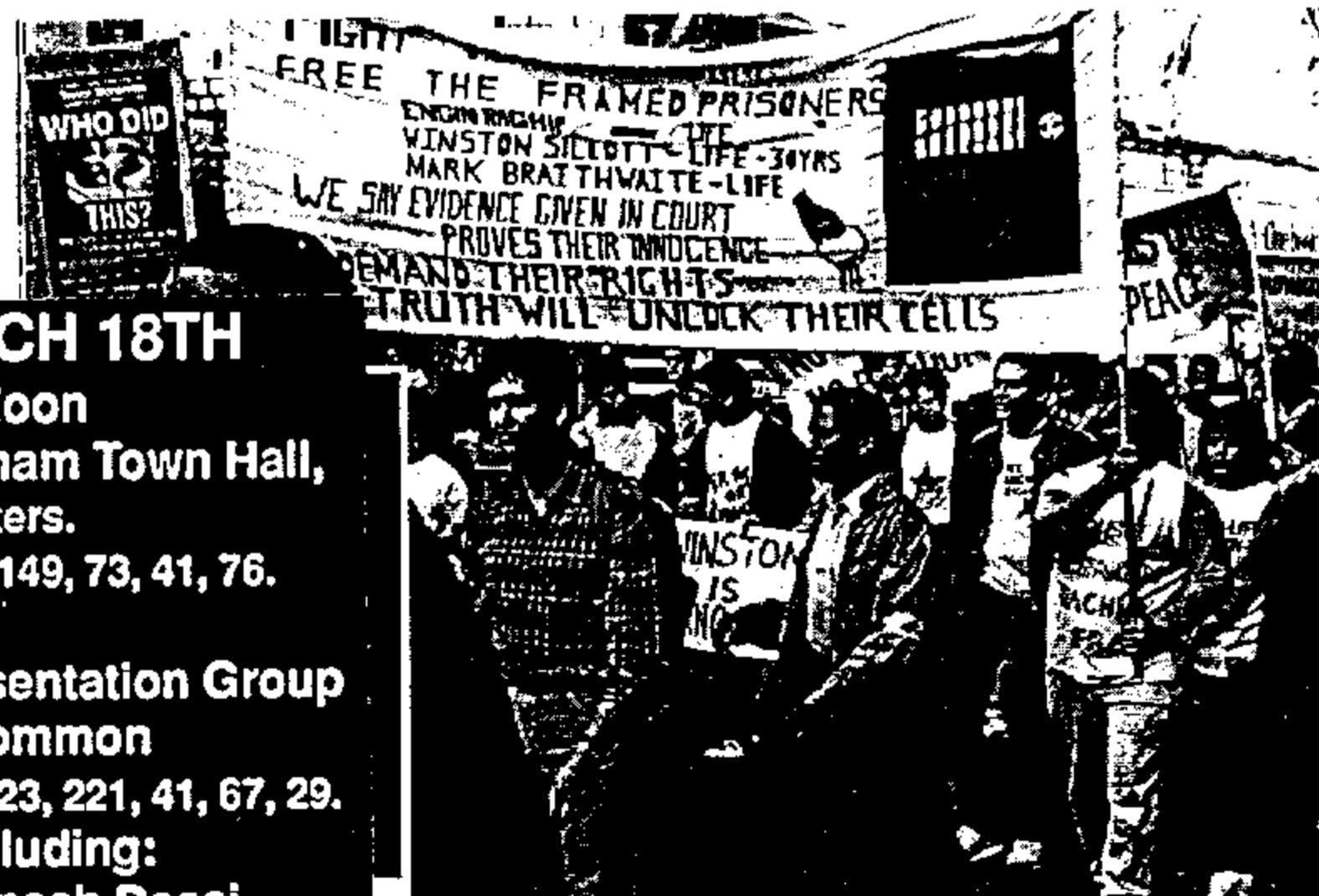
RALLY

with Irish In Britain Representation Group
3pm, Duckett's Common

Tube: Turnpike Lane; Buses: 123, 221, 41, 67, 29.

With speakers including:

Bernie Grant MP, Unmesh Desai,
and relatives of the framed prisoners.



Build a National United Anti-Deportation Movement

Socialist Voice interviewed one of the activists in the Marion Gaima defence campaign. Marion Gaima has been fighting deportation for six years. We call on the labour movement to support her fight as it should be supporting all anti-deportation campaigns.

Martin Ralph: "What has it been like since Viraj Mendis was deported?"

Monika Dixon: "Out on the streets the reports are that the police are raiding everywhere. The deportation of Viraj Mendis was the time to begin for them. Last night a woman reported back on the increase of Latin Americans being pulled in from known houses or factories. People just disappear like that and that's what's frightening. You see someone working in a shop across the road. You go in the next day and hear they are on a plane bound for wherever.

"This is down to what rights you have. If you are deemed to be an overstayer you have no rights. That's why it's so frightening. At least before this a Member of Parliament could put a stop to the immediate deportation. He could go through the 'so-called' legal processes. Now, within certain categories, you are not entitled to any legal processes.

"It is left to the whim of immigrant officials. People are reporting this happening all the time. If people don't do anything it's going to continue to happen.

"Yes, since the Viraj Mendis campaign the attacks have increased. What we have to do is ask people to become part of the real struggle to overturn these laws."

MR: "How are you fighting for Marion Gaima?"

MD: "At the moment we have won the appeal and now we have to wait. But there's waiting and waiting. You can still remind them that we're still here but not in such a way that it antagonises them.

"We handed in 40,000 signatures and now we want to concentrate on the letters blitz. This involved active campaigners going out on the street corners and doing the work because a lot of those signatures came from Hackney and Hackney is the main base of our support. When we have to turn people out on lobbying it is the Hackney people who come

forward and Hackney workers.

"Towards the end of March in Hackney we will be holding a meeting for the community to discuss the whole issue not just Marion.

"The House of Commons meeting went very well. But we want to bring some activity back to Hackney. We have had the high profile so lets come back to the base and make sure all know the issues.

How is it that someone like Marion can be put into prison in Holloway Road on two different occasions when she was deemed to be an overstayer?

"We want to get all kinds of questions asked. We won't have a formal meeting, we'll have a discussion and out of this we'll make the points.

"We welcome interest in Marion Gaima's campaign but we all have to have the same goal - against the deportation.

"Marion's struggle is six years old so we welcome those with fresh ideas.

"We want to talk about her right to stay on compassionate grounds. The circumstances are such that this is the only way the Home Office will grant her leave to remain.

"So for the next period that's the job of the campaign, to get people to write individual letters. Not made up ones but 1,000's of individual letters because the Home Office will give that real merit.

"We have had good support from NALGO (National association of Local Government Officers) members. We have had other days of action like half day actions. We have NALGO members up and down the country affiliated to the campaign.

"Without NALGO we could not have afforded to put out the material we have put out.

"If the decision goes against us we will have a deputation of all those that have been involved since the beginning.

"Workers will come out when you ask them.

"The strength comes from the grass roots at the end of the day. If we don't have anything we have the numbers.

"There is something that can be done immediately. You can start writing to MP's, to the wards, to the councillors. The same in the trade unions. For this there needs to be links to pull that together.

There are a number of campaigns at the moment but they're not linked and that's what makes them ineffectual. But to win overall there needs to be a united concerted battle.

"We need to get something we can win. Labour MP's make an excuse they cannot do certain things anymore. Since the immigration laws have come in we cannot do X,Y,Z.

"Instead of telling us what they can't do, they should be saying how they are going to change the laws.

MR: "Why do you support Marion Gaima?"

MD: "We felt sorry for her at the beginning but then we began to look at the issues. And we have stuck with it because we think the whole issue of deportations is wrong and the laws are wrong - that's what keeps us going.

"Marion is a NALGO shop steward. She represents members. She still deals with their problems.

"Not many people would still be prepared to continue but Marion has always said: '*I have my problems but I recognise that others have problems which are equally important to them as fighting deportation is to me*', and she continues to fight for her members. Not many would do that.

"That's what makes her special. That's what makes her different because she's not selfish."

MR: "And the future?"

MD: "Marion has always said: '*once I win I don't stop fighting because I have won*'.

"We have seen many campaigns that have won but the campaigners sink back. The person who has actually won falls back into obscurity.

"When Marion first came forward this is the situation we found. Few were there to help us. The VMDC did give us help. When Marion wins we won't forget, we won't step back.

Public Meeting
Stop All Deportations
Marion Gaima Defence
campaign
14th March 7pm
Halkerbi Turkish
Community Centre
92-100 Stoke Newington Rd,
London N16

Interview with Nicaraguan Workers' Leader

Bonifacio Miranda Bengoechea, leader of the Nicaraguan section of the International Workers League (IWL), the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) was interviewed by the Italian section of the IWL, the Revolutionary Socialist League.

This interview appeared in their paper, *Prospettiva Socialista*, in December.

Prospettiva Socialista: "The economic situation in Nicaragua is extremely dramatic. Can you tell us what the living conditions of the population are like?"

Bonifacio Miranda Bengoechea: "Probably, the economic crisis of Nicaragua is the worst of the neo-colonial capitalist world. Ours is a country which is at war with North American imperialism and which has inherited a deep economic crisis from the dictatorship of Somoza. At present Nicaragua is at the lowest economic level of its whole history. I can give you some figures. When the Sandinistas took power in 1979 the external debt, inherited from Somoza's dictatorship, was \$11,500 bn. At present the external debt has risen to \$12,000 bn.

"In 1979, after the liberation war against Somoza, Nicaragua had an export trade of \$ 700/800m. This year exports are estimated at \$150 m, when at least \$1 bn is necessary. These figures of the macro-economy give an idea of the situation and of how the masses are suffering the consequences. For us, the main reason for this is that the Sandinista government did not expropriate the capitalists, did not extend the revolutionary process to the whole of Central America, and, consequently, was forced to carry out a defensive war in very unfortunate conditions in which the whole cost of the war is stacked on the shoulders of the mass movement."

PS: "What is the average wage of a factory worker?"

Bonifacio: "To give an example, during the dictatorship an industrial worker was earning approximately \$100, today a worker's wage is about \$10. This means that living standards have fallen enormously. Wages in 1980 were incomparable with the ones at present. Therefore, in Nicaragua the mass movement suffers under a combination of unemployment, very high inflation and low wages which bears down heavily on workers and their families. The situation of the population is dramatic. We agree on the fact that there is a war against US imperialism, but we

"The PRT fights for a workers' government which would be the first link of the Central American Revolution"

cannot agree that, while the working masses are suffering because of the miserable living conditions, the Sandinista government is applying a policy of permanent stimulation of export capitalists and the column of capitalism in Nicaragua."

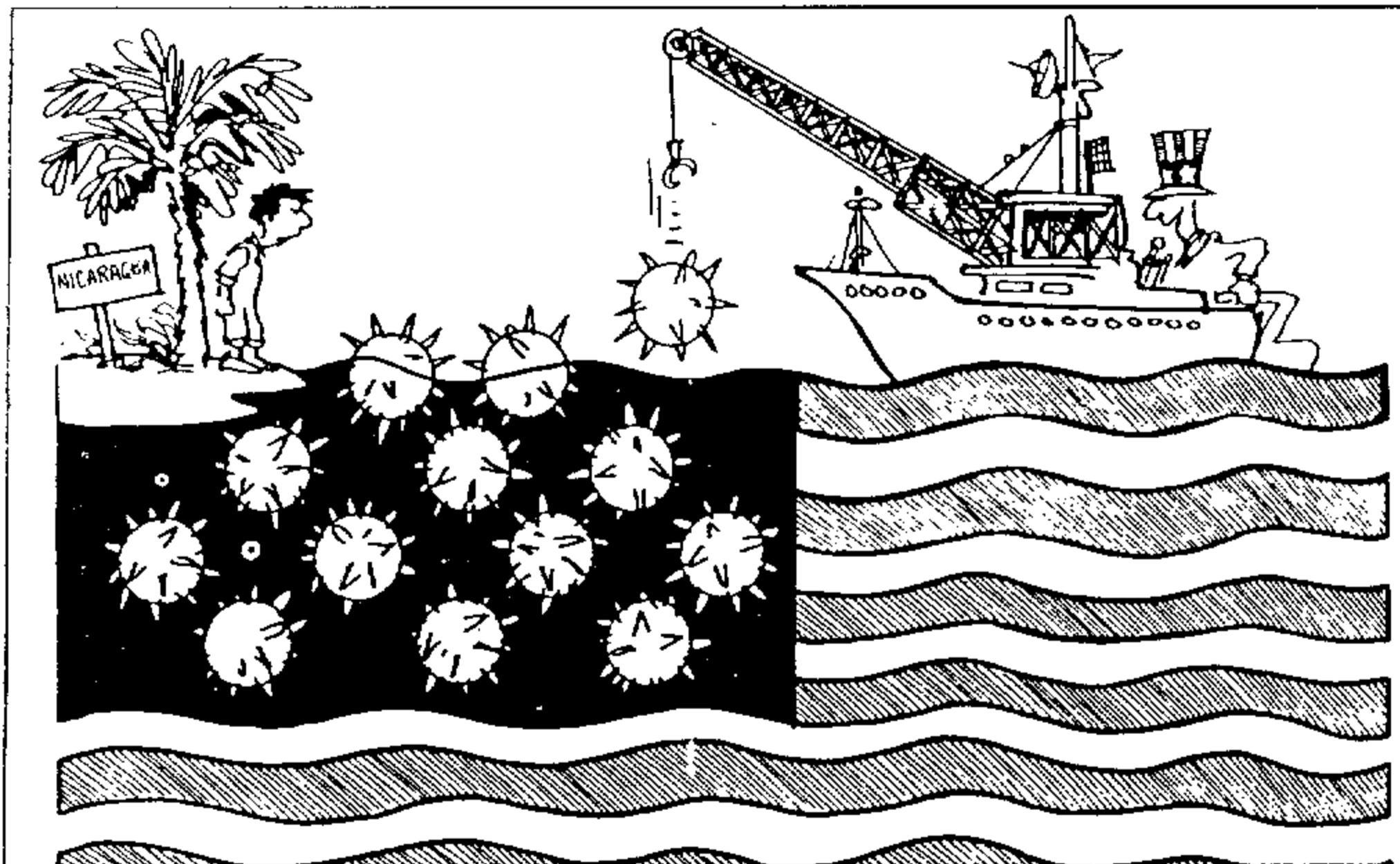
PS: "What are the conditions and the consequences of the agreement of Esquipulas in 1987?"

Bonifacio: "The Sandinista government signed the agreement of Esquipulas in Guatemala on 7th August 1987. Their justification for this concession was the necessity of overcoming the crisis and that reaching a peace agreement with the North American government would allow the recovery of economy. We believed that this argument was false. It is necessary to consider that through the 8 to 9 years of war against yankee imperialism the Nicaraguan working class has militarily defeated the counter revolution at high cost and sacrifice. We had defeated the "Contras", but the country was economically demolished. And the Sandinista government, instead of

the agreement, the economic crisis is still deepening and, what is more, foreign capital has not come as the Sandinistas had dreamed. Nicaraguan capitalists are not investing but exporting their profit to Miami. The situation is so grave that the Sandinista government was forced to apply an economic plan dictated by the International Monetary Fund this year, which was not successful.

"There is a complete boycott of world imperialism against Nicaragua. This has been concretely proved by the lack of international aid in the face of the destruction caused by hurricane 'Juana'. It is world blackmail. It is in this context that we believe that the concessions made by the Sandinista government were not able to give breath to the revolution, but reinforce our enemies."

PS: "Talking about these concessions, according to many left forces in Italy, Sandinism is a model of socialism. What can you say to deny this position? For example, what proportion of the economy is nationalised? Is there workers' and peasants' control of the economy?"



fighting for the complete victory, that is, to crush definitively the "Contras", instead of fighting for the extension of the revolution in the whole region, when having the opportunity of extinguishing the contra's last breath, begins to retreat and signs the agreement of Esquipulas with the pretext of overcoming the economic crisis. On the contrary, we believe that a year after signing

Bonifacio: "Recently, in his speech on the 9th anniversary of the revolution on 19th July, President Daniel Ortega said that in Nicaragua the socialism of 1979 has been built. We believe that this speech was made for foreigners, because in Nicaragua it has provoked popular reaction against the turn to the right of the President. Why? Because it is absolutely false that socialism has been

built; rather than that, social inequalities have increased. There is an enormous amount of poor people and just a few of the 'new' rich. We do not believe that this is socialism. Socialism cannot exist where there are special shops where the rich and the bureaucracy can buy any product in dollars while the majority of the population lives in misery. We do not believe that there is socialism where there are only 200 buses in Managua which has a population of one million, while one million dollars have been spent on Toyota cars for government officials. If this is socialism, we would not be socialists. The question is that, effectively, in Nicaragua there is a sector of the economy that is state owned: almost 50 per cent is in the hands of the state and the other 50 per cent in the hands of capitalism. But for us the problem is not just mathematics: the problem is not how much is in the hands of the state and how much in the hands of the bourgeoisie, but what is the direction of the economic policy of the government. We believe that even if, in recent times, some private owners have been expropriated, some abandoned lands taken over, the economic policy of the Sandinista government is directed towards supporting one sector of agricultural trading business, which as we have said before is the vertebral column of capitalism in Nicaragua.

"There is not workers' control over nationalised industry; there is a control by the administrative bureaucracy which is the same as the Sandinista bureaucracy. There is a similarity between the bureaucratic workers' states (USSR, Cuba, China, etc.) and Nicaragua. All the state sector of the economy is controlled by functionaries directly nominated by the Sandinista Front. At present, the manager in a nationalised enterprise is the same as the political secretary of the Sandinista Front in this enterprise, who takes decisions in the economic field without any kind of consultation with workers. Moreover, in recent times there have been important workers' struggles in order to take control of business. In Nicaragua there are three kinds of pasteurized milk, the selected, the complete and the perfect. With the excuse of the necessity to modernise the machinery the state bureaucracy has just decided to produce only one of them without any consultation with workers and with many redundancies in the factory. Now workers' have occupied the enterprise against the decision of the minister who had not consulted them before applying the new measure. This is clear proof of the fact that workers' control does not exist. And this bureaucracy which wastes resources, so hard for the people to produce, is exacerbating the economic crisis because its orientation is driving towards economic disaster."

PS: "With this situation, what is the position of your party?"

Bonifacio: "Since 19th July 1979 we have been fighting for a workers' government which must be the first link of the Central American revolution; that is to say that the triumph of Nicaragua's political independence is in order to develop and extend the revolution in Central America. It is necessary to remember that Central America is one nation that was artificially divided into five countries by North American imperialism for easier domination. Our policy is always in order to fight for socialism and for the reunification of Central America. We have deep political differences with the Sandinista Front who have decided to go the opposite way. That is, to limit the revolution within Nicaragua and to negotiate with capitalism, sharing power with them. There have been ten years of struggle and we can say that it was a conquest not only for us, but for world Trotskyism, because we overcame the hardest stage of this struggle which was the period when the mass movement was confident with the Sandinista Front. Now there is a deep break of the working masses with the Sandinista leadership and we see the possibility for the development and growth of our party.

"Our policy maintains the orientation of the one we had in 1979 and can be summed up in four or five main points. In the first place, there is no way out for the problems of Nicaragua in Nicaragua alone. We believe that the solution is in the triumph of El Salvador and Guatemala, in the expulsion of the 'Contras' from Honduras, in the extension and the generalisation of the revolution throughout Central America leading to the reunification of the Central American nation. Secondly, measures within Nicaragua to defeat the 'Contras' and against Nicaraguan capitalists. That is why we demand nationalisation under workers' control of the main factories and main agricultural trades. Thirdly, in the present situation, when imperialism is using the anger of the people against the Sandinista leadership, it is necessary to establish a minimum wage in relation to the cost of minimum needs. Fourthly, to stop paying the external debt, since with Nicaragua's \$12 bn debt, all trade surplus is set aside for paying interest.

"There is one more point which for us has strategic importance. We must lean on the world working class to be able to resist the most powerful imperialism in the world. If we lean on the working class of the United States, of Europe, of the USSR, of Latin America, we believe we could not only overcome the difficulties of the Nicaraguan revolution but induce a development of the worldwide revolutionary process. The mobilisation of the Italian and European working class in defence of Nicaragua would not only help the Nicaraguan revolution but the Italian and European one too."

Release Hugo Blanco

Hugo Blanco, a former Trotskyist and congressional deputy, was arrested on 9th February in Peru. He is under investigation on charges of 'terrorism' and 'agitation'.

He led a demonstration in Pucallpa, in the East of Peru, of more than 8,000 peasants demanding payment of long standing debts owed to them by the government. Security forces shot dead more than 10 peasants, several score were wounded and 29 are still missing.

This is yet another attack from the Government of Alan Garcia on the workers and peasants who fight against his attempt to impose the austerity plans of the International Monetary Fund. In 1988 there were 302 cases of civilian disappearances of whom 144 had previously been detained by the security forces. There were also some notable military massacres, including that of at least 28 villagers in Cayara in Ayacucho on 14th May and many cases of torture and murder by the security forces.

Hugo Blanco joined the Trotskyist movement in the early fifties when he was a student in Buenos Aires (Argentina). When the peasants uprising began in the late fifties he returned to Peru and became the most important Trotskyist mass leader in Latin America. He led occupations of the land by the peasants and organised self-defence against the armed attacks of the military and the landowners. The government and the bourgeoisie launched a fierce repression which ended with the defeat of the peasants and Hugo Blanco was imprisoned and condemned to death. An international campaign achieved his release and later his amnesty.

Today another solidarity campaign must be built to achieve the release of this leader who, even though he left the Trotskyist movement years ago with substantial differences, is still one of the most important leaders of the peasants movement in Latin America.

Immediately a campaign must begin in Britain demanding of the Peruvian government:

The immediate release of Hugo Blanco and all political prisoners!

For the investigation and punishment of those responsible for the massacres of political leaders, workers and peasants!

Paraguay:

MASSES ON THE MOVE The End of a Dictatorship

Miguel Banos

On 3rd February the oldest dictator in Latin America, Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay, fell. He had been in government for 34 years. He was overthrown by a military coup led by General Andres Rodriguez.

Even if Stroessner has been immediately replaced through a military coup, the fall of this old dictator is a result of the struggle of the masses against the deep economic, political and social crisis in Latin America. The dismissal of Stroessner is part of the struggle that has defeated almost every military dictatorship in the continent. For the first time in history there are going to be elections in every Latin American country, including Chile, where the weakened regime of Pinochet can exist only because of the betrayals of the leadership of the mass movement.

Alfredo Stroessner came to govern through a military coup in 1954, when he was commander in chief of the armed forces. Immediately after the coup he called for a General Election in which he was the only candidate for president and his party, the Red Party (Partido Colorado) the only one allowed to participate in the elections. In February 1988 Stroessner had been 'elected' President of Paraguay for the eighth consecutive term.

For 34 years democratic rights had not existed in Paraguay. Many political opposition leaders and trade union and peasant activists have been deported or arrested. At present it is estimated that one million Paraguayans live out of the country.

Paraguay has been the site of retirement for many war criminals and former dictators. Dozens of Nazi criminals, including Josef Mengele, were given asylum by Stroessner. Somoza was welcomed by the Paraguayan government after the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979. Many of the Argentine military escaped to Paraguay after the fall of the dictatorship in 1982.

The change which has taken place in Paraguay is not just a 'crisis at the top'. Stroessner's regime could not escape the international situation. After the fall of the dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay and Brazil, and after the defeat of Pinochet in the Plebiscite in Chile, Stroessner was shaken by Paraguay's own crisis.

In Paraguay, like in every other Latin

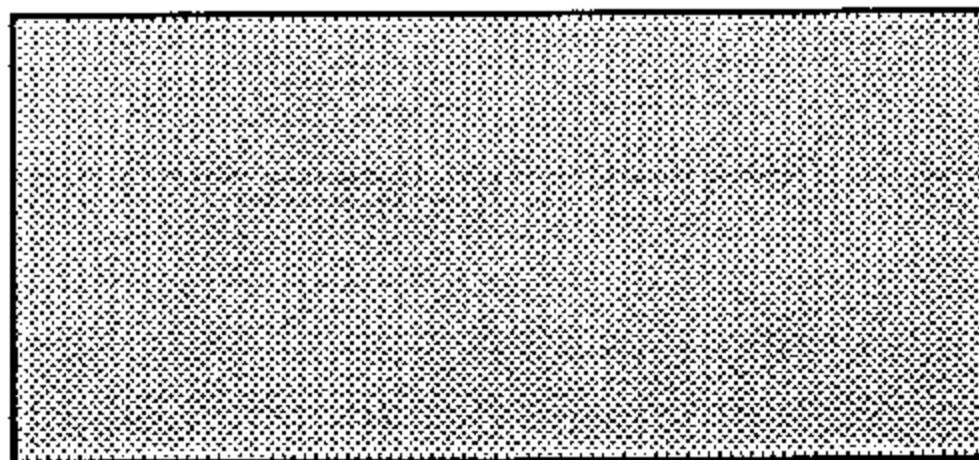
American country, the payment of the external debt means austerity plans, inflation and unemployment. This situation has provoked an important increase in workers', peasants' and people's struggle in the past year. Teachers, health workers and working class areas of Asuncion (capital of Paraguay) have been mobilising for better wages and better living conditions. In December 1988 the demonstrations entered the political field. Thousands of workers, students and youth were involved in Asuncion and four other cities in the 'March for Life' demanding democratic liberties.

Faced with this situation two wings appeared within the Red Party. One of them was the 'militant' wing, led by Stroessner and his clique, which wanted to maintain the regime and make Stroessner's son his successor. The other one, the 'traditionalist' wing, of which Rodriguez was a member, wanted to save the regime through the introduction of some reforms and contemplated the possibility of some democratic concessions but under the control of the armed forces. This 'traditionalist' wing is supported by US imperialism and the church, who prefer to give some concessions to avoid the possibility of a revolutionary explosion of the masses.

So, even if Rodriguez was a close collaborator of Stroessner, the dismissal of Stroessner is the successful result of the mobilisation of the masses.

The release of political prisoners, freedom for political and trade union activities and the legalisation of all political parties are essential for free democratic elections. But Rodriguez is not going to concede all these just because he has already called for General Elections for May. The Paraguayan masses must continue their struggle.

The British working class must support, unconditionally, the Paraguayan workers and peasants who are still fighting to end the last remains of a dictatorship which has oppressed them for more than forty years.



ICTU Embraces Haughey

John Mitchell is the sacked General Secretary of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trades Union (IDATU).

The Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU) expelled John and suspended his union when he attacked the unions in the North for not taking a stand on discrimination against Catholics there, the strip searching of women prisoners etc.

The reaction of the IDATU executive was to pull out of the North altogether and sack John Mitchell!

John was sacked without notice, denied union representation and given four weeks pay after six years of service to the membership.

Much play has been made by IDATU's executive of John's 'alleged' links with republicans.

It was Phil Flynn, former vice president and still a prominent figure of Sinn Fein who seconded the motion to suspend IDATU from the ICTU.

On 19th October 1988 Joe Donnelly, President of IDATU, offered to end the campaign to undermine John Mitchell in return for: "forgetting the North".

For not actively opposing attempts by the Derry branch of IDATU to remain part of the union officials were disciplined.

IDATU officials were not allowed to represent John even though he is an IDATU member.

At a branch meeting in Cork union official Jim O'Connell threatened to expel anyone who supported John.

The executive of IDATU broke union rules in order to remove John Mitchell. Rule 24:12 reads: "Should the General Secretary at any time desire to resign his position, or should the Union decide to dispense with his services as General Secretary, three months notice will be given by either party" **JOHN MITCHELL RECEIVED NO NOTICE!**

IDATU has a policy of campaigning against "bureaucratic harassment of the unemployed" yet the executive has raised the subs from £2.00 per annum to £1.30 a week for all unemployed members.

Union policy is "in favour of a United Ireland" yet the executive has withdrawn from the Six Counties leaving union organisation in the North up to the British trades unions. They have hounded John Mitchell for fighting for a united Ireland.

What happened to the leader of IDATU shows the growing collaboration between the southern Irish trade union bureaucracy and the Haughey Government.

This collaboration has rapidly increased since the introduction of the National Plan over wages and jobs two years ago. It promised jobs in return for low wages and delivered low wages and fewer jobs.

Behind this attack on one man are very deep processes that are bound up with the increasing dominance of Europe and of how the working class is going to answer the increasing attacks on its terms and conditions of employment. It is faced with developing a programme that combines the fight for a united Ireland with the development of the independent movement of the working class.

Leaflet to Thatcher

The following leaflet was issued by members of the Polish Socialist Party and distributed in Warsaw during Thatcher's visit last year:

Co-opt Mrs Thatcher to the Consultative Council!

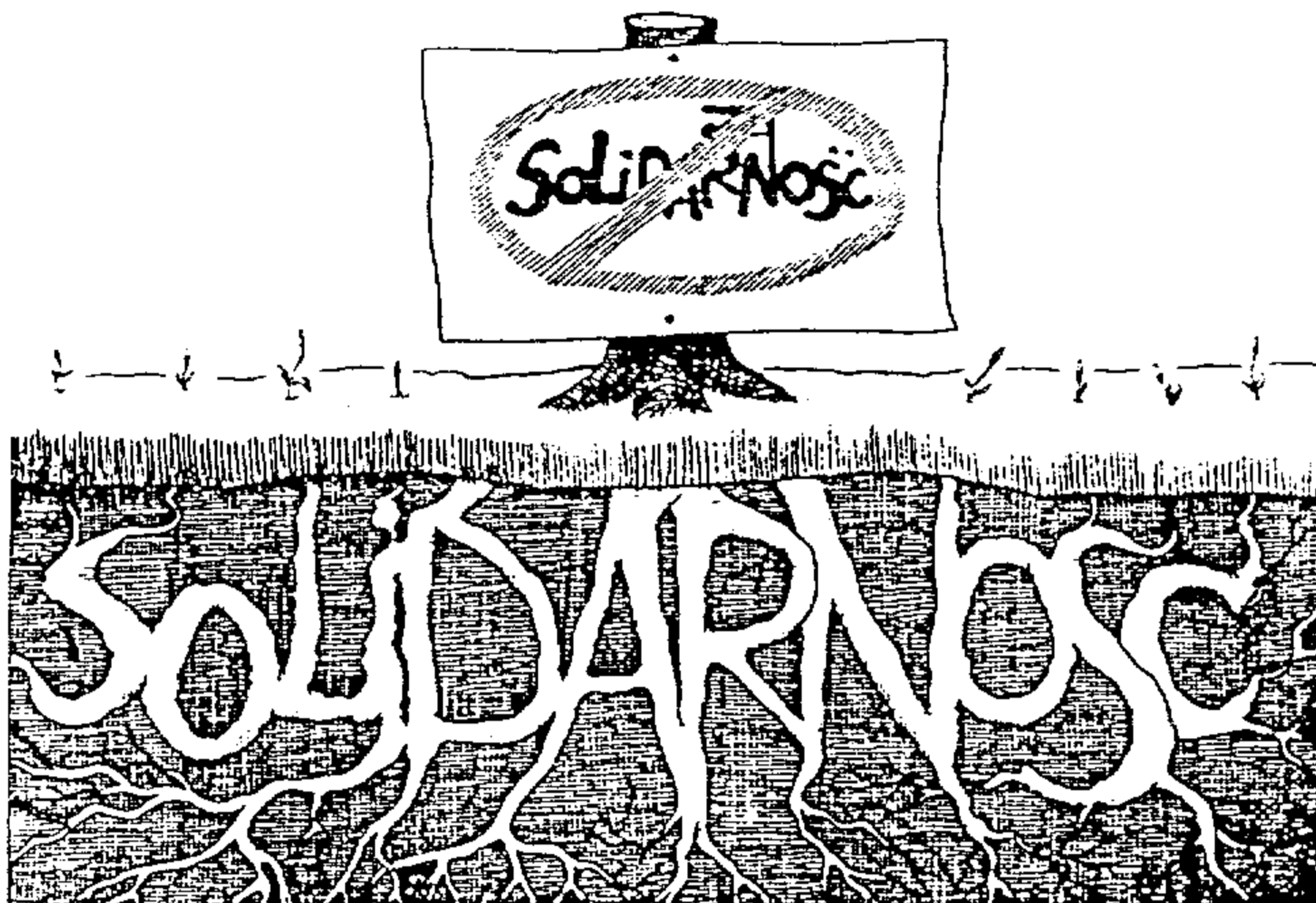
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will undoubtedly find a common tongue with General Jaruzelski. Most importantly they should exchange experiences in crushing trade union rights. The two are already world class experts on this.

In fact, there is already a tradition of co-operation here. When the British miners were on strike Jaruzelski hurriedly came to the Tories assistance and increased coal exports to Britain.

They can teach each other the best ways of protecting privileges at the expense of the poor; the most effective methods of lowering the consumption of working people; the most skillful approach to adopt in cutting social services.

If it were not for certain obstacles caused by their respective social systems, they would make a perfectly matched couple. Unfortunately geo-political considerations rule out marriage.

So perhaps Mrs Thatcher can be made an honorary member of the Politbureau. At least



she should be co-opted to the Consultative Council. Her advice was utilised back in May when our mass media quoted the example of the British seafarers' strike as proof that sympathy strikes could not be tolerated here either.

Now Mrs Thatcher could oversee the sacking of miners from Jastrzebie pits. She herself has thrown tens of thousands of miners out of work.

And if it proved necessary to reintroduce martial law, the British PM's wealth of experience would surely come in handy. After all, martial law has been going on in Northern Ireland for nineteen years.

assure the Poles she is the defender of workers' rights by expressing her support for Solidarnosc.

Well no thanks.

We would prefer a thousand times over the support of British miners, or seafarers, or of the Catholic minority in Ireland, who have everyday experience of poverty, persecution and the terror of security forces. They can understand us.

Thatcher wants to use us. We say to Thatcher:

Reinstate your sacked miners!

Repeal your anti-union legislation!

Withdraw your troops from Northern Ireland!

It is quite possible Mrs Thatcher will use her visit to Poland to

Price £1.00

The Soviet Bureaucracy and the Political Revolution



An International Socialist League Pamphlet

Readers may ask: 'why will the masses in the Soviet Union be forced to turn to the real history of communism and the real struggle for a revolutionary leadership.'

The answer established in this pamphlet, as Lenin and Trotsky insisted, is that either socialism, through the struggle of the masses, will prevail or capitalism, against the masses, will triumph. The masses will therefore be compelled to struggle both against capitalism and also the bureaucracies of the workers' states.

But this pamphlet is not pessimistic nor does it try to offer easy solutions. This is why we think it is vital reading for anyone who wishes to understand the new movements that are and will develop at a startling pace.

Gorbachev Suppresses

Bill Hunter

On the 20th of last month Mr Gorbachev paid the Ukraine a visit, decorated by his wife Raisa.

Gorbachev told crowds in Kiev that it was up to them to help implement perestroika. He said, according to the Reuter report, "If you don't like what's happening, then get together and deal with it. It's up to everyone of us. Otherwise nothing will come of it."

What demagogy! Standing next to Mr Gorbachev was none other than Vladimar Scherbitsky, full member of the Politbureau, the leading body of the Soviet Communist Party. For seventeen years Scherbitsky has been First Secretary of the Communist Party in the Ukraine with a record of suppressing opposition.

Thousands of Kiev citizens had demonstrated against Scherbitsky in the two days before Gorbachev's visit. On the very day that Gorbachev went to Kiev to "meet the people" 5,000 of them demonstrated in Kiev's October Revolution Square against the adoption of Shcherbitsky and other Communist party officials as Parliamentary candidates. The crowd was protesting at the way the Communist Party had rigged the elections.

Even while he stood at Gorbachev's side, Shcherbitsky showed signs of impatience with the crowd, at one point dismissing a complaint with an angry gesture.

The Ukrainian people again and again have fought the repression, slanders and resistance of Scherbitsky and the bureaucratic clique which Gorbachev protects and represents.

Their demonstrations have been attacked by police, they have been beaten up, some of them have been jailed and even murdered.

A few months ago, sixteen members of the Culturological Club in Kiev were seized by the police and driven beyond the city limits, some were beaten, others were injected with drugs and threatened with death.

Viktor Berkhin, a journalist was arrested on false charges of "hooliganism" after writing reports in "Soviet Miner" criticising corruption in Voroshilovgrad. In October, his death was reported in jail.

The journal "Glasnost" reported the case of Evgenia Ratnikova, whose son died after being beaten by MVD (Ministry of the Interior) troops. Fellow students were warned not to attend the funeral, witnesses were threatened and harassed, a second autopsy was refused. When the case was referred to the

Kiev military district court, the mother was accused of "deliberately spreading false evidence which discredits the state" and was dismissed from her job.

These reports come from "Soviet Nationality Survey" for October 1988.

Large scale protest meetings took place in Lvov and other cities in the Summer. It was Mr Gorbachev and his fellow bureaucrats who, in fear of masses of people "getting together", then passed regulations to strike a blow at the organisation of meetings and demonstrations.

After this, a demonstration took place in Lvov on the 4th August. 3,000 people who marched to the Lenin monument were set upon by militia and dogs and twenty-five

"They are striving for power. They should be stopped, by using all the power at our command - political and administrative...it's not for them to decide the destiny of this land."

people were arrested.

Gorbachev's opposition to any real mass democracy has already been shown by his vicious attack on the Karabakh Committee in Armenia at the time of the recent earthquake when the Committee organised its own relief work. For months, Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders had ignored the refugee problem in Armenia, caused by events in Azerbaijan, and there was a lack of confidence in their earthquake relief.

The Committee was no small body. During last year it showed it represented the entire Armenian population. An observer at one meeting reported it consisted of 800 representatives from factories and areas. Here was a real "get together".

Gorbachev snarled: "They are striving for power. They should be stopped, by using all the power at our command - political and administrative...it's not for them to decide the destiny of this land." And it was not only a question of stalinist words. He used the power at his command. Some members of the Karabakh Committee were arrested and a police hunt began for others.

A narrow minded and reactionary bureaucracy has no way out of its crisis. It cannot be "fixed", leaving bureaucratic rule untouched. The power to resolve the problems of the Soviet Union lies only in this mass movement which is now "getting together". All Gorbachev's demagogy cannot hold back the great upsurge against the privileges and corrupt power of himself and other bureaucrats.

For a Nuclear Free Ukraine

While in the Ukraine, Gorbachev visited Chernobyl. A purely symbolic visit which will be seen as such by the people of the Ukraine. Despite the repression of the bureaucratic apparatus they have been protesting at the high level of pollution in Ukraine, where the Soviet bureaucratic planners have concentrated nuclear plants.

"Ukrainian Peace News", the English paper of the Ukrainian Trust Group of Lvov and Kiev, reports a meeting in Kiev of 10,000 in freezing weather. The meeting "demanded tougher measures to tackle the republic's exceptionally high levels of pollution", dissident sources reported from Ukraine. The authorities, out of fear of an unofficial demonstration taking place, allowed the protest to go ahead provided the following placards were not displayed: "A nuclear free Ukraine", "Those responsible should be made accountable", "The Heritage Club supports the ecology of language culture and nature" and "Greens, let's unite".

As the demonstration began, placards with the inscription "Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl, Chihirin?" were forcibly removed.

The main concerns of the demonstrators, according to the report, were nuclear power and chemical processing plants as well as the mysterious disease that has affected children in the city of Chernivtsi. So far over 100 children have been effected by the illness which has caused their hair to fall away in clumps.

V. Shupynov, a biosphere scientist from the USSR Academy of Science told the meeting:

"All the people of Ukraine are actually living inside a nuclear reactor. I think that this is one of the worst tragedies committed against the Ukrainian nation. Above our cities and above Kiev a new threat of dead air has been formed...there have been dangerous changes to the ozone layer, which has practically ruined the ozone layer above Kiev.

"We ought to know the truth, and the truth is that, within the next few years, it will be necessary to remove the entire nuclear industry from Ukraine." He called on the Ukrainians to form a committee to monitor ecological safety in the republic.

Workers' Democracy

Balance Sheet of Corruption

Peter Windeler

Karl Marx noted that when capitalism is in crisis the capitalist class resort to swindling in a desperate attempt to appropriate amongst themselves the dwindling pot of profit. But swindling and corruption are not the sole preserve of capitalists. Over the past few months a series of scandals and gross misuses of power have been exposed from within the workers' states of Eastern Europe.



USSR

In the Soviet Union Yury Churbanov, the son-in-law of the late Leonid Brezhnev, former Soviet president, was jailed for 12 years on 30th December 1988 for accepting bribes worth more than £550,000. Churbanov, aged 52, was the second highest ranking police official in the Soviet Union from 1980 until 1984. Since then he had been the First Deputy of the Interior Ministry, a job he was stripped of when he was finally exposed and arrested in January 1987. Six other defendants, all senior police officials from the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan were also found guilty in the same corruption trial and jailed for between 8 to 10 years. The trial of a seventh official Khaidar Yakhyayev, Uzbekistan's former Interior Minister, has been suspended pending further investigation.

In the USSR a host of lesser corruption trials are to follow. Many members of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet are expected to be charged with corruption.

Over the past 18 months many names have been removed from both bodies giving patently false reasons such as "ill health".

Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia the Prime Minister Branko Mikulic resigned on 30th December after accusations of corruption and scandal against him had dominated newspapers for the previous month. He has now been removed from the Central Committee for using illegal funds to build himself a seaside villa in Bosnia, a Yugoslav republic. Mikulic was known as an unscrupulous fixer and had been accused of being involved in his native Bosnia, with other officials, of illegally acquiring

land at very low prices.

Mikulic made his name in the Republic of Bosnia by his successful running of the Winter Olympics. But behind the show-case, Bosnia was run like a fiefdom in which corruption and scandals prevailed over rational economic planning.

Soon after he was chosen as Prime Minister the Agrokomerg scandal broke out. This involved the issuing of un-backed up promissory notes. Although informed of the illicit deals at an early stage Mikulic did not act swiftly. The rumours began that he was involved, via family connections, in acquiring plots of land through illegal means.

Several top Bosnian officials have also been helped through the availability of very low-rate credits and have built expensive fashionable houses for themselves on the coast.

Rumania

In Rumania President Ceausescu has recently raised to the ground large sections of old Bucharest to make way for a huge avenue.

As in the past he has acted almost like a dictator. He has ploughed through the country's capital in order to make room for the monumental Victory of Socialism Boulevard on which the President's 17 story House of the Republic is nearing completion. This callous act of stalinist vandalism has been criticised by Rumanian dissidents.

Ceausescu was the first communist leader in history and hopefully will be the only one to carry a sceptre. He also has a bossy, uneducated but doctorate-bedecked wife; Comrade Academician, Doctor and Engineer Elena and has appointed many relatives to positions of power.

Britain made Ceausescu a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable order of the Bath in 1978. The dissident Mihai Botez says angrily that the West "helped to legitimise a corrupt Communist regime, which has ruined our country". The "Independent" newspaper on 26th January noted that: "the regime controls the country like vandals control a playground after dark". The regime now plans to "systemise" (demolish) up to 8,000 villages which will affect 1.7 million members of the Hungarian minority.

Why should those already in privileged positions in the workers states mis-use their power even though they already live better than the man in the street?

To a large extent the answer lies in the nature of the deformed workers' states with the lack of workers democracy. Another factor is that the leaderships have compromised themselves with the Western banks and with the IMF.

For instance in Yugoslavia Mikulic has been attempting to push through measures to satisfy the IMF. Yugoslavia has foreign debts of £12bn and has attempted to make a sharp cut in public spending particularly in health, education and scientific research. These steps were accompanied by an attempt to resurrect capitalism and make the economy "market orientated". This resulted in a general strike in Croatia last month. The measures would mean mass unemployment, a freer market and severe curbs on public spending.

Cringing before imperialism has probably reached its zenith in Rumania where Ceausescu has presided over the last 6 years of a repayment of most of the country's \$10bn foreign debt. The measures adopted have involved depriving citizens of food which was exported to repay the loans.

Patients for Sale

Rae Hunter

The Government launched its White Paper on the National Health Service on 1st February 1989. Margaret Thatcher called it *"the most far reaching reform of the National Health Service in its forty years history"*.

The Government declares it will extend patient care and reduce waiting lists. Yes! - for those with money it will provide these things, but for the poor, the old, the mentally sub-normal and the chronically ill the life-line will be severed.

The NHS was a product of the strength of the working class who had been through six bitter years of the Second World War and had made it plain they would not go back to the misery of the thirties.

The Destruction of this Health Service is not a sudden thing. For years hospitals have been under attack. The process began under a Labour Government and is now being brought to fruition by the Tories.

Between 1969 and 1974, 121 hospitals were closed in England and Wales. Between 1976 and 1978, these figures leapt up. There were 143 closures or changes of use.

Up till 1983, the NHS administration was based on a team management concept. Districts and Regions were run by District and Regional teams of officers drawn from the different areas of the Health Service - administration, nursing, finance and medicine. The teams took decisions by consensus of opinion.

In 1983, the Tory Government changed this method. They appointed Ray Griffiths, Managing Director of Sainsbury's Supermarket chain, to refashion the NHS.

He wanted "business management" and was opposed to consensus. He recommended the appointment of General Managers. This method was extended right through, even to hospital wards.

Managers who increased performance at lower cost were given financial incentives.

One of the ways of saving money has been in employment practices. Some 70 per cent of the Health Service budget goes on wages. In 1984, NHS employees fell by more than 4,500 and in 1985 there was a further reduction of 3,300.

Comparing 1987 with 1982, 25,000 jobs of

ancillary workers have gone. Their jobs were lost in contracts to private enterprise.

The main proposals of the White Paper are as follows: Major hospitals will be able to apply for a new self-governing status. They will be free to set rates of pay for their own staff. They will be able to offer their services to other parts of the NHS and to the private sector.

Because they will have an incentive to attract patients, it is evident that, if the geriatrics, the chronically ill etc. have no money then they will not get a look-in. The Free Health Service which working people fought for is going to be practically destroyed.

The other most important change will be in General Practitioners. They can have a special budget to choose how the money is spent. The method can be exploited for gain by unprincipled GPs, but the majority would most likely feel like Dr Roland in the "Independent" of 31st January:

"What will happen when the budget runs out?" he asked, and went on, "It would change the relationship with patients. At the moment when you go to a doctor you assume he is making a judgement based on your need for medical care.

"With a budget, patients would know the GP is also influenced by how much money he has left that year. Many patients as well as doctors would feel that unacceptable."

One of the worst aspects of the White Paper is the further rationing of prescriptions. If the GP's allocation of money for drugs runs out, what then?

Involved in the movement of the hospital workers in 1988 was the question, should the NHS be carved up and run for profit or should it be for the benefit of the working class communities with decent conditions and wages for hospital workers?

In 1989 the Tory Government has made it clear what it thinks should be done with the NHS.

It is up to the Health Service Unions and the labour movement to answer by building on the movement of last year and uniting more and more of the communities that will suffer under the tory plans to defeat the attacks on OUR NHS.

Miners

This month is the fifth anniversary of the start of the great miners' strike. It has to be said that a great number of people, particularly leaders of the trade unions and of the Labour Party, would like to forget this year long, bitter battle.

If it is not widely commemorated in the British Labour movement then that is not a cause for dismay or pessimism. In many respects this British miners' strike was a watershed in the development of post war leadership of the working class.

Because British miners have a long record of struggle in the forefront of their class, and have experienced in their history the sharpest results of oppression by capitalism and its state, their struggles have many times outlined sharply the general problems of the British workers movement.

The strike of 1984-85 was thus not the first time that one of their struggles brought out clearly to the rank and file the abysmal weakness of trade union and Labour Party leadership.

So it was in 1926, when the British working class made a magnificent response in a General Strike backing the miners only to find that the trade union leadership deserted them and left the miners to be starved back to work after eight months.

"Never Again" said the Willises, the Jordans and the Kinnocks of that time - the Turners, the Thomases and the MacDonalds. They rushed panic stricken to collaborate with capitalism, in the Mond-Turner agreement (Mond of the Imperial Chemical Industries represented the big employers).

Since the miners strike of 84/85 the TUC has been in a parallel panic retreat. To be more accurate it has been a capitulatory rout on a wider front than that at the end of the twenties. One retreat has followed another as they moved in terror of two aspects of the miners' strike - one, the ruthless use of state force in the judiciary, in police terror, in financial aggression and two, militant mass action.

"New Realism" came in as the modern expression of Thomas and Company's "Never Again". In 1927, the Communist Party opposed the Mond-Turner agreement. In the 1980's the stalinist degeneration, which was gathering speed at the end of the twenties, had brought a once revolutionary movement to counter-revolutionary policies and they were joining in an alliance with the right wing to destroy Scargill and the leaders of the strike. They were in the forefront of the "New Realists".

The "Left" in Britain was also tested by the

Strike - Fifth Anniversary



miners' strike. Even some revolutionary groups now talk about the demoralisation of the working class in face of the victories of Thatcher. They are expressing their own demoralisation and that of the trade union and labour bureaucracy. The problem is not the fighting ability of workers. The miners showed the enormous possibilities there.

The overriding problem, as the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International so clearly brings out, is that of the bureaucratic

leadership which spreads confusion and blocks, diverts and directly opposes miners, printers, seafarers or any other body of workers in struggle and suppresses and ignores the youth. The truly opportunist left, "broad" or otherwise, has been unable to even begin to resolve this crisis of leadership and succumbs to the scepticism on principles.

All this gives the ISL no cause for pessimism. Quite the contrary as can be seen by a reading of its perspectives adopted at its

conference last month. If the abysmal weaknesses of the leadership of working class organisations in Britain have been more clearly revealed then that can be made a plus for the working class, who have no alternative but to struggle under the attacks of British capitalism.

And, above all, the momentous result of the great miners' strike was its international effect. A Spanish trotskyst at our conference, reporting on the recent Spanish General Strike and the feelings of the workers involved declared:

"Their struggles have a direct connection with the heroic strike of British miners. The miners could not win, but they inspired struggle in Europe".

Not only in Europe. We know that workers throughout Europe were following the miners strike. But further, our own experience and the information we have from the IWL (FI) members, is that workers throughout the world were feeling sympathy with, and great respect for, the British miners' struggle.

We must mention here one country - Poland. We do so because the bureaucrats who are the government in Poland assisted Thatcher to break the miners' strike by exporting Polish coal to Britain. We do so also, because in the NUM there was opposition to Solidarity. Now that Polish socialists and revolutionary oppositionists are establishing many more links outside Poland, we have every day confirmation of the correctness of our defence of Solidarity rank and file.

The Polish Government attempted to hide up the destination of the coal but it was the workers in the ports who informed the miners. Silesian miners committees, under the dictatorship,

made several statements attacking the export of coal.

The miners strike in Britain assumes its true aspect only if it is viewed from an internationalist stand point as part of the world class struggle.

Communities Against the Poll Tax

In Scotland Sheriff's officers have frozen the bank accounts of 130 people in order to obtain payments of £50 fines imposed for non-registration of the Poll Tax. The Labour controlled Central Regional Council in Stirlingshire, under the Tory Community Charge legislation, will remove the sum of £66.01 from anyone fined for non-registration. This consists of the original £50 fine plus a £16.01 "sheriff's fee". Individuals refusing to register or to pay their Poll Tax now face having the tax "arrested" out of their wages, bank accounts or benefits.

Among those fined was Morag McGowan, a single parent with five children existing on state benefit. Ms McGowan was notified by her bank that the account she had set up to receive her child benefit payment of £144 per month had been frozen.

In meetings over the Poll Tax in England and Wales workers are now asking: "What is the Poll Tax?", "How will it affect me?" and "How do you fight it?"

The Poll Tax (Community Charge) and national business rate will be introduced from 1st April 1990 in England and Wales. People will be served with a standard Poll Tax bill with a year's payment spread over ten months. Parents will not be liable for children over 18 but spouses will be collectively liable. This would mean that if a husband leaves home without paying his Poll Tax, his estranged wife will be liable to pay both her Poll Tax and her absent husband's. Local Authorities that have attempted to maintain services may be faced with imposing a higher Poll Tax - penalising the inner cities and councils that cover some of the poorest sections of the working class.

Poll Tax - a Youth Tax

18 - 24 year olds will be most affected by the Poll Tax - making up the majority of those paying a local tax for the first time.

A young person in a bed sit will pay the same as a millionaire in a penthouse flat.

Full time students will have to pay 20% Poll Tax - up to £168 per year - at their term time address without any increase in their grants. In actual fact grants are to be frozen at their current levels in the very year the Poll Tax is to be introduced, so students will face paying this unjust tax out of a dwindling grant!

An 18 - 24 year old receiving the national average Poll Tax Bill of £224 per year would

Martin Ralph

probably have to pay the full amount if they took home just £45.80 per week.

In Greater Manchester the question of the Poll Tax is agitating all sections of the labour movement. A recent meeting in Rochdale Town Hall attracted over 100 people, despite very little publicity.

In Stockport a meeting was held at the Labour Club on Wednesday 22nd February, called by the local Trades Council, to discuss how to organise a campaign. Despite sparse publicity over 60 workers, local Councillors, and activists attended. A committee was

refusal to pay frustrates implementation but does not prevent it

formed to co-ordinate a campaign throughout the borough.

A Trades Council member from the local Child Poverty Action Unit explained that elements of the Poll Tax had already been introduced, as today everyone, no matter how poor, has to pay something towards their ordinary rates. By not opposing this change in the rates being enforced, the campaign of opposition to the Poll Tax missed a valuable opportunity. He went on to say that the imposition of rates bills were already creating severe hardship amongst workers causing an explosion of rate and rent arrears. "How can you pay a bill when you just don't have the money? You just can't", he answered.

The meeting agreed to send several coaches of local residents to the Glasgow Poll Tax demonstration on 18th March.

In St Helens, on Merseyside, a campaign is underway concentrating on organising resistance to the tax 12 streets at a time. In Liverpool meetings are well attended.

Correct Strategy

The Poll Tax cannot be stopped by relying on politicians and trades union leaders. The only way the Tories will be forced to withdraw this hated tax is by a mass and constant mobilisation of housewives, workers and youth. The campaign in St Helens points in the right direction, where the community is being mobilised section by section. Local meetings must be organised in community centres, Labour Clubs etc. to co-ordinate the opposition and mobilisation. From here mass

demonstrations linking campaigns across the country must be organised.

The numbers which can be mobilised on the streets will exceed the numbers that voted in local and general elections removing any Tory mandate. Workers in this mobilisation must be made to feel the strength of their own organisation and unity.

The campaign has to go beyond refusal to pay or refusal to implement the Bill. The Tories cannot be left to pick off individuals or small areas. As an experienced speaker from Scotland emphasised, in a meeting in Liverpool recently, **refusal to pay frustrates implementation but does not prevent it.** The essence of the campaign cannot be based on individual boycott. Transferring responsibility to the individual is a blue-print for disaster. The Tories do not mind making workers homeless. They will not mind cutting off electricity or switching off the water.

Not Just The Poll Tax

That is why the movement must seek the greatest possible links with all the struggles of working class communities. The Tories attack on many fronts at any one time and so must the organisations of the working class. Those fighting the Poll Tax should speak to workers in factories and win their support. While continuing to mobilise over the question of the Poll Tax a common front should be built on all the questions facing the working class over housing, education, health, social security, the environment etc.

No help will come from the leadership of the Labour Party on the Poll Tax. It has become such a sharp question that either labour councils oppose the Poll Tax and break the law, which itself means turning to the communities to defend the council, or they will have no choice but to implement it. That is why Kinnock and the right wing could not commit themselves to anything but words of protest.

But many left wing councils have capitulated in the past after saying that they were going to fight the Government. Without building support in the working class communities no campaign will win. Individuals may go to prison, but this in itself does not mean that the Poll Tax will be defeated.

We are calling therefore for a mass, non-sectarian campaign, that has a perspective of building and continuing to fight, of linking in Scotland and England all the struggles that are and will break out against the Poll Tax.