



INSIDE.

1986 reviewed —
pages 8&9

Viraj Mendis defies
Home Office — page 5

Silentnight strikers
fight on — page 3



TORY PLANS TO SELL OFF POST

THE break up of the Post Office and privatisation of all postal services was proposed this week by the influential right-wing Centre for Policy Studies.

This move will bring the loss of thousands of jobs and the closure of many services.

Handing over postal services to the speculators, this move is a direct attack on the jobs and living conditions of the 150,000 members of the Union of Communication Workers.

The Centre for Policy Studies is Thatcher's Think Tank. It was set up by her and former Education Minister Sir Keith Joseph. It has always made the running in the

formation of Tory government policy.

Telecom has been sold off. The Royal Mail, separated from the Post Office, has been split up into various sectors including letters, parcels and counter services.

Secretary for Trade and Industry Paul Channon has already urged the Royal Mail to establish its counter services as a separate business.

While noting that the British Post Office has a commendable record and that privatisation would be a new venture because postal services throughout the world are government-controlled and monopolised to a certain degree, the Centre for Policy Studies adds: 'The Government must do more if it means to ensure postal

BY CHRIS McBRIDE

efficiency and dynamism in the longer term.'

The Centre says that the Giro-bank could be privatised in 1987. The counter services could be put in private hands the following year.

It makes the ridiculous claim that the jobs in 20,000 sub-post offices are not at risk.

The example of the privatisation of bus services indicates that they are being slashed in rural areas. Postal services would certainly suffer the same fate.

The Centre even goes so far as to imply that postal deliveries could be taken over by milkmen or newspaper boys:

'Competition in delivery to sub-

urban households and businesses does not appear to present any problems.

'Already houses have regular deliveries from one or more sources — postmen, milkmen, newsboys and a host of handbill deliverers.

'If there are economies of scale why aren't these functions integrated into a single operation in urban areas?'

The reaction of the general secretary of the Union of Communication Workers Alan Tuffin was to hope that divisions in the Tory Party would stop the proposals coming into effect.

The government would face a fierce backlash from Tory MPs in rural areas, he warned.

As every class conscious post-worker knows, such pious hopes

will not stop the Thatcher government.

To stave off its crisis until after the next election it will sell off anything to maintain its revenues.

The postal service was set up as the first nationalised industry in Britain.

The Tory plans to place it in private hands, and tailor it to the needs of the speculators, demonstrates the completely parasitic nature of British capital.

In the interests of short-run profits it must destroy the living standards of millions. The postworkers are the latest in line.

The postworkers must demand that their union leaders mount a real campaign, in unity with printworkers and all others whose jobs and livelihood are now threatened.

Such a campaign cannot be postponed for the hoped-for election of a Labour government. It must be launched immediately.

£10,000 Special Fund

IN SO FAR: £7,279.03

TARGET: £10,000

AS WE ENTER 1987, the Workers Revolutionary Party is making a special appeal to members and supporters for the Special Fund of £10,000 which we need urgently.

The party's international contacts have increased greatly and a number of exchange visits have already taken place with members of the Trotskyist movement in Ireland, Europe, Australia and the Americas. Readers of Workers Press will have seen articles and letters from some of these contacts — but there have been many others which have resulted in exchanges of views, newspapers and other material. We will report developments.

For these discussions to proceed, however, we need money — particularly for fares. We allocated half the £10,000 fund for the international work, and we have already spent a large part of it.

We are sure that, after the isolation of the Workers Revolutionary Party in the past, our members and readers welcome the opportunity for wider discussions. We know you support this work politically but we need you to support it financially as well, either with an individual donation or by raising money from your branch members and sympathisers.

In addition to the international work, we have allocated half the fund for the expenses of moving the party headquarters and printing facilities, which is partially completed.

The largest single donation so far has been £5,000 from a member in London. Few members would be able to match this, but we can make up the rest of the fund with the hundreds of smaller amounts. We need the full £10,000 by February 1, 1987.

● Please send donations to: Workers Revolutionary Party
P.O. Box 735, London SW9 7QS



● Part of the contingent of the Trotskyist MAS (Movement to Socialism) on the huge Buenos Aires march against the Argentine government's planned amnesty for military torturers and murderers. See story page 16.

MILITANT'S LEADERS: DEFENDERS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

A RECENT interview given to *The Independent* by Militant leaders Pat Taffe and Ted Grant (15 December 1986) underlines yet again the thoroughly reformist and opportunist politics of these two self-styled Trotskyists.

Grant, expelled from the Labour party in February 1983, has outlined a perspective that will amaze anyone even slightly familiar with revolutionary Marxism.

'There is no way that Militant can disappear. Militant will become the majority in the Labour Party and the unions and will transform society during the course of the next decade.'

Let us spell out a few salient facts.

The Labour Party is a contradiction. It is a workers' party with bourgeois politics. That is to say, its politics accept as permanent the property relations and institutions of capitalism. In particular the Labour Party accepts as inviolate the capitalist state.

The class character of a political party cannot be judged simply from the point of view of those who support it or vote for it in elections.

This character is determined by the conditions of its historical origins, its relation to the struggle of classes and to the bourgeois state.

The Labour Party came into being at the start of this century, at the beginning of the epoch of imperialism. It arose out of the peculiarities of British social development.

As the first industrial capitalist nation Britain assumed the position of 'workshop of the world'.

This exceptional monopoly position for a period created fairly tolerable conditions for a privileged 'aristocracy of labour' which in part lived on the crumbs of imperialist exploitation.

The Labour Party based itself on the narrow interests of this privileged layer in the working class. It was never a socialist party: throughout its history it has renounced the class struggle and declared socialism to be a 'utopia'.

More than this, along with the trade union bureaucracy, the leaders of the Labour Party have been the principal instrument of bourgeois rule throughout the present century.

Capitalism long since ceased to be a progressive social system, long ceased to be able to develop the productive forces in a crisis-free manner.

The parasitic nature of capitalism was nowhere more clearly exposed than in the oldest capitalist country, Britain.

The bourgeoisie came increasingly to rely on their agents in the working class movement to sustain their rule. This was especially so in this country, given the absence of a peasantry.

With the decline of the Communist International and the rise of Stalinism these reformist agents were joined by the leaders of the Communist Party.

Without the cooperation of these labour leaders, capitalism could not have survived the turmoil of the inter-war period and the crisis immediately after the war.

Labour was returned with a massive majority in 1945. It used its offices in the bourgeois state to preserve capitalism intact.

It defended the interests of British capitalism abroad just as it defended those interests at home against the working class. It waged a series of dirty colonial wars in Kenya, Greece and Malaya against colonial and semi-colonial peoples.

To pretend to the working class that the Labour Party can ever, under any circumstances, be the instrument for its liberation, is to perpetrate the same fraud as Kinnock and the right wing leaders of the Party.

Ever since Thatcher came to office in 1979 their message to the working class has been: lie down and accept what the Tories dish out and wait for the election of a Labour government.

Taffe and Grant say little different.

Their politics are also clearly exposed when they say:

'We are in favour of a peaceful transformation of society, but if the right wing maintain their control of the trade unions, maintain their control of the Labour Party, then it can result in violent moods — which we are not in favour of — among the youth, among the most stirring sections of the working class.'

How can a movement claiming to be based on revolutionary Marxism be in favour of the peaceful transition to socialism? The power of the ruling class rests not on its property alone but on the bourgeois state — those 'special bodies of armed men': secret police, the army, the intelligence services etc.

To talk of a peaceful transformation of this state is a deception. It must be smashed and replaced by the dictatorship of the working class which will be exercised not through parliamentary institutions but through its own organs of power, soviets.

Grant's conception of a peaceful take-over of the Labour Party is an echo of the old Fabian notion of the gradual 'permeation' of the Liberal Party. With one difference.

British capitalism is irrevocably weakened after long years of relative decline, in recent years of absolute decline.

For a couple of years after 1945 the Labour government could provide a number of reforms — nationalisation, the setting up of the National Health Service — which helped tie the working class for a crucial period to capitalism.

Now that situation has changed qualitatively. The crisis of social democracy, the drive to expel Militant and all those who oppose Kinnock and company is ultimately an expression of the chronic decline of British imperialism.

We are, as a matter of principle, opposed to the witchhunt of Militant and will stand with all those who fight against it, whatever our political differences with those concerned.

But this cannot blind us to the reactionary politics of the Militant Tendency and its leadership which have long since broken all connections with Trotskyism.

THE TEACHERS' FIGHT

Advisory committee to decide all

BY MICK KING

THE powers given to Education Minister Baker in the new Education Bill must be understood by all trade unionists as an assault on basic rights and a signal of the deepening opposition to the Tory government.

Baker has removed the right of the teachers' unions to negotiate nationally with their employers.

Instead, an advisory committee appointed by Baker will determine pay and conditions.

Baker reserved the power to reject its recommendations should these stooges even so much as mildly contradict their master's voice.

The unions are left with only limited local negotiation on local conditions.

At one stroke, the right of unions to negotiate and represent their members has been taken away.

The enactment of these proposals in the space of a few days shows the determination of the government to crush not merely opposition to Tory education policy, but also any section of the working class or middle class which opposes it.

The government did not spend £6 billion in the miners' strike merely to close 'loss-making pits'. Nor did they move against the teachers merely to restore 'peace and calm' in schools.

Why should the Tory government take such draconian measures against a section of workers with little previous history of struggle?

The answer is that the battle which began over the erosion of pay since 1974 rapidly embraced the question of working conditions ('conditions of service').

The nature of the industrial action in systematically withdrawing from 'voluntary activities' — meetings outside school hours, much of the associated paperwork, and especially the covering of lessons for absent teachers — actually improved the conditions under



which teachers worked.

Teachers discovered that by collective action they could radically improve their lot: they were able to exercise some control over the intensity and tempo of their work.

Power to determine their rate of work had been placed in the hands of union members, power had shifted from the employers and their representatives — the heads.

The proposed sell-out by the leadership of the NUT therefore could not go unchallenged by the membership.

Politically and psychologically, the teachers were not prepared to accept a return to the situation prior to the dispute.

That is why they opposed the Coventry deal in such numbers as to force the NUT leadership to re-cook the

deal via the conciliation service ACAS.

The Tories know that the leadership cannot deliver the membership into the embrace of this government regardless of the ballot result.

Baker has to impose direct control in an attempt to crush the struggle of teachers lest it prove dangerous and contagious.

In doing so, he cuts the ground away from the old reformist leadership in the teachers' unions, especially the NUT, which has always posed as humane, liberal and committed to state education as well as representing the interests of its members.

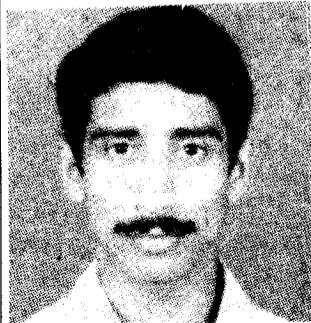
There now opens up the very real possibility of a challenge to these reformists.

Free Brutan Perera!

London picket at Air Lanka

MEMBERS of the Workers Revolutionary Party demonstrated against the continued imprisonment of Sri Lankan Trotskyist Brutan Perera outside the London office of Air Lanka on December 20.

Perera, who has been denied bail, may be held indefinitely under the right-wing Sri Lanka regime's emergency laws. The Revolutionary Communist League, of which he is a member, has stood firm in support of the struggle for the right of the Tamils for national self-determination.



The WRP leaflet demanding Perera's release asked passers-by to raise the matter in trade union and Labour Party branches and with MPs, to protest to the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, and to join the picket held every Thursday at the Commission's offices at 13 Hyde Park Gardens, London SW7, from 12 noon until 2pm.

King Billy rides again

BY GEOFF BARR

THE contest for the titles of most short-sighted and most reactionary Labourites in local government has produced a strong Devon contender.

Exeter City Council Labour Group has taken up the running.

It has worked in alliance with the SPD and Liberals to dominate the City Council for two-and-a-half years.

Until now it has done nothing very spectacular (nor has it done anything socialist).

But the city worthies have now made a discovery.

This is that William of Orange landed in Devon as the first step to seizing the English throne in 1688.

The 300th anniversary of this event will be in 1988. What better than a celebration!

Orangemen could just pour into Devon, pockets and chequebooks bulging.

Exeter City Council voted to spend £60,000 on a public-

ity campaign.

Local Labour Party members were outraged when they discovered what their 'representatives' were up to.

On Friday November 7 the Party general Committee passed a resolution, moved by the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) condemning the Council's support for the celebration.

It pointed to the close links between the Orange Order and the National Front and the British Movement, and that the celebration might attract fascists to Exeter.

The LPYS resolution pointed out that a show of Labour Party support for the triumph of the House of Orange gives a clear message to the people of Ireland.

The LPYS are not alone. Exeter Anti-Apartheid feels that if it opposes racist repression in South Africa and Namibia it should also

SILENTNIGHT STRIKERS FIGHT ON

SILENTNIGHT strikers are furious at the leadership of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT) who have issued a letter to the labour movement that 'the dispute is at an end.'

They didn't tell the strikers about this — they heard of it from the 'Financial Times' just before Christmas.

According to the FT, general secretary of FTAT Colin Christopher spoke to Labour Party employment spokesman John Prescod before issuing the letter.

Yet Christopher was elected recently partly on the ticket that he 'would see the dispute through until the end'.

The question is: to what end?

Is Kinnoch using the leadership of the union to discipline its members in order to present a 'clean face' in the election?

If so, the attack on Militant has now been followed by a

brutal attack on a section of workers.

At the Labour party conference, Kinnoch met the Silentnight strikers.

He said: 'Their cause is just and worth support — so I back the boycott.'

Where do he and the Labour leaders stand now?

The following is a statement from Terry Bennett, one of the Silentnight leaders:

'After almost 19 months the union has withdrawn official support. They state:

'In the light of all the circumstances the General Executive Council of FTAT have had to seriously review the situation and address themselves to the overall position of the union.'

'It should be appreciated it has been a long, difficult and

expensive dispute which has a serious effect on the resources of the union and regrettably can no longer be sustained.'

The fact that the employer has chosen to put up a wall of silence and not talk is no reason to give up and go away.

Effect

We are having an effect with the leafletting campaign and the sales of Silentnight beds are decreasing in the high street.

We need to continue discussion and we are asking the labour and trade union movement to ensure the boycott against Silentnight remains.

We are also asking that pressure be maintained

against the Co-op directors and managers of other stores who are still purchasing Silentnight beds.

We are appealing against our union executive committee making the dispute unofficial. We need your help and support — now more than ever.

The 88 remaining strikers and their families are determined to fight on.

We have been on strike since 10 June 1985. We are still on strike for the same principles.

For further information, speakers etc., contact: Silentnight Strike Office, 9 Frank Street, Barnoldswick, Colne, BB8. Telephone 0282-816709. or Terry Bennett, 22 Garrick Street, Nelson, Lanc. 0282-603055.

Spirits high at Hanger's . . . but warning bells ring

BY BOB MYERS

AFTER three months on strike, the sacked workforce at Hanger's Roehampton factory remain determined to win their reinstatement.

Links have been formed with many other sections of the working class in struggle: printers, miners, the Silentnight workers and also with the sacked workforce of the BTR com-

pany in South Africa.

Before the strike the Hanger's metal workers' stewards refused to meet a representative of the South African strikers who work for the same company.

Now the Hanger's men are all wearing T-shirts printed for them by the co-op set up by the men in South Africa after they were sacked.

A recent Hangers meeting stood in a minute's silence in memory of the South African BTR stewards who were kidnapped and murdered.

Just before Christmas the Roehampton men and their wives and girlfriends organised a splendid party with food, drink and presents for the children. Many men expressed their willingness to continue the fight — till next Christmas if necessary.

But while the men picket and travel round the labour movement seeking support, the strike leadership are containing the action to Roehampton while work continues at all the other branches.

Management are maintaining their position that only 80 of the original 300 men are needed. But at an ACAS conciliation service meeting they offered to take another 60 back, while warning they would probably have to be sacked again next March!

Ruthless

Against this ruthless multinational, who prepared for at least a year for this dispute, the officials and strike committee have no perspective other than to continue a war of attrition at Roehampton.

A resolution has gone from the London metal workers branch to the TASS annual conference demanding the nationalisation of the limb making industry.

This call is vital and must be fought for throughout the limb industry if the Tory government and employers' plans for speed-up and wage-cutting are to be stopped.

But the resolution will be just pious words if those calling for nationalisation allow the strike to continue isolated and eventually strangled with a negotiated settlement leaving many men outside the gates.

No matter what the problems, the other Hangers branches must be shut down. This will only be achieved in fierce opposition to the union officials who are scared of sequestration and a fight against the government's anti-union laws.

'Not money, but jobs'

Says sacked printer's wife

Printer's wife MAUREEN WHIPPS from Southend spoke to Workers Press at the Women Against Murdoch march before Christmas.

'My husband's a sacked printer. I'm working, but now we've only got a third of the money coming in that we had before.

We've still got to pay the mortgage, the electric, the rates. We've still got to eat.

I still have to have my train fare to work. Every penny we saved has gone and we're getting deeper in debt.

In my immediate family those involved are my husband, my brother-in-law, my sister.

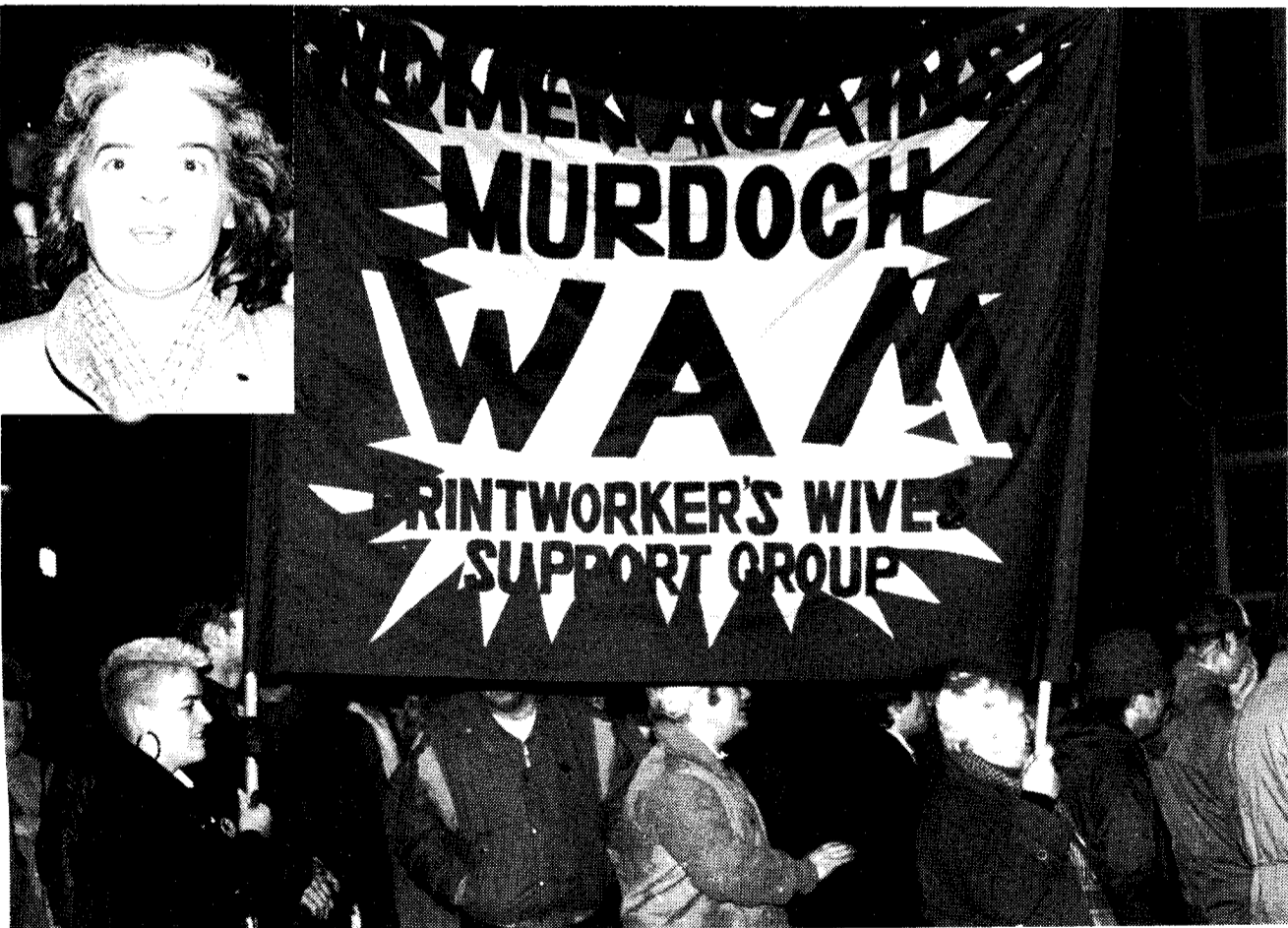
We will probably have to sell our house. I don't know where we'll go from there.

I think the men should stick out. It's not about money, it's about jobs.

Their jobs have been taken by people who are unqualified, who have been put into Wapping and trained by Mr Murdoch for nearly a year before it happened.

They've been given EET-PU cards and they are not electricians, they're not qualified.

My husband has been a



printer for 32 years.

For someone to come along who is no way qualified to print a paper and take away another man's job who's been in the trade 32 years is absolutely despicable.

What else are they but scabs?

The TUC should tell Hammond to get his men out of there.

They've got no right to have electricians' cards, let alone be in there printing.

Hammond is in Thatcher's

pocket, they want to see one union.

If the printers had done this to them there would be the biggest hue and cry in the land.

It won't stop at printers' job, it'll be plumbing jobs and so on.

The TUC and a Labour government should instruct Hammond to get those men out.

I don't know if the plant should be taken over and nationalised. It's private property.

They have nationalised in-

dustries before now, though.

If a Labour government comes in, first of all they must repeal the laws that the Conservative Government have brought in to repress the unions and the working man.

They started with the miners, now it's the printers, next it will be British Telecom — their ballot result is out soon.

It won't stop here, it will be every union in the country. She wants to oppress the working class.

It's political, government

backed, hence the thousands of police they put over here every week.

What does it cost the country in policing? At least £3 million up to today.

The dispute's 11 months old, and we're determined to keep on fighting whatever we have to lose.

I still think the men should fight on whatever hardship it causes me.

Even if we have to go back to council accommodation we're determined to keep on fighting. I mean that.

Tory dole inquisition

THE GOVERNMENT is currently introducing an 'available for work' test to drive hundreds of thousands of claimants off the dole.

The existing requirement to be available for work to qualify for payment will become the basis for an inquisition.

Pressure on claimants to fit within a narrowing set of rules will ensure a rising per cent of defaults and a consequent sharp increase in the numbers disallowed benefit.

Already in operation in some areas since October 31, new claimants can have their right to benefit ended if they are unable to start work immediately (even if there isn't any), if they are looking after children or a disabled relative and cannot find an alternative minder, if they are unwilling to move away from home or travel vast distances daily, if they refuse unsocial hours except on health grounds, or if they put limits on the type of job or the level of pay they will accept.

On any one of these counts a new claimant can be classified as unavailable for work be refused benefit.

A separate test of the same type is aimed at the long-term unemployed elderly and disabled to get them off the unemployed register.

These plans have been tested at 18 'pilot' unemployment benefit offices.

They were monitored to gauge accurately how many people might be removed from benefit and what 'savings' could be made.

The original internal memo which outlined the procedures to be followed explained:

Condition

'Availability for work is a fundamental condition for the receipt of unemployment benefits and, during the experimental period, it will be drawn more clearly to claimants' attention than hitherto. There is no change in the law.'

However, the next paragraph makes clear that new criteria are involved.

'Being available for work means not simply being ready to take a job should

REPORTS BY BERNARD FRANKS

one turn up (!) but taking active steps to seek work. This can sometimes be difficult to establish but, during the experimental period, no claim should be treated as straightforward if answers to questions on the claim forms or a claimant's attitude cast doubt on his (sic) availability' (underlining in the original).

Availability for work was a requirement built into the 1948 unemployment benefits legislation.

Proved

It was 'proved' by signing on at the labour exchange, and going for job interviews where these were arranged by the exchange officers.

Claimants could be tested by providing relevant work then checking to see why this had not been accepted.

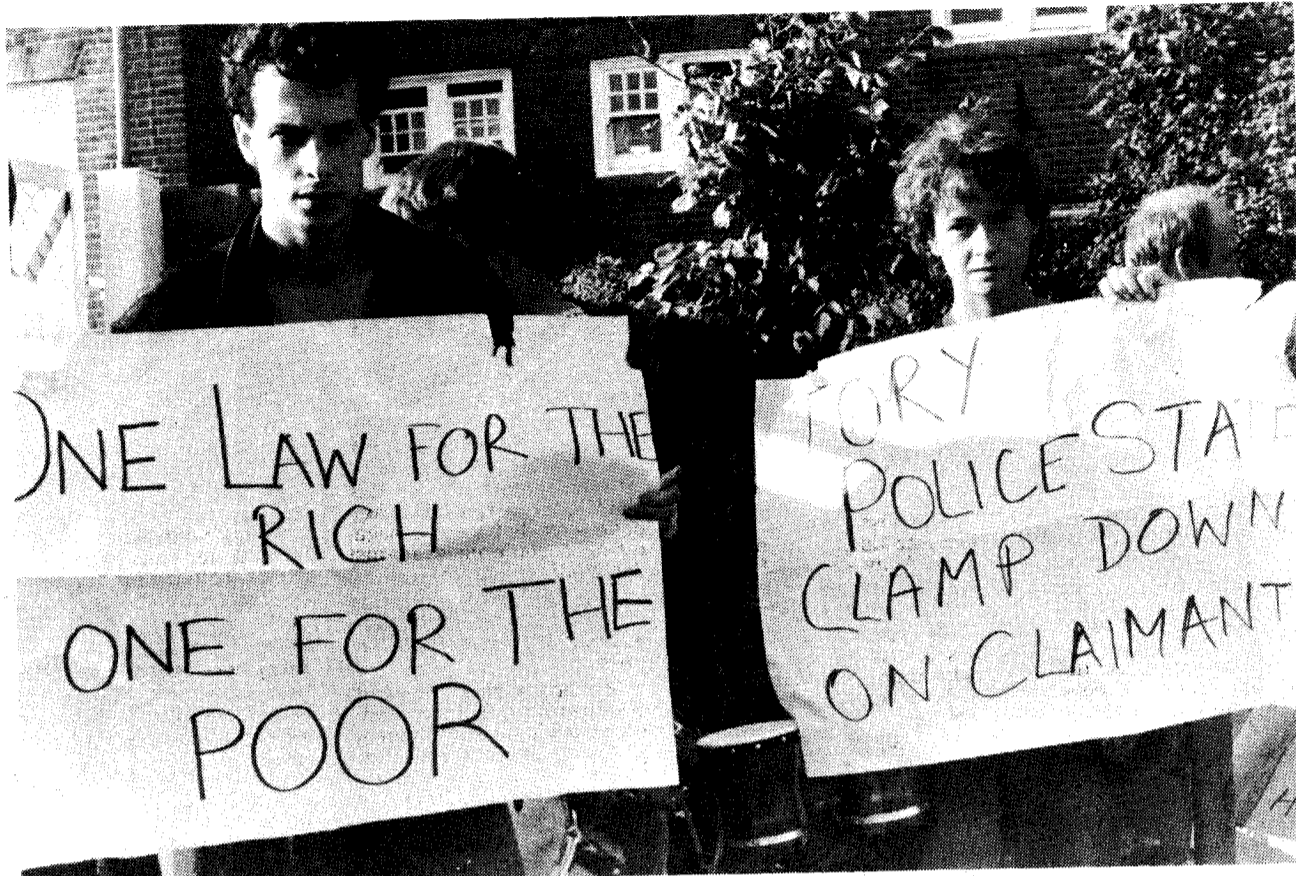
An added 'incentive', then as now, was the Poor Law principle of paying benefits at such a low level that any job is better than being on the dole.

It appears ludicrous to apply an availability rule when jobs are just not available.

On the contrary: the Tories are all the more concerned to force claimants out of benefit, off the unemployment register, and into the worst of sweatshops and cheap labour jobs.

They ask claimants to do the near impossible to qualify.

From 16 June 1986 new claimants at the pilot study offices were required to fill in a questionnaire, form UB671A.



'Being available for work means not simply being ready to take a job should one turn up but taking active steps to seek work.' Although this effectively means fighting the Tories and the Labour and Trade Union leadership, these activities will probably not meet the government's conditions.

Failure or refusal would lead to failure to qualify.

The internal memo required:

'A record is kept of the number of claimants who cease to claim within two weeks of receiving the availability questionnaire, i.e. by next signing-on day'.

This was to find how many claimants could be forced off benefit by the questionnaire.

However, if names as well as numbers were retained a stigma could be attached to a subsequent claim by the same people.

The pilot studies have been a huge success as far as Paymaster General Kenneth Clarke is concerned.

The government claim that the scheme is purely an administrative change and that the unemployed have

'nothing to fear' (Lord Young, Employment Secretary).

The pilot offices covering the newly unemployed achieved an average of 7.2 per cent unemployed people discontinuing their claims, as against 3.5 per cent in other offices.

Many more claims were deferred pending decisions by adjudication officers, leading to a further 2.6 per cent being disallowed.

All told, 361 claimants lost benefit in the study areas.

This is equivalent to 20,000 claimants a month if applied to all the offices.

The availability for work test for the long term elderly and disabled led to around 100 having their supplementary benefits stopped in the six offices where the policy was tested.

adequacies' which, they claim, can be made good by reform.

Ominously, the Labour Party has not even made the usual pre-election promises to do that.

As a step towards a socialist policy for dealing with unemployment once and for all, unemployed people should combine with trade unionists, DHSS and employment office workers to draw up and campaign on their own programme of demands for a proper benefits system.

This would be expressed in terms of fully adequate payments, clearly defined claimant rights, acceptable staff pay and working conditions and an end to all snoop-ing and housing systems.

The main criterion would be, not what governments choose to provide within the confines set by the needs of capitalism, but what is needed to ensure the well-being and self respect of those whom it seeks to demean and rob.

Prospective Labour candidates must be asked where they and a future Labour government will stand on this issue.

How benefits are slashed

AVAILABILITY testing is only one part of the onslaught of the Tories on the unemployed.

Failure to conform to the requirements of the so-called 'Restart' scheme by those unemployed over a year is leading to wholesale disallowance from benefit.

Over 1,000 people have lost payments, many illegally, because their disbaring was in process before the scheme was even in force, according to welfare rights lawyers.

Plans are in hand to cut Housing Benefit drastically from April under the Social Security Act.

The Needs Allowance rise is to be held below the inflation rate, while the rate at which the allowance is withdrawn will increase much more quickly as income rises.

Hound

The 1985 benefit rule changes were designed to hound young people out of their lodgings and back to their parents so payments could be cut.

Heralded by a gutter press

campaign about seaside holidays on the dole, a benefit limit of £70 a week was fixed for full board and lodging in hostels.

At the same time, limits of two, four or eight weeks were set for boarders under 26 years of age to claim benefit in defined areas.

The effect has been to swell the total of desperate, homeless young people sleeping rough.

Meanwhile the understaffing of DHSS offices, leading to distressing delays in processing and paying, can only be seen as deliberate government policy to destabilise the system.

Hundreds of thousands of claims are currently outstanding, letters pile up, switchboards are jammed and frustrated violent outbursts by claimants are becoming common at some offices.

Clerical officers are cracking-up or simply walking off the job, some on strike, some to leave for good.

People on both sides of the counter are being hounded. They have a common interest in uniting to vent their just anger on the 'Tory gov-

ernment.

However, it is not just a question of the Tory government.

It is one of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism that the more it improves the productivity of labour and the ability to supply all human wants, the more it creates mass unemployment and prevents precisely those processes from operating.

Profit

Resting on the system of production for profit it would sooner see vast sections of itself and its product destroyed to revitalise the rest, than see itself entirely replaced with a system of production purely to satisfy need.

As part of the destructive process workers are forcibly removed from employment — then condemned and hounded for being without work.

It is to the discredit of Labour leaders that they do not expose and attack these aspects of capitalism, but only to its 'failings' and 'in-

Many had their benefit stopped because they said they could not travel a long way to work.

The government's conclusion is that 200,000 claimants could be deterred from claiming within a year, a 'saving' which would more than cover the £14 million cost of employing 14,000 extra staff to run the system.

Welfare rights campaigners believe the figure will be much higher because roughly 400,000 people join the unemployment register each month.

The *Guardian* recently quoted a letter from a senior civil servant, sent to a regional benefit manager, stating: 'we may be able to deter 2 to 4 per cent of fresh claimants who are not serious about looking for work and disallow another 2-3 per cent who are not available' (29 November 1986).

Reports that a 'bounty-hunter' scheme is to operate, by which Claimant Advisers have to achieve 30 'write-offs' a year, leading to loss of benefit for at least 17 weeks, have been strongly denied.

'Available for work'?

The questions on form UB671A are:

1. What are you doing to find work? (you may be asked to produce evidence).
2. Can you start work today?
3. If not, (a) why not (b) when can you start?
4. What do you normally do?
5. Are you able and willing to take any full time job? If no, (a) please give reasons (b) give the hours you can work each day.
6. Are you willing to work beyond your home town?
7. Are you willing to work beyond daily travelling distance?
8. Do you have any adults or children to care for during working hours? If yes, can you make immediate arrangements for their care if you get a job?
9. What was your weekly wage or salary (before deductions) in your last job?
10. What is the minimum weekly wage or salary you are willing to take?

RELEASE JAILED

TRADE UNIONISTS

S WALES MINERS

DEAN HANCOCK: Oakdale — Eight year sentence. Gartree maximum security prison, nr Market Harborough, Leicester

RUSSELL SHANKLAND: Taff Merthyr — Eight year sentence. Gartree maximum security prison, nr Market Harborough, Leicester

KENT MINER

TERRY FRENCH: Betteshanger — Four year sentence

from January 1985. B73383, Northeye Prison, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex

PRINTERS

STEPHEN SAVAGE: SOGAT Casuals — Three months from October 1986, Sheerness Prison.

MIKE HICKS, SOGAT NEC, Imperial FoC London Wholesalers — Four months plus eight months suspended. Wormwood Scrubs, from December 5 1986.

Waddington says go! Viraj Mendis says NO!

Thatcher's Britain

VIRAJ MENDIS continues to defy the capitalist state by maintaining sanctuary in a church in Manchester.

He says: 'I will not voluntarily return to my death in Sri Lanka.'

Home Office Minister David Waddington decided before Christmas that Mendis must be deported.

He says, however, that he will not order the police to break into the church and arrest Mendis.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) responded with a powerful demonstration and rally just before Christmas, at which Viraj said: 'How can I rely on the Home Office when their practice of raiding people's houses at dawn, followed by detention and deportation is well known?'

Frame

'How can I rely on Manchester police force which has already sought to frame me up once? I am determined to continue fighting.'

'I have no alternative but to take public refuge. The Church of the Ascension here in Hulme fully supports my decision and is giving me sanctuary.'

'At the same time my lawyers are starting judicial review proceedings. The campaign is at a higher level than ever before. Waddington must be forced to reverse his decision or resign.'

'It is time for the leadership of the Labour party and the Alliance to openly support me.'

'In order to succeed the

activities of the campaign must intensify.

'I appeal to all organisations and individuals to rise to that challenge.'

● Manchester has become a centre of successful fights against deportations — 20 campaigns have been won in the last year.

Viraj Mendis told Workers Press: 'If you organise against the immigration laws you will be deported, that is Waddington's message.'

'The visa controls he has just introduced, for instance, make it impossible for relatives to come to this country even to attend funerals.'

'The Tories' attack on us has hit us hard, but it has only made us more angry and we will hit back even harder.'

'The police started taking notice of me after I helped organise a march of 2,000 against deportations in Manchester in 1985.'

'It brought together nine people facing deportation.'

BY MARTIN RALPH

They have all won except me.

'We have shown that the best way to fight back is to mount a campaign in alliance with all those willing to fight.'

'Manchester City Council have given support because they are willing to help blacks and other people faced with deportation.'

'By keeping me in this church, the Tories think they have won, but we are organising a conference against deportations.'

'This will help to defend me, and to organise the fight against the immigration controls.'

'We are asking the leadership of the Labour Party to make a public statement to say they support our campaign and, if they win the next election, that they will not deport me.'

'For this stance the Labour leadership must not bow to racist pressure. They

think this may cost them votes.

'Since the miners' strike, however, many more people have been listening to our case.'

'We have found there is a clearer understanding of the capitalist state and of the police since their treatment of the miners.'

'We can only fight on our feet, not on our knees. We put our lives and principles higher than a Labour victory.'

'In our conference we will have Americans who have used sanctuary for hundreds of Latin Americans, and won.'

The campaign to keep Viraj here, and the deportation conference, must be fought for inside the trade unions and labour movement.

There is a deep hatred against the Tory government within those communities faced with deportation and other racist threats.

The Tories always react

with cynicism and callousness to these communities.

As Manda Kunda said at the VMDC rally: 'I have not exactly won my right to stay in this country. Waddington has said I can stay so long as I keep my job.'

Many hundreds, if not thousands, are faced with these threats.

It is not clear what steps the Tories will take to try and defeat the sanctuary campaign which is a political act of defiance. It has therefore upped the stakes for the Tories.

It defies capitalist law and order and in its own way asks the question: who rules — the working class or the capitalist class?

Danger

There is danger for the capitalist class in this campaign while the the working-class movement to fight racism is growing. The November 'Workers against Racism' conference in Birmingham, attended by over 1,500 people, reflects this.

The conference 'resolved to launch a Europe-wide campaign against escalating government attacks on the rights of immigrants, refugees and black people'.

Those involved in the conference should forget any sectarian differences and give the sanctuary campaign full and organisational support.

The anti-deportation conference is being held in Manchester on 11-12 April, carrying forward the slogans of the historic VMDC march in July last year.

All supporting organisations should attend. Viraj certainly intends to be there!

● For details, contact the VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15. Telephone: 061-234-3168.

'Primary purpose' rule splits family

BARBARA in Manchester is fighting a typical case against the immigration laws: the Home Office is using the 'primary purpose' rule to stop her husband coming to this country. She has issued this statement:

'Barbara met Shakeel in June 1983, whilst they were both working in Germany. They lived there together as man and wife and in March 1984 they got engaged.'

'They continued living together until Shakeel was requested to return to Pakistan in October 1984.'

'In 1985, Barbara joined Shakeel in Pakistan where they were married in June and soon after applied for Shakeel's settlement in the United Kingdom.'

'Barbara became pregnant and very ill, so after living in Pakistan for some months she had to return to England. In February 1986 her daughter was born.'

'In March 1986, Shakeel was interviewed in Islamabad and in the same month his

application was refused on the 'primary purpose' rule. An appeal has been lodged.

Their daughter has never seen her father and she is being deprived of that vital bonding of love between father and child. He will be a stranger to her and nothing can ever repay these lost months the Home Office has denied her.'

By refusing Shakeel entry, the Home Office is forcing Barbara to make an unnecessary decision — either leave her family and roots in England and live in a foreign country, or divorce her husband whom she loves dearly and who is father of the child. By keeping this family apart, the Home Office is trying to break down their marriage. ●

● Supporters are asked to write to David Waddington at the Home Office, and to Barbara's MP, Andrew Bennett. For further information, contact: Barbara's Defence Campaign, South Manchester Law Centre, 584 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester M13.

A time for the children? The Workers Revolutionary Party Christmas party left nobody in any doubt about the answer. The energies and talents of younger offspring of members and supporters was very much in evidence, the centre of attraction undoubtedly being the appearance of seven-and-a-half-week-old twins, Fiona and Alison. Following a session of musical games supervised by equally energetic mums and dads, the 30 or so invited guests retired to the real purpose of the proceedings, the food and (non-alcoholic) drink! Balloons popped unexpectedly eliciting further squeals of delight, and the angles of the variety of headwear with which every guest was provided by the organisers became ever more rakish. Unfortunately one of the more grown-up grown-ups, Norman Harding, was called away on other business and missed the arrival of Father Christmas who found a present for every child and handed out the raffle prizes, assisted by the knowing, sharp-eyed Emma. 1986 was not the year of the revolution in Britain as predicted by Healy and company but the Workers Press children's party was by no means an insignificant step forward in the right direction.



WAGE CUTS, not seen in Britain since the 1930s, are in store for some of Britain's lowest paid workers in 1987.

That is one consequence of the abolition of the Wages Councils which protected the poorest paid workers, like those in catering.

These cuts come at a time when, according to figures released by the Low Pay Unit, the gap between those on the lowest rates and those on the average wage is wider than ever before.

In 1886, when pay figures were first collected, the average wage for men in full-time manual jobs was £1.21 a week.

Those in the lowest fifth earned 69 per cent of the average then — but now the poorest fifth get only 65 per cent of the average wage.

CHILD POVERTY has tripled in the last 21 years, with the greatest increase in the last few years, according to the Child Poverty Action Group.

Two million children live at or below the level of supplementary benefits.

CPAG Director Ruth Lister said in a memorandum issued just before Christmas that the figures are 'an indictment of successive governments' with millions of children condemned to hardship and deprivation.

Most of the recent increase in child poverty is in families with two parents — and unemployment is clearly the main reason why millions of children are now being raised on supplementary benefits.

OFFICIAL statistics seriously underestimate the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation in London.

The London Research Centre has published figures which show the homeless crisis is out of control.

In September 1986, councils placed 6,153 families in bed and breakfast hotels. This is a 41 per cent since a Shelter survey six months earlier.

Homelessness is rising fastest in the outer London boroughs, and the Association of London Authorities' Emergency programme on Homelessness now predicts that if nothing is done there will be 12,000 families dumped in temporary accommodation by 1989.

A QUARTER of a million people became homeless in 1985. Over the last 20 years, the number of families in temporary accommodation has gone up from 2,518 families to 12,970.

Homelessness also affects young people, 80,000 of whom are now homeless.

It shows that more than half a million pensioners live in homes officially unfit for human habitation.

Four million families live in substandard accommodation. 2.5 million families live with extreme damp.

Severe overcrowding affects nearly a million people, and nearly half a million households have no home of their own, like the young couples who have to live with in-laws.

When people live in hostels and bedsits, they are frequently living in places needing major repair.

People in such 'multiple occupation' buildings are nine times more likely to die from fire than people living in any other kind of housing.

Government cuts in housing amount to 60 per cent in real terms since 1979.

IRELAND

IMPERIALISM'S MAIN PROPS IN IRELAND

MAIRE O'SHEA'S letter in the 13 December issue of Workers Press puzzled me a great deal.

If I parroted 'Rome Rule' (Workers Press mis-printed this as Home Rule) then it was not to agree with the loyalists 'who wish to justify their resistance to any contact with 26 county government representatives.'

I can see no point in loyalists meeting with Fitzgerald except to organise pogroms against the nationalist community in the North. Here is the meat of the matter.

The Catholic Church and the Orange Order are not separate institutions from the bourgeois order in Ireland.

They are its main props, its moral policemen, inseparable from imperialist domination.

I can only conclude that Maire is confused on the nature of religion and its role in society.

The power of both institutions, north and south, must be broken if socialism is to be established.

This demands a conscious Marxist leadership of the working class.

That point was developed in PB's letter of 19 July if my article was a little weak on the subject.

No bourgeois party can face that task, so revolutionary is its consequence, nor

BY GERRY DOWNING

will it ever be solved by the fact that the church has no answers to mass unemployment and the fact that a large industrial proletariat has replaced the huge peasant population of Ireland 30 years ago.

If we claim the name of Marxists we must see religion as the 'sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.' (Marx)

So if clerical reaction is showing itself again it is because people seek comfort in thoughts of life after death as there is no comfort in the dole queues.

Others turn to drink and drugs but escapism in all its forms avoids the problem of how to defeat oppression in this world.

'For the day-labourer, who all his life remains a beast of burden in the service of the bourgeoisie, the ideal right to influence the fate of the nation by means of the parliamentary elections remained little more real than the palace he was promised in the kingdom of heaven.' (Trotsky: Terrorism and Communism)

So how do we proceed as Marxists?

'Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of right and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.' (Marx)

To fight clerical reaction you must fight the state.

In the early part of 1933 a

ferocious anti-communist witch-hunt was launched.

The Communist Party of Ireland was about to be re-founded and clerical fascism was determined to stop it.

Beginning on Monday 27 March a three day siege of Connolly House, the new party's HQ, commenced.

A Lenten sermon in the Pro-Cathedral was used to inflame the mob.

The rank and file of the IRA and other workers rallied to support the Party they saw as the hope for a socialist revolution.

But the IRA under Sean McBride refused all support and expelled the communists from their ranks.

After three days the mob won, fired the building and assaulted the defendants while the state forces looked on or assisted the attack.

In the Mother and Child crisis of 1951 the same Sean McBride, whom Maire implicitly defends, repeated the same cowardly capitulation to the Archbishops.

The intervention of Brown of Galway, Lucy of Cork and McQuaid of Dublin was to preserve their own privileged positions under capitalism, not on behalf of the greedy doctors.

The 'cry of the oppressed masses' was music to their ears and they wanted it to stay that way.

The first criticism is the criticism of religion and as someone who had the 'benefits' of the brutality of an Irish Christian education I will fight its poisonous influence as long as I am able.

STOP STRIP SEARCHING

STRIP-searching and other methods of humiliation are being intensified against the Irish Republican women prisoners convicted at the Brighton bomb show trial.

'In Durham jail we are stripped after visits of any sort, with cell searches and cell changes, on visits to hospital or at any time when we leave the prison,' wrote Ella O'Dwyer, who is serving a life sentence along with Martina Anderson, to friends in Glasgow just before Christmas.

'We are body searched six times daily and constantly

watched by cameras, warders and dogs.'

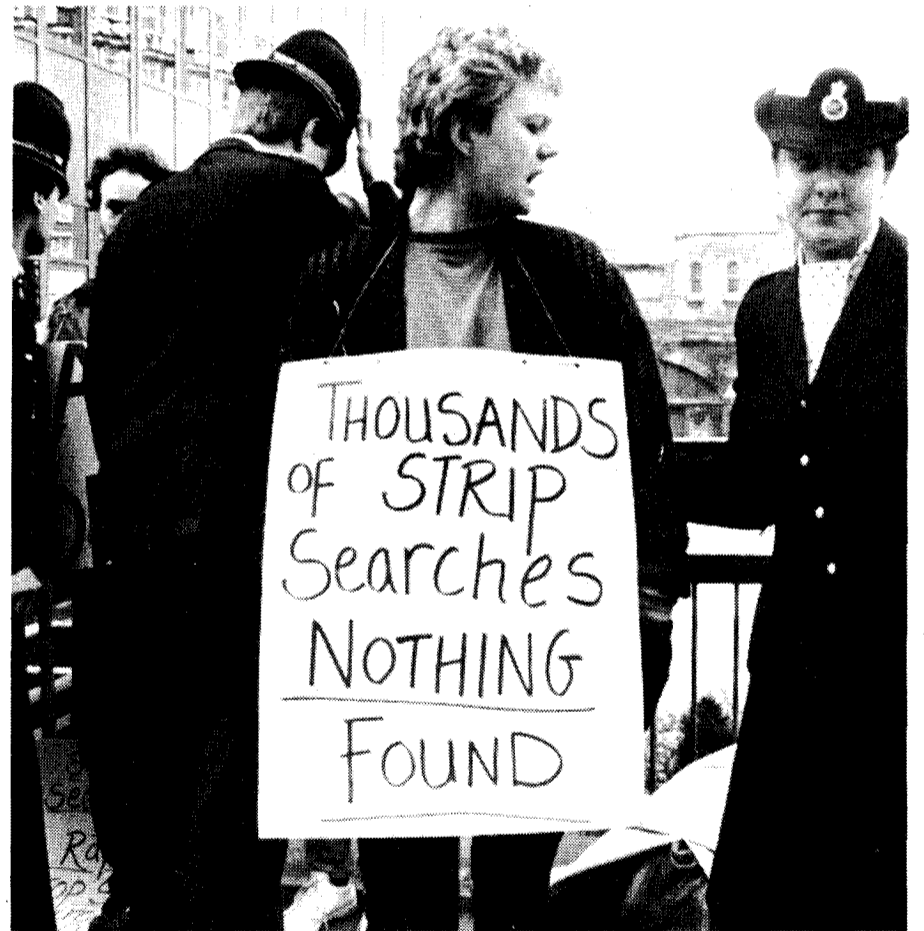
Ella describes how prison authorities constantly limit prisoners' educational facilities, how their supply of winter clothing is unlikely to arrive before February, and how 'Victorian' conditions are imposed on the laughable pretext of 'lack of funds'.

'One small teaspoonful of disinfectant can be had daily by those cleaning on the wing. No mops are allowed in the process of wiping up everything from pubic hair, urine, stale food or vomit.'

'Twice a sluice overflowed for want of maintenance and

the women were expected to get on their knees to clean up the urine and waste with the permitted hand scrubbers. Some of us refused, on principle, to do so and one woman, having refused a "direct order" to clean it up, was put on report. The "charge" was later dropped.'

The greatest scandal is that the official leadership of the labour movement — which is rightly protesting about the treatment of imprisoned printer Mike Hicks — hypocritically allows this doubly barbaric treatment of Irish prisoners to go unchallenged.



Demonstrators were arrested wholesale during the Old Bailey show trial in May of last year, while peacefully protesting against the strip searches.

REPUBLICAN PRISONERS OF WAR

LONG LARTIN

HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ

LIAM BAKER: 20-year sentence, 464984.

JAMES BENNETT: 20-year sentence, 464989.

EDDIE BUTLER: Life sentence, 338637.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: 20-year sentence, 131877.

GERRY CUNNINGHAM: 20-year sentence, 132016.

JOHN MCCOMB: 17-year sentence, B51715.

ANDY MULRYAN: 20-year sentence, 461576.

PATRICK MULRYAN: 20-year sentence, 461575.

PARKHURST

HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX

NOEL GIBSON: Life sentence 879225.

PATRICK HACKETT: 20-year sentence, 342603.

GERRY McDONNELL: Life sentence, B75882.

PAUL NORNEY: Life sentence, 863532.

TOMMY QUIGLEY: Life sentence 69204.

PETER SHERRY: Life sentence, B75880.

WAKEFIELD

HM Prison Love Lane, Wakefield, W Yorks. WF2 9AG

NATALINO VELLA: 15-year sentence, B71644.

ALBANY

HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS

MARTIN BRADY: Life sentence, 119087.

HARRY DUGGAN: Life sentence, 338638.

BILLY GRIMES: Life sentence, 758661.

SEAN HAYES: 20-year sentence, 341418.

GARTREE

HM Prison Gartree, Leicesters Rd, Market Harborough, Leics, LE16 7RP

RONNIE MCCARTNEY: Life sentence, 463799.

STEPHEN NORDONE: Life sentence 758663.

JOE O'CONNELL: Life sentence, 338635

ROY WALSH: Life sentence, 119083.

FRANKLAND

HM Prison Finchale Ave, Brasside, Durham

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG: Life sentence, 119085

BRENDAN DOWD: Life sentence, 758662.

PAUL HOLMES: Life sentence, 119034.

CON MCFADDEN: 20-year sentence, 130662.

EDDIE O'NEILL: 20-year sentence, 135722.

LEICESTER

HM Prison Welford Rd, Leicester, LE2 7AJ

PAUL KAVANAGH: Life sentence, 1888.

BRIAN KEENAN: 21-year sentence, B26380.

PATRICK MCGEE: Life sentence, B75881.

WORMWOOD SCRUBS

DONAL CRAIG: 4 years.

LIVERPOOL

HUGH DOHERTY: Life sentence, 338636.

WANDSWORTH

VINCE DONNELLY: Life sentence, 274064.

DURHAM

HM Prison Durham, Old Elvert Street, Durham.

MARTINA ANDERSON: Life sentence, D25134.

ELLA O'DWYER: Life sentence, D25135.

REMAND PRISONERS: BRIXTON

HM Prison, Jebb Avenue, Brixton, London SW2 5XF.

MICHAEL J MCKENNEY: L46486

G. (DANNY) McNAMEE: L48616

REMAND PRISONER: WORMWOOD SCRUBS

HM Prison, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London W12 0AE

LIAM QUINN: L49930

INNOCENT MEN AND WOMEN FRAMED BY THE BRITISH POLICE:

CAROLE RICHARDSON: 290719, HM Prison Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire

PATRICK ARMSTRONG: HM Prison Gartree.

PAUL HILL: 462778. HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs.

GERARD CONLON: 462779, HM Prison Long Lartin.

JUDITH WARD, HM Prison Durham.

HUGH CALLAGHAN, 509499, HM Prison Gartree.

JOHN WALKER, 509494, HM Prison, Long Lartin.

BILLY POWER, 509498, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs.

GERARD HUNTER, 509495, HM Prison Frankland.

RICHARD McILKENNY, 509498, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs

PADDY HILL, 509496, HM Prison Gartree.

They are all serving life and in the case of Carole Richardson, indefinite detention.

BY CHARLIE WALSH

THE Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) has called for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Their submission to Viscount Colville, who was appointed by the government to carry out the annual review of the Act, lists 20 objections to the Act and argues that it is contrary to Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The document points out that the Labour party, which introduced the Act in 1974, is now committed to its repeal

— which is also called for by Fianna Fail, the Republic's largest party.

It says: 'The IBRG regards the PTA as a racist act and a discriminatory weapon of repression used primarily against the Irish community in Britain to stifle lawful and legitimate activity, and which has institutionalised anti-Irish racism into policing policy and the legal system in Britain.'

In a press statement, the IBRG calls for 'vigorous campaign', involving the opposition parties, the trade union movement, the churches and the Irish community, seeking the repeal of the Act.

The statement calls on the Irish government to condemn the Act and demand its repeal and adds: 'The Irish Foreign Minister, Peter Barry, recently in Vienna took a strong line on human rights in Russia.'

'What a pity he does not show the same concern for the Irish in Britain'.

Ninety Seven per cent of those held under the Act since its inception in 1974 were innocent victims of the legislation. The West Midlands PTA Research and Welfare Association has also made a submission to Viscount Colville calling for a repeal of the Act.

WORLD NEWS.

Arm the African workers

A reply to Norah Wilde

NORAH WILDE has seriously mis-represented the Workers Revolutionary Party's policy on South Africa in her contribution to Workers Press ('Weapons of Criticism and the Criticism of Weapons', December 20, 1986).

She writes: 'WRP opposition to the arming of the Azanian workers throws its political line on South Africa into considerable confusion.'

What evidence does she have of this 'opposition'?

Her article is characterised by a lack of any quotations from the WRP, apart from references to an earlier article by Comrade Geoff Barr.

And these references hardly sustain the claim that the Party is opposed to the arming of the African workers.

To put it mildly, it is surely legitimate to raise, as Cde Barr does, the question as to whether the violence employed by the ANC is always directed at appropriate ends.

But it is surely disingenuous to translate this into the proposition that the WRP thereby opposes the use of violence or the necessity for the armed struggle in South Africa.

Let us state matters as clearly as possible. There can be no peaceful solution

BY GEOFF PILLING

to the struggle in South Africa, just as there can be no peaceful road to socialism in Britain.

This is a fundamental principle of Marxism, of Trotskyism.

The South African working class will not overthrow capitalism without an armed struggle against its capitalist oppressors. A civil war is being waged in South Africa between oppressed and oppressor.

Only a pacifist humbug and opportunist would condemn the use of violence by the oppressed.

Our criticism of the slogan 'Arm the African workers' has a quite different content, as Norah Wilde surely knows.

There are those on the left, principally the Torrance-Healy-Redgrave rump who

were expelled from the Workers Revolutionary Party in October 1986, who have used this slogan in the British working class movement as a means of avoiding the real political questions involved in solidarity actions in support of the South African working class.

The main prop of the apartheid regime in South Africa is British capitalism, which still holds considerable investments in that country. The responsibility of the British working class here lies in striking blows at its own ruling class, represented by the Tory government.

It is this sort of action that the TUC and Labour leaders seek at all costs to avoid.

The slogan 'Arm the African Workers' is a typical demagogic demand which in practice allows these leaders to get off the hook.

Those who continue to parrot this slogan know full well that the Labour leaders have not the slightest intention of carrying out such a policy, even assuming they had the material resources to do so.

These same people never of course demand 'Arm the Irish Workers' and for the simple reason that Ireland is too close to home.



Longest US steel strike ever

AMERICAN steelworkers were attacked by police in Lorain, Ohio and injured were taken to jail from the hospital.

Four were injured and 14 arrested and charged with rioting (a misdemeanour) and five also with inciting to violence (a felony).

The 22,000 men at the USX corporation have been locked out since July — the longest dispute in the American steel industry (above).

The company refused to continue negotiating with the union over company proposals for a new contract which would have massively cut wages and benefits.

The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) were prepared to agree to cuts in production costs in line with those agreed with other employers but USX wanted more.

Each time the company has tried to ship steel pipe produced before the lock-out began, union members have mobilised to block the shipment, resulting in ugly clashes with the police which culminated in the worst injuries and arrests on November 26.

The line of least resistance for opportunism is always on international questions, as Trotsky long ago pointed out.

What is required is a campaign to force the Labour leaders to organise effective blacking action against the South African regime which

must be linked with a struggle against the Tory government.

If they refuse to fight for such action they will be exposed as effective accomplices of Botha.

It is also necessary to de-

mand of any future Labour government that it ceases all trade with Pretoria, that it withdraws diplomatic recognition from the regime and provides all material and political assistance to those in struggle against Botha and company.

Peking takes fright over students

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

CHINA'S students defied new Public Order laws this week, marching thousands strong through Peking the capital in a demonstration for democracy and political freedom.

The Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, taking fright over student protests, last week rushed through public order measures curbing rights to demonstrate.

The new restrictions, similar to Tory Public Order laws in Britain, ban demonstrations in Peking's central Tian'anmen Square, in areas near the Great Hall of the People, and near the official residences of top party leaders.

People wishing to demonstrate will have to seek police approval five days in advance, notifying the proposed time, route, and even expected numbers.

Police will decide whether the marches or rallies can take place, and alter routes if they consider traffic or public order would be disrupted.

For almost a month now, students in various parts of China have been demonstrating for greater political freedom, democratic rights, and less bureaucracy.

Latest to demonstrate had been 3,000 students at the Qinghua University — many of them sons and daughters of the Party elite — who marched to other campuses and then to Peking's central city centre on December 23.

At Nanjing, as many as 4,000 attended rallies for five consecutive nights.

The biggest demonstrations have been in Shanghai, where 10,000 took to the streets. That Shanghai students led the way follows the city's traditional vanguard role.

The huge industrial and port city was where China's modern national struggle first confronted foreign imperialism, where the Communist Party was born, and where the Chinese working class fought its first heroic struggles sixty years ago.

Among the slogans being raised by the students is 'No modernisation without democracy'. Taking the bureaucracy up on its own terms, they are saying that moves to encourage freer initiatives and material incentives in the economic field must be accompanied by political rights.

The leadership's response has been twofold. In contrast with the bureaucracy's current drive to welcome foreign capitalist investment and trade, and accept Western cultural products, radio

and television broadcasts last week warned against importing 'Western bourgeois ideals'.

'The Communist Party wants to grant more democracy to speed up its reforms, but this does not mean we adopt Western bourgeois democracy,' said vice-minister Wang Daming.

'Laws preserve freedom but they can also be used to control those who go overboard, disrupt public order and encourage Western capitalist ideals of freedom.'

A leading academic, Professor Zhu, meanwhile warned against any repetition of the 'Cultural Revolution' of the 1960s, saying it had brought great suffering to people. He said students should beware being deceived by such methods as had been used then, such as posters, open debates and demonstrations.

Official student union spokespersons taking part in a radio debate said social problems could not be solved by demonstrations and marches, and students should stay on campus and get on with their studies.

Doubtless France's Tory prime minister Chirac who recently had to back down to student protests against his education measures must have heartily wished he could persuade French students to take such advice!

Although as yet there is insufficient information coming out on the underlying causes moving the Chinese student protests, it is known that there is discontent over social contrasts in China, as well as political rights.

The bureaucracy has tried to placate the students by offering individual career prospects and privileges, whether in the form of imported consumer goods or freer cultural activity, for an aspiring middle class.

But when the students demand freer political expression too, and democratic demands, however naive, this brings the frightening prospect of the working class also being aroused.

The ability to attract capitalist investment is very much a matter of offering a combination — the freedom to make profits and a well-disciplined workforce.

The bureaucracy's reforms, by increasing social differences and making them more obvious by the uneven spread of consumer goods, can arouse discontent among the workers. Coupled with democratic aspirations, this would inevitably raise the spectre of trade union activity and strikes — open class struggle within a supposedly 'socialist' society.

The bureaucracy is not only trying for the moment to avoid all-out repression which would drive the students into more dangerous channels, but also to ensure that its 'liberalisation' policy remains tightly under its own control.

Mayekiso faces charge

BY CHRIS BAILEY

MOSES MAYEKISO, General Secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) of South Africa and Chairman of the Alexandra Township Action Committee, could stand trial for his life on a charge of subversion, according to the London based organisation 'Friends of Moses Mayekiso.'

Moses, who is well known to many trade unionists in Britain after his speaking tour last year, disappeared into solitary confinement in a windowless cell at John Vorster Square in Johannesburg five months ago.

He had returned voluntarily to South Africa from Europe at the height of the arrests of trade union leaders.

Neither his family, union nor lawyers, all of whom have made constant requests, have seen him since then.

The International Metal Workers Federation have also sought unsuccessfully to gain access to him.

Three weeks ago the

South African Justice Ministry stated that he was about to be charged under Section 54 of the Internal Security Act (treason and subversion).

Several residents of Alexandra have already received letters from the police telling them to notify any change of address as they will probably be called as witnesses on a subversion trial.

The authorities are claiming that the Alexandra Street Committees 'usurped the authority of the state.'

Moses is a dedicated socialist, opposed to the two stage theory of revolution in South Africa.

In his speeches in Britain he stressed that 'apartheid was the form of rule of capitalism in South Africa' and that 'a black capitalist government might even be worse.'

The international campaign for his release must be stepped up.

Amalgamated Engineering Union members in Britain in particular should demand that their union, which is part of the International Metalworkers Federation do more than just send protest postcards.

It is time to take industrial action to defend the jailed South African trade unionists.

1986: CLASS STRUG

JANUARY

Heavy fighting broke out in the 'People's Republic' of **SOUTH YEMEN**, different factions within the nationalist regime using army units against each other. The capital, Aden, was under siege. The Soviet Union, with which South Yemen has close aid-and-trade ties, was unable to intervene. It organised evacuation for foreigners, and asked the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to use its good offices to bring about a cease-fire.

FEBRUARY

'The people of **HAITI** have liberated themselves from one of the most horrendous dictatorships in the world,' their delegate told a Caribbean conference.

Hated dictator Jean Claud 'Baby-Doc' Duvalier fled, and his infamous 'Tonton-Macoutes' (secret police thugs) felt some of the fear they had once inflicted on the people.

Haiti's poverty-stricken masses eagerly turned to trade union and political organisation, youth keen to learn and claim their rights. More recent demonstrations have voiced their concern and anger that the new regime is not bringing the progress and democratic rights they demand. There are calls for a second, real revolution.

A fortnight after Baby-Doc's departure, US helicopters rescued former **PHILIPPINES** ruler Ferdinand Marcos from his besieged presidential palace.

Hundreds of thousands of

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

people had taken to the streets of Manila in support of challenger Cory Aquino. Army chiefs, unsure of their troops, and still facing Communist Party-led guerillas of the New People's Army in the countryside, decided to ditch the corrupt Marcos.

A guerilla truce and foiled right-wing coup later, the military — and Marcos' former backer, Washington — are biding their time and organising. Filipino workers are organising too, industrially and politically.

In **SWEDEN**, Social Democrat prime minister Olaf Palme was assassinated in the street near his home. Many thousands of Swedish workers and youth marched in the funeral procession. There was anger at the attack, and angry criticism of police handling of the investigation.

A former Swedish supporter of Lyndon La Rouché's US-centred rightist movement was held briefly, then released. To date the murderer and those behind him have yet to be found, or the motive established.

MARCH

Elections in **FRANCE** brought return of right-wing government under Gaullist Jacques Chirac, reflecting widespread disillusionment with reformist Socialist Party's failure to halt rising unemployment, and austerity measures. The French Communist Party's serious decline was reflected in the polls, which also saw a sinis-

ter rise for the racist National Front.

APRIL

US aggression against **LIBYA**, beginning with the US fleet being sent into the gulf of Sirte, climaxed in the bombing of Tripoli, killing many civilians.

There were worldwide protests, including demonstrations in several British cities. The Workers Revolutionary Party organised a picket on the US embassy and march to Downing Street the evening of the bombing. We declared full solidarity with Libya against US imperialism, and called for US bases to be thrown out of Britain.

In the **SOVIET UNION**, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion sent a radioactive cloud across much of Europe, causing serious contamination.

The disaster awakened millions to the nuclear power danger, and strongly reinforced the anti-nuclear movement, especially in West Germany.

MAY

Riot police were called out to smash student demonstrations in **SOUTH KOREA**; to attack hospital workers marching in Asuncion, **PARAGUAY**; but by far the biggest struggles to erupt were of course in **SOUTH AFRICA**.

Fierce battles raged in the Crossroads shanty town, security police and hired

thugs confronted by militant youth defending their community. More than 16,000 government troops were sent against Alexandra township, near Johannesburg.

The racist regime meanwhile launched an airborne terrorist operation on May 19 against refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

There was also an upsurge in fighting in **SRI LANKA**. The government desperately ordered planes to bomb the port of Jaffna, in its effort to regain control from Tamil freedom fighters.

In **PAKISTAN**, hundreds of thousands turned out to greet returned opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and voice their opposition to the right-wing military regime.

JUNE

The racist regime in **SOUTH AFRICA** declared a new state of emergency on June 12. Police raided offices of all Black trade union and political organisations, thousands were arrested or had to go into hiding, and measures were taken to control press reporting.

Workers Press declared (June 28) 'Trade Unionists Must Act: **BLOCKADE SOUTH AFRICA!**' We called for industrial action to hit South Africa's trade, and referring to the links between British capitalism and South Africa's racism declared 'It is one war on two fronts!'

As Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Bujak and others were arrested in **POLAND**, the Workers Revolutionary Party arranged a visit to Britain by Polish oppositionist Stefan Bekier, a Trotskyist. He was able to speak to miners and shipyard workers in Scotland and Tyneside, to Ford workers at Basildon, linking workers' struggles.

In **SRI LANKA**, Trotskyist Brutan Perera and other comrades of the Revolutionary Communist League were arrested on frame-up charges as part of a reactionary offensive against working class and Tamil freedom supporters.

JULY

As more news came of repression against trade union-



JUNE: Shop stewards at Govan Shipbuilders, Glasgow, greet Left — Simon Pirani (WRP); second left — Stefan Bekier (Pol France)

THE year 1986 saw a deepening capitalist crisis affecting industries and governments around the world. Workers and youth were in struggle in the metropolitan capitalist countries, the underdeveloped so-called 'third world', and the Stalinist bureaucracy-deformed workers' states.

The working class is international, and all its struggles are inter-connected. To make that unity conscious and build a revolutionary international is the historic aim of real communists that is, Trotskyists.

For the Workers Revolutionary Party, 1986 was a decisive year in which, freed of Healy's corruption, opportunism, and treachery we rededicated ourselves to this aim.



JULY: WRP delegation lobbies TUC General Council demanding trade union sanctions against South Africa



AUGUST: WRP joins Belfast demonstration on 15th anniversary of the introduction

GGLE WORLD WIDE



Delegation campaigning for support for Polish Solidarnosc union. (left Trotskyist) and second from right — Gerard Laffont (LOR of ...)

ists and youth in **SOUTH AFRICA**, the WRP, together with other Trotskyist groups, organised a campaign for trade union sanctions, calling for a lobby of the TUC General Council on July 23.

Trades Councils in Birmingham, Lambeth, and elsewhere, and many trade union branches supported the lobby.

In **CHILE**, trade unionists tested their reviving strength with a two-day general strike against the Pinochet dictatorship, and thousands of youth clashed with armed police and troops on the streets of Santiago.

AUGUST

Troops opened fire on crowds of anti-government demonstrators in several **PAKISTAN** cities.

In **GREECE**, new laws from the 'Socialist' government allowed landlords to impose huge rent increases, thousands of tenants faced eviction, and trade unionists came out on strike in protest.

From **HUNGARY**, there was news of miners' strikes against pit closures. One of the strikes was at Tata-banya, where 30 years ago miners fought in the Hungarian uprising.

The plight of **TAMILS** fleeing the reactionary Sri Lankan regime was shown dramatically when 152 refugees were found drifting in open boats off Newfoundland, **CANADA**, having been put off a West German ship.

Capitalist media propaganda depicting the fleeing Tamils as a 'threat', instead of dealing with the reasons behind their exodus, was strongly condemned in a front-page Workers Press statement by guest-writer Viraj Mendis, himself a Sri Lankan worker fighting deportation by the British government.

SEPTEMBER

In **BOLIVIA**, the government declared a state of emergency, ordered hundreds of arrests, and the army out to halt a march of 7,000 miners on the capital, La Paz. Bolivia's tin miners were fighting continued sackings and closures.

A picket was organised on

the Bolivian embassy in London, in support of the miners and for the release of Trotskyist miner Eleuterio Gutierrez, whom the state has held for over a year without trial, on frame-up charges.

In **AUSTRALIA**, Bob Hawke's Labour government announced an austerity programme cutting welfare spending while easing tax burdens for the rich, in its efforts to rescue a crisis-hit capitalist economy.

OCTOBER

In **IRELAND**, the Irish Republican Army's first General Army Convention in 16 years discussed how to achieve united socialist republic, and introduced a historic change in its constitution to permit Republicans taking seats in the Free State Dail.

Approved later after heated debate by Sinn Fein's Ard Fheis (conference), this change of strategy was seen as likely to shake up the Irish party political scene.

At same time, Irish Republicans affirm they will continue to wage armed struggle against British occupation in North, where meanwhile Thatcher's Hillsborough agreement was floundering under attack from Loyalist die-hards.

In **ISRAEL**, nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu, kidnapped by Mossad agents after blowing whistle on Israeli nuclear weapons, was remanded by a secret court pending trial on 'treason and espionage' charges.

News from **COLOMBIA** of the murder of trade unionist Everth Marin Cortini brought a demonstration outside the Colombian embassy in London. Everth was well-known among

T&GWU members here with whom he'd worked to organise low-paid cleaners and catering workers.

On the thirtieth anniversary of the workers' uprising in **HUNGARY**, the Workers Revolutionary Party was joined by other groups in a commemorative rally in London, with Hungarian revolutionary Michael Varga and former *Daily Worker* Budapest correspondent Peter Fryer among speakers.

Similar meetings were held in other British cities, and by Trotskyists in **ITALY, IRELAND, ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA**, and elsewhere.

NOVEMBER

In **IRAN**, parliament speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani blew the gaff on secret US approaches and arms deals, leading to the 'Irangate' crisis which has blown up in Washington. US President Reagan's Administration is now hit by twin scandal, as Iran arms deals were used to finance right-wing 'Contras' fighting **NICARAGUA**.

There, US flyer Eugene Hasenfus, shot down while on mission to help Contras, had revealed details of CIA involvement in terror war.

DECEMBER

The ridiculous figure cut by Thatcher's top civil servant 'lying on behalf of his government' (or as he insisted, 'being economical with the truth') did not impress the judge in **AUSTRALIA** where the British government was trying to ban a book on MI5.

Ex-agent Peter Wright threatens to reveal details on how the secret service plotted to bring down Wilson government.

The US government faced

investigation of the 'Irangate-Contragate' scandals and US press anticipated fall of Reagan in coming year.

In **FRANCE**, massive demonstrations by students and school youth won workers' support and forced Chirac government to back down on reactionary education 'reforms'.

This has been followed by eruption of strikes in public transport, railways, and shipping. The French working class is on the move.

Stepped-up repression in **SOUTH AFRICA**, with stringent press censorship, and regimentation of society under effective military command.

Thousands of Black youth and children spend Christmas in detention; state censors reports of parents' demonstrations.

In Birmingham, delegates representing 58 trade union branches, trades councils and anti-Apartheid groups hear Irish shopworker Catherine Reilly on how to wage industrial action against apartheid trade.

Conference decides to step up campaign for workers' sanctions, organise solidarity with African workers' freedom struggle.

WORKERS PRESS and the Workers Revolutionary Party will be playing its part in this vital fight in the coming year.

We will also be trying — with your help — to expand and improve our coverage of workers' struggles throughout the world.

We will pay special attention in 1987 to the efforts which have already begun to rebuild, on sound Marxist foundations, the Fourth International as World Party of Socialist Revolution.

Despite the many practical difficulties after Healy's expulsion, the defections from our movement led by renegade Michael Banda and the efforts by US Workers League secretary David North to block international discussion, the fight against the politics and methods of the Healy clique has proved a starting point for rebuilding the Fourth International on a principled theoretical and programmatic basis.

This political task has begun on two sure foundations — promoting the widest possible international discussion amongst Trotskyists, and assuming to the full our international responsibilities in working class solidarity action. On this basis, and whatever our remaining problems, we can look forward confidently to the coming year.



APRIL: WRP demonstrates outside US embassy after US bombs Libya

VIETNAM AND TROTSKYISM

A STALINIST MAS

THIS fourth part of our series, by SIMON PIRANI, deals with the massacre of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in 1945. In September that year, an insurrection took place in Saigon: when the Japanese were defeated, the workers formed soviet-type committees and took to the streets demanding national independence and socialism.

The Stalinists of the Vietnamese Communist Party helped the French and British imperialists — to whom Stalin had 'given' southern Vietnam at the Potsdam conference — to crush the uprising.

OCTOBER 1, 1945. Vietnam had been through six weeks of revolutionary convulsions, coming to a climax in the last week of September when British, French and Japanese troops occupied Saigon city centre, displacing the Vietminh administration and threatening terror against the revolutionary workers and peasants.

After repeated attempts, the Vietminh negotiated a truce with the British on 1 October, the chief result of which was that imperialist troops — British, French and Japanese — were given 'free passage' by the Vietminh through the defiant Saigon suburbs.

A one-week ceasefire between 3 October and 10 October was used by the imperialists to strengthen their forces. On the 5th, General Leclerc arrived at the head of a French Expeditionary Force.

As the French and Gurkhas renewed their offensive against the Trotskyists and other resistance forces, Tran Van Giau had the nerve to issue a leaflet condemning the Trotskyists as 'French imperialist agents'.

The Trotskyist fighters who retreated to the west were disarmed at Cho-Dem, states the Struggle report. ('The August Revolution and the "Struggle" Group', files of the ISFI, Paris).

The Struggle forces who went east tried to mobilise two armies, the Hoang-Pho I and Hoang-Pho II, when they were surrounded at Xuan-Truong by large numbers of armed Vietminh forces: Tran Van Thach, Nguyen Van So and Nguyen Van Tien were taken to Thudaumot where they were given a military trial and shot on the orders of Kieu Dac Thang, a common criminal and jailbird made a General courtesy of Duong Bach Mai (the Stalinist police chief); Phan Van Chau and Phan Van Hum took the direction of Bien-hoa, from where they hoped to reach Hue.

'Now we have no news of these comrades... (Later reports indicate that both Van Hum and Van Chau were killed by the Vietminh).

Nguyen Thi Loi, another comrade on active service, fell at Can-Giuc (Cholon).

All the Trotskyists at Thudaumot were exterminated. At Mytho, Tana, Bien-hoa, Cantho, Tayninh, there were mass arrests of Trotskyists.

Binh Thai Thong, of Struggle, was arrested at Mytho while presiding at an interprovincial meeting of delegates from the villages and districts. Thong was disembowelled.

How many other comrades of the Fourth International paid with their lives for their allegiance to the

cause of revolution?

'There were those who were able to join the resistance in divisions (of the Vietnamese army) whose commanders were either with us, or sympathetic.

'For example the Third Division, commanded by Nguyen Hoa Hiep, had a large number of Trotskyists.'

The Trotskyists in other groups fought just as heroically as those of Struggle. The Go-vap tramwaymen's militia, led by members of the ICL, made a stand against the Vietminh, Gurkhas and French troops on the Plaine des Jongs. They held out until January 1946, when their leader Tran dinh Minh was killed by the Viet Minh.

A report in the ISFI files indicates that LCI fighters were wiped out by the Vietminh at Kien-an on October 23rd, 1945. ('A "Moscow Trial" in Ho Chi Minh's Maquis', in the ISFI files).

The leader of the Struggle group, Ta Thu Thau, met his fate on the way back from his journey to north Vietnam. Arrested at Quang-Ngai in central Vietnam by the Vietminh, he was placed in front of a People's Tribunal.

Due no doubt to the esteem in which Thau was held as a workers' leader, the tribunal three times declared him not guilty of crimes against the people. Despite this the veteran revolutionary, a former teacher who had been half-paralysed during his imprisonment at Poulo Condor, was taken out and shot by the Vietminh. (Reported in 'Quatrieme Internationale', August 1946).

The documented proof of the huge scale of the repression can not be reconciled with those apologists for Stalinism who claim that Ho Chi Minh did not know about the massacre, that perhaps it was the work of some over-zealous rank-and-filers, that Tran Van Giau was afterwards disciplined by the Vietminh as a result of it, etc etc.

The reports submitted to the ISFI, particularly, confirm indisputably that the Vietminh worked conscientiously and deliberately, and often effectively aiding the French and British, to wipe out the Trotskyists and other resistance forces.

The Vietminh and the French

The Vietminh's attempts at compromise with the allies were not as strong as French imperialism's determination to re-establish colonial power.

The more the Vietminh decimated the revolutionary forces in the resistance, the more they found themselves under attack from a ruthless imperialist enemy which gave no quarter.

Having destroyed the revolutionary leadership of the Vietnamese working class, the Vietminh turned to the bourgeois nationalists of the Vietnam Revolutionary League and the Vietnam Nationalist Party,

On 23 October, 1945, the day that LCI militants were massacred at Kien-an, the Ho Chi Minh government in Hanoi signed a pact with the nationalists to work jointly against the French.

The Indochinese Communist Party, at its conference on 9-11 November 1945, decided on an even more astonishing gesture to appease the anti-communist leaders of the nationalist forces: they dissolved the Communist Party, which was not to be reconstituted until 1951!

The French finally agreed to talk to Ho when they had strengthened their military grip on Vietnam.

Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu was installed as governor in Saigon, while General Leclerc sent a flotilla carrying 13,000 troops into the Gulf of Tonkin in the north.

On 6 March 1946, an agreement was signed permitting French troops on Vietnamese soil, recognising

Vietnam as a free state within the French Union — and leaving the question of dividing the country (the French were in favour of this) to a future referendum.

This agreement was justified by Vietminh general Vo Nguyen Giap to a mass rally in Hanoi on the grounds that the Bolsheviks had also signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty with Germany, which enabled it to strengthen itself for future struggles.

There is a difference: the Brest-Litovsk treaty was signed by revolutionaries who were working actively for the success of the German revolution, and simultaneously mobilising the Red Army and the Russian working class to fight the invading imperialist forces; the treaty with the French was signed by Stalinists who had set out with the stated intention of doing a deal with imperialism, and who far from organising revolutionary workers to defend state

property, had threatened those who took property from the bourgeoisie and landowners with death — and ruthlessly carried out that sentence against the Trotskyists.

Conclusion

Neither the Hanoi deal nor the Fontainebleau negotiations which went on from May to September 1946 could satisfy the French imperialists' thirst for conquest.

On 24 September 1946 they bombarded Haiphong harbour, killing thousands, and plunged Vietnam into a war which ended seven years later at Dien Bien Phu, and re-started immediately with the entry of American troops who replaced the French.

The Vietminh strategy of 'People's War' was not, as was claimed even by Trotskyists, an extension of the communist strategy of working-class revolution: the long-drawn-out struggle was forced on the Vietnamese

people because the working-class revolution of August 1945 was betrayed in the most despicable and violent traditions of Stalinism.

Apologists for Stalinism like Spencer do not even seriously consider the strategy of workers' revolution advanced by Trotskyists: he only quotes the historian Buttinger who said the Vietminh were right to regard resisting the French in Saigon as insane.

So-called 'Trotskyists' like Martin McLaughlin likewise argue that the Vietnamese Trotskyists 'committed a severe tactical error in pressing ahead with the strikes and demonstrations in Saigon' because they faced the British-French occupation force, with Chinese Kuomintang forces in the north. ('Vietnam and the World Revolution', by M. McLaughlin of the Workers' League (US), p. 17).

But if it was a 'severe tactical error' to oppose the

The Saigon insurrecti

The following article was written by a Vietnamese worker who participated in the Saigon insurrection in 1945. It was first published in 1968, in the French newspaper 'Informations-Correspondance Ouvrieres', and then in 1975 in the British magazine 'Solidarity'.

ONE of the main concerns of the Vietminh Committee was to ensure its 'recognition' by the British authorities as a *de facto* government. To this end the Committee did everything it could to show its strength and to demonstrate its ability to 'maintain order'.

Through its press it ordered the dissolution of all the partisan groups that had played an active role in the struggle against Japanese imperialism.

All weapons were to be handed over to the Vietminh's own police force. The Vietminh's militia, known as the 'Republican Guard' (Cong hoa-ve-binh) and their police thus had a legal monopoly on the carrying of weapons.

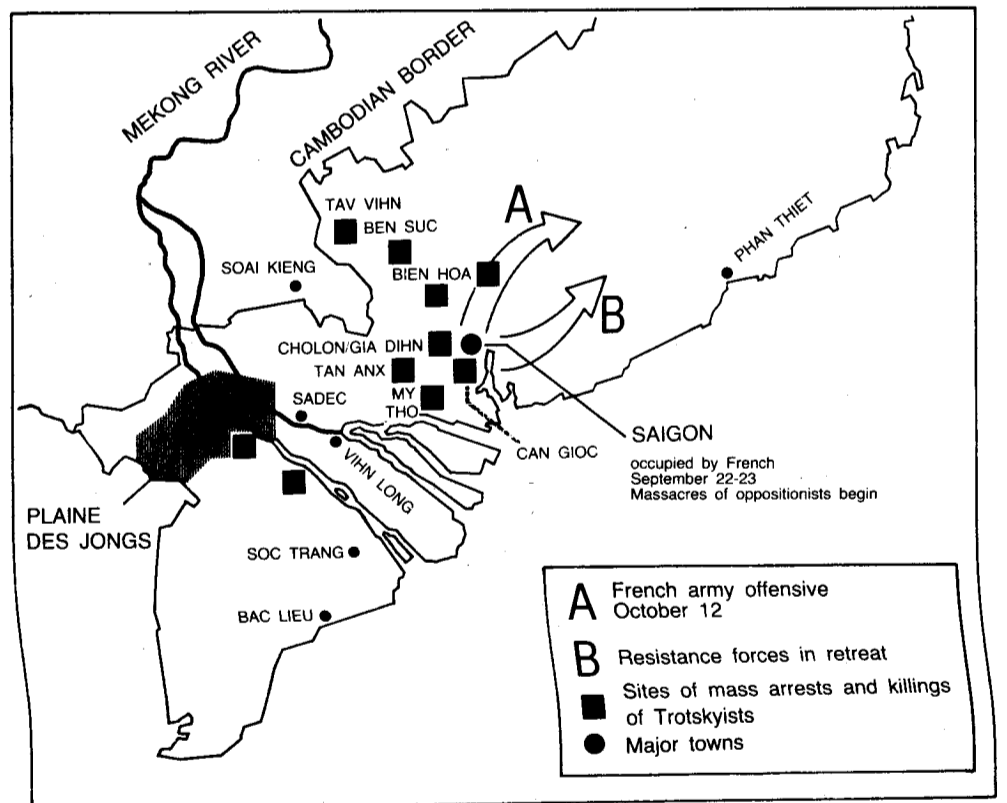
The groups aimed at by this decision were not only certain religious sects (the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao) but also the workers' committees, several of which were armed.

Also aimed at were the Vanguard Youth Organisation and a number of 'self-defence groups', many based on factories or plantations.

These stood on a very radical social programme but were not prepared to accept complete control by the Vietminh.

The Trotskyists of the 'Spark' ('Tia Sang') group, anticipating an imminent and inevitable confrontation with the military forces of Britain and France, started to distribute leaflets calling for the formation of Popular Action Committees (to-chuc-uy-ban hanh-dong) and for the arming of the people.

They advocated the creation of a popular assembly,



Southern Vietnam in 1945

to be the organ of struggle for national independence.

Workers of the big Tramway Depot of Go-vap (about 8 km from Saigon), helped by Tia Sang militants, organise a workers' militia.

The militia issues an appeal to the workers of the Saigon-Cholon area to arm themselves and to prepare for the inevitable struggle against the forces of British and French imperialism.

By now General Gracey has proclaimed martial law.

Before it abandons the centre of Saigon the Vietminh Committee plasters the walls with posters, inviting the population to 'disperse into the countryside', to 'avoid confrontation', and to 'remain calm, because the Committee hopes to open negotiations.'

A sense of insecurity hovers over the town, which slowly drains itself of part of

its Vietnamese population.

During the night of 22-23 September 1945, French troops, supported by Gurkhas (commanded by British officers) re-occupy various police stations, the Post Office, the Central Bank and the Town Hall.

They meet no immediate resistance.

The news spreads like a trail of gunpowder and triggers off a veritable insurrection in the working class districts of the town.

Explosions are heard in widely separate areas.

The movement has broken out without anyone giving any kind of directive.

The Vietminh has certainly not called for insurrection.

Their one preoccupation is 'law and order' and their own accession to power — following 'negotiations'.

In all the outlying suburbs,

trees are cut down, cars and lorries turned over, primitive furniture piled up in the streets.

Elementary barricades are set up to prevent the passage of French and Gurkha patrols and the taking up of strategic positions by the imperialist forces.

The centre of the town rapidly falls under the control of the French and Japanese troops, supported by Gurkhas.

But the poorer suburbs (Khanh-hoi, Cau-kho, Banco, Phu-nhuan, Tan-dinh and Thi-nghe) are firmly in the hands of the rebels.

The rebels themselves are not a homogeneous lot.

Among them are members of the Popular Committees, of the Vanguard Youth, Cao Daiists, and even 'off the line' groups of Stalinist 'Republican Guards'.

Part Four of a Workers Press series

SACRE

re-imposition of French imperial rule in Saigon in 1945, was it not a still greater one to attempt to form a workers' administration in Paris in 1871?

Was it not 'insane' for the Kronstadt sailors and workers to declare a workers' government in May 1917? And surely a still greater 'tactical error' to 'press ahead' with the July 1917 demonstrations in Petrograd?

At all these points, when the working class entered on the scene of history in its thousands and millions — which is precisely what makes a revolutionary situation — revolutionary leaders took the working class into the struggle, often convinced that it held the possibility of defeat.

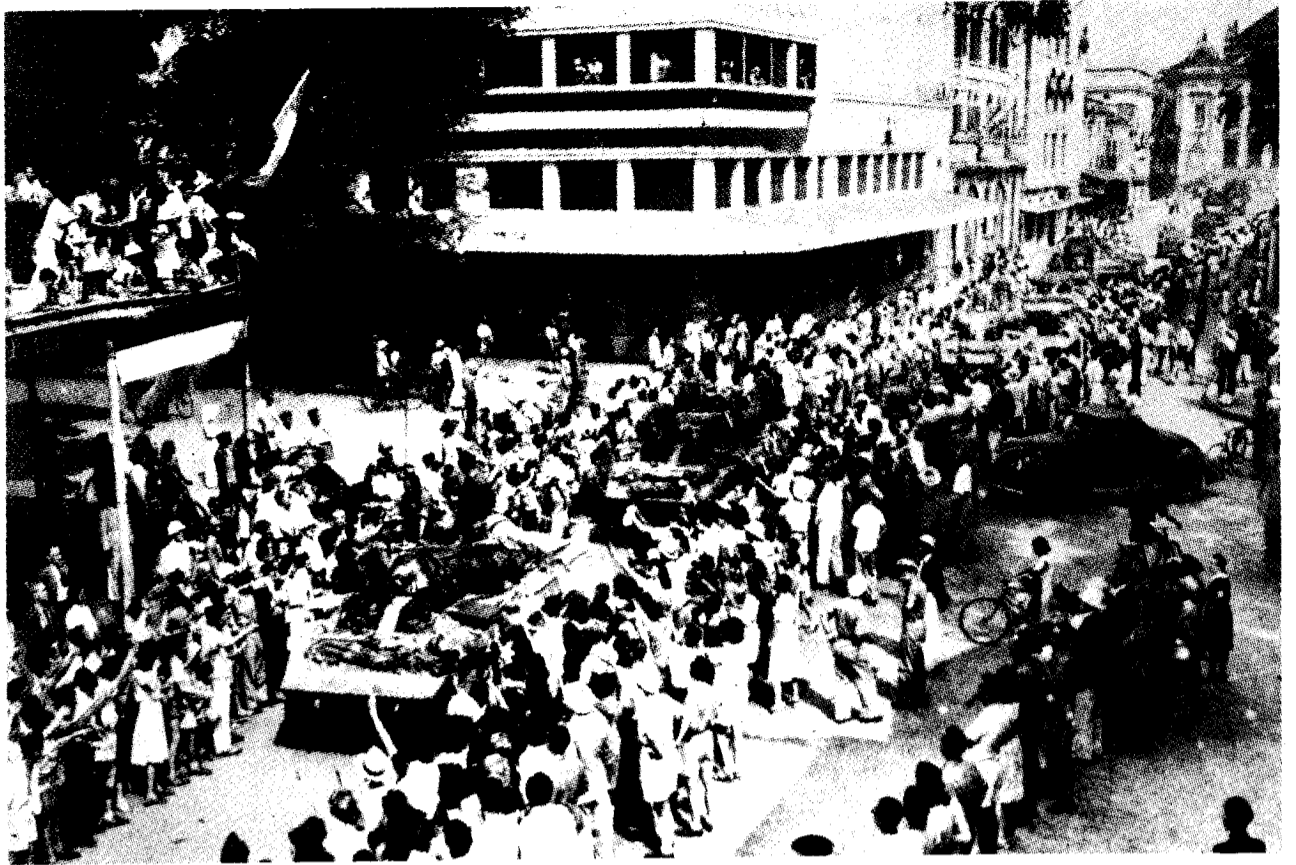
Indeed the Russian revolution itself was made on that understanding.

What should Vietnamese revolutionaries have done when the workers formed popular committees, the

peasants expropriated the land and hundreds of thousands took to the streets demanding national independence?

The Stalinists of the Vietminh tried to quell the revolutionary movement in order to do a deal with the allied imperialists; the Trotskyists, basing themselves on the perspective of international revolution which was being confirmed by revolutionary movements worldwide at the end of the war, took the leadership of that movement and fought to the end.

Those who reject their stand reject the class-struggle strategy on which the communist movement is based, worked out by Marx, Engels and Lenin and carried out in practice both in the victorious revolution of October 1917, and in the defeated revolutions of Paris 1871, Germany 1918 . . . and by the Vietnam Trotskyists in 1945.



Under an agreement to remove the Chinese forces, Ho Chi Minh agreed to the return of the French army to Hanoi in 1946. Troops are seen here re-entering the city. The welcoming crowd was composed mostly of French residents

on — by an eye-witness

In areas where the popular forces are in control Frenchmen are shot: the cruellest functionaries of the old regime, the hated policemen (known by the population to have participated in tortures) are sought out, killed and thrown into the canals.

Racialism, fed by 80 years of imperialist domination and by the contempt of the white men for the yellow men, leaves its imprint on the violence of the masses, which erupts at moments like these.

The massacre of a hundred French civilians in the Héraud Estate, at Tan-dinh, is a painful remainder of this fact.

The threats of certain French colons to 'skin the Annamites alive to make leather sandals' is boomeranging back against all whites.

The occupation forces feverishly search the whole centre of the town.

This doesn't prevent the insurgents from setting fire to various important buildings (such as the Manufactures Rubber Company) and to warehouses.

During the night of 23-24 September, guerrillas attack the port without respite.

The following day revolutionary groups openly parade in the Rue de Verdun and march up the Boulevard de la Somme, converging on the Market Place, which they later burn down.

In Saigon there is neither water nor electricity.

Supplies are breaking down.

Each day the French seek to extend the area under their control, while various armed groups organise themselves as guerrillas in the periphery of the city.

The Vietminh Committee produces a leaflet: 'The French . . . seem to take pleasure in murdering our people. There is only one answer: a food blockade.'

While seeking to 'starve out' the French (a futile hope as British ships control the access to the harbour) the Vietminh clings to its hope of

starting negotiations with the British.

Talks with Gracey do in fact start . . . and a truce is announced on 1 October.

On 5 October General Leclerc, head of the French expeditionary force, arrives.

His mission is to 'restore order', to 'build a strong Indochina within the French Union'.

He lands his troops.

The commandos of the battleship 'Triomphant' parade down the Rue Catinat.

The hated tricolour again flutters from various windows.

The 'negotiations' between the Vietminh and the British continue.

The only result is that British and Japanese troops are allowed 'free and unobstructed passage' through zones occupied by the insurgents.

The Vietminh Committee, continuing its policy of appeasement towards the imperialist allies, has consciously taken this decision.

The Gurkhas and the Japanese move out further detachments and occupy more strategic points in the periphery of Saigon.

On 12 October French troops, supported by Gurkhas, launch a general attack towards the north-east.

The miserable peasant huts burn from Thi-nghe to Tan-binh.

The encirclement of the town by the rebels is gradually being broken, in desperate fighting.

The leader of the Bay Vien group of guerrillas refuses to undertake underhand police work against other tendencies not affiliated to the Vietminh.

He proclaims his independence in relation to the latter.

His is not the only armed band to refuse the authority of the Stalinists.

The biggest of such 'dissident' groups is known as the Third Division (de-tam-sudoan).

It is led by an erstwhile

nationalist who had for a while placed his faith in Japan.

A few hundred armed men organise sustained resistance to the French, in the Plaine des Jones, but they surrender a few months later, and the group disbands.

The Vietminh will not tolerate any tendency that dares formulate the least criticism of it.

It deals with such tendencies by physically liquidating them.

The militants of the Trotskyist group 'La Lutte' (The Struggle) are the first victims of the Stalinist terror, despite their proclamations of 'critical support to the Vietminh government'.



STALIN

Gathered in a temple in the Thu-duc area, and while preparing the armed struggle against the French on the Gia-dinh front, they are surrounded one morning by the Vietminh, arrested and interned shortly afterwards at Ben-suc, in the province of Thu-dau-mot.

There, they are all shot — together with some 30 other prisoners — at the approach of the French troops.

Among those murdered was Tran van Thach, one-time municipal councillor for Saigon, elected in 1933 on a Stalino-Trotskyist list and released a few weeks earlier from the penal settlement at Poulo Condor.

Ta Thu Thau, also released from Poulo Condor, had gone to Tonkin province to help organise assistance to the famine-stricken areas.

He was murdered by sup-

porters of Ho Chi Minh, on his way back, in Central Annam.

In this atmosphere of Vietminh terror, the workers' militia of the Go-vap tramway depot, some 60 strong, participated in the insurrection, on its own initiative.

The 400 workers and employees of the Tramway Company were well known for their militancy and independent frame of mind.

Under French imperialist rule there had been no trade union rights.

After 9 March 1945, when the Japanese had replaced the French at the head of this particular enterprise, the workers had immediately constituted their own workers' committee and put forward a series of demands.

Japanese soldiery, led by Colonel Kirino, had come to threaten them, but confronted by their militant and united stand had eventually been obliged to grant them a wage increase and even to recognise eleven delegates elected by the eleven categories of workers: electricians, carpenters, metal workers, etc.

In August 1945, when foreign technicians had momentarily abandoned the enterprise, the depot had been taken over and managed by the workers themselves, until the time of the insurrection.

All those insurgents who do not rally immediately to the Vietminh flag are denounced the Vietminh as traitors (Viet-gian).

Workers who don't identify with the 'patriotic cause' are called 'saboteurs' and 'reactionaries'.

The Southern CGT is presided over the arch-Stalinist Hoang Don Van.

Its function is to control the workers of the Saigon-Cholon area, by nominating their 'representatives' for them, from above.

In this atmosphere of violent ideological totalitarianism the workers of the Go-vap tramway depot, although affiliated to the Southern CGT, refuse the label of Cong-nhan cuu-quoc

(Worker Saviours of the Fatherland).

They want to remain a proletarian militia.

They reject the Vietminh flag (yellow star on red background), saying they will continue their fight under the red flag, the flag of their own class emancipation.

The tramwaymen organise themselves in combat groups of eleven men under elected leaders — and under the overall command of Tran Dinh Minh, a young Trotskyist from the North who had published a social novel in Hanoi (under the pseudonym of Nguyen Hai Au) and who had come south to participate in the struggle.

At this stage the local Stalinists, under the command of Nguyen Dinh Thau, seem far more concerned at arresting and shooting their left critics — and in fact all whom they see as potential rivals for the leadership of the movement — than at prosecuting the struggle against the French.

Terrorist acts become the rule.

They leave a deep imprint on the 'state-in-embryo' which the maquis was soon to become.

The emergence of the Vietminh as the dominant force, in the years to come, was only possible after a lot of peasant and working class blood had been shed.

Refusing to accept the authority of Nguyen Dinh Thau, the tramwaymen's militia seeks to regroup in

the Plaine des Jones, towards which it has opened a way, fighting meanwhile against the Gurkhas and the French at Loc-giang, Thot-not and My-hanh.

In the Plaine des Jones the tramwaymen establish contact with the poor peasants.

And it is here that in a fight against the imperialist forces that Tran Dinh Minh gets killed, on 13 January 1946.

Some 20 other tramway workers had already lost their lives in the course of battles waged on the way.

The intolerance of the Vietminh in relation to all independent tendencies, the accusations of treachery combined with threats of murder and the numerical weakness of the tramwaymen's militia eventually force its members to disperse.

Three of them, Le Ngoc, Ky, and Huong, a young worker of 14, were stabbed to death by Vietminh bands.

The Saigon explosion reverberated into the countryside and into the more distant provinces.

The peasants seized the local officials who had most distinguished themselves by their cruelty or their extortions, and many were put to death.

But in the countryside as in the towns the pretext of popular anger against their exploiters was everywhere used by the Vietminh to settle accounts with potential dissenters.

ACCUSER of CAPITALISM

John Maclean's

Speech from the dock, May 9th 1918

Edited, with a new introduction by Terry Brotherstone

Price 75p

ISBN: 0 86151 073 9

New Park Publications Ltd, 10-12 Atlantic Road, London SW9 8HY. Tel: 01-274 8342

Also distributed by:

Hope Street Book Centre, 321 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 3PT. Tel: 041-332 8881

A PAGE FROM FENIAN HISTORY

The voyage of the 'Catalpa'

THE struggle against British colonial occupation of Ireland has always been marked by episodes of courage and initiative. During the last century, as now, the Irish people fought bitterly against their oppression and imprisonment, illustrated by the following account of a spectacular jail-break which freed Fenian leaders who had been transported to Australia.

WHEN the British suppressed the Fenian Society in 1865, thousands of Irish patriots were arrested.

Seven in particular were arrested and transported to penal settlements for life in Fremantle, Western Australia.

On 15 October 1867, Robert Cranston, Thomas Darragh, Michael Harrington, Thoma Hassett, Martin Hogan, James Wilson and John

BY NORMAN HARDING

sailed from New Bedford.

The team that was to handle the planning of the operation at the Fremantle end were got together and made their plans for the journey, to sail via Los Angeles.

The leader was to be John Breslin, who had rescued James Stephens, the great Fenian leader of the 1865 risings, from prison in Dublin.

Breslin was also to be assisted by the Parish Priest in Fremantle, Father McCabe, who had previously helped O'Reilly make his escape.

Breslin was to pose as a Mr Collins, a wealthy American.

Upon his arrival in Fremantle he booked in at the Emerald Isle Hotel.

After becoming established he made contact with the six men in prison and arranged to meet Jim Wilson while he was on work outside the prison.

After eight long years of waiting, Wilson heard of the plans and of the \$30,000 Dollars that had been collected from all over the world to help make good the escape.

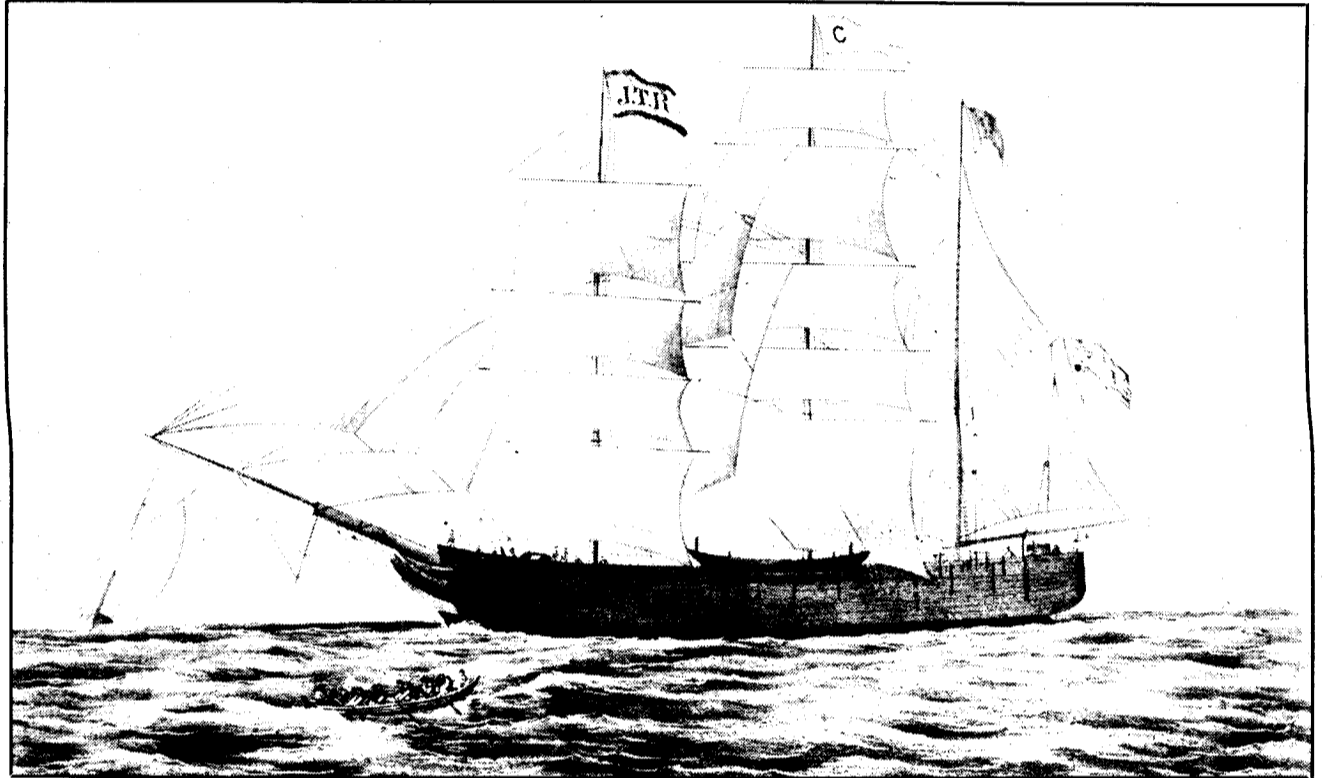
He went back to the prison to tell his friends of the plans.

All of them had to be on work-teams outside the prison, wait for the day of the escape, and do nothing that would interfere with the plan.

On the morning of 28 March 1876, the 'Catalpa' arrived at Bunbury.

The voyage had its problems: one of them was when the crew discovered that whaling was not the purpose of the trip and there was an attempt at mutiny.

Only when they were promised payment at the



The 'Catalpa'

rate for the best catch at New Bedford for that year was order restored.

In fact, when the actual rescue was in progress the crew supported it to a man.

On hearing of the arrival of Captain Anthony, Breslin took the first mail coach to Bunbury where the two men made the final plans.

The 'Catalpa' was to go to Rockingham and wait offshore.

On the day after Easter Monday all six made their way from the work parties to a central point.

On horses and in a cart, the rescued and rescuers made a mad dash for Rockingham and to the rowing boats with the police close on their heels.

After many hours of rowing they reached the 'Catalpa'.

But the authorities were determined that the rescued men had to be recaptured.

They commandeered the 'Georgette', a steam paddle

boat, strapped a 12lb field piece to the deck and, with a number of regulars and volunteers on board, gave chase.

They very soon caught up with the 'Catalpa' and fired a shot across its bows.

Captain Anthony was not to be intimidated.

He made it very clear that to attack a ship flying the American flag would be an act of war.

With this the 'Georgette' gave up the engagement and abandoned the chase.

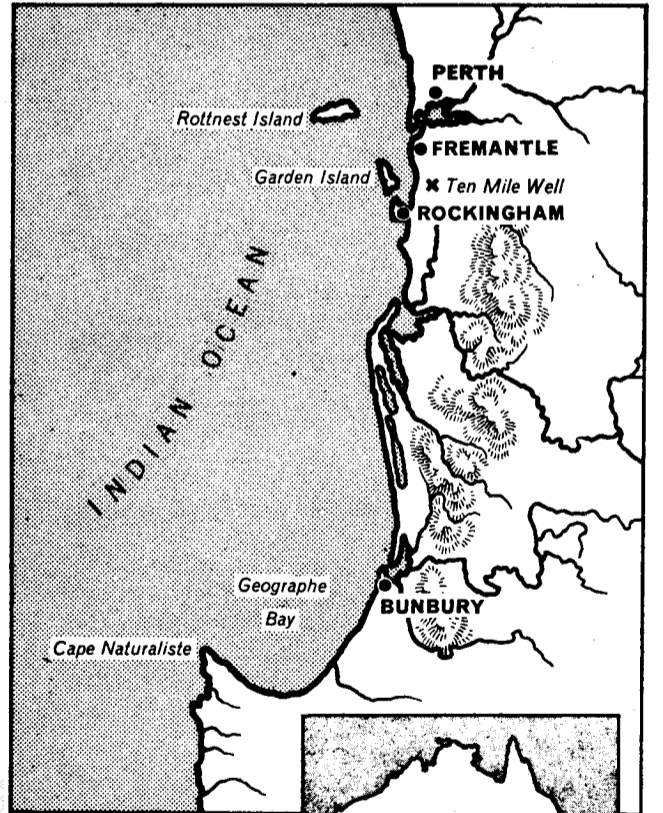
On 18 August 1876 the 'Catalpa' arrived at New York.

The rescue was complete.

Nine years after leaving England in the convict ship, the seven Fenians were reunited.

Their message to the Irish freedom fighters was very clear:

Whoever you are, wherever you are, you will not be forgotten.



JOHN J. BRESLIN

Boyle O'Reilly — all Irishmen, all patriots, all Fenians — began their long and dreadful journey in the convict ship 'Hougoumont'.

On Friday 10 January 1868 they arrived in Fremantle.

Fremantle jail, known as 'the establishment', had the Indian Ocean on one side and the unrelenting bush on the other.

Yet one of the seven, John Boyle O'Reilly, after unsuccessful attempts, made a very daring escape, swimming out to an American whaling ship.

On arrival in America, he played his part in setting in motion a plan to get the six remaining Fenians out of Fremantle.

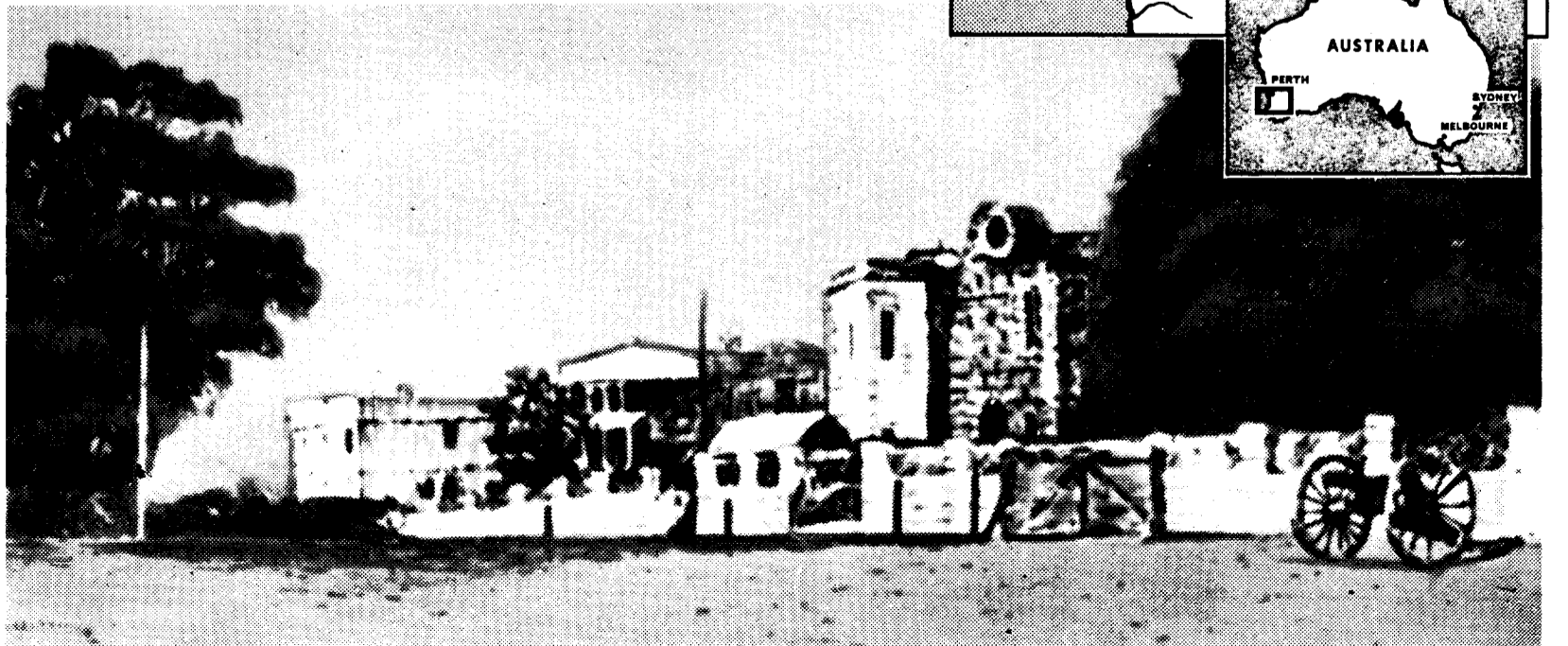
Plans were made for what was to be one of the greatest rescue operations of all time.

John Devoy of the 'New York Herald' approached whaling Captain George Anthony and convinced him and a few other people whom he could trust, of a plan to buy a ship and set out on a whaling expedition, the real purpose of which would be known to only a handful of others.

The 'Catalpa', a 202-ton, 90ft merchantman, was bought for \$5,250.

Preparations for a refit, provisions and the signing of a crew were put underway.

In April, 1875 the 'Catalpa'



Fremantle jail

Defend public transport!

London bus worker DAVE DOWSETT, a WRP member, proposes a policy to fight the cuts

LONDON'S public transport system is being destroyed by the policies of the Tory Government.

In the run up to Christmas NUR members on the Underground were balloted on industrial action against plans to reduce staffing levels at stations.

Earlier this year bus crews voted for industrial action to defend jobs and services — only to be overturned by their Delegate Conference.

Since then busworkers have seen their working conditions put back by 30 years and thousands of jobs disappear.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, public transport in London was developed by capitalists for profit.

There was no planning involved. In 1905 a Royal Commission proposed a Central Traffic Board for buses.

Despite this acknowledged need, capitalism resisted control over their activities.

However, the bus industry by its very nature needs to be integrated.

The owners of the bus companies had to enter into 'association' and mergers with each other, in order not to duplicate routes and to ensure profitability.

The beginning of the 1920s heralded the emergence of 'Independents' separate from the associations.

The bus manufacturing industry, eager to expand their markets, willingly sold buses on hire purchase and made loans to independent companies.

The 'free market spirit' which existed at the time did not reduce fares for passengers.

Neither the associations, the mergers nor the Independents attempted to undercut each other.

Instead bus war developed in London's streets.

Buses from different companies would race each other to bus queues.

A bus with a small passenger load would change direction and even route if larger queues were found to be in the opposite direction.

In the less profitable non-peak times services were cut.

Such was the danger and chaos on the streets that the 1924 London Traffic Act, supported by both the police and the public, attempted to restrict the number of buses on a particular route.

But by the end of the 1920s most of the independents had either themselves entered into 'associations' or had been swallowed up by the larger operators, the chief of which was London General whose livery colour was red.

In 1933 London's buses, trams and underground were finally brought under the control of one body — the London Passenger Transport Board — by an Act of Parliament.

The old owners and shareholders were paid huge amounts of compensation and the new Board was expected to show a profit — which in general it did until 1963.

The London Passenger Transport Board at last provided a basis for the integration and planning of the public transport network, and was therefore able to cut out

wasteful and dangerous competition.

After World War Two, London's public transport came under central Government control.

A London Transport Executive was appointed under the direction of the British Transport Commission.

When the Commission was abolished in 1962, LTE reported directly to the Transport Minister.

Around this time public transport ceased to be profitable, due to the rapid growth of private car ownership.

In 1965 the London County Council was superseded by the Greater London Council, and in 1969 the Transport (London) Act gave the GLC control of the, by then, deteriorating, London Transport.

Election

The Labour administration elected to the GLC in 1981 pledged itself to revive public transport in London.

Through its cheap 'Fares Fair' policy it increased municipal investment to make fares more attractive.

It created a demand for increased services and reduced traffic congestion and pollution.

The policy worked. There was a 13 per cent increase in bus travel and a 7 per cent increase on the underground.

London's streets were visibly less congested.

Before the year was over the Law Lords had declared the policy illegal.

Fares had to be doubled and services cut.

A 16 per cent decrease in bus usage and 13 per cent decrease in tube usage was experienced immediately.

When legal loopholes were exploited in 1983 to cut fares and introduce an integrated ticketing system, passenger transport usage again increased.

If public transport in London is integrated and fares are cheap, it will be well used and popular even with high car ownership.

In 1984 as part of its abolition of the GLC, the Government gained control of London Transport.

The 1984 LRT Act gave the Secretary of State the power to appoint the London Regional Transport Board, and to set subsidy levels and financial targets.

Under the Act, LRT be-



London bus workers demonstrate against cuts, March 1985. Below: two anti-cuts marchers make a special point

came the 'holding' company as well as the public transport authority.

The bus, tube and servicing departments were split into separate subsidiaries which were required to tender for their own work on the open market.

In 1985 fares were increased by 9 per cent — well above the rate of inflation, yet bus services were cut.

The times between buses have been lengthened, routes have been shortened or axed.

In addition London Buses Ltd. have increased one-person operation (OPO), which increases the unreliability of buses.

Six London bus garages have been closed.

The upheaval, demoralisation amongst staff and the loss to local communities

has been enormous.

The 1986 Transport Act, which de-regulates and allows private competition in the bus industry throughout the country, excludes the Greater London area, although the Minister of State retains a right to de-regulate London at his/her discretion.

This is not by accident.

The capitalist class is fully aware of the chaos on Britain's roads which de-regulation will create.

Instead for London, a form of 'controlled privatisation' is being undertaken.

LRT has to tender out all its constituent parts on the open market, yet the winners of the tenders are in theory supposed to operate within the constraints set by LRT.

The results have proved one thing — the only thing up to tender is the wages and working conditions of the workers.

In some cases the tender-wins have come unstuck.

They have tendered by costing the wages rates too low.

Having won the tenders on these figures they have been unable to recruit drivers at the low wage rate offered.

As working conditions deteriorate within London Buses, there are over 900 drivers short.

With so many unemployed, London busworkers have been 'voting with their feet' and leaving in droves.

All the other sections of LRT are also facing this tendering process and again it's wage rates which are under attack.

The assault on public transport is an integral part of the capitalists' plan to preserve their own position at the expense of the working class.

Capitalism 'municipalised' London's public transport network in the first place, because the free market could not provide the service which was required to transport the working class.

The lessons of the early periods of this century are that in order to maximise their profits the bus operators had to combine to avoid duplication and competition.

The London bus industry is all other industries in miniature.

Capitalism needs to create monopolies in industry to survive.

Yet these monopolies contradict the capitalist ethic of free markets.

The T&GWU has not confronted the onslaught with positive action.

Fear of the Tory anti-union laws and a lack of confidence amongst the leadership has created despair amongst the membership.

Revive

Amongst London's busworkers there is no confidence that the industry will be saved by the election of a Kinnock government.

It was acknowledged that public transport would be well down the agenda of such a Government even before the 1986 Labour Party Conference admitted it would not be able to solve the crisis of capitalism, nor willing to offer an alternative to it.

To save the industry, the jobs of busworkers and the services of Londoners a more radical approach has to be adopted.

The whole experience of bus operation has proved that integrated services working in a planned network is cost effective, en-

courages usage — and fares can be kept low.

As it is quite clear that a future Labour Government would be unwilling to secure the development of public transport that will be needed, the people who need public transport for travel and those who need it for employment who must secure its future.

These people have the daily experience of what type of service is needed, and the transport workers have the practical experience of how such services can be provided.

Together they can provide a formidable force.

Committees of passengers and transport must be formed in all local AREAS based around a particular bus garage or depot, or Borough.

Delegates from tenant and resident associations, community groups, Trades Councils etc. could be elected to sit on the committee.

Similarly the transport workers would elect their delegates.

Such committees would take under their wing the frequency of services, type of bus (e.g. crew, OPO, minibus), integration between bus, tube and rail, and the planning of new routes.

Overall control could be by a London-wide co-ordinating committee consisting of representatives from the local committees.

The education and experience of present LRT officers could be utilised as technical advice to these committees.

The policies of the present Tory Government have meant the privatisation of services.

In the 1930s, when London's public transport services were nationalised, huge sums of compensation were paid out to the owners.

The repayment of loans taken out to pay for this held back public transport development for years.

The same mistake must not be made again.

Transport services should be taken under the control of the user/worker committees without compensation to the private companies, or in the case of LRT companies to central Government.

In the present situation of mass unemployment it makes no sense to cut socially useful jobs.

The local committees should investigate the need of individual routes for crew operation rather than OPO.

Where justified conductors, guards and station staff should be recruited.

If such recruitment did not provide employment for all the local community, the length of duties should be reduced without loss of pay.

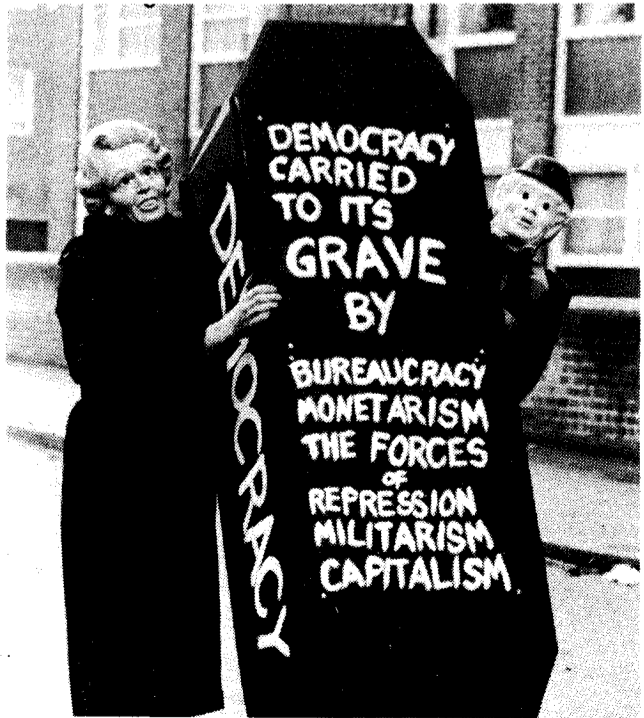
Society as a whole currently pays for those which capitalism keeps unemployed.

The cost of society actually employing these people would not drastically increase if other social factors are also taken into consideration.

A public transport network developed on these lines would benefit those who depend on it.

Public money invested in it would be controlled by the public through their committees and developments in public transport technology could be utilised for their social benefit and not for the profit they could provide for the few.

What is the way forward in the fight against the cuts? We invite transport workers and others to send their views to Workers Press.



LETTERS

Letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board. Letters over 500 words will normally be cut. Send letters, to arrive by first post Monday, to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

Anderton speaks for capitalism

AT A police conference set up to discuss AIDS and its effects on the police service, James Anderton, police chief for Greater Manchester, declared 'I ask why homosexuals freely engage in sodomy — let's be blunt about it — and other obnoxious practices, knowing the dangers involved.'

He went on to attack prostitutes, their clients, pornographers and drug-pushers.

He ended with: 'Everywhere I go I see increasing evidence of people swirling around in a human cesspit of their own making.'

During the economic boom of the 1960s this 'human cesspit', otherwise known as the permissive society, was allowed to flourish as the British working class was bribed with pay rises.

For the first time 'gay' men were able to admit their homosexuality without fear.

Along with this there arose the women's lib movement, which, because the British bourgeoisie needed them, helped to ease the oppression and exploitation of women.

Now, during the economic recession of the 1980s, with a working class becoming more politically aware day by day, the British bourgeoisie finds itself attacking a whole attitude and frame of mind it once allowed.

James Anderton's mouth uttered the words, but it was the voice of British capitalism.

By launching this vicious attack against homosexuality the bourgeoisie is helping to whip up anti-gay hysteria.

It is a vicious attempt to divide the working class and keep it conquered.

R. Spielmann,
Manchester

Bornstein and Richardson enmeshed in time-warp

THE LETTER from Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson (Workers Press, December 6), confirms the opinion that I expressed in my review of their book 'War and the International' in the current issue of *International* that they are enmeshed in the time-warp of the 1930s and that the Workers Internationalist League (WIL) was the only true begetter and heir of Trotskyism.

I have no intention of making excuses for the way the Lee affair was handled by the leadership of the Militant

Group, although the way it is presented in Chapter One of the Book contains many errors of substance.

But to refer to it as 'part of the world-wide campaign against Trotsky and his movement' — I could hardly believe my eyes when I read this.

Talk of the conspiracy theory of history! This was worthy of Gerry Healy himself.

Their defence of the WIL's relationship to the Fourth International also puts a question mark on their inter-

pretation of Trotskyist history.

As long ago as 1936, Trotsky said: 'Not FOR the Fourth International — THE Fourth International.'

Cannon, Shachtman and Gould came to Britain with proposals which had been drawn up in close collaboration with Trotsky himself — it was this which impressed Bert and May Matlow and brought them back into the movement.

This was not Cannon's 'unprincipled unification', but an effort initiated by the Old

Man himself to try and unify the Trotskyist movement in Britain in the lead-up to the founding conference.

The unification of the Trotskyist movement is still the burning issue which confronts us and, as in 1936, it is not whether we are FOR the Fourth International but an integrated part of the world party which was founded in 1938 (or was this also part of the 'world-wide campaign against Trotsky and his movement'?).

Charlie van Gelderen

Simon Bolivar Brigade 'uninvited'

I WRITE in response to the letter from Workers Power supporter Keith Hassell published 15 November.

I admire your quest for truth and share your faith that the truth must be laid before the working class.

Keith claims to tell us real facts about Nicaragua, Columbia and the United Secretariat (USec), which are identical to a recent article in Workers Power.

I write to you as a supporter of the USec.

The 1979 11th World Congress of the USec led to a split of the Moreno-led sects.

The Argentinian PRT together with other Morenists formed an armed brigade and arrived in Nicaragua uninvited by the FSLN.

They refused to accept military commands and discipline of the FSLN.

They waged an armed sectarian campaign!

The FSLN disarmed and expelled them for these reasons, suggesting that they wage a struggle against Somoza's allies, including the military junta in Argentina.

The results are self-evident.

The FSLN overthrew the Somocistas and expropriated them, expelled the National Guard and bourgeois representatives from the JGRN and other Councils of State, unionised the vast majority of workers and peasants and armed them to defend the Revolu-

tion against the USA-armed and financed Contras.

The Morenists have since suffered decline and splits throughout Latin America and elsewhere.

Whole sections of them, e.g. in Mexico and Bolivia, have rejoined the USec.

Meanwhile, the policies and programme of the Argentinian PRT are clearly reformist, bearing no relation to the previous ultra-leftist practices.

As for the section of the USec in Colombia, the PSR, they have suffered assassination of leading cadres by military death-squads.

During the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Colombian Morenists added a criminal element in defrauding the masses by taking to the streets, to Union meetings and other gatherings of workers to raise money ostensibly for the FSLN, which they kept for their own ultra-left manoeuvrings against the FSLN.

Finally, Lenin in 'State and Revolution' defined the state as 'armed bodies of men'.

Ignoring the fact that the

Nicaraguan Police Chief is a woman, and that women have been armed by the FSLN against the Contras, I see no problem in defining that state as a workers' state.

Perhaps by calling for a political revolution, Keith is unintentionally admitting this.

I appeal to you to join in anti-imperialist solidarity with the FSLN, who face daily problems more testing than British revolutionaries have yet had to face.

The relations between the FSLN and Sinn Fein are excellent due to common experiences.

Bernie Hynes

P.S. The Socialist Workers Party (USA) does not hail Nicaragua as a workers' state! They term it a 'workers and farmers government'.

● It should be stressed that this letter does not reflect the position of the Editorial Board. Workers Press will, in due course, carry material dealing with some of the rather sweeping statements made by Cde Hynes.

Wapping bamboozling melodrama

THE COLUMNS of the last few issues of the UK Press Gazette have provided a stage for another scene from the Wapping bamboozling melodrama.

Under the heading: Wapping insight reveals why the Street went under, an almost full page article reviewed ex-Sunday Times journalist Linda Melvern's book 'The End of the Street', and provided the cue for appearance of next artiste: Brenda Dean.

Three editions later, on the letter page, in a roughly 900 word script, SOGAT General Secretary, Brenda Dean, launched into an oration of praise:

'She,' — Linda Melvern — 'has pieced together much of the story and certainly unearthed material which even those of us in the midst of Rupert Murdoch's web of deceit could not see clearly at the time.'

But a dagger thrust is concealed within the next sentence: 'So inevitably there are flaws and factual errors which one could challenge.'

'For example Linda Melvern makes much of the fact that one of SOGAT's members, Tony Cappel and Terry Ellis of the AUEW assembled a remarkable amount of proof that those inside Wapping were clearly up to no good.'

'What those two colleagues did not tell Ms Melvern was that their absolute assessment was that Rupert Murdoch could not produce all his titles in Wapping and that action taken against all his national newspapers would result in chaos in Wapping.'

Stung into action by the implication that her book contained flaws and factual errors, Ms Melvern delivered her riposte two issues later.

She replied, 'Brenda Dean took issue with a story in the last chapter about two trade union officials, Tony Cappel (SOGAT) and Terry Ellis (AUEW), neither with senior rank in the Chapel hierarchy, who carried out their own investigation during 1985 into what was really going on in Wapping.'

'Dozens of documents were smuggled to them by inside contacts during the year. They were told about the Atex personnel working in the plant, knew how many terminals were installed, had seen coachloads of recruits, and found out some of the presses had been converted from tabloid to broadsheet size.'

'With their own network of spies they built up a dossier and by September 1985 had enough information to lead them to the conclusion that not only was Rupert Murdoch planning to print the four titles in the new plant but was capable of doing so.'

'They tried for months to warn senior officials with increasing desperation. They even mounted an exhibition of their evidence in the Strand Palace Hotel — only one senior SOGAT official turned up.'

Referring to Dean's assertion that the two rank and file trade unionists, Cappel and Ellis had told her that their absolute assessment was, that any attempt on Murdoch's part to produce all four newspapers at Wapping would result in chaos, Linda Melvern replied:

'At no time was such a conclusion reached. Quite the reverse. I have spoken with Terry Ellis since reading Brenda Dean's letter and

he is surprised about her claim.

'We even did a graph to show it was possible to print all four titles,' he said. 'At no time did we say there would be chaos in Wapping if Murdoch switched the titles. I can't believe she would say this.'

This synopsis lengthened to cover the trade union leadership's performance to-date would not be out of place in an episode of the TV *Muppets* series, with SOGAT's Miss Piggy's voting strength overwhelming any display of ardour by NGA's Kermit for a class conscious policy, with the TUC general council's right wing members adding confusion, chaos and despair.

It does not have the saving grace of the TV series comedy because it is tragedy: the tragedy of nearly 6,000 potentially lost jobs, and the impending devastation of a UK trade union bastion, the Fleet Street chapels.

After eleven months of dispute it should be superfluous to lecture general trade and periodical printing trade unionists that the struggle at Wapping is their fight just as much as it is Fleet Street's.

Not a month passes without articles in the *Production Journal* — technical mouth-piece of provincial and small-time newspaper proprietors — announce large scale introduction of direct-input editorial and advertising systems.

Systems that almost completely annihilate the traditional composing room work.

And it is not only in this production area that the management labour saving drive is rife: plate-making, the machine room and the despatching and office are all subject to the pressure.

The golden boys and girls of the moment, the journalists, the fat cats with their Judas money for doing the comps' job have not been overlooked.

In the electronic pipe-line are systems for micro-chip sub-editing, semi-automatic full-page fit make-up on screen with spelling and grammatical correction, and the setting of type by on-the-spot reporters.

The annihilation of journalists' jobs stands out in bold capitals upon the not too distant horizon.

Summed up in the question of where do we go from here, the Wapping impasse has been the anguish of trade union activists since the two outstanding Wapping demonstration marches of May 1 and 3, events from which every trade union leadership absconded, tails between their legs, instead of organising the willing demonstrators, country-wide, for demonstrations comparable to those of the Paris students and workers of December 4 and 10.

These Battle-of-Cable-Street reminiscent actions defeated not merely a single employer's organisation but an entire government.

The answer to where do we go from here is to be found in the rank and file organisation, with demands from trade union branches and chapels, trades councils, Labour parties, in fact all working class organisations to the TUC general council that it sanctions a campaign for Victory at Wapping, that will match the Paris students' and workers' December 4 and 10 victory.

A.W. Shute

LISTINGS

Listings are published free by WORKERS PRESS for organisations within the Labour movement. Please send details of any function or event you want to advertise to arrive by mid-day Monday for publication the following Friday.

NON-STOP PICKET OF SOUTH AFRICA HOUSE. For the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners in South Africa. For sanctions against the racist South African government. Outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, London. Organised by City of London Anti-Apartheid.

A STRIKING EDUCATION The story of the SILENT-NIGHT strike in photographs taken by the strikers them-

selves. Available for hire as a portable exhibition. To hire, contact: Josephine Kelly, FTAT Strike HQ, 9 Frank Street, Barnoldswick, Lancs., BB8 5AE (0282-816709)

Campaign Against Police Repression Saturday, January 3: 'illegal' March against the new Public Order Act. Repressive and anti-democratic laws embodied in the new Act begin to come into force on Jan 1. Assemble 12 noon, Clock Tower Place, London N7 (near Caledonian Road Tube). Ten different groups and well over 1,000 individuals have declared themselves co-organisers of the march which will breach the new law requiring the police to be given 7 days written notice. NB it is NOT yet illegal to simply participate in this march.

MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUP

Bryant Street Methodist Centre
off West Ham Lane
(nearest Underground: Stratford)

Sunday January 11, 7.30pm

CUBA

Speaker: John Lister

LETTERS

The significance of John Maclean

JOHN L. BROOM'S letter (Workers Press, December 6, 1986) about my article on John Maclean and James Connolly (Workers Press, November 22, 1986) was very welcome. I hope it will lead to further correspondence on the historical significance of Maclean.

It is true that Maclean ended his life fighting for a 'Scottish Workers' Republic'.

In my view, however, it is misleading to call him a Scottish nationalist; particularly if one bears in mind what this means today, not only to the pro-capitalist Scottish National Party, but also to both wings of the Communist Party, who support the treacherous policy of the Popular (or Tartan?) Front.

And there are more strictly historical reasons for asking those who agree with Broom to at least clarify what they mean.

For a brief period after World War I, Maclean toyed with the idea of a Scottish

type of communism related to the Celtic or clan tradition in the Highlands.

He entered discussions with the eccentric aristocrat Erskine of Marr and maybe this needs more examination.

But his Scottish angle seems to have been conditioned mainly by other factors — and it should be stressed that, unlike Connolly's lifelong commitment to Irish nationalism, it was an angle to which Maclean turned only late in his political life.

It is certainly important that discussion of the secondary (though not insignificant) question of Maclean's 'nationalism' should not divert us from understanding his essential contribution to internationalism, particularly from 1914 to 1918.

After World War I, Maclean was, I think, very conscious of the deepening crisis of leadership in the British labour movement which, even in 1919, was already thwarting his campaign for a 'general strike against Brit-

ish capitalism', based on the offensive of the miners, railwaymen and transport workers, organised in the potentially mighty 'Triple Alliance'.

He saw no easy answers and was casting around for a way forward.

He was also influenced by events in Ireland after the 1918 elections — but he did not see Scotland as a parallel to Ireland.

The national struggle in Ireland, he believed, was seen by British imperialists not only as a question of colonial policy, but also as a strategic question.

Maclean thought that the next capitalist world war would be between Europe, led by Britain, and the USA.

The British were seeking to secure the integrity of capitalist Europe by restoring capitalism by military intervention in Russia, and by securing the western flank in 'John Bull's Other Island'.

A worker-led Scottish 'breakaway', Maclean

thought, would hit at the integrity of the British empire at its metropolitan core.

A third factor (I am not saying there were not others) was Maclean's assessment of some of the individuals who were coming into the leadership of the British CP in 1920-1921.

Gallacher he regarded as a militant who was a 'clown' when it came to communist theory.

Others he suspected of being state agents entering the new party partly to spy on domestic 'subversives', partly to plant misleading information on the Bolsheviks.

These points far from exhaust the question.

But I think we need much more concrete historical analysis (for which Broom's book is one of a number of helpful sources) before generalising about Maclean's 'nationalism' or drawing any political conclusions from it.

Terry Brotherstone

Read WORKERS PRESS

WORKERS PRESS leads the fight for Trotskyism and Marxist principles in the labour and trade union movement nationally and internationally.

WORKERS PRESS is committed to tell the truth and uncover corruption in the workers' movement.

TAKE OUT A POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION OR HAVE WORKERS PRESS DELIVERED EVERY WEEK!

Cost: 25p per issue, or inland postal rates:

10 issues: £3.80	Inland:	50 issues: £19.00
10 issues: £4.80	Overseas: surface	50 issues: £24.00
10 issues: £5.10	Europe, including Eire	50 issues: £25.50
10 issues: £5.30	Near East, Arab states	50 issues: £26.50
10 issues: £5.90	Americas, Asia, Africa	50 issues: £29.50
10 issues: £6.40	Far East, Australia	50 issues: £32.00

Name..... Enclosed £.....
Address.....

SEND TO: WORKERS PRESS, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

A literature survey

IN YOUR issue of December 6, Simon Pirani accuses me of 'justifying Vietnam collaboration with the imperialists, falsely claiming that they "tried to save the revolution" thereby'.

While we wait for Pirani to refute this view, can I just point out that I am not the author of the remarks which he attributes to me?

Pirani has lifted the phrase 'tried to save the revolution' from within a longer quotation which I took from Joseph Buttinger's book 'Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled'.

As I used it, the quotation reads:

'Only two lines of action

were open . . . the first . . . which called for an attempt to prevent French troops from re-entering Vietnam, although widely supported by nationalists of all political shades, was consistently advocated only by the Trotskyists.

'The opposite course, which tried to save the revolution by avoiding an immediate armed conflict with the French, was that of the Vietminh.'

It is quite plain that this is Buttinger's attempt to summarise the differences between the Vietnamese Communist Party and the nationalist organisations in August 1945.

False or otherwise it is not my claim. Since the quotation summarised both views, I could with equal justice be accused by some other unscrupulous adversary of advocating the Trotskyist position.

The same applies to Pirani's assertion that my very tentative and incomplete document 'purports to be a well-researched statement'.

I have never made any such claim. Pirani's remark is on a par with his (unfounded) presumption that my document is available from Communist Forum.

To the best of my knowledge the WRP Education Department is the only body

that has thought it worth publishing. Whether this says more about the department or the document is a matter for others to judge.

I myself have neither the time nor the expertise to undertake anything more than a literature survey of this complex and difficult topic, which is more or less what my document consisted of.

Now that your paper purports to have a commitment to tell the truth, I expect you will be happy to publish this letter and clear up any false impression your readers may have gained from Pirani's article.

John Spencer

Simon Pirani replies

JOHN SPENCER is quite right that it was the historian Joseph Buttinger, and not he, who wrote that the Vietminh 'tried to save the revolution' in Vietnam in 1945 by doing a deal with French and British imperialism.

If Spencer does not himself hold this view, I apologise for attributing it to him.

But if his document 'The Vietnamese Trotskyists and the 1945 August Revolution', currently being circulated by supporters of the 'Communist Forum' group led by Mike Banda, is indeed a 'literature survey of this complex and difficult topic', then I do hold him responsible for mis-directing his readers.

He has quoted, at length, from Buttinger who contrasted the Vietminh's 'common sense' politics (i.e. collaboration with the British and French) with the Trotskyists' 'insane' adherence to proletarian internationalism.

But he has made no attempt to explain the Trotskyists' political reasoning, nor even survey the relevant Trotskyist literature.

Similarly, Spencer liberally sprinkles his document with quotations from others and remarks of his own, which leave the reader with the impression that the

Trotskyists were working, if not in the pay of, then certainly in the interests of, Japanese imperialism.

He neither mentions the fact that the Japanese had virtually collapsed by this time, nor has he surveyed the Trotskyists' responses to these serious allegations which he repeats.

Of course he may object that, since his document was 'tentative and incomplete', I had no right to accuse him (as I did in Workers Press, 13 December) of trying to add weight to the Stalinist lie that the Trotskyists worked with the Japanese.

But such 'incompleteness', whether he likes it or not, serves a purpose.

The context of this discussion should be explained.

Fourteen months ago the WRP threw out its leader G. Healy.

Spencer, myself and many others had to re-examine the politics of the organisation in which we had spent most of our adult lives.

And this was clearly connected to the historical crisis of the Fourth International as a whole.

Spencer and some others proceeded broadly speaking with three assumptions: firstly, that they bore little personal responsibility for

the movement's crisis, and were not obliged to undertake self-criticism in the party; secondly, that the WRP regime under Healy was 'immoral' and vile and that they could just sound off against its negative aspects without attempting to explain how it had arisen in the revolutionary movement; thirdly, that this vileness was in any case a direct continuation (and not a contradictory negation) of the vile and 'misconceived' Fourth International — and consequently, the whole International should be got rid of.

An outlook roughly along these lines enables Spencer to view Vietnamese Trotskyism not from the point of view that this is his own history, but from the standpoint of bourgeois 'impartiality'.

So his 'literature survey' ignores the quite obvious fact that the very availability of literature on Vietnamese Trotskyism is con-

ditioned by history itself: the Stalinist version has been published in dozens of languages by the Stalinist-controlled state and inevitably affected to a degree the work of bourgeois historians (and is now being re-issued in xerox copies of Hanoi publications by 'Communist Forum').

On the other hand Trotskyist literature on the subject has rarely been published, and in the case of all but one of the Trotskyists' eye-witness reports of the 1945 revolution, kept in a file of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International quite unknown even to most Trotskyists.

Along with the Vietnamese Trotskyist movement itself, the truth about 1945 was nearly obliterated on the one hand by Stalinist repression and falsification and on the other by liquidationist forces inside the Trotskyist movement.

Simon Pirani

Socialist Press

Monthly journal of the Communist League of Australia

Subs: 12 issues £8.50, 6 issues £4.25.
PO Box N93, Petersham NSW 2049, Australia

Workers Revolutionary Party Lecture Series

'Aspects of Historical Materialism'
Every Friday, commencing January 9
7.30 pm prompt

Duke of York, York Way

— near Kings Cross Station

JANUARY FIGHTING FUND

TARGET: £2,000

WORKERS PRESS in its present form is now a year old. We know from the increase in subscriptions and from the letters we receive that our support is growing — and that readers feel able to criticise and make suggestions for the paper too.

We welcome this discussion, which we think is helping us to publish a readable revolutionary paper, reflecting the policy of the Workers Revolutionary Party and open to views and comments of other working class parties and organisations.

The raising of our monthly fund is necessary to realise this aim and especially to develop the paper. We therefore ask our members and supporters to contribute to the monthly fund of £2,000. Last month's total was short of what we need — the January fund is essential for the paper.

December total was: £1,299.54

Please send donations to: Workers Press, P.O. Box 735, London SW9 7QS

WORKERS PRESS is the weekly paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party. If you wish to know more about us or are interested in becoming a member, why not fill in this form and send it to us?

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Name..... date.....
Address.....

Trade Union..... Age (if under 21).....

SEND TO:
Secretary to the Central Committee
PO Box 735, London SW9
7QS

Saturday January 3 1987. Newsdesk 01-733 3058

ARGENTINE AMNESTY



Youth were prominent on the MAS contingent

FROM A CORRESPONDENT
IN BUENOS AIRES

MORE than 50,000 workers, youth and students staged a massive protest just before Christmas against the Argentine government's proposal for amnesty to military torturers and murderers.

Under the military dictatorship which ended three years ago more than 30,000 people disappeared.

Last week the two houses of the Argentine Congress passed the amnesty Bill at special session despite widespread opposition in the country.

When President Alfonsin announced that the Bill was to be sent to the senate, the opposition parties organised against it.

The 50,000-rally was called by the Peronismo Renovador (New Peronism), the Partido Intransigente (Intransigent Party), the left wing of the Democracia Cristiana (Christian Democracy), the Communist Party of Argentina and the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo — movement to socialism, Argentine section of the Trotskyist International Workers League. The MAS lost 100 of its members under the military dictatorship.)

By 6.30p.m. the most enthusiastic members of the different parties were assembling for the march. The sounds of the 'bombos' — big drums — and kettledrums filled the streets around the assembly point.

The singing started: 'Alfonsin, stop lying! If the murderers are free, you're not for life and peace!' 'Ole, ole, ole, ole! Jail the murderers now! Free our comrades now!'

'Make the radical government see: the people will not change their minds! We want neither amnesty nor "full stop"!' Among the different columns organised by the parties, that of the MAS was particularly attractive, with red banners, a percussion band and gigantic puppets representing the International Monetary Fund, the military, and President Alfonsin.

A group of the Juventud Radical (radical youth) — members of the party in government — attended the rally against the president's orders.

Their fighting spirit was shown by the slogans against their own government: 'They are enemies who belong to other parties, but today in the enemy field there are members of our own party.'

At 8.30p.m. the march began. At the head were the human rights organisations, Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, and other relatives of those who disappeared under the military dictatorship.

They were followed by the different political parties: Peronist, Intransigent, Christian Democracy, Radical Youth, MAS, Communist Party and other small groups.

Order was kept by the stewards from the various parties. No police were in sight — their presence could have created a riot.

The rally ended at Congress Square. By the time the MAS entered the square, the speakers had already started reading the messages and greetings from prominent personalities and groups.

But everything stopped when the MAS entered. The Trotskyist party had organised one of the biggest contingents — almost 6,000 — on the march, bigger even than that of the two bourgeois parties represented in the Congress — the Intransigent and Peronist parties.

At the head of the MAS column were bright red torches. With the noise of fireworks, bombos, kettledrums, the singing and the red banners, the spectacle was impressive. The column entered the square and surrounded the rally.

When the last speeches were read, the MAS closed its ranks and, after singing the Internationale, dispersed.

● **President Alfonsin's amnesty Bill declares: 'All legal actions against the members of the armed forces, security, police and prison services who took part in repressive activities, no matter what those activities were, between the military coup and 10 December 1983, will be withdrawn if their cases are not called to court within 60 days of the passing of this law.'**

During the three years Alfonsin has been in power, fewer than 20 military officers have been brought to court.

The remaining 1,700 have not even been prosecuted because they are being brought before military courts.

The courts are naturally opposed to convicting their own people. As a consequence of this 'full stop' law, as it has become known, 1,700 murderers and torturers will be granted an amnesty by the Alfonsin government.

The government lies when it claims the law reflects the wishes and hopes of the Argentine people for reconciliation with the military.

This was exposed when the official press published the results of a poll showing 76 per cent of the population of greater Buenos Aires (about one third of the country's population) opposing the 'full stop' law.

The feelings of the Argentine people were clearly expressed by the 50,000 who marched against the Bill.

Why does the government want the law passed? Alfonsin's government is a direct agent of the multinationals and the International Monetary Fund.

It is only too willing to pay the external debt to the imperialist powers. To do that it has to carry out their economic policies — which means more hunger and unemployment for the Argentine masses.

But the government knows that the workers will resist this, so it needs the new law to unite the military behind it.

Alfonsin will be able to use the armed forces against workers who, driven by hunger and despair, take to the streets to protest or occupy factories and workshops to demand better wages, working and living conditions.



The MAS contingent of 6,000 was the largest on the march