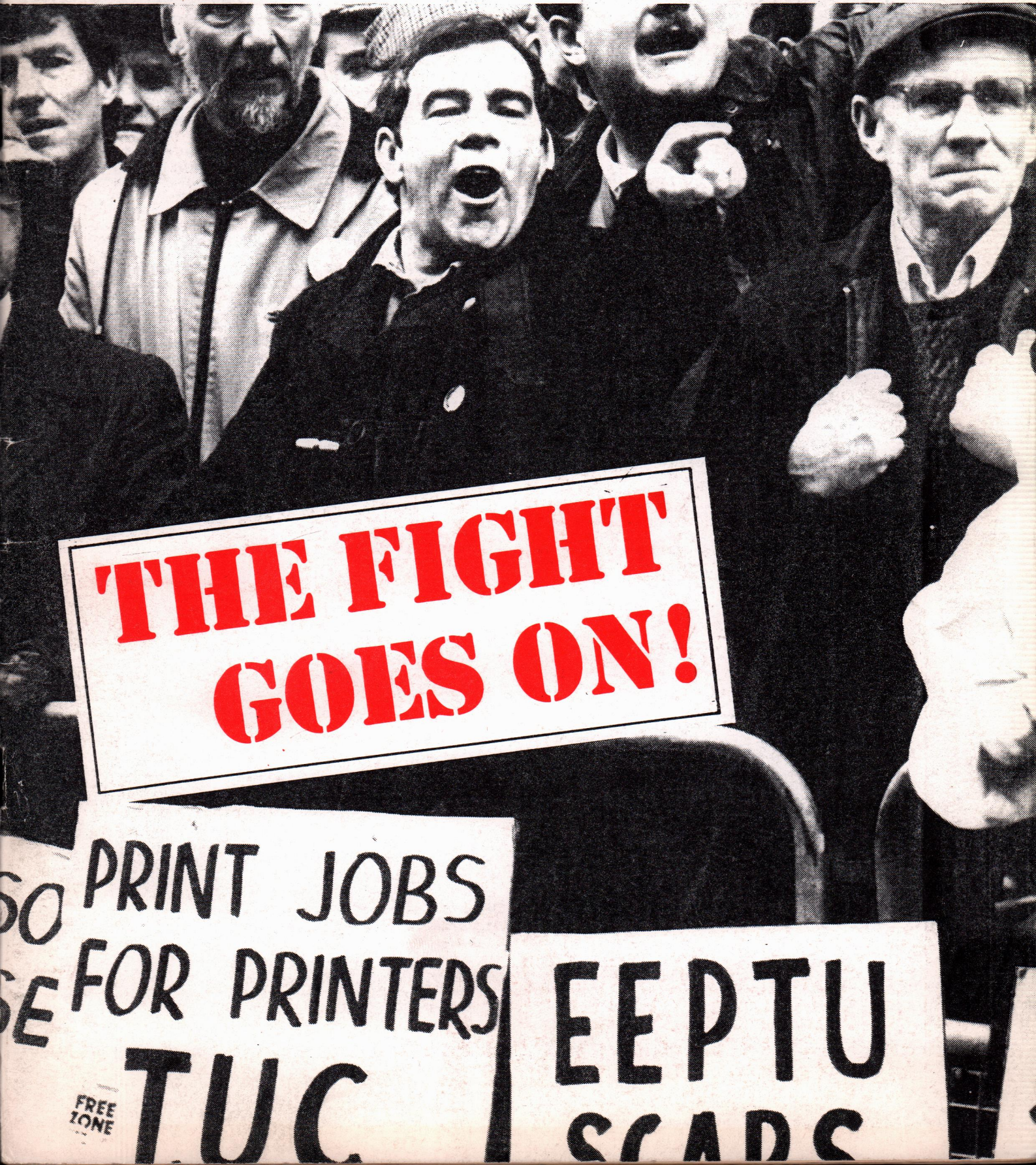


SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 14. November 1986. 70p



**THE FIGHT
GOES ON!**

50 PRINT JOBS
FOR PRINTERS
TUC

KEEP TU
SCADS

FREE
ZONE

About Socialist Viewpoint

AFTER an unplanned and longer than desirable absence, *Socialist Viewpoint* is back — and bigger than ever!

We owe regular readers an apology for the delay in producing this issue. We have been busy in the meantime — running a successful Summer School, lending more than our share of practical support to the new newspaper-style *Labour Briefing*, moving our typesetting equipment, supporting a range of activities at Labour Conference and elsewhere, taking holidays, and working on the articles you see in this specially-enlarged November issue.

Since we last went to press, events have moved forward on all fronts. Internationally, developments have been overshadowed by the moves in South Africa — and the dramatic vote by the US Congress to compel Reagan to impose sanctions.

No less significant has been Reagan's triumph in brushing aside a World Court ruling and securing Congress support for funding to back the murderous Contra forces in their efforts to unseat the democratically elected Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

There have been the gestures and rituals of Reykjavik, with Reagan publicly demonstrating his contempt for Europe by rejecting out of hand a Soviet proposal that would scrap all medium range missiles in Europe — in order to cling on to the reactionary delusions of the Star Wars programme.

But there have been harsh lessons too for the British Labour leadership as it moves to the right in search of votes. Bob Hawke's right wing Australian government has been driven by a galloping economic crisis to draconian standards; the Greek PASOK government has been trounced by the right wing in local government elections as a result of its austerity programme; and an isolated and discredited Francois Mitterrand in France is talking of retirement from the presidency having ditched Socialist Party pledges and paved the way for a right wing Chirac government.

Nothing daunted, Kinnock performed the predicted manoeuvres at Blackpool, setting the stage for a tragi-comic re-run of the Wilson fiascos of 1964 and 1974, as the dark clouds of economic crisis have rolled threateningly overhead, and opinion polls register far less than a wave of enthusiasm

among the punters. Meanwhile, despite all of the obstacles, setbacks and betrayals since 1979, there are definite signs of a revival of working class militancy and self-confidence. In an astounding show of tenacity the printworkers have voted more strongly a second time to reject Rupert Murdoch's buy-off at News International. The miners have moved back into action with strikes and overtime bans. Sealink workers on the 20th anniversary of the 1966 seamen's strike showed the folly of Labour's plans to impose strike ballots by their rapid unofficial action against outrageous sackings. And health workers continue to fight back against cuts, closures, privatisation and asset-stripping.

This extended issue of *Socialist Viewpoint* also carries background articles on the 1956 events in Hungary which gave concrete form to the Trotskyist call for political revolution against Stalinist bureaucracy.

Socialist Viewpoint is a magazine committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through banner-waving ultimatums, introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, or as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary. Rather it must be a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate and the fight for regroupment of Trotskyist forces with policy and programme.

If you feel — as we do — that this magazine offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

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

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...over Potts Printworkers lobby TUC after ballot
...to right on PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

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Magic words of conference illusionists

THIS YEAR'S Party Conferences have been like a cavalcade of corny magicians auditioning for their own TV series. Each Party has developed its own abracadabra of chit chat in an effort to divert away from the crude manipulation that forms the essence of each trick.

Most miserable failure by far this year was undoubtedly the disastrous attempt by Dr David "Kaligari" Owen and his lovely assistant David Steel to saw the Alliance in half over defence policy: the first — dismembering — part of the trick went fine, but the finale wound up a limb or two short of a full set, leaving David Steel with fingers in both ears but without a leg to stand on.

Labour's Blackpool spectacular on the other hand certainly laid on every conceivable stunt and trick. A slick leadership presentation included disappearing debates (skillfully concealed by "Playschool" or after cameras were switched off; and policies vanishing before our very eyes ("renationalisation — what renationalisation?")

We saw the amazing talking dogs (the LCC gamely echoing Their Master's Voice) and Neil Kinnock producing bunches of flowers from everywhere. He even plucked a live — if rather scrawny and sick-looking — unilateralist dove from behind the ear of Dennis Healey, to everyone's surprise, including Healey himself.

There was comedy too, with Roy Hattersley's economic tribute to Tommy Cooper, explaining how he would control currency speculators ("Just like that!") with a few generous tax incentives, to the amusement of all concerned — not least the speculators.

Master illusionist Kinnock appeared in quick-change disguises as internationalist, nationalist and crusader for gay rights and women's liberation: the audience could only applaud the man's versatility.

A longer-term trick was also set in motion: a 30-year vanishing act for the nuclear power industry, which is Labour's new bid for the slowest-acting reformist measure ever proposed.

The Blackpool audience — except for the few left wing sceptics around *Briefing*, *SV*, and the hard left who saw behind the scenes — seemed to lap it up: but



TV viewers and electors will register their views in due course.

The magic on offer at the Tories' Bournemouth blue-rinse extravaganza was of a far more primitive, ritualistic type — with much sticking of pins and knives into effigies.

But there was some more sophisticated stuff too, with Edwina Currie's hamburger eating act, and brilliant "now you see it, now you don't" routines in which the fleeting illusion of compassion, improved

education, and economic stability was dispelled into thin air within seconds. Norman Fowler did his little turn, with a long printout of a few hospital improvements (some reprinted ten times to fill out the length required). It was not so much "Hey presto" as "Where'a Hayhoe?"

What went down best were the "Banco Booth" sessions in which volunteers from the laughing audience had their pockets stuffed with fivers by ministers turning state industries and public services into profit-making private monopolies.

Of course the Tories always lay on a good old-fashioned witch-hunt — complete with ducking stools, the rack, and the stake on hand to help whip up a frenzy against the Labour hate-figures of the hour.

But this year in particular the cursing routine was coupled with ritual obeisance to the supreme totem — nuclear weapons and the NATO alliance — which they hope will enable them to dispel the dark force of Labour and the Alliance, and win a miraculous third term.

Behind the razzamatuzz and "jokes" from Norman "You'll like this — not a lot..." Tebbit was a desperate search for the alchemists' Philosopher's Stone that might enable a reactionary government — with the right incantations from a sympathetic press — to turn a disastrous economic plight and an unpopular Prime Minister into a solid gold electoral victory.

As the first signs of audience reponse were measured, it appeared that the old fashioned Tory appeals to prejudice and greed had stood them in better stead with the punters than Kinnock's skin-deep radicalism and right wing patter. Labour's rating in the opinion polls stood still, while the Tories gained from the sorely divided Alliance.

While the galloping economic crisis continues to undermine Chancellor Lawson's breezy act, it also underlines the contradictions of a Labour platform which relies on reforming the present crumbling system rather than looking to replace it with any socialist alternative.

Thatcher's chances of securing a devastating third term of office cannot be written off: there is a real danger that Kinock's bid to hold the middle of the road could see Labour's hopes crushed by a Thatcher juggernaut or lead to the morass of a "hung" Parliament in which the Owen-Steel roadshow would gain disproportionate influence.

It remains urgent that the labour movement maintain the fight against Thatcher on every front, while it prepares to defend itself and press its demands under a possible Labour or coalition government.

If this is not done, then even the limited promises made by Kinnock and taken at face value by a mystified "soft left" could quickly vanish into thin air... before your very eyes!



Tory leaders struggle to silence Edwina Currie in Bournemouth

Ballot result hardens attitudes

ON Wednesday October 8, the streets of Tower Hamlets rang out with strong and determined slogans of the sacked printworkers. The morale was high, the numbers demonstrating were large and the atmosphere was confident and optimistic.

For the second time in the dispute the strikers had told Murdoch to shove his offer of compensation. The dispute is about jobs and trade union rights and the printworkers are in no mood to vote the issues away.

On that Wednesday a number of the enemy in the dispute were surprised. They must have felt very confident that the offer would be accepted. Murdoch was astoundingly quiet — irritated no doubt that the headlines on his titles had to be changed from *Murdoch Wins!*

The police were totally unprepared for the size and sentiments of the demonstration. As printers marched behind the SOGAT Clerical banner down the Commercial Road a small group of police tried to stop them — the police were forced to retreat and thirteen were injured. Several printers described it as "our 3rd of May".

Brenda Dean had little to say and was no doubt as surprised (and probably as dismayed) as Murdoch at the NO vote. All her collaboration and negotiating had been thrown back in her face.

The vote against the offer was won by an even larger majority than before with only the RIRMA branch voting for acceptance. The crucial issue now is where does the dispute go from here?

There is no way that the presence at Wapping or the momentum of the strike can be kept up if the same tactics used for the past nine months continue. It is essential now for the grip of the Communist Party over the strike "committee" to be loosened and that firm plans and tactics of picketing and for escalating the dispute are drawn up and argued for throughout Fleet Street.

The only way to win is for Fleet Street to come out.

Many of the people central to the organising of the pickets and

demonstrations and with most control over the tactics used so far are not even strikers. They are branch and chapel bureaucrats and most of them are hard line Stalinists. The dispute should have been under the control of the workers who were sacked from the beginning. Some of them are now trying to wrest the power from the hacks in order to move the strike on.

Since the no vote the only strategy that Dean and Dubbins have had is to "go to the TUC". They will now halfheartedly attempt to get the TUC to implement the fairly meaningless resolution about the EETPU that was passed at the TUC conference. Of course it is important to pressurise the TUC to take a stand against the EETPU and for the printers, but their mandate from conference — even if the resolution was followed to the letter — is very weak and will have no significant effect on the outcome of the dispute. Following the TUC betrayal of the miners there can be no doubt that Willis and Co. have no guts for a fight, particularly prior to a General Election.

The only strategy that the CP has come up with since the no vote is to call for an increased boycott and a levy throughout SOGAT and the NGA.

Attitudes following the no vote are hardening. The nature of strikes has changed over the past five years. Previously a long drawn out strike was likely to sustain support and was characterised by a drift away by the strikers. With the increasingly hostile attitudes to unions and the green light from the Tories to smash unions wherever possible, long and bitter struggles have become a feature of industrial relations. This is also to do with the reluctance of the bureaucracy to support the kind of action which can win strikes quickly — the effect of the anti-union legislation has been far reaching and significant.

The miners' strike, the Barking strike, the struggle of the Addenbrookes woman, and the Silentnight strike have all been long but have been strikes where a high percentage of strikers have stuck with the picket and with the dispute. Long struggles now make the workers more determined, particularly where the

issues are jobs and trade union membership.

But, as the miners' strike showed, even the most determined and strongest workers cannot stay out forever. This month will be critical in deciding which way the print strike goes.

People will not continue to go down to Wapping on Saturday and Wednesdays to be led to the front of the plant, herded together where the police direct and treated to a few boring speeches from the Communist Party hacks. But, with Fleet Street out the effect could be entirely different. There would be massive pressure on Murdoch from the other papers to settle. With the additional input of the Fleet Street workers there could be effective picketing of Wapping which would stop the News International titles from getting to the news stands.

With Fleet Street out the TGWU could be pressurised to stop their members scabbing by moving materials.

Murdoch is not happy with this dispute. When he engineered it he could not have envisaged that it would last for nine months. The cost of maintaining security at the plant, the using in and out of scabs, the scab turnover rate are all biting. Vehicles are constantly being damaged. Two weeks ago 17 of the "white mice" fleet of transit vans which scurry around the streets at 2 and 3 am were bricked in independent episodes. Lorries and scab coaches are being hit all the time.

But the dispute is also taking its toll on strikers and supporters. In October two people, one a striker with a small baby and one a Southwark councillor, were sentenced to six months in prison. The arrests and beatings by police are still occurring daily. A high percentage of the strikes and supporters have criminal records arising from the dispute. A report from Labour Research showed that one out of six of the sacked workers have been arrested during the dispute, a higher ratio than striking miners. As the strike continues frustrations get worse and violence becomes more common and the courts impose harsher sentences.

This dispute has not been highly



Perhaps the first attempt at an objective and coherent political analysis of the miners' strike and its lessons for the workers' movement. 44 pages, 80p, including postage, from *Socialist Viewpoint*, BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

featured in the media. Scenes from Wapping or Kinning Park rarely appear on the television in the way the miners strike did. The other papers have a vested interest in keeping it quiet and in seeing Murdoch win... they will then be in a strong position to impose similar terms and conditions on their workers.

The printers, now out for nine months, are largely determined to win this dispute. They lack the rank and file leadership up till now to force the arguments into Fleet Street. The way to win is clear... Fleet Street out. Sloganeering about it is easy. Giving the support, both practical and political, to the printworkers who are arguing for it has proved harder. All SOGAT, NGA and NUJ members who are still handing *News International* titles must be picketed. And a strategy must be drawn up for mass picketing the other papers in order to stop them publishing.

The endless sectarianism or total apathy of the left has meant that the strongest of the printers have been left with little support. That has to change now.

Support groups need to be revitalised to take a lead in mobilising the labour movement in their areas to get down to the pickets

and physically support the printers. They should set up public meetings and have the printers who are arguing for Fleet Street out speaking, not the "Wapping personalities" like Hicks and Freeman who have been at the front of stopping any kind of discussion on spreading the strike.

A support group structure should be reformed bringing support groups in Regions together. But it needs to be a structure which is accountable and not a sectarian group which preaches about the way forward without mobilising for it and which patronises the strikers.

Nine months on strike changes people. The tactics for winning — the boycott, the weekly demos, the flying squads — advanced at the beginning by the bureaucrats, and supported by the Communist Party, have failed. There is nothing wrong with them as tactics for supplementing supporting strike action. But they are not in themselves separately or together capable of winning this dispute. That was difficult to argue at the beginning with about 90 per cent of the printers. Nine months in struggle has changed some of them and the arguments need to be put now, put strongly, acted on and maybe the trade union movement will see a victory instead of a defeat.

The 9-month fight they couldn't kill!

THERE was no real debate about the *News International* dispute at the TUC. Everything was geared to play it down.

Like the 1984 TUC conference which was debating support for the miners, a resolution was put which could get maximum backing but had no teeth to it and called basically for the TUC affiliates to do nothing.

The state of the dispute was summed up when Michael Hicks, leading member of the Communist Campaign Group came out of the conference with his ever present megaphone — which he needs like Linus needs his security blanket — and announced the TUC had just given fantastic backing to the printers.

There were cheers and clapping. In the crowd was a print worker who has been fighting since the beginning for Fleet Street to come out, for effective picketing, and against the tactics of Dean — which Hicks and the CCG promote. He just stood there head down, arms folded and shook his head.

He knew that the TUC vote ment

absolutely nothing and far from backing the printers the TUC, Kinnock, Dean, Dubbins and Willis want to wash their hands of this dispute, negotiate it away.

The role of the leadership of the NGA and SOGAT has been crucial from the beginning. Brenda Dean is clearly (and justifiably) hated by many of the print workers.

She is the villain of the piece. Because she is a woman leading a very male dominated union the slurs and criticisms of her politics degenerate into attacks on her because she is a woman (and by implication clearly not up to leading a strike). Her role from the start has been to try to negotiate. Her most terrified thoughts were that a strike with similar tactics and strengths of the miners might materialise and she has done everything possible to stop that.

She has deliberately defused any attempts by other sections to get involved in the picketing and has personally phoned up NUM leadership figures to ensure that no official NUM presence has been on the Wednesday and Saturday pickets on a regular basis.

Dubbins on the other hand gets rapturous applause and standing ovations

from the printers. The Dean and Dubbins double act are a bit like classic police officers' methods during interrogation. One is hated and the other gains your confidence under pressure so you trust him. Dubbins is now the "one who is okay". He has done nothing to further this dispute and has been just as much of a traitor to the worker as Dean but because she is so awful he seems better.

Whatever happens in this dispute the print unions will never be the same again. The crucial question in the trade union movement which comes out in any strike or struggle is the question of leadership. Nowhere has it been more apparent than in the printworkers struggle.

It was clear from the beginning of the strike that the SOGAT NGA leaders did not want a fight and would block any attempt to get effective action. The fact that not even all SOGAT and NGA members handling Murdoch titles were called out was a clear indication of the lack of will to spread the strike at all.

The fact that many SOGAT members were working on *News International* titles and that Fleet Street was working normally made it virtually to get any response from TGWU members driving the scab



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

Two days after the ballot result: printworkers and supporters march through Wapping. The fight goes on!

lorries, though this does not excuse Ron Todd and the TGWU from their role.

Because of the very bureaucratic and federated style of the print chapels and branches there was very little organised unity between the different strikers even within the same union. It was three weeks into the dispute before there was a joint union committee meeting to discuss the dispute. Workers were turning up for Saturday night pickets with no plan, no organisation, and no idea of how to achieve the stopping of Wapping.

The Stalinists meanwhile were acting quickly to ensure that they kept a tight grip through the bureaucracy on the picketing and stewarding of the marches. From day one of this strike the CP and the Communist Campaign Group were determined to be in control. They have had a very strong presence in the print unions for many years now. The CP split had just taken place and there was disunity amongst the Stalinists, which left a slight chink in their armour but not enough to allow a strong challenge from non-Stalinist strikers.

Anyone attempting to intervene in the strike who was known to be hostile to the CP was attacked. Support group members from Tower Hamlets were threatened by Communist Campaign Group members both at meetings and on the picket.

Printers who were critical of the organisation of the strike and particularly the role of the CCG and CP were physically threatened. **Most important of all was the need of the CP to ensure that the question of bringing the rest of the Fleet Street workers out was never raised in chapel meetings or mass meetings and that sacked NI workers who did raise it were discredited and shut up.**

They were the first to adopt the pathetic excuse that any Fleet Street strike would increase Murdoch's circulation because

his would be the only papers on the stands.

The print chapels, although very good at winning economic demands for their workers, have not developed many political perspectives within the unions. The leaders, FOCs and MOCs, had negotiated through strength excellent working conditions which were now threatened by Murdoch. But the bulk of the sacked members were not well equipped enough to argue effectively against the Stalinists and against the tactic of the boycott campaign.

Gradually more and more of them, however, were looking for a method of raising the issue of bringing out Fleet Street, and a small but strong group of printers have been at the fore of trying to gain control of the aspects of the strike from the very powerful and mafia-like CP.

The Fleet Street Support Unit, consisting mainly of printers, was set up about three to four months into the dispute. It is an attempt to loosely organise those printers who are trying to spread the dispute to the rest of Fleet Street.

The Fleet Street Support Unit is now organising leafletting and lobbying outside the other papers. The *Observer* with 550 NGA members with redundancy notices was the first target. Organising the left in unions with structures like the print unions is an extremely difficult job — but it has begun.

The Stalinists on the other hand can be seen at Wapping every Wednesday and Saturday leading the marches away from any real confrontation; announcing on their megaphones that they must be peaceful and orderly; winding the police up, and then leaving so others get the brunt of the police violence.

Not long ago one of the marches was proceeding down Commercial Road, the main road that the lorries and scab coaches take once they leave the Highway.

A scab coach came towards the march. People surrounded it. There were not enough police to control the situation so the CCG stepped in and regrouped the march to go down a side road away from the scabs and the lorries! They were literally doing the police's job for them.

The wonder of Wapping is not that the marches are small now but that people continue to come week after week despite such demoralising tactics.

Living in Tower Hamlets where the plant is situated, the strike is part of everyday life. Every time you go to work you see the scabs and the lorries. The coaches are parked outside the tube, picking up and dropping off their filth.

The roads are blocked off at least twice a week. If you refuse to show identification you don't get home. Police on horses in riot gear ride through working class housing estates on their way to and from the plant.

The plant itself dominates the landscape throughout much of Wapping and every time we look at it the anger rises. The Tower Hamlets Support Group has been active since day one of this dispute.

Is evolution is probably a miniature of what has happened with this dispute throughout the rest of London. The first meetings were packed with 60 to 70 people from all political groups and trade unions. It was a new and exciting dispute on our doorstep.

The first meetings got little practical support work organised, as everyone was keen to make a speech about how they saw the dispute being run and won. The sacked printers who attended (and who are still with us) must have wondered what they had walked into.

Now, nine months later, the support group is a core of 6 to 10 activists and the printers. The polemic has stopped and so has the influence of almost every other

political group in the borough. The general feeling seems to be that the dispute is going to be sold out anyway — so why bother?

The left press still write about it every week and the papers sellers are on the picket — but only to sell their papers and not really to give any practical support and solidarity to the sacked workers.

The left generally seems to have learned little from the miners' strike. It cannot get itself together to support workers in struggle unless they are clearly onto a winner.

The most militant and political of the printers know that this strike will be sold out. But they are still in there fighting, picketing and marching — and where is the trade union and labour movement support from the rest of London? Sitting at home or at a newer picket somewhere with more prospect of winning.

Supporting the printers has always been different from supporting the miners. London's labour movement raised thousands of pounds for the miners. People were travelling to and from the coal fields.

But this strike is different. A mass industrial struggle in the heart of London. Supporting it was never about organising collections of food and money. It was much harder. It is about getting other workers who are low paid and work in terrible conditions to listen to what the well paid printers are saying about losing their jobs. It was about a continual presence outside the Wapping plant every week for eight months. Not just one or two romanticised trips to a striking pit village every week.

It is about going down to Wapping and being infuriated by the sexism, racism and anti-gay sentiments of

many of the workers you are there to support and having to confront that all the time. It is about constantly talking with the workers (and not just the rest of the left) about the need to get Fleet Street out...

It is a dispute right here on our doorstep and it is being ignored. The May local elections took a lot of people away to canvass and to work in their boroughs. Many of those never came back.

Possibly living in Tower Hamlets we get more involved in the emotions of the dispute than others. There are scores of printers who we recognise now and they recognise us. We don't know their names or anything about them except that they are there every week on the marches and outside the plant. They are comrades in a fight which daily gets harder to win.

The women in this dispute have been incredible. Some of the strongest and sharpest of the strikers are the women clerical workers — in marked contrast to Brenda Dean. Always at the bottom end in terms of the union's organisation but at the top in terms of the strike. They have been excluded from having any organised say as women in this strike by the bureaucrats.

Even the women's demonstrations have been fronts. The last women's demonstration in July was tightly controlled by the officials to ensure that none of the anger of the thousands of women on it could be effectively expressed.

It was the first demonstration to be held after the high court injunction banning the right of the marchers to proceed down the Highway. The atmosphere was lively and good. Unlike the usual marches, there was loud singing and chanting. Many of us were glad that the timing had coincided with the women's march, feeling that

women would be less likely to be controlled than the men.

But as the march got to the plant the leaders of it (Stalinists) halted it 150 yards away from the police and made no attempt to insist on our right to proceed down the road.

The rally which should have taken place a half mile away started exactly where the police told the chief stewards to stop. Women had been betrayed. To add insult to injury we were supposed to stand there and listen to Brenda Dean tell us all about the "fight for our people".

Marching through the streets of London on a day time march with the printers in July when the sun was shining and the atmosphere was strong and solid was a moving experience.

As we walked past the Times building in Grays Inn Road scabs had put copies of the *Times* and *Sun* in the windows. One woman — who has been on every march, always with her placard and a strong voice — stood there. She was not going to move until the papers were taken down. The whole march came together and determined not to move.

The police went into the building and removed the papers from the windows. The woman was jubilant. It was a small victory. A tiny victory. But for people who are fighting with everything they have against the might of Murdoch, the Metropolitan Police, Thatcher and her thugs, the cused union leaders and the right-moving Labour party and TUC, it was a significant victory.

That woman is what struggle is about. She will not give in even if she is beaten to the ground. She will get up and fight again. The left has a lot to learn from women like her.



Paul Mattson/Frame



Showing the folly of Labour's pledges on ballots: Sealink workers walked straight out on unofficial strike when faced with redundancy - would a Labour government force them back to work?

Is Kinnock promising a rose-garden?

The line of Labour Party Conference in Blackpool was, of course, decided by the leadership in advance:

***Follow up the unity-above-all TUC with a bland pre-election rally presented for the media;**

***Put Labour's new grey programme up front ditching any vestiges of anti-capitalist policy;**

***And bury or, at worst, marginalise all controversy.**

With massive manipulation by the chair and Conference Arrangements Committee, hiccoughs in this plan were kept to a minimum, and the media assessment was of a Labour Party "united as never before" behind the Leader, with the left out of sight.

Kinnock's speech as Leader set out his plans for a Labour government in much the same terms as at Bournemouth last year.

A two-year programme to reduce employment by a million; a five-year plan for "laying the foundations of steadily expanding investment and employment; a ten-year "economic

By PETE FIRMIN, with additional material by KEVIN LEE

planning perspective"; a British Investment Bank and a small dose of "social ownership". More collaboration with capitalism to encourage investment. This is hardly even the beginnings of a socialist programme for the economy.

In Kinnock's words, "we have to work our way to recovery", "we have to create the wealth". The problem is it all ignores those who profit from the work of others, and who monopolise the wealth.

Of course there was a ritual condemnation of the Tories, but even the "left" icing on Kinnock's cake was far from radical — tough, easy talk against US interference in Nicaragua, and calls for government sanctions against South Africa are hardly the sole property of socialists. Far be it from Kinnock to make the qualitative step of calling on the trade union movement to take direct action against South African trade!

The only commitments were in other areas: staying in NATO, no removal of US defence and

intelligenece installations. The closing remarks were pure nationalism. Kinnock claimed to be willing to die for his country, but not of course for the working class. What else could you expect from a Labour leader who barely noticed the miners' strike?

Unlike last year at Bournemouth, Kinnock did not need this time to attack any sections of the Party for conducting the class struggle. Last year the miners' strike was still fresh in everyone's mind, together with the demand for re-imbursement of the NUM and re-instatement of the sacked miners. The rate-capping struggles in Liverpool and Lambeth had only just collapsed. Kinnock had to prove himself to the bosses as capable of fighting these elements, and lay the ground for the witch-hunt against *Militant* in Liverpool.

This year, with those struggles more distant, the expulsions in the bag and the desire for unity even stronger he could concentrate on his programme for right wing government.

The witch-hunt of course had been completed on the first morning in closed session. Already certain to lose the vote for re-instatement the *Militant* supporters showed their

Labour Party

Musical chairs?

IN AN ATTEMPT to stamp out any opposition at all to his Leadership, Neil Kinnock has manoeuvred to get himself elected as Chair of the Party for the coming year.

This unprecedented step of being Leader and Chair has been taken in order to stop the presumably terrifying situation of Dennis Skinner chairing the Party in election year.

What Kinnock doesn't seem to realise is that unless he changes the rules entirely, Skinner will become Chair in the first year of a Labour government — possibly even more of a threat to Uncle Neil.

Women

SEVERAL of the "women's debates" at Conference appeared to concern themselves with the ins and outs of bureaucratic change, ignoring wider struggles women are involved in. In fact, the debates around women's representation in the Party and the proposed "Ministry for Women" were very much arguments about power.

The overturning of the NEC in the "Ministry for Women" debate showed that delegates were keen for the next Labour Government to take seriously its commitments on equal pay, women's rights to control their own fertility, improved child care, and so on.

When *Labour Briefing Women* fought hard to maintain a principled position in the women's representation in the Labour Party debates, they were denounced as "loony lefties" by the leaders of the Women's Action Committee (WAC), who wanted to hand the Women's Conference over to unaccountable trade union block votes as well.

Social Ownership

"SOCIAL OWNERSHIP" has become the polite, "red rose" term for nationalisation. The composite carried at Conference did not demand the return of privatised industries to the public sector. The composite demanding renationalisation was only given half-hearted support by sections of the Left (such as Labour Left Liaison) because it called for renationalisation to be carried out "without compensation". The policy backtracking by Kinnock is as strong in the economic field as elsewhere.

Ireland

THE BRIEF IRELAND debate was focussed on a strong composite motion from ten constituencies which condemned the Anglo-Irish Accord; supported self-determination and a United Ireland; and demanded British withdrawal "as an urgent priority". Richard Stanton, the Brighton delegate who moved the composite, recognised the importance of tackling the nature of imperialism and believed this to be one of the key ways to challenge the Party leadership.

tactical ineptness and alienated their defenders even further by refusing to address conference — on the pretext that they were only allowed 5 minutes each without the television cameras. This only went to support the right wing claim that the far left are only out for publicity. Only 300,000 votes (including those of FTAT and the FBU) were cast for their reinstatement.

The tactics of those who argued that Amir Khan and Kevin Scally could win reinstatement by distancing themselves from *Militant* fared no better. The band-wagon behind the witch-hunt, combined with the desire not to rock the boat of "NEC recommendations", is moving so fast that conference rejected their reinstatement by 4.4 million to 3.7 million. Even if the promised "review" of their case should reinstate them, conference could not be seen to openly support opponents of Hattersley.

In the NEC elections, the hard left clearly lost out with the defeat of Eric Heffer. Targeted by the right and the soft left LCC for years, attacked for walking off the platform in disgust during Kinnock's speech last year, and finally threatened by his sponsoring union UCATT in the week before conference with withdrawal of support for defending *Militant* and opposing Kinnock, Heffer was as much a victim of the witch-hunt as *Militant* itself.

Those on the "hard left" (Campaign Group of MPs, *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) who supported Tam Dalyell rather than the second Black Sections candidate, Narendra Makanji, got their answer at the first meeting of the newly-elected NEC on the Wednesday. Dalyell's first vote was to side with the right to vote in Kinnock as Party vice chair against Dennis Skinner.

Where there seemed a chance of controversy, the bureaucracy cynically attempted to incorporate and defuse issues. Thus, on the first (Sunday) evening although the NEC recommendation was nominally to reject the demand that a future Ministry for Women be given full cabinet status, this was moved without enthusiasm and rejected. Although this was a victory for the left and women's rights, those who campaigned for this are fully aware that even should Kinnock as Prime Minister agree to this the fight would continue to ensure that crucial issues (health facilities, equal pay, abortion rights, etc) are not buried in the general "austerity programme" as happened under the "Socialist" government in France. It would also require that the Parliamentary Labour Party elect at least one woman to the Cabinet, a major step forward from the present gang of white middle class men.

Last year, despite opposition from the platform, the resolution on Lesbian and Gay rights won a simple majority at the first time of being discussed at conference. Given the stage management and sharpness of the right wing, it is hard not to be cynical about the unanimous (!) decision of the NEC to recommend support at this year's conference, which left it up to the EETPU and AUEW delegations, together with some hard right constituencies to uphold the traditional backward line and vote against.

The resolution got 79 per cent of votes cast, ensuring it should go into the manifesto. However, the amount of work still to be done in the movement is shown by the refusal of Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire County and Glasgow District Councils to implement a basic equal opportunities policy.

Another attempt to defuse an issue produced probably the biggest ruckus in conference itself. It has been a long-standing demand of women in the Party that the national women's conference hold its own Rules Conference — something that has been denied it by the bureaucracy.

This year the Women's Action Committee supported a resolution which would allow NEC involvement in the restructuring of conference. The only revolt against the "fixing" of debate by the chair was organised by *Briefing Women*, which resulted in women gathering round the rostrum to demand the suspension of Standing Orders in order to let their opposition be heard.

To win such a suspension of Standing Orders after the NEC spokesperson has summed up on a debate is unheard of, but they managed it, egged on by the patronising remarks of the chair. The resolution was passed, but the argument against was heard, and the criticism received by the *Briefing Women* is all the more surprising when one of the present tasks of the left is to defend the LPYS against precisely such interference in its rules.

On nuclear power, the anti-nuclear composite got 66.28 per cent of the vote, just short of the two-thirds necessary to become manifesto policy. But, assisted by a noisy lobby of BNFL workers outside the conference, the NEC's fudging statement was also passed, giving Kinnock a free hand.

Conference re-affirmed its unilateralist position on nuclear arms, together with a demand for a real campaign (passed before, but where has the campaign been?), but resolutions calling for withdrawal from NATO and closing down US bases were heavily defeated.

In a cleverly stage-managed production, other controversial

debates were whittled down in time or called for times when no TV cameras were running.

Ireland and Black Sections barely got a look-in. *Militant* prostrated themselves in front of the witch-hunters and disgusted many of their defenders when Frances Curran (LPYS rep on the NEC) volunteered to sum up against Black Sections on behalf of the NEC. There is nothing the right like more than to see two of their most hated opponents fighting it out.

The debate on troops out of Ireland, taken after all, was so brief and so heavily stage-managed you'd be pushed to notice it happened.

Current industrial disputes and the legacy of past ones never reached conference floor. Despite a lobby by News International print workers, the motion from their unions was simply on restricting foreign ownership of the media — as if the nationality of the press barons made the slightest difference to the redundancies hitting the industry.

Durham Miners (at present engaged in a series of one-day strikes) lobbied in support of their jailed and victimised comrades, but the NUM chose not to put a resolution on the issue — on the spurious grounds that it had been won last year and they didn't want it to be defeated. Kinnock of course said last year he would not reimburse the NUM. The issue should have been put to conference and the movement not allowed to forget the miners' strike.

Opposition to state interference in Union rule books came in a motion from TASS, who then agreed, on the advice of the NEC, to remit, missing an important opportunity of identifying the size of the opposition. A similar manoeuvre saw COHSE and NUPE conspire to withdraw a motion on democratisation of the NHS.

The debate on the economy never got off the ground. Speaker after speaker rallied behind the NEC's proposals, with the one resolution calling for re-nationalisation buried under a sea of red roses. It was obvious that beyond a few knee-jerk responses the left has not even started a serious discussion of alternatives to the rubbish that is coming out of Hattersley's word processor.

If the class struggle and serious debate on left alternatives to Kinnock were kept out of conference, they were certainly not missing around the fringe.

The Campaign Group, *Labour Herald* and *Labour Briefing* all held large rallies at which speakers more or less clearly differentiated themselves from Kinnock's programme. The class struggle refused to go away, with the persistent presence of the strikers from Silentnight (who also picketed



THE VOTE to expel supporters of *Militant* (5½ million for, — 325,000 against) was even worse in terms of constituency support than it first looks. The FBU and FTAT both voted against the expulsions — which means that Constituency Parties voted 2-1 in favour of kicking out *Militant*.

Bearing this, and the overwhelming support for the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership, in mind, the campaign to

reinstate Kevin Scally and Amir Khan from Birmingham did well to secure major union support, including that of the TGWU.

The urgent need now is to organise broad-based campaigning against the expulsions through Labour Against the Witch-hunt '86. LAW '86 is organising a conference in November, and can be contacted at 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.

Blackpool Co-op) and Hormel (Spam) in the USA.

The National Justice for Mineworkers held a packed, enthusiastic lunch-time meeting after which it was clear to all that not only was the issue not going to go away, but also that the role of the labour movement's "leaders" in the strike had not been forgotten.

LIKE most delegates, we were pleased to see LCC break from the habit of a lifetime and invite a worker in struggle onto their platform. Could this by any chance have anything to do with the fact that the striker, from JE Hangers, is on strike in Peter Hain's Putney constituency?

Black Sections held one of the most inspiring meetings with speakers from a whole range of struggles, making it clear that the fight is not simply about constitutional change but the labour movement being forced to recognise the particular oppression of black people and take up their demands.

Tommy Carroll, Sinn Fein Councillor, gave and received greetings from more fringe meetings than some thought humanly possible. The attempt by Stuart Bell, the front bench spokesperson on Northern

Ireland, to condemn violence and oppose Troops Out at the debate organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland fell flat when faced with the arguments of Carroll and Bernadette McAlliskey. He did himself no favours in denouncing sectarian violence by reading out the names of 10 people murdered; Ken Livingstone in the chair promptly pointed out that nine of the ten were Catholics!

Emerging from the conference was a new sharper level of debate about how the left should relate to the fact that the "new realist" right has clearly managed, under Kinnock's leadership, to reverse most of the gains made since 1979.

Nigel Williamson (editor of *Tribune*) and Ken Livingstone bemoaned the fact that their project — the "realignment of the left" — has failed. Having argued for the last two years that the left had to build bridges to Kinnock to keep him out of the clutches of the right, they now recognise, belatedly and in a confused way, that Kinnock is very much the *leader* of the right.

Having led retreats and sell-outs and given Kinnock all possible assistance in the marginalisation of any serious left opposition, they now find themselves out in the cold. Redundant to the requirements of the

Black Sections

BLACK SECTIONS members answered their critics at a fringe meeting on the Tuesday night. Far from a select band of middle-class careerists interested only in internal wranglings of the Labour Party, their meeting provided a platform for all black people in struggle.

Speakers from Broadwater Farm and St Paul's, Bristol, outlined the police attacks on their communities. A speaker from Fenestras, the trade union federation in El Salvador, and a Sinn Fein councillor from Armagh put the meeting in an international dimension.

Viraj Mendis described the campaign to stop his deportation. A NALGO member spoke of the reasons for building black caucuses in trade unions. Diane Abbot, Russell Profitt and Bernie Grant, all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, spoke on the need to take real power when Labour forms a Government.

The unity of Afro-Caribbean and Asian people under the Black Sections banner was a constant theme. And the answer to Roy Hattersley's claim at last year's Conference, that "his Asians" did not want Black Sections, came in the form of Councillor Amir Khan who was expelled for organising a Black Sections meeting in Birmingham attended by nearly 300 people.

The Black Sections' "manifesto" for their NEC candidates was a clear socialist programme including opposition to all immigration controls; nationalisation of the commanding heights of industry under workers' control; abolition of YTS "slave wages"; and full British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.



THE DITCHING of Eric Heffer by the Constituency Parties was a direct result of his uncompromising stand against the witch-hunt and the purge of Liverpool Labour Party. *Socialist Viewpoint* has differences with Heffer over many policy issues, but his departure from the NEC at this time is a major setback.

The Campaign Group, *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Organiser* will now have to watch the antics of their chosen candidate, the pro-nuclear, old Etonian, landowning Tam Dalyell, with great interest.



right and hated by the left, they are trying to create a new Socialist Fudge Alliance (SFA) to fill the space between those who recognise that a Kinnock government will be a re-run (only worse) of the Wilson-Callaghan governments and those who welcome this.

Livingstone's proposals to overcome this isolation of the "cuddly left" are clear. He hopes for a new alliance, stretching from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and Tribune Group of MPs on the right across to sections of the Campaign Group and Labour Left Liaison (LLL).

Livingstone welcomed what he called "the defeat of the workerist elements within the Campaign Group" (Heffer!) and made a clear separation between *Socialist Action* and its allies in LLL on the one hand, and the "distant" left around *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser*. The issues around which Livingstone would like to hang this new alliance are those of race and sex — precisely those issues which Kinnock has started cynically to incorporate in order to isolate the hard left and confuse the middle ground. The reality is that Livingstone has no major differences with the centrepiece of Kinnock's programme, despite Hattersley being the *bête noire* of the "cuddly left". Livingstone talks only of the need for a "regional industrial regeneration strategy" and complains vaguely of the shadow cabinet "blurring the edges of policy".

The clear danger is that sections of the "hard left" are going to be taken in by this. Unless there is a clear recognition that fighting the special oppression of women, black people, lesbians and gay men is closely tied to the class struggle in general and "economic strategy" in particular, then they may well be led to believe that they can best "move" the next Labour Government by forming such an alliance.

Signs that some have failed to distance themselves from such a project could be seen at the fringe meeting organised by Labour Left Liaison on "the politics of Campaign Forum". Both Marc Wadsworth of Black Sections and John Ross of *Socialist Action* declared that *Militant* no longer deserve the sympathy of the left. Ross went even further to say "we are not defending *Militant*, we are defending Party democracy". The possibility of hitching up with the LCC — who also opposed the expulsion of Khan and Scally but pushed for the expulsion of Liverpool *Militant* supporters — are clear.

Militant supporters of course have not been expelled for their refusal to support the demands of women and black people, nor for their opposition to Troops Out of Ireland; they are pilloried because they still argue for and attempt to carry out (in however a confused and bone-headed a fashion) the politics of class struggle. That fact still places them on the left, even if they are still tied to crude economism.

Rather than ditch *Militant* because they stand in the way of alliances with opportunists, they have to be drawn

Lesbian and Gay Rights

WITH SUPPORT from Jo Richardson MP, speaking on behalf of the NEC, the lesbian and gay rights resolution was passed by the two thirds majority needed for inclusion in the Party manifesto.

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) intervention at Conference was very much geared round action, such as the October 26 demonstration against Labour-controlled Nottingham Council which has refused to include sexuality in their equal opportunities policies.



PHOTO: John Harris (IFL)

Who is the "real" right winger?

into a serious campaign against the witch-hunt which fights throughout the movement, not the courts and stunts. But many elements of LLL have also refused to become involved in such a campaign.

The LLL fringe meeting was expected to be an opportunity to hear somebody explain what Campaign Forum (set up in Chesterfield a few weeks previously) is, and an

opportunity for the left to discuss, without being swamped by platform speakers, a balance sheet of conference and where the left goes from Blackpool.

Instead, the decision to have only 2 speakers had been reversed — and not one of those on the platform told the audience what Campaign Forum is.

Tony Benn however strongly implied that he had been wrong to stand for the Deputy Leadership in 1981. Perhaps this gives us a clue as to what Campaign Forum represents.

Clearly the opportunities are there for those willing to argue consistently

for support for struggles going on at present, rather than bargaining over Kinnock's programme for government. There is an urgent need to warn the movement about the nature of that programme. This cannot be done by horse-trading between rival blocs but only by a persistent fight for political clarity.

The need to organise those who recognise the danger signs and want to challenge the concept of an alternative government of capitalism has never been more urgent, a task which *Socialist Viewpoint* and *Briefing* supporters have set as a priority.

Cuddlies winge

THE WINGEING "cuddly left" of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) — (have you ever tried cuddling a viper? — have just discovered, surprise, surprise, that Neil Kinnock has moved to the right.

The LCC actually demanded the removal of Doctor John "Chernobyl" Cunningham as Environment Spokesperson — and suggested putting him in charge of Education. Whatever did the education staff and students do to deserve him?

In an article in the LCC's bulletin, Ken Livingstone congratulates their bid to "establish left unity" and denounces any challenge to Kinnock's position as Leader.

He seems to ignore the fact that Kinnock's terms of "unity" include a blank cheque for the possible expulsion of thousands of Labour left wingers who support the *Militant* or embarrass Roy Hattersley.

Even Nigel Williamson, erstwhile Editor of *Tribune*, recognised that the Left's so-called realignment had been "a spectacular failure".

Nigel asked if the new *Socialist Action*-backed "Campaign Forums" would accept LC involvement, while Ken Livingstone suggested unity between LCC and Labour Left Liaison.

We fail to see how serious left wing fighters can unite with witch-hunters.

Save Rose and Brian Brutal face of racist laws

BY GARTH FRANKLAND

In May, Rose Alaso's sister was picked up without warning by immigration officials in Leeds. Rose returned to her house to find it empty.

Her defence campaign rang all the airports and were told that Rose's sister was not being deported. Everybody thought that

perhaps the sister had been kidnapped. Then a phonecall confirmed the deportation.

This is reality of day-by-day terror under which political refugees and immigrants now live.

On Friday August 22, Rose left for work as normal leaving her eight year old son to be taken by a neighbour to the local community playscheme. Brian never arrived: instead he was terrified and besieged by plain clothes men pounding on the door, wanting to see his mother.

Neighbours said that the men said they were police. The director of Chapeltown Citizen's Advice Bureau rang the local police station to ask why the men had to come to Rose's house. The police station denied that anyone had called.

Councillor Lorna Cohen and the Euro MP for Leeds, Mike McGowan, also made inquiries — only to be told that the police did not want to talk to Rose Alaso.

On the Saturday morning at 7.30 am the plain clothes men were again pounding at her door. Rose refused to admit them unless she had one of her advisors with her. The men went away.

Rose and her companion then went to the phone box to telephone for advice — but a police car drove on the pavement at her. The police

jumped out, handcuffed her and rammmed her into the back of the car.

At the police station the police refused to let her phone Mike McGowan. Rose was held for over 8 hours — and eventually charged with not paying a taxi fare and biting a policeman's finger! Rose denies these charges.

Over 30 people later attended the emergency press conference called to explain the background to Rose's arrest.

This absolutely blatant harassment by immigration officials and police must be seen against the background of the Tories' new racist "visa" pass laws for black visitors to Britain.

They represent a clear attempt to muzzle Rose — a strong campaigner not only in her own defence but in defence of others attacked by the racist immigration laws.

The campaign committee has pledged itself to redouble its efforts to keep Rose and Brian in Britain.

Rose told local councillor Garth Frnkland that the police had questioned her over her membership of the Labour Party.

There had also been pressure to prevent her from going to the TUC — but she went anyway.

"I am proud of my fight. I will go on till we win," she said.

They shall not pass!

As anti-fascist demonstrators commemorated the victorious Battle of Cable Street in East London, the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine issued this reminder of the lessons for Jewish workers.

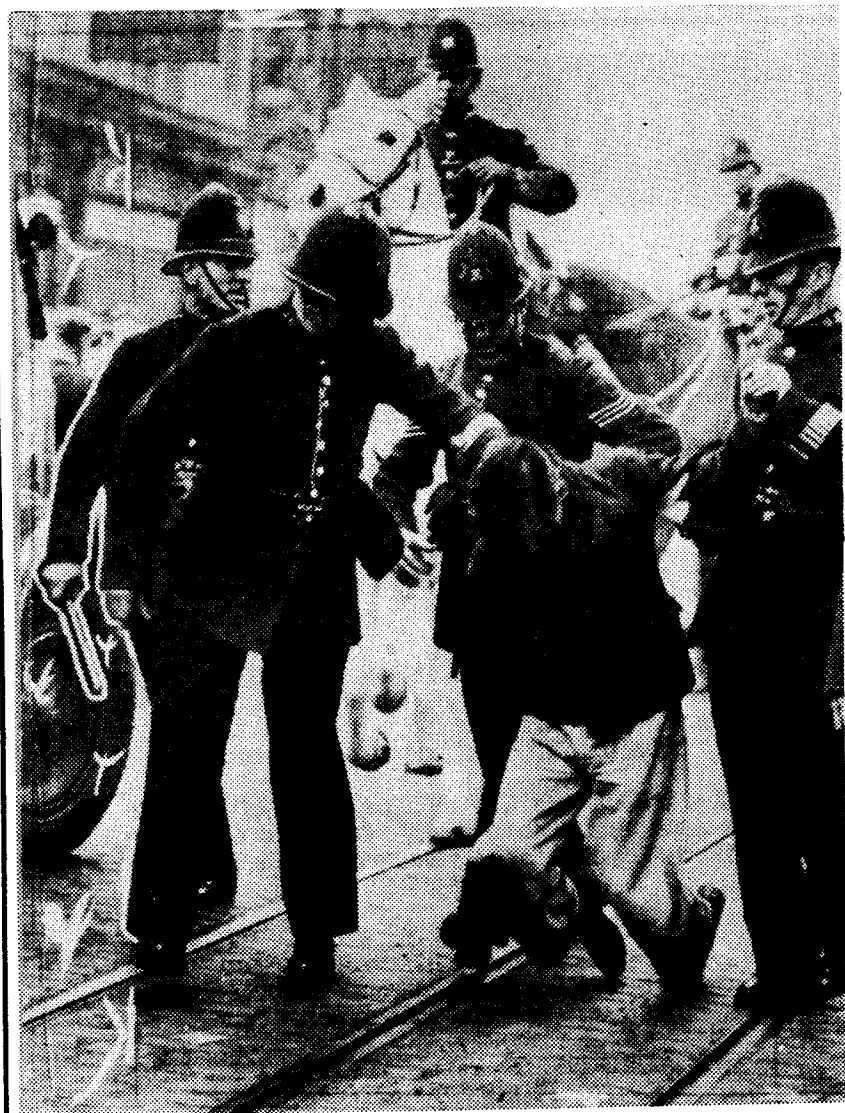
The courage and determination of the thousands of Jewish workers — in alliance with communists, Catholic dockers and East Londoners — who fought the Battle of Cable Street, contains many lessons for us today. Above all, their victory showed that fascism and anti-semitism can be fought and defeated.

Their fight for the right to live as Jews in Britain stood in sharp contrast and opposition to the aims of the zionist movement which at that time was seeking to establish a separate Jewish-only state by colonising the land of the Palestinians.

The zionists argue that anti-semitism is an inherent part of the gentile (non-Jewish) character; it cannot be fought, and thus emigration to a Jewish "homeland" is the only answer.

The Jewish workers' organisations — the Jewish People's Councils in particular — which stopped 4,000 fascist thugs in their tracks, had a different answer to the racism they faced. "Direct action", workers' solidarity, not Zionism defeated the rise of fascism and anti-semitism in Britain.

Today Black people in the East End of London face similar attacks, and a racist police force. The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine looks to the example of Cable Street for the way forward. The slogan "They shall not pass" is as applicable today as it was yesterday.



Contact Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, BM LMCP, London WC1 3XX.

Anti-fascist arrested in 1936 events.

Miners are back in action for jobs!

By BILL PETERS

The decision of the Scottish Area Executive of the NUM to support the loss of almost 2,000 jobs in the Scottish coal field is the worst decision taken in the coal mining industry since before the year long strike.

In the course of one week last month they supported:

*the loss of hundreds of jobs through voluntary redundancies at Killock and Barony in Ayrshire;

*the closure of Comrie colliery in Fife with the loss of 480 jobs;

*and the link-up of Bilston Glen and Monktonhall in Lothian with the loss of 900 jobs.

The decisions have reduced the labour force in the Scottish coal field to less than 5,000 and the number of pits to nine.

Commenting on the decision to support the closures, George Bolton, national chair of the Communist Party, and Vice President of the Scottish NUM, said that the closures were taking place because:

"The Coal Board are trying to rationalise the industry to meet the current situation."

He went on to stress the "positive side" of the decision:

"The positive side of the picture was that £20m was being invested in Monktonhall and that deep mining was being retained in Ayrshire... There are also good prospects for future developments at Musselburgh, Happenenden and Canonbie."

A few days later Bolton was stressing the point again:

"In the short term there are job losses, but in the long term there is a very good prospect for Bilston Glen and Monkton Hall. It's a step backwards to take a step forwards."

Scottish Area NUM Secretary Eric Clarke said:

"We are recommending acceptance of the proposals for Bilston Glenn and Monktonhall because the alternative was the complete closure of Monkton Hall and the loss of all reserves in the Musselbough basin."

He went on to say:

"We are reluctantly accepting short-term expediency for long term development."

These statements are utterly cynical, since the track record of the NCB is that they will follow up every unresisted closure with more closures. Before long they will be questioning the viability of what is left of the Scottish coalfield.

The Scottish decision has compounded the difficult problem of defending jobs in



PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Terry French's candidacy for NUM Vice President highlights issue of victimised miners.

the rest of the coal industry, yet the Scottish Area bureaucrats are completely unrepentant in their right wing stand. At the last meeting of the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign held in Bolton Lancashire, they proudly announced that they were defending the victimised miners and that they had been to Balmoral to petition the Queen on their behalf!

Any illusions which may have existed that the departure of MacGregor and his replacement by Haslam have been quickly dispelled. In fact the pit closure programme had been speeded up, and the hard line in the pits maintained. The

national membership of the NUM is down to below 100,000 from almost 200,000 at the beginning of the strike. Over 30,000 of these are due to pit closures and redundancies.

The strength behind Scargill's speech at the NUM conference, where he reminded the union that ultimately industrial action is the only way to defend jobs can now be clearly seen. Yet Scargill remains under pressure from within the NUM, particularly from Area leaderships like Scotland and South Wales, and the Communist Party is organising against

him along with the right wing. There have been rumblings from McGahey and others who want to do a deal with the UDM. Within the trade union movement as a whole, Scargill's class struggle approach is under ever greater attack.

Last week the South Wales Area decided not to oppose the closure of Nantgarw colliery near Cardiff, and Cwm colliery near Pontypridd, with a loss of up to 1,300 jobs. At a meeting at the pits only 30 miners voted to use the review procedure and resist the closure. If this is contrasted with the determined attempt to prevent the closure of Lewis Merthyr in 1983, the dramatic change in the situation can be seen. The South Wales coalfield is now down to 14 pits, from 28 before the strike, with a loss of 8,000 jobs.

South Wales NUM Area President Des Duffield said in the *Morning Star* that he would not recommend fighting the closure through the review procedure since "I wouldn't want to raise hopes by using this procedure, which is a farce."

It is true that the defence of jobs under the current conditions is difficult and it is also true that the current tactic of the NCB in juggling with redundancy payments have made it even more difficult. The present redundancy scheme ends in April and long service miners could lose in excess of £20,000 if they are made redundant after April rather than before. Intended redundancy would need to be known by December 1986 for the three month rule to be valid. At the present time the miners receive £1,000 per year's service in redundancy payments. Now, those not notified for redundancy by December will only receive money under the new scheme; those under 21 years service would receive £250 per year, 21 to 30 years of age £450 and 30 to 50 year olds £700 for every year's service.

To put a pit in the review procedure now would take the closure date beyond April, and up to now every pit which has gone into the procedure, with the exception of Darfield Main in Yorkshire, has been closed in the end — including pits like Bates where the review procedure was won.

Even the militant Kent coalfield have conceded the closure of Tilmanstone under those conditions. A meeting of the 475 miners there voted not to use the review procedure but to accept the closure.

Yet all this is taking place under conditions where there is a revival of militancy amongst the rank and file of the NUM, expressed most clearly in the 2 to 1 ballot decision of the Durham Mechanics to begin a series of one day strikes at selected pits each week.

The Mechanics were balloted for strike action on four issues:

- 1) to reinstate Geoff Hartnell (a Durham Mechanic sacked two months after the end of the strike) and all the sacked miners;
- 2) to force the Coal Board to pay back the money stolen from the miners;
- 3) to restore the conciliation machinery in the industry;
- 4) to stop the closure of Seaham Colliery.

Following this decision, a ballot of Durham NUM members voted by a 66 per cent majority to ban all mid-week overtime.

The first of the one-day strikes was held on September 22 at Murton colliery and was a resounding success. In a remarkable display of solidarity, the only people to cross the Mechanics picket line were a handful of deputies, and two members of

the UDM. 18 of the 20 UDM members at the pit respected the picket, with all the NUM members.

Dave Temple, delegate for Murton Mechanics described the radicalising effects of the strike in an article in *Workers Press*:

"Two mini-bus loads of police were quickly rushed to the scene but in the absence of the huge numbers they were accustomed to, they were forced to take the taunts and jibes of the pickets and could only passively appeal for 'common sense' to prevail.

The atmosphere was further electrified as wives, girlfriends and well-wishers joined the men on the gate and stayed talking till the small hours of Monday morning.

One mechanic summed up his feelings when he said: 'I am two years younger than when I turned out tonight.'

As Monday progressed, the pubs and clubs of Murton filled with high-spirited miners discussing old times and future action.

Not a defeatist soul to be seen."



The second strike took place on Tuesday of last week, this time Westoe colliery was the target, where seven NUM members have been sacked since the end of the year long strike. Only recently the pit was brought to a standstill when miners refused to cross a picket line put up by the sacked men.

In last week's strike the action was again absolutely solid. There was never a question of the NUM members going in but there are 130 UDM members at the pit and they had been urged by the scab union to cross the Mechanics picket line. In the event only a dozen went in, and the pit came to a standstill.

The third took place at Wearmouth pit on Monday October 21. Production was at a standstill and only UDM members and some NACODS went in.

This overtime ban linked to the one day strikes has shaken the Board and may have been a factor in the decision of Haslam to offer to pay the back pay in an attempt to buy the dispute off on that one point. If this is the case the lesson of this is to build on this success by maintaining and stepping up the action focussing on the other three demands.

Successful action of this sort demonstrates that a fightback can be organised even at this stage in the coal industry. It creates new conditions to fight for the reinstatement of all the sacked men and to defend the industry. The pay issue is important as well. The wage offer, for

example, includes a clause on pensions under which a strike of more than a week would effect future pension rights.

At the same time the 1986-7 pay round is due to begin next month. That is expected to include the so-called "Doncaster Option". There has been little information on this coming from the NUM but it is expected to include a non-negotiable pension scheme and a new bonus set-up which is seen by many militants as an attempt to divide production workers from the rest of the workforce. Under this face men would be paid on "target achieved", the rest would be paid on a "tonnage achieved". The scheme doesn't pay out unless the tonnage achieved is more than the colliery break-even point.

All this raises the matter of a coherent strategy to be fought for across the industry by NUM militants and the construction of a broad-based rank and file movement which to organise around such a strategy, however, remains an unresolved problem.

Not that there is a shortage of those presenting themselves as a national rank and file movement of miners: the most recent of these is a "National Miners' Broad Left", which held its first meeting in Barnsley on September 21. Although organised along sectarian lines by *Militant* it attracted 120 miners from right across the British mining industry.

The main debate at the meeting showed the need for a discussion on a strategy for the miners to meet the present conditions. It recognised the gradual re-emergence of combativity amongst rank and file miners since the end of the strike, and the need for a clear direction if it is going to be developed further. The problem was how to go about it. In fact the meeting could hardly have been more confusing.

The strategy advanced by *Militant* was to call for the extension of the overtime ban which has been in operation in South Wales for the past two months — which is a ban on production overtime — into a national action in its present form. They argued that this would further develop militancy in the pits since the present ban in South Wales was costing the NCB large sums of money and this could be repeated in other areas.

The main debate therefore was between this proposal and a call by other miners from the SWP, the WRP and *Socialist Viewpoint* for a full overtime ban covering both production and non-production overtime (although the SWP didn't want a national overtime ban to be called by the national union but to extended from area to area. *Militant* argued that this would be going too far too fast, and that miners were only ready for minimal action. The *Militant* policy prevailed with a motion calling for a complete ban being defeated.

The platform of the meeting resisted a proposal calling for the extension of the Durham Mechanics selective strike action into other NUM areas, and it was not until a delegation from Durham arrived at the meeting — late because they had been organising a strike for Monday morning — that an emergency resolution was accepted by the platform. The resolution was then carried despite a recommendation from the platform to vote against.

The meeting went on to pass a resolution calling for the defence of pits, but it did not address itself to the very difficult question of how to defend the threatened pits and how to deal with the April redundancy pay deadline; what do you say to a miner who says that he will lose



PHOTO: John Harris (IFL)

Traditions of the great strike are being revived in one-day actions.

£20,000 if the closure of the pit is resisted and he ends up losing his job anyway? Unless that question can be answered there is little chance of resisting the present round of closures since the miners themselves will demand that the closures are accepted. In some pits which are faced with possible closure but where no closure has yet been announced there are miners pressing the NUM to negotiate closure in order to meet the April deadline; what is to be said to them which will give them a real alternative?

Scargill points the way when he says that ultimately the only way is to defend jobs is by strike action — however difficult that may be. The problem is that as time goes on the situation gets more difficult. There is a gun pointing at the heads of the miners and that gun needs to be removed if jobs are going to be effectively defended.

An attitude has to be developed that it is possible to go strike action — in the directly threatened pits as well as in the ones which are seen as more safe. The stronger pits have to be linked more directly to the ones faced with imminent closure. At the same time it has to be recognised that no pit is safe. Cwm was seen as a "safe" pit. The April deadline itself is designed by the NCB to divide the miners. This situation has to be challenged by the development of direct action. A strategy of this sort needs thrashing out by the militants in the NUM and must be advanced throughout the union. Time is very short. Threatened pits should meet together nationally and formulate a policy to be put to Area Conferences of the Union. The limited action which has begun points the way to this if it is adequately developed.

In the solidarity campaign there have been some positive developments with the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. After the friction caused by the bureaucratic removal of the original secretary, who was doing a very good job, in order to replace him with someone who was less critical of the right wing of the labour movement, the recent meeting in Bolton was far more constructive.

It is important to build the Regional Campaigns, such as the inaugural meeting of the South East Region Campaign to be held in London on November 8.

Although there are now only three miners in prison — Terry French from Kent and Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland from South Wales — the support for them must be maintained. The two Fryston miners recently released from prison show the problems these miners face. Their pit was closed whilst they were in prison. Three out of four pits have now been closed in the Castleford area with the loss of 2,500 jobs.

At the same time the sackings are still going on. Mick MacGinty, the vice president of Nottinghamshire NUM, a miner at Ollerton who played a leading role in the great strike, has been sacked by the NCB after 30 years service, for allegedly threatening a pit deputy. Looking at the record of the Nottingham management and the way they sacked Paul Whetton it will be another frame up.

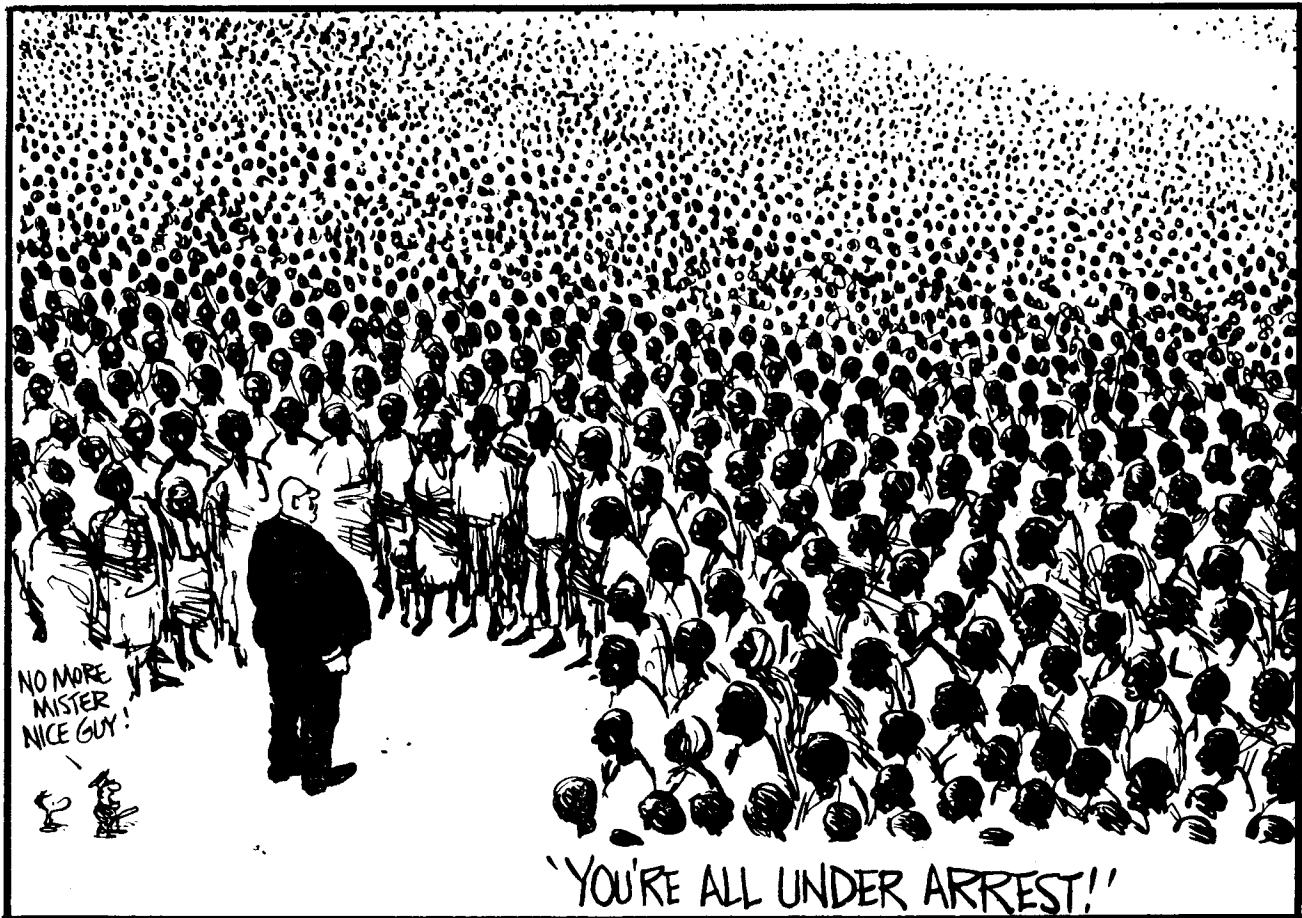
On Wednesday October 16, 500 Ollerton miners struck, seriously disrupting production, in protest against the sacking. Many of the strikers were members of the scab UDM, despite the fact that UDM official went to the picket line to urge their members to cross.

This situation makes it very important to

strengthen the NUM leadership at Area and national level to develop a fightback against this kind of action and defend the leadership of Arthur Scargill. In this respect the decision of Terry French to stand in the forthcoming election for national vice president of the NUM is a big step forward. He has a record of struggle against the state repression faced by the miners during their strike which is second to none. His election as vice president would bring the issue of the victimised men right back into the centre of the stage in the NUM.

Terry French's decision to address the Justice Campaign fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference was a very courageous one. At the meeting he said that whatever happened to him, he had always been a miner and would remain a miner for the rest of his life. He has now been victimised by the prison authorities for attending the meeting by being transferred from open prison back to maximum security.

- *Halt the pit closures, defend jobs!**
- *Support the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign!**
- *Defend the victimised miners, stop the sackings!**
- *Make the overtime ban national and make it total!**
- *Extend the strike action started in Durham!**
- *Challenge the April deadline, stop the blackmail!**
- *Call a conference of threatened pits to discuss a plan of action!**
- *Build an effective national rank and file movement to fight for such apolicy!**
- *Support Terry French for national Vice President!**



Trade Union sanctions now!

IN June this year a State of Emergency was imposed by Botha's racist state in an attempt to crush the rising wave of resistance from the black South African workers. That same month at the NUM conference in Britain Cyril Ramaphosa — the miners' leader in South Africa — demanded that the British trade unions start imposing sanctions themselves on the apartheid state.

Lambeth and Birmingham Trades Councils took that call seriously and organised a successful lobby of the TUC General Council in July. A bigger lobby of Congress itself was held in Brighton in September.

Lambeth Trades Council took the lead in organising the campaign which has drawn support from a number of trades councils, union branches and Labour Party branches.

Engineers, bus and railworkers, hospital and local government workers have shown their support on these lobbies. The campaign organised one of the best attended fringe meetings of the week at Brighton, where David Kitson spoke in support of the campaign.

The responsibility of the labour movement is immense. Since Ramaphosa's call to action (repeated by Oliver Tambo) the Commonwealth conference came and went and the meeting of EEC ministers broke up with Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl successfully vetoing meaningful sanctions against South Africa. The TUC let all this pass in silence. Congress resolutions last month gave the green light for some action, yet nothing has been done. We aim to put that right.

The task of the next weeks and months is to translate our aims into action, widespread political support turned into practical boycotting action in the workplace; a boycott of goods and services to and

from South Africa and a boycott of goods and services of companies with links and investments in South Africa.

We exist in order to develop local action such as that achieved by the Dunnes workers in Dublin or the Portsmouth hospital workers. Labour Party members were active in getting the local council in Bristol to take action.

We aim to push the TUC beyond adverts in papers and into encouraging direct action in the workplace. We seek to work with all forces, especially those in the AAM and the Labour Party who are prepared to work for these aims. Individual action by consumers is not enough. Collective action in the workplace is long overdue.

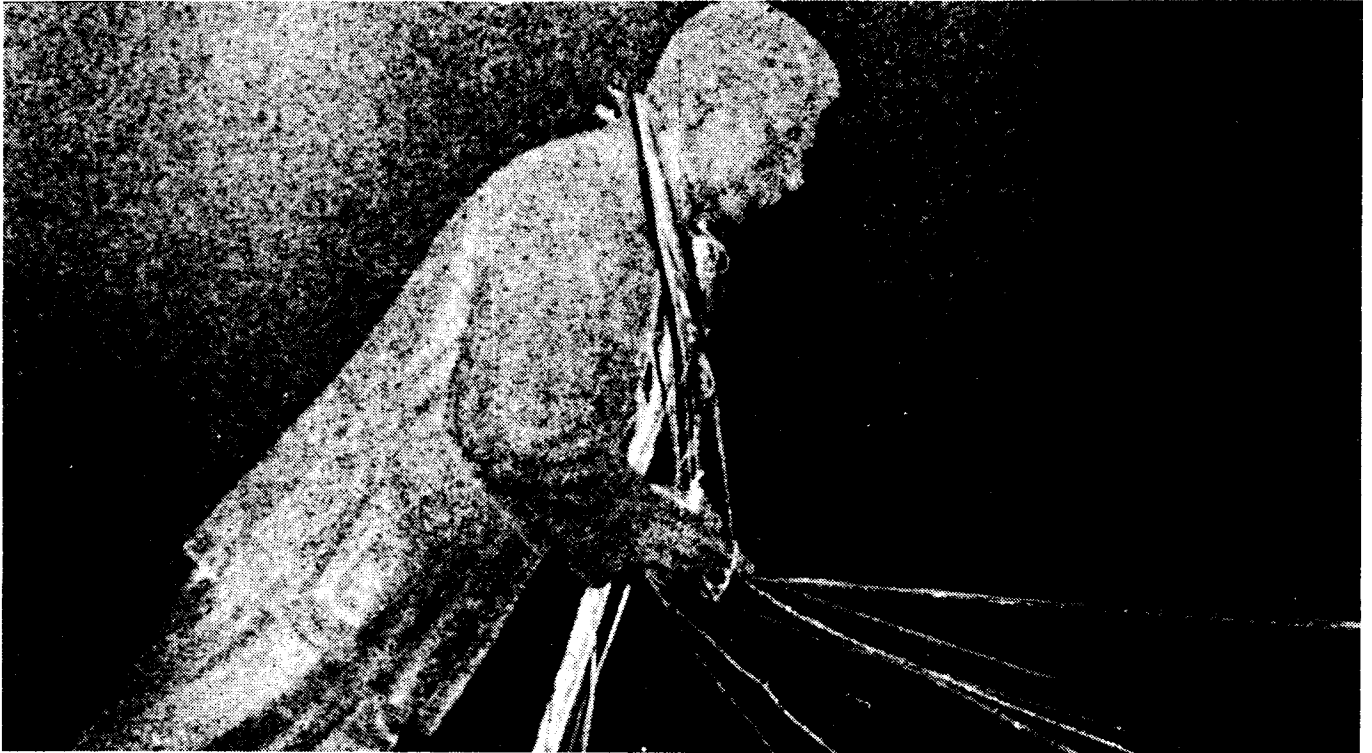
To organise the next stage in the campaign the sponsors of the TUC lobby, including the Lambeth Joint Shop Stewards Committee and the City of London AAM, have called a conference in December. Its purpose will be to launch a National Campaign for labour movement sanctions. We urge you, your Labour Party, your union to be represented there. Get involved. Heed the call of the South African masses now!

Conference for Trade Union Sanctions against South Africa

Saturday December 13 11am-6pm
For further information please ring Bronwen Handyside, 01-274-7722 x2010

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT Hungary 1956

10p



Hungarian revolutionaries topple the statue of Stalin in Budapest

Hungary and the Crisis of Stalinism

When Moscow's tanks and artillery opened up their barrage against the Hungarian working class of Budapest on November 4 1956 – and began the brutal invasion that was to leave 20,000 dead – they also demolished the illusions of tens of thousands of Communist Party members and sympathisers in Britain and elsewhere.

The British CP alone lost over 10,000 members as a result of its shameless stance in defence of the repression of a workers' uprising which had challenged the political power of Hungary's Stalinist bureaucracy.

The invasion dispelled illusions in

This October marks the 30th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution – the great uprising of the workers against Stalinist repression that was ruthlessly crushed by Khrushchev's tanks.

As our tribute to that heroic struggle and to emphasise the political importance of the lessons from that experience, *Socialist Viewpoint* is carrying an extended series of articles by JOHN LISTER on the background and events that show the need for a deepening and development of the Marxist programme.

the supposed "progressive" role of Moscow's Stalinist leadership by demonstrating once again in graphic fashion the profound antagonism between the bureaucratic leaders and the workers they profess to represent.

For much of the period since the

Red Army had eventually overcome a host of problems and rolled back the massed armoured might of German fascism, the appearance had been of successive defeats being inflicted upon imperialism by the Soviet Union.

*Soviet troops had liberated much



Armed workers on the streets of Budapest 1956

of eastern Europe with no support from the Western Allies. As a result it had dictated the political terms of the new regimes established and overseen the overturn of capitalism in one country after another, especially after the outbreak of the Cold War from the end of 1946.

*Communist-led partisans had ousted fascist armies in Yugoslavia;

*Mao Tse Tung's peasant-based Communist Party had fought back and defeated Chiang Kai Shek's imperialist-backed forces in China in 1949;

*Communist leaderships in Korea and Vietnam had fought wars with imperialism and inflicted defeats upon massed imperialist armies.

For those who based their political assessments on surface appearances, the case appeared clear enough; whatever its shortcomings, Stalinism represented in the post war period a dynamic, historically progressive force, inflicting defeats on imperialism and therefore advancing the interests of the working class.

This overwhelming impression was for some people mitigated by the gory purges and show trials which swept Eastern Europe between 1949 and 1952, and by the heavy military

repression of the East German uprising of 1953 — in which East Berlin workers revolted against impossible work norms, only to be met by Russian tanks.

But for many the Stalinist propaganda was accepted, or the imperialist Cold War version of events was too reactionary to carry much weight — until the rude events of 1956 shattered their complacency and forced a rethink.

Earlier in the year had come the traumatic revelations of Khrushchev's carefully-publicised "Secret Speech" to the CPSU 26th Congress, which had lifted the veil on decades of the crimes and outrages of the "infallible" Joseph Stalin, the mass murders, frame-up trials and victimisation of loyal communists.

At the same time had come the rehabilitation of Yugoslavian leader Tito, who had been freely branded as a "fascist" following his 1948 split with Stalin. Now he was welcomed back into Moscow's fold by the open arms of Khrushchev.

The middle of 1956 brought strikes and demonstrations in Poland, resulting in a change of leadership in an effort to head off a rising challenge by workers to the power of

the bureaucracy. The formerly disgraced bureaucrat Gomulka was brought back in with Kremlin approval to head off the mass movement. The main condition of Moscow support was that Gomulka should prevent any link-up between the Polish struggles and the developing crisis in Hungary. He used his personal prestige and cynical promises to recognise the emerging workers' councils as his means to contain the situation: the workers' councils were soon to be marginalised and discarded.

Even while these events were underway came the stormy upsurge of the workers' revolt in Hungary, followed by the bloody response of what many had seen as a "liberalising" Moscow leadership.

For many with illusions in Stalinism the world was turned upside down. The same leaders they had applauded as they rolled back a largely prostrate and unresisting capitalism had shown its most heavy-handed repression and armoured might to repress not the capitalists but... the workers' councils of Hungary!

Hungary: the road to 1956

The pre-war situation in Hungary had been one of vicious, sustained repression following the reactionary overthrow of the 133-day Soviet Republic set up by an alliance of Bela Kun's Communist Party with the Social Democrats in 1919.

That revolution had pursued an ultra-leftist course of crash nationalisation and anti-clericalism while rejecting the burning issue of land reform, which was they key to mobilise the country's large and impoverished peasantry (even in the 1930s 85 per cent of Hungary's land holdings were below the subsistence level of 12 acres).

The counter-revolution sponsored by Romanian troops ushered in a dictatorial regime under a former Austro-Hungarian imperial Admiral Horthy, who for the next 25 years collaborated with various permutations of the old oligarchy and the rising anti-semitic "radical right" among the officer caste and state bureaucracy, who were drawn towards Nazi Germany as a means of securing their nationalistic ambitions.

Drawn eventually into an alliance

with Hitler, Horthy's regime declared war on the USSR. When it attempted to pull back from this in 1944 the country was invaded by German troops, and a puppet government headed by the fascist Arrow Cross took over for the 2 months before the Red Army marched in.

This final phase of the war had seen Hungary swept by a full-scale anti-semitic campaign, with several hundred thousand Jews sent to German death camps.

The Hungarian Communist Party, illegal and persecuted since 1919, had dwindled to a dozen or so members in 1942, and numbered only a few thousand at most when the new provisional government, headed by a recently-defected Horthyite general, was installed in December 1944. The leader was Matyas Rakosi, a veteran of the 1919 Revolution, who had spent 15 years in Hungarian jails, and who returned from Moscow in 1944 as a hard-line supporter of Stalin.

By the end of 1945 the Party had swollen to a staggering 500,000 members, recruiting wholesale from careerist forces, police and military allies of the old regime, and including numerous former members of the Arrow Cross.

The elections that were held at the end of 1945 were permitted to take place by Stalin's military commander on the understanding that whoever

won, the CP would control the Ministry of the Interior — and through this the police and the dreaded AVH Secret Police, which was rapidly to expand its operations to hold files on 1 million of the 10 million population of Hungary.

The first such Minister of the Interior was Imre Nagy, another Moscow-trained CPer. But he was soon replaced by Laszlo Rajk, a long-standing hardliner active in the resistance to the Nazis despite having close family ties to the Arrow Cross leadership. He had a popular base far greater than the leadership chosen by Moscow for the fast growing CP.

The 1945 elections proved an embarrassment for the CP, which won only 17 per cent of the vote, trailing far behind the 59 per cent for the right wing Smallholders Party which had worked hand in glove with the Horthy regime and which united the reactionary vote behind it. The Social Democrats also took 17 per cent of the vote yet to a certain extent this problem had been created by the Stalinists themselves, as Hugh Seton-Watson reported:

"In the first months it is a curious paradox that the reconstruction of these (bourgeois) parties was largely the work of teams of communist agitators who travelled around in Red Army vehicles."

A coalition government was formed with leaders of the Smallholders Party (Zoltan Tildy and Ferenc Nagy) as president and Prime Minister. But tensions grew, and the impossibility of restoring capitalism in a Hungary wracked by runaway inflation (an



Masses rally in opposition to Stalinism

exchange rate hitting the quadrillion to the pound level) became clear by the winter of 1946. The Ministry of the Interior began busily preparing a show trial alleging a plot against the state. Bela Kovacs, General Secretary of the Smallholders party was arrested early in 1947.

In May 1947 Ferenc Nagy on a visit to doctors in Switzerland was warned to stay away and resign; new "plots" were discovered and more right wingers fled or were arrested, while the Stalinists pieced together a new electoral bloc — the National Independence Front — through which they were able to share in 60 per cent of the vote in 1947 (the CP itself secured only 22 per cent). Tildy resigned, to be replaced as president by a social democrat — and then in June 1948 the CP forced the Socialist Party into a merger to form the grotesquely misnamed Hungarian Workers Party.

Despite the rampant economic crisis, nationalisation of much capitalist property had come late in Hungary compared to other countries

of Eastern Europe. The banks were not nationalised until January 1948, and other sections of capitalist industry later that Spring. It was not until August 1949 that Hungary adopted a new constitution along similar lines to those of other East European states. In 1950 came the beginning of the bureaucracy's first five-year plan.

Both of these last two steps came after the start of a massive purge of the new, burgeoning Hungarian CP — a purge which was to displace 150,000-200,000 members, and included the arrest, show-trial and execution of Laszlo Rajk, who had been moved from the Interior Ministry in 1948.

Rajk was seized in June 1949 while still Foreign Minister and a politburo member. He was accused of conspiracy with Tito, the Yugoslavian leader newly excommunicated by Stalin. Rajk was persuaded to make a full "confession" by promises of his life, reunion with his family and a new identity in the Soviet Union if he would publicly echo the frame-up charges. Having confessed, Rajk was

executed in September.

The purging of Rajk as a lifelong CPer who was seen as a potential threat to Rakosi's authority came at the same time as the torture of another Party veteran Janos Kadar — who was to be spared and later play a treacherous role in the 1956 events. This brutal method of kicking the Party into line fits with the pattern of similar purge trials at that time across Eastern Europe. Rajk was also the first, high-profile victim of the anti-Tito frenzy. However, his ghost, like that of Banquo in Macbeth, was to return to torment CP leader Rakosi, and play a key role in triggering the events of 1956.

By early 1949, Rakosi's Hungary had been turned into a deformed, bureaucratic parody of a workers' state, in which the power and property of capital had been overturned and expropriated not by the workers but by a Stalinist bureaucracy which claimed to act on their behalf.

How Trotskyists got it wrong on Stalinism

In the eyes of many CP members and sympathisers, the accomplished fact of the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe — irrespective of the manner in which it was achieved or the imperfect end result — was the decisive question.

Trotsky's approach to a similar problem — the Soviet invasion of Finland and Eastern Poland just prior to the War — had been very different. Coldly assessing the prospect that Stalin — for all his counter-revolutionary politics — would be forced to overturn capitalist property relations if the Red Army were to stay any length of time, Trotsky insisted that:

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and



remains the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution.

(...)

"The statification of the means of production is (...) a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by

'socialist' measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution with bureaucratic manoeuvres, and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland."

(In *Defence of Marxism*, p 19, emphasis added)



Czech Stalinists took power in 1948 "Prague Coup"

Counter-revolutionaries overturn capitalism

The Hungarian events fitted the general pattern of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism. But in two important respects Trotsky's pre-war analysis differed from the reality after the war.

"The first difference was that Trotsky had expected the Soviet bureaucracy to be overthrown during the war either by political revolution within the USSR or by a concerted imperialist drive to restore capitalism. In practice, the working class lacked the necessary organisation and leadership, while the imperialists came out of the war divided, weakened and incapable of challenging the Red Army in Europe, let alone the Soviet Union.

"In *In Defence of Marxism*, Trotsky had pointed to the means which he expected Stalin would be obliged to use in expropriating capitalism in Poland. He anticipated that use would be made of a controlled mobilisation of the working class.

"The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories — and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution, it is impossible to constitute a new regime — will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to ensure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses."

(Ibid pp18-19, emphasis added)

This theme was reinforced in pre-war debates in the Fourth International movement, and further information from Finland and Poland was used to back it up. Unfortunately this aspect of Trotsky's analysis was one-sidedly taken up by some Trotskyists in the post-war period, and considerable effort was expended in



Women march through Petrograd in 1917

seeking evidence of the Stalinists utilising mass mobilisations to overturn capitalist rule.

While Czechoslovakian events were almost in line with the predictions made by Trotsky, few other situations fitted the theoretical mould. Far from resting in any way on mass mobilisations, the role of Stalinism in post-war eastern Europe was consistently to oppose and crush the mass mobilisations that did occur. It was only after the post-war revolutionary upsurge was long finished that the main nationalisations and expulsions of capitalist ministers from the coalitions took place.

The dogmatic search for mass mobilisations within the East European countries left the Trotskyist movement open to serious confusion. The more "radical" face projected by the Tito leadership in Yugoslavia was superficially interpreted as a result of "mass pressure" shifting the bureaucracy in a revolutionary direction, while Tito's rift with Stalin was seen in this light as an ideological break with *Stalinist politics* rather than a clash of material interests between two rival bureaucracies.

In part this was due to a narrow definition of Stalinism as

"The subordination of the interests of the workers in every country of the world to those of the Soviet bureaucracy." (Resolution of Yugoslavia, World Congress 1951).

It is questionable whether this definition of Stalinism was adequate even in the monolithic Comintern before the war; but it certainly has been shown to be completely insufficient to deal with the much more complex politics of the Stalinist movement since 1945.

While they were still able to spot the "rightward" face of Stalinist reaction, many Trotskyists fell prey to the illusion that mass movements could push "radical", left-talking sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy itself to led movements for political revolution.

Once again these illusions ran up against the harsh facts of working class struggle, firstly in East Germany in 1953 and most graphically in Hungary in 1956.



United in fear of revolution: Stalin with imperialist leaders.

The politics of Post War Stalinism

While thousands recoiled in disgust from the repressive face of Stalinism, it was not so simple to arrive at a scientific understanding of the apparently contradictory role of the Moscow leadership before, during, and after the war. This could not be done simply on a superficial view of events.

The starting point had to be Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian revolution after 1923-24, and the emergence of a distinct, privileged, parasitic ruling caste resting on the basis of the nationalised property relations established following October 1917. This conception of a bureaucracy counterposed to the interests and independent organisations of the working class, and excluding it from all the levers of political power, balancing between the power of the workers on the one hand and the power of imperialism encircling the USSR on the other, is

indispensable to understand the twists and turns of Stalinists politics before and after World War 2. But it remained a hard one to swallow for many of the CP members who were appalled by the events of 1956.

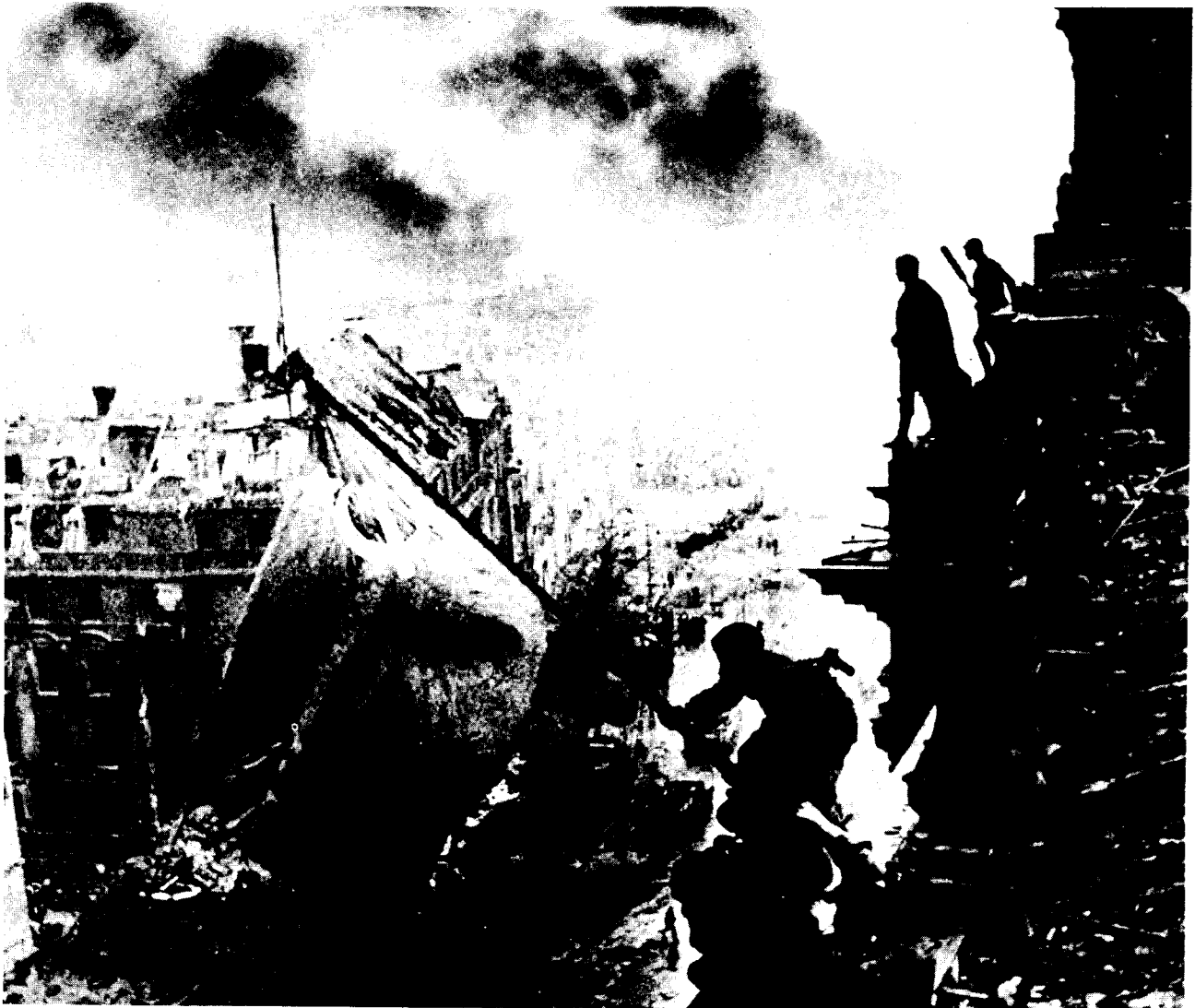
However it was sufficient to enable both wings of the divided Trotskyist movement in that year to arrive at a broadly common view of the Hungarian struggle, to side unequivocally with the workers against the Moscow bureaucrats, and intervene in the outcry and turmoil of the time. On the basis of this line important forces were won from the CPs — particularly in Britain — to Trotskyism.

This was possible despite serious weaknesses and confusion on both sides of the Trotskyist movement on the nature and role of Stalinism in the post-war period. That confusion had already led to a breakaway by one wing convinced that the USSR was "state capitalist", and brought a further split in the Trotskyist movement in 1953. It was later to

create further disorientation — not least in the assessment of the Cuban Revolution and the protracted war in Vietnam.

A coherent view of Stalinism and the contradictions within it is indispensable for the development of a perspective and programme for the political revolution which must overthrow the bureaucracy; the crucial starting point for this must be defending the political independence of the working class from all wings of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies.

The Trotskyist movement had founded itself as a distinct international grouping, rather than fighting on to assert its status as a faction of the Communist International, only after the actions of the Stalinist bureaucracies had brought historic defeats in Britain, China, and most decisively in Germany (where the CP's ultra-sectarian line of denouncing the Social Democrats paved the way for Hitler's rise to power in 1933). The lack of self-critical response to these



The Allied isolation of the USSR gave the Red Army a free hand in East Europe

disasters confirmed that what remained of the Comintern was "dead for the purposes of revolution".

Trotsky emphasised that the Kremlin leaders did not act from ideological motives: rather they tailored their ideology to the latest twists and turns of opportunist foreign policy or moves to crush a particular current of opposition inside the USSR and then imposed and upheld their "theories" by brute force.

The Moscow leadership's overriding concern was — and still is — to defend its own power and privileges by striking a balance of forces between the Soviet working class, defending the nationalised property relations established in 1917, and world imperialism.

Under Stalin's leadership, and in the isolation that suffocated the healthy development of the Russian revolution, a conservative, nationalist bureaucracy had emerged that saw its task as preserving the status quo with capitalism, at the expense of workers' struggles. In this sense, as well as in its brutish

repression of working class opposition inside the USSR itself, the Kremlin leadership had by 1933 become *counter-revolutionary*.

These basic points were argued by Trotsky even while the Comintern still held onto the crazy sectarian line of Stalin's "Third period" that brought the catastrophe in Germany. But they were borne out unmistakably during the next phase of Comintern policy, the "Popular Front" turn to alliances with the so-called "democratic" or "progressive" sections of the bourgeoisie, which led up, most chillingly, to Stalin's pact with Hitler in 1939.

Trotsky's analysis of the political essence of Stalinism did not depend upon the particular line being put forward at any given moment, but upon an analysis of the material base and contradictions of the Soviet bureaucracy, and the regime it imposed through purges, terror and corruption upon the Comintern and its parties.

From this starting point, three essential features arise:

***The Soviet bureaucracy is not a class, but an unstable, parasitic caste feeding off the nationalised property relations in the USSR; internationally it seeks to balance between the strength of the Soviet proletariat and the encircling power of imperialism.**

***It is for this reason that Stalinism as a bureaucratic force stands in fundamental contradiction to the interests of the working class in the Soviet Union, and opposes any development which might strengthen the international working class and jeopardise the existing balance of forces with imperialism.**

***Stalinism is distinct from social democracy in that it arises and is forced to defend non-capitalist foundations. It is not tied to seeking reforms within a particular capitalist economy; and from its very outset it has been forced to operate on a global level in establishing its relations with imperialism. In conditions where the balance of power with imperialism is disturbed by other**

factors, it is by no means excluded that Stalinism could employ anti-capitalist measures to improve its own relative position: what is excluded is any policies which further the independent interests of the working class.

None of these basic elements of Stalinism has changed in the post-war period, though the picture has of course become much more complex, and additional basic elements have to be added for a full understanding of events. Among these:

*The treachery of Stalin's imperialist "allies" in leaving the Red Army to shoulder almost the whole of the military struggle against German fascism in Europe produced an ironic pay off when the Red Army moved westwards into a ring of Eastern European countries, leaving imperialism with effectively no voice or leverage in that area of the world. Stalin, on the other hand, having at the cost of 20 million dead clawed his way back from the brink of (self-inflicted) military defeat, had good reason to seek ways of keeping imperialist armies and future threats at arm's length.

*While the terms of the post-war settlement hatched up in 1944 between Stalin and the imperialists recognised the already extended Soviet influence over Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Czechoslovakia, it sought to share influence 50-50 in Hungary and Yugoslavia; and the most significant aspect was the commitment to restore capitalist control over Greece and the rest of Western Europe at the expense of mass Communist-led resistance movements which had dominated the fight against fascism. Even in victory, Stalin's instinctive reactions were counter-revolutionary — towards a consolidation of capitalism in Western Europe, and the establishment of Kremlin-influenced capitalist coalition governments in Eastern Europe. In Romania and Bulgaria the monarchy was preserved; throughout Eastern Europe, reactionary capitalist and peasant parties were revived to be incorporated into coalitions.

*As direct levers of power in these countries, Stalin could not rely simply on the Red Army; he needed national Communist parties, many of which had been very small until the final stages of the war. The rapid expansion of these parties with an influx of careerists and even ex-fascists, and their eventual forced merger with the old social democratic parties (to wipe out any alternative political focus for workers and strengthen the bureaucratic apparatus of the CPs) ran alongside the penetration by the CPs of the key positions in the often rickety state machinery. Strategic targets for CP domination were the Ministries of the



Stalin

Interior, controlling the police and secret police forces.

*While these remodelled CPs were in the main headed by old Stalinist die-hards who slipped back into their countries after years of exile in Moscow, they also tended to include elements that had a real record of struggle in the resistance movements, and a base of popular support in their own right. Yugoslavian leader Tito, in particular, had led a civil war in which his CP-led partisans had mobilised hundreds of thousands and held de facto state power in whole areas prior to driving out the fascist occupiers without the assistance of the Red Army. In seeking to use these CPs as a device to control events, rather than maintain a military occupation or attempt annexations, Stalin was creating a potential contradiction between the interests of new national bureaucracies and the demands and needs of the Kremlin.

*In all the East European countries, nationalisations were needed in order to re-establish a working economy, after many pro-Nazi employers had fled the country. In other instances nationalisations were used as a means to end workers' occupations and break up factory committees that had taken control. In Yugoslavia in particular almost the whole bourgeoisie had fled, and wholesale nationalisations were the only way to restart production.

*Elsewhere the more advanced of the East European economies were plundered for manufacturing plant and materials, with whole factories uprooted and transported to the Soviet Union as part of a colossal programme of war reparations. "Joint Stock" companies were often set up by Moscow as a cover for this bureaucratic looting.

*Stalin's initial notion of stabilising capitalist coalition governments and effectively using the East European countries as a "buffer" between the

USSR and any future imperialist military threat was disrupted by the imperialist Cold War offensive beginning in 1946-7. The same capitalist parties which Stalin's men had so carefully retrieved from the dustbin of history were suddenly seen as a potential threat. Their leaders were harassed, imprisoned or driven into exile by an increasingly confident use of the state machinery by well-placed CP cadres. Remaining capitalist holdings were nationalised, and the transformation into a new type of state was evenly completed at slightly different times and tempos across Eastern Europe.

*These states appeared in many respects to echo the structure of the bureaucratized Soviet Union; but while in the USSR capitalist power had been overturned by the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class, in Eastern Europe the overturn had been accomplished through bureaucratic and administrative action over the heads of workers. While in Russia the armed workers and their organs of power — the soviets — had held power in their hands, this was not the case in Eastern Europe.

These states had not degenerated from revolution to bureaucratism, they were a different type of state, deformed from the very outset, and qualitatively different from a healthy workers' state. The only real point of comparison was with the monstrously degenerated regime under Stalin.

*In this way the experience in Eastern Europe bears out the insistence by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky that it is impossible for the working class to transform a bourgeois state gradually into a workers' state;

"The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (Marx).

In eastern Europe, of course, the state machinery was seized not by the workers themselves but by bureaucratized travesties of "workers' parties", and wielded in such a way as to produce a *deformed* caricature of a workers' state. Hungarian Stalinist leader Rakosi summed up the difference in a candid statement in 1949 that:

"A People's Democracy is according to its function a dictatorship of the proletariat without the Soviet form."

In other words, the workers have had no say in the running or planning of the nationalised economy or the social or foreign policies of the repressive regimes that have emerged balancing not only between imperialism and their own working class, but also between their own national bureaucratic interests and the demands of the Kremlin.

The Bureaucracy that lost its grip

Things began to unravel for Hungarian leader Rakosi from the time of Stalin's death in March 1953. The change of leadership in the Kremlin was a protracted and uneasy process which disrupted Rakosi's close links with the Soviet leadership. Worse, the break in the continuity of repression, and marginal concessions made by the new Kremlin rulers to contain demands for sweeping changes, encouraged critical voices backed up by the reappearance of former show-trial victims from labour camps.

Summoned to Moscow to meet the new ruling circle, Rakosi was closely questioned on his simultaneous role as Party General Secretary and Prime Minister. He would neither hand over one of the posts nor suggest a deputy.

In June 1953 came the Berlin uprising, riots at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia and strikes and demonstrations in Hungary itself. An alarmed Kremlin leadership, fearing that Rakosi's brutal repression was storing up an explosion of revolt, ordered him to hand over the Prime Ministerial post to Imre Nagy, who in Moscow's eyes had the advantages of being a reliable Muscovite with a popular base, not involved with Rakosi's excesses, and — unlike Rakosi and his sidekick Erno Gero — not Jewish. Nagy outlined a substantial plan for reforms of the economy, and began moves to close down its internment camps with their 100,000 political prisoners.

Nagy's handicap was that he was seen as linked politically with Malenkov — a fading star in the Kremlin constellation, whose more "liberal" line of economic development emphasising consumer goods and improved living standards was echoed for 18 months under Nagy in Hungary.

The boat was also rocked in Hungary by the publication in autumn 1953 of an account by the Communist poet Kucska of the conditions in the collectivised countryside: Rakosi had presided over a collectivisation strategy that had been opposed within the party leadership by Imre Nagy at the time.

Rakosi never accepted or co-operated with his new Prime



East German youth resist in 1953

Minister: in early 1955 the climate changed and enabled him to sack Nagy — who was hounded from the leadership and later expelled from the Party — and appoint Erno Gero in his place.

Nagy's reforms however had unleashed far greater pressure for change than Rakosi and Gero could handle. Thousands of political prisoners had returned to their families confirming the horror of the Rakosi police regime; peasants had been able to withdraw from co-operatives and return to private farming; overtime and Sunday working had been cut for industrial workers.

Encouraged by these concessions, circles of intellectuals had begun to organise and demand academic freedom — and this was not simply switched off by the ousting of Nagy.

The factor which most decisively pulled out the rug from under Rakosi was Khrushchev's move to consolidate his domination over the Kremlin leadership with his famous "Secret Speech" to the 20th Soviet Party Congress in February 1956.

Among the revelations which rocked the assembly of bureaucrats was Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's split with Tito:

"The 'Yugoslav affair' contained no problems which could not have been solved through party discussions among comrades. There was no significant basis for the development of this 'affair'; it was completely possible to have prevented the rupture of relations with that country."

(in *The Stalinist Legacy*, Penguin, p 256)

This left Rakosi — the executor of Rajk and jailor of other leading Hungarian Communists for alleged collaboration with the "fascist" Tito — out on a limb.

The following month, Rakosi was forced to admit that the 1949 show trial had been a gigantic frame-up. As Rakosi lost the confidence even of sections of his police apparatus, a new ferment animated the intellectual and journalistic circles, but reaching even army officers and technical workers. Rajk's widow, Julia, emerged from obscurity to demand that her husband be rehabilitated.

Struggling to retain his grip on the Party leadership, Rakosi made a few economic concessions to his opponents, and released some of the country's political prisoners, while making vicious political attacks on the intellectual circles which had become the main focus of opposition to the regime.

His days were clearly numbered, and an anxious Moscow leadership intervened to replace Rakosi with his no less objectionable and unpopular sidekick Erno Gero.

Meanwhile the Polish workers had erupted into mass strikes and demands for reforms. By the autumn of 1956 this example had spilled over to Hungary, with a 100,000-strong demonstration called in Budapest on October 23, at least partly in solidarity with the Polish movement. It was far from politically homogenous, with some workers and students carrying pictures of Lenin, other pictures of the former Prime Minister Imre Nagy. The *Internationale* and the *Marseillaise* were sung; but there was unity on one level — a gigantic statue of Stalin was pulled to the ground!

When Gero hit back by broadcasting a stinging attack on the demonstrators, angry crowds converged on the radio station — only to be fired upon by the hated secret police, the AVH. The fighting spread, and Soviet troops garrisoned in Hungary moved in.

The next day saw the start of a general strike, with the fighting and upsurge spreading beyond Budapest to the provinces. Nagy (with reluctant Moscow acquiescence) took over for a second term as Prime Minister.

Nagy did not call for the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops; nor did he make a clean break with the old Stalinist regime. But while failing to meet the demands of the workers, he made a gesture towards the right by including two leaders of the suppressed right wing Smallholders Party in his government.

Meanwhile the workers had begun to sense the potential power in their hands, and rapidly organised themselves into workers' councils challenging the control of the hopelessly bureaucratized ruling Party;

"In the space of forty-eight hours all the factories in the country had their elected councils, and at the moment of the ceasefire (November 29) several central councils, representing the workers of a whole town or department were formed, in particular at Miskolc, Magyarovar and in certain suburbs of Budapest."

Midlos Molnar, *Budapest 1956*

On October 31 a Parliament of Workers Councils for the whole of Budapest spelled out the extent of the frontal challenge to the power of the ruling bureaucracy, and the extent to



(Above) Stalin



The ruins

CUBA Radical face of Stalinism



If you thought the only choices on Cuba were to support Castro or support Ronald Reagan, then you should read *Cuba: Radical Face of Stalinism*.

Dissecting the politics and evolution of the Cuban leadership, this book reasserts the need for a Trotskyist party and programme in Cuba, and presents the events firmly in their global context.

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which the leading layers of workers saw the revolution as taking *their* nationalised economy under their own control. A statement on the basic rights and responsibilities of workers' councils contained nine points, beginning

"1) *The factory belongs to the workers.* The latter should pay to the state a levy calculated on the basis of the output and profits. 2) The supreme controlling body of the factory is the Workers' Council, democratically elected by the workers. (...) 4) The director is employed by the factory. The director and the highest employees are to be elected by the Workers' Council. (...) 7) In the same way the Workers' Council resolves any conflict concerning the hiring and firing of all workers employed in the enterprise. 8) The Workers' Council has the right to examine the balance sheets and decide the use to which the profits are to be put..."

(B. Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, emphasis added)



Int tanks in Poznan, Poland in 1956



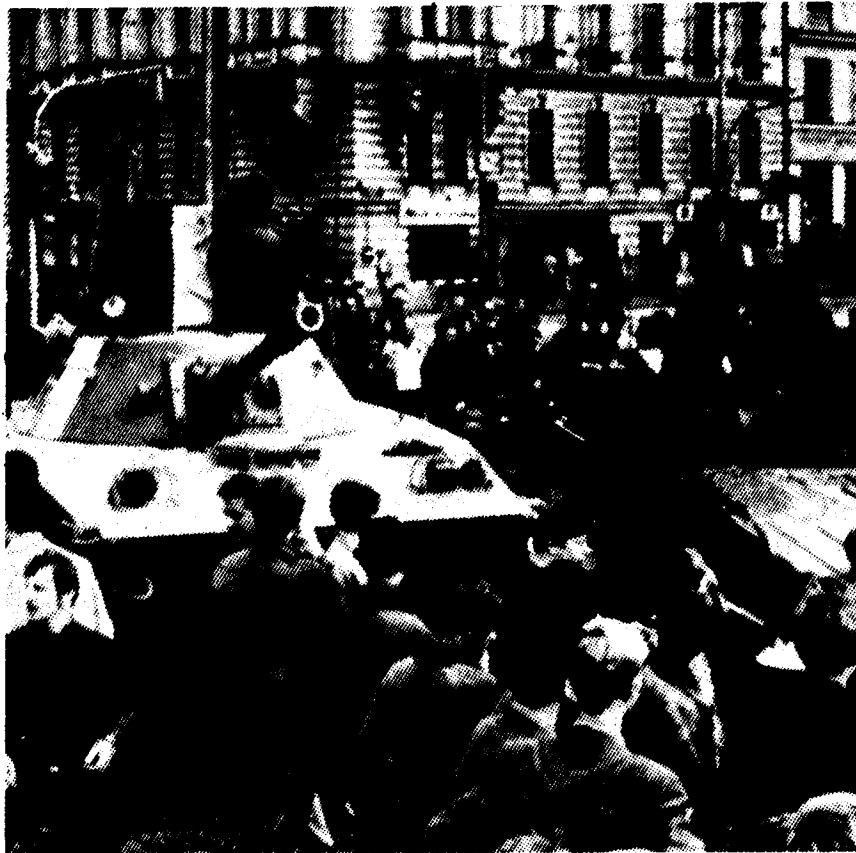
Budapest after the Russian assault

On top of this challenge to the economic control exercised by the Hungarian bureaucracy, workers on the streets had linked up with students and with Hungarian troops in joint committees, and had turned their pent-up anger on the savage forces of the AVH secret police — the main arm of political repression — which had files on over 1 million of the 10 million population.

Many AVH were beaten, hounded and even lynched when they fell into the hands of the workers they had terrorised for years.

Such a far-reaching attempt to unseat a Stalinist bureaucracy from the base of its power and privilege in Hungary would have been disturbing enough for the Moscow leaders, who since Stalin's rise to power at the head of a vast conservative state bureaucracy in the 1920s, had increasingly viewed any workers' revolution as a threat to its own power and privilege.

But it was compounded by Nagy's insistence upon a complete removal of Russian troops, followed in swift



Kremlin tanks in Budapest

succession by his announcement of intentions to leave the Warsaw Pact, and declaration that Hungary would become a neutral.

For the Kremlin this was too much(they set up an alternative Hungarian government under veteran Stalinist Janos Kadar, and on November 4 set about instaling him in office over the dead bodies of the Budapest workers.

Despite the bombardment and the deployment of 200,000 Russian troops, the workers' councils and sporadic strikes continued right through to January 1957. On Novmebr 14 a Budapest central Workers' Council was formed, and both Kadar and the Soviet forces were forced to negotiate with them.

As late as December 11 the arrest of leaders of the Central Council provoked a solid 48-hour general strike.

While the workers showed huge courage in their attempts to lay hands on the positive gains of the nationalised Hungarian economy, they found themselves politically limited by the effects of ten years of Stalinist repression of independent working class politics. Following on decades of dictatorial rule under the Horthy regime. However there is no serious evidence that the Hungarian workers looked in any way towards a restoration of capitalism as was predictably claimed by Moscow.

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Armed Hungarian workers 1956

No "peaceful road" to political revolution

When Khrushchev sent in the tanks and heavy artillery he killed any hopes of a self-reform of the Moscow leadership after the death of Stalin.

Far from being pressurised to the left by the revolutionary mass movement of the working class, the Moscow and Budapest bureaucracies had for the most part moved to stamp on the revolt, while Nagy and a handful of "left" bureaucrats had shown their inability to express, let alone lead, the struggles of the workers.

The most central political lesson of the Hungarian experience was that it underlined the correctness of Trotsky's analysis that the working class must inevitably run into conflict with the bureaucracy, and that only the insurrectional overthrow of that bureaucracy by mass action – the political revolution – could establish workers' democracy and healthy workers' states in place of the Stalinist travesty.

The need for a revolutionary



Trotsky

leadership based on a firm political grasp of Stalinism to spearhead the fight for political revolution was also confirmed in the 1956 events – both in

the tumultuous mass actions of Hungary and in the bureaucratic manoeuvres that headed off the Polish mass movement.

In each case, despite the high profile involvement of intellectuals and technical staffs, the central core of the resistance to Stalinism was the industrial working class: this has again been seen in the Solidarnosc struggles in Poland since 1980. The strategic task of political revolution is to link this revolt with other sections of the oppressed in the establishment of new organs of working class power that can challenge the bureaucratic state machinery at every level. It is also vital to organise resistance in the ranks of the armed forces; only on this basis will it be possible to *smash* the reactionary state machinery that represses the working class, and replace it with genuine workers' democracy.

There is no "peaceful", reformist road to the ousting of a parasitic bureaucracy whose only hold on power and privilege depends upon clinging to office. The "deformed workers states", despite resting on nationalised property relations which must be defended against imperialism, are not "almost workers' states", but alien, repressive police regimes *qualitatively* different from a healthy workers' state.

In saluting the courage and sacrifice of the Hungarian workers of thirty years ago, Marxists today must commit themselves to complete the task which that Revolution began – the overthrow of Stalinism as part of the world wide struggle for working class power.



Mass picket of Guys Hospital to challenge visit by Thatcher

Health workers notch up victories

TWO significant victories — one setback. That has been the score in recent struggles to defend NHS against Tory cuts and closures.

The victories have been significant against a climate of defeatist attitudes among most union officials.

*In Paddington, 20 women who sat tight and refused to vacate their NHS accommodation after being made redundant through privatisation at St Mary's hospital have forced the district health authority to back down on moves to evict them. The October DHA meeting voted to allow the women to remain in their rooms — which many have made their homes for years since they came to Britain as migrant workers — until they find alternative accommodation.

In view of the stony-faced refusal of Westminster council to rehouse the women, this is a major retreat by the DHA which had given them only 6 months to move out following the takeover of St Mary's domestic contract by the private firm Mediclean, meaning that none of the cleaning staff are now NHS employees.

This fight has been important in three respects:

*It has given a lead for the thousands of NHS staff who are under

By JACK DOBERMAN

pressure to leave hospital accommodation as part of Baron Rayner's asset-stripping plan to sell off 56,000 units;

*It has highlighted the particular plight of domestic staff who until now have in some areas been entitled to — or even required to live in — NHS accommodation, but who do not have the same echo of public sympathy that homeless nurses can readily evoke;

*In addition it has thrown the spotlight on the side-effects of privatisation; even those staff who elect to stay on and work for a contractor at reduced pay and worsened conditions lost their status as NHS employees and face — like those made redundant — the possible loss of their homes.

This very factor has just been quoted by Mediclean itself as a reason for its inability to recruit staff to carry out its £270,000 contract at Botley's Park hospital in Surrey. Since the loss of NHS accommodation, even three pay rises in the last year had failed to attract domestics to the job in the heart of the stockbroker belt.

The second significant victory again centred on a sit-in action, this time in the South Derbyshire constituency of new Health Minister Edwina "Vegetable" Currie.

COHSE members staged a work-in to oppose the premature closure of St Mary's Maternity Home — and despite the inaction of the normally loud-mouthed Currie they succeeded in winning their demands in full, saving seven nursery nurse jobs.

These two victories, which show the possibilities to embarrass and force retreats even from health authorities under government pressure, came at the same time as the swift collapse of yet another occupation — the work-in by staff at New End geriatric Hospital, Hampstead.

The health authority announced earlier this year its intention to close the 107-bed hospital without public consultation under "emergency powers", and despite a legal hiccup or two as a result of High Court challenges from Camden Council and the local Community Health Council, got the judges' green light to proceed.

When staff at New End made hasty attempts to occupy the hospital, the DHA responded immediately with an application for an injunction against

the sit-in leaders, which was obtained within a record 48 hours — far faster than any of the comparable legal moves at St Loenard's, South London or Neasden Hospitals.

The occupation was not strong enough to withstand this onslaught, and the DHA began to bundle the elderly patients from New End with the now routine management ruthlessness — to incarcerate them in their new living quarters on the 7th floor of the concrete and glass Royal Free Hospital.

When the first six patients were moved workmen were still in evidence on the 7th floor — a ceiling was being painted in one ward and a floor polished in another; unmade beds were in the corridors.

Patients arrived by wheelchair and sat beside their bed bewildered and confused. No doctor was present on the ward to examine them.

Supper for the six finally arrived at

6.45 after complaints by frustrated nurses. It was 45 minutes late — the explanation being that "when these were surgical wards 6pm suppers were not a priority."

Relatives of patients have told the committee that they have not been given full information as to when moves would take place. The ward is still bleak and undecorated.

The closure of New End and transfer of patients to closed wards at the Royal Free effectively cuts 25 per cent of Hampstead's acute beds — and will have a major cumulative impact on waiting lists even while Norman Fowler claims to be reducing them.

The High Court's rubber stamp for the closure simply sets the seal on an NHS structure in which only the most hollow charade of democracy has ever existed, and which under pressure from cash limits is now

hacking back at vital services irrespective of local opinion, patient need and the impact on health workers.

Elsewhere, there are signs that the fightback is gathering strength.

A strong, popular campaign against the planned closure of the West London hospital by Riverside DHA has gained strength from the retreat earlier in the year by Barney Hayhoe, who shelved proposals to close the Westminster Hospital for (well justified) fear that it would jeopardise the Hammersmith and Fulham by-election.

And on Monday November 10 an official COHSE demonstration centred on London's Bethlem and Maudsley hospitals will take up the general issue of health cuts in London and nationally, with contingents expected from the Midlands and Yorkshire.

British Coal undermines UDM

UDM leaders have proven once again that their "union's" days are numbered by their failure to mount any opposition to the closure of Hacknall colliery in their Notts heartland.

1,250 UDM jobs are to go, while UDM General Secretary Roy Lynk claims that "this is not a closure". Already British Coal management is targetting the pits in Nottinghamshire that it will similarly "not close".

The UDM was never in any position to take action over the Hucknall closure: its very foundation was as a body of scabs opposed to strike action and defence of pit jobs. The UDM rules in themselves stifle action.

There must be a ballot for any action. This must then be ratified by their NEC.

You must not approach other sections for support. By the time you have got permission to strike, the issue will have gone cold. That is the idea.

The rules of the UDM are, as far as local disputes go, virtually a no-strike agreement.

The UDM's positions on major issues are also geared to avoiding any fight with the employers.

*It supports nuclear power, inviting the Chairman of the nuclear industry as a guest to the UDM Conference.

*It favours two year pay deals in which UDM leaders snatch at the first offer made.

*It openly assists British Coal management in the victimisation of NUM members.

The UDM was officially set up in late 1985. There were three main Areas involved: Notts, South Derbyshire, and the

A Lancashire miner looks at the emergence and gloomy future of the UDM as a bosses' union in a climate of closures.

Durham based CWAT, made up of the 1,500 scabs there. The central leaders were Roy Lynk, Ken Toon and David White. When Notts and South Derbyshire formed the UDM the CWAT was quick to affiliate.

Breakaway elements from Lancashire were sent into the CWAT to prop up its every dwindling numbers. The UDM was very confident that Leicester would join them, as well as 90 per cent of the Midlands, and two pits and a workshop in Lancashire.

THE UDM has roots in previous treachery by Notts miners, during the great strike of 1926. A certain Labour MP, called Spencer, decided that enough was enough, and Notts miners should go back to work. He set up an alternative union with the assistance of the coal owners.

Members loyal to the MFGB were blacked and were not given work by the coal owners. The Spencer union did not reign long. Through its lack of potency to fight for wages, conditions and against closures the union had to negotiate its way back into the main union for protection of its members.

With the disbandment of the Spencer union, a trust fund was set up using about £1,000,000 left from the "union" funds. This trust fund — to

But Leiceser voted to stay national — even after the NCB tried to bribe their General Secretary to join. Only one pit in the Midlands joined. Both pits and the workshop in Lancashire voted to stay National.

These losses were all body blows to the UDM leadership whose professed membership of 40,000 was never seriously believed by anybody but themselves. Just after their formation their numbers were about 27-28,000.

The rule book of the UDM is a mix of old and new rules. Some of the rules have been copied straight from the NUM rule book, but new rules have been brought in to prevent disputes.

The officials of the UDM are General Secretary Roy Lynk, President Ken Toon, Vice President George Hunter. Other

which the NCB pays somethings like a couple of pence for every tonne of coal wound in Notts — was administered by Notts Area union officials and NCB representatives.

Every year, Notts miners receive a nominal payment from the fund. Also many union officials receive expenses and gifts from the fund, which is now called the "Workmen's Allocation Fund". A copy of a cheque from the fund to Roy Lynk (UDM President) for a sum of £500 is one example the NUM have been able to get hold of.

The fund has always been shrouded in secrecy and very few miners knew of its existence before the '84-85 strike. Only the trustees and board of management of the fund are allowed access to its books.

noteables are David Prendegast and Neil Greatrix.

Present at Conferences with nil voting rights are the national officials and the 3 officials of each section. In addition there will be section delegates; 1 delegate per 500 members up to 5,000, then over 5,000 1 delegate per 1,000. This gives Notts a built-in majority.

There is also an advisory national council which meets twice a year in October and March.

The NEC consists of the 3 national officials, the general secretary of each section, plus one delegate for the first 7,000 members and one for each consequent 7,000. This again gives Notts a built-in majority.

The UDM paper is the old Notts Miner, but full of vitriolic tripe, lies and inuendo

about the NUM and its leadership. In fact it is just like an NCB news-sheet.

The acceptance of the NCB's offer of 5.2 per cent plus the revision of the pension agreement shows the UDM's innocence when it comes to negotiations. They ran in and signed an agreement to beat the NUM to a settlement. But they did not realise or did not bother about the serious implications of the revisions of the previous agreement.

Even though the UDM were the darling of the Tories during the strike and after, this did not mean the Tories liked or trusted the UDM. Many of the UDM members still claim to be staunch Labour voters. The SDP-Liberal Alliance, more so the SDP, has courted the UDM, inviting prominent leaders to the SDP conference. They seem ideal material for each other,

both middle of the road, with no policies, and both breakaways.

The only real hope for the UDM is the breakaway or expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC, which would probably also inspire the AEU to follow them and form some alternative TUC.

The UDM fits in well with these people, since it too is prepared to sacrifice principles for money.

The new chair of British Coal, Sir Robert Haslam, built his career on industrial relations. Even he will realise that it is better to deal with one union. The coal owners and government realised this in the Spencer era.

The NUM must make a strong stand and force the NCB to disband their puppet union.

Austin Rover pay sell-out

Management pulls convenors' strings

The wages offer made to its workforce by Austin Rover management of a 5 per cent increase in basic rate over two years is the lowest offer made on an annual wage review since BL was formed in 1968.

Nor is the offer without strings. It is a part of a package which includes:

- *management's right to introduce "new working patterns" (specifically they want a nine and three quarter hour day, 4 day week);

- *merging the Cowley Body and Assembly plants, worsening conditions of employment;

- *a joint committee to police absenteeism and lateness;

- *a revamped bonus scheme theoretically paying more money, but making the money harder to earn.

There have been serious problems of democracy since the wage round began. The new TGWU automotive national officer has been getting his feet under that table and establishing his right wing credentials; and for the first time in two decades there is no militant leadership in the Assembly Plant to push the claim forward. As a result of this there have been no mass meetings since the wage claim was formulated.

There has not been a single leaflet from the negotiating committee telling the workforce what is going on, whilst the media has been pumping out management's case, talking about massive losses made by Austin Rover in the current financial year and

By BILL PETERS

AUSTIN ROVER



distorting the money offered — they have been saying that ARG workers stand to gain £11 per week out of the deal.

On Monday October 20 the ARG negotiating committee, the JNC, successfully persuaded a delegate conference of ARG shop stewards to recommend acceptance of the package to the workforce. The only change management have made in the course of the "negotiations" has been to take

the "new working patterns" out of the review and table it for separate discussions.

The deal has been recommended for acceptance with no previous involvement of the workforce at all. The only major plant to press for rejection was the Cowley Body Plant, where the leadership was mandated that way by the shop stewards.

The new right wing leadership in the Cowley Assembly Plant would not allow even the shop stewards in that plant to vote on the deal and pressed for acceptance at the JNC. They were fully supported by the Communist Party-led delegation from Longbridge.

There will now be mass meetings in most of the plants for information purposes, but the decision will be taken by secret ballot vote.



A stockpile of BL Maestros.

AUSTIN ROVER



Would you buy a used alibi from this man?

By HARRY SLOAN

The more President Botha weeps crocodile tears and protests his innocence, the more suspicious appears the sudden death in an air crash of Mozambique President Samora Machel.

Only a week previously, South African military chief General Malan had been publicly boasting that Machel's regime had been driven to the brink of collapse at the hands of the ruinous campaign of economic sabotage and terrorism carried out by the South African-backed murder squads of the so-called Mozambique "National Resistance Movement" (MNR).

Yet as the news of the air crash on South African soil hit the news around the world, South African ministers were suddenly falling over themselves to pay tribute to Machel's statesmanship, "pragmatism" and protest their own innocence.

There is no doubt that the overt and covert South African military offensive against Mozambique had taken a toll of Machel's willpower, and had forced the humiliating bi-lateral Nkomati non-aggression "pact" of 1984 in which Machel agreed to curb the activities of ANC forces within his borders — while the Pretoria regime has cynically continued to funnel weapons and cash to their mercenary MNR gunmen.

There is certainly some doubt over how much Botha actually wanted to remove the whole regime in Maputo rather than press-gang it into concessions. From a political point of view there could be no way in which the MNR — which lacks any popular base of support — could take power without itself becoming immediately embroiled in an equally protracted and expensive disruptive cold war against the ousted FRELIMO forces, who would have no choice but to fight for their own physical survival. However attractive the concept of a pliable puppet government in Mozambique might appear to Pretoria, it is not a viable possibility: it would be a vast, open-ended economic and military commitment.

Botha argues he had no interest in killing off the most influential figure in the Mozambique government after he had shown himself so willing to deal with South Africa.

The political succession in Maputo can be no certainty, and the impact of a new leader could even be to make a more determined effort at finding fresh international support for a stand against Pretoria — perhaps by a turn towards the Soviet Union.

Despite Machel's earlier more radical rhetoric and early policies of nationalisation (later largely abandoned) the extent of Mozambique's "leftism" and challenge to apartheid rule has been



Botha

restricted from the start by this grinding poverty in the aftermath of the FRELIMO victory over Portuguese colonialism in 1975, and in the light of the country's long-standing economic dependence upon South Africa.

Unlike Angola, which secured substantial Cuban military support in 1976 to repulse a co-ordinated attempt by CIA-South African-reactionary forces, and has been able to use oil and mineral revenues to finance extensive Cuban (and thus Russian) support since the, Mozambique has always stood largely alone, with only the most tokenistic Soviet military or economic backing. Even the Thatcher government has recently been more supportive than Moscow.

But while the practical military challenge from Maputo to Pretoria's armed might has not been great, and the hysterical denunciation of Machel as a pawn of the Kremlin has always been a crude deception, there is another sense in which Mozambique, like Angola, has by its very independence played a crucial role in the development of revolutionary struggle in Southern Africa.

The guerrilla victories of FRELIMO and the MPLA that helped snap the brittle fascist regime in Portugal in 1974, and drove out the colonists from their most southerly territories in Africa, gave a renewed impetus to the black struggle against the white settler regime in Rhodesia and in South Africa itself, which erupted into action in the Soweto events of 1976.

Though the Rhodesian regime was far weaker internally and internationally, and eventually unable to resist imperialist pressure for a deal with a much larger black majority, the South African regime

has also been weakened by the existence of black governments on each side. It has consistently sought means to humiliate, destabilise and if possible overturn these governments.

South African troops and planes have systematically violated the borders of each of its black neighbours — and maintained a prolonged occupation of whole areas of Angola, partly to pursue its war against the liberation movement in Namibia.

From the very outset, South African arms and aid have backed the brutish activities of UNITA and the MNR — movements which have developed their own links with the South African military and political establishment, and have their own motives for pursuing the fight against the Angolan and Mozambique governments.

There are real doubts as to the extent to which Botha can dictate the precise policies and actions of the MNR, which he has apparently attempted to restrain.

There must also be doubts whether some of South Africa's own hard-nosed army chiefs would not relish the chance to pull what they see as the lynch-pin from the Mozambique regime, and notch up their most spectacular step so far in rolling back the anti-imperialist gains of 1975 whose very existence they see as a provocation.

Indeed while Botha claims without great conviction that Machel was a centrepiece of South African plans for the region, a picture is emerging of an alternative, aggressive strategy by the Pretorian racists. This would involve striking back against sanctions by seeking to impose their domination over the nominally "independent" Mozambique, which could then be used as a grand sanctions-busting "front" for South African business dealings on the world market.

As we go to press, the riddle of the crash has not been solved — but the least likely variant appears to be a genuine accident. Only time will tell if Machel was the victim of bad weather, poor engineering, a rogue guerrilla, a maverick general or a concerted Pretoria counter-offensive.

For the hard-pressed, starving and exploited black masses of Mozambique, the conclusion in each case is the same.

The fight has to be stepped up to crush the vicious MNR, whose victims threaten further miseries: and it is vital to develop beyond the eclectic, populist zig-zag economic policies of Machel and the FRELIMO leadership to an economic plan controlled by the workers and poor peasants — for which solidarity and support can be developed internationally.

Chernobyl's "cloud of friendship"

The Chernobyl nuclear plant in the Ukraine is 80 miles from Kiev (pop. 2½ million). It is situated on the banks of the river Dnipro which flows the rough some densely populated and industrialised areas and is set in a town of about 50,000 people.

It consists of 5 operational 1,000 megawatt nuclear reactors and is the largest nuclear plant in the USSR. The accident occurred in No. 4 reactor.

At the moment the share of nuclear power in the USSR's total output of electricity is 10 per cent, and planned to rise to 20 per cent by 1990 — according to the 5 year plan devised in 1985.

Chernobyl is a water-cooled graphite moderated design used only in the USSR. It is also designed to produce plutonium for military purposes (i.e. for nuclear weapons).

The Chernobyl disaster occurred on April 26. It took 3 days for Moscow to admit the accident. It took 11 days for Soviet press reports to give any details at all.

It took 7 days for the people of Chernobyl to be evacuated, and 9 days for the peasants in the surrounding area to be evacuated. The people of Kiev and Minsk were not told of the dangers of consuming milk or any fresh produce.

Gorbachov himself was silent for 18 days, and then blamed local officials for the disaster. Clearly the new "openness" in government is determined by the convenience of the bureaucracy, not by the needs and demands of the people. The whole media manipulation was designed to avoid protest and criticism at all costs.

The process was one of silence at first, then bland denials, then belated admissions.

Experts at the post mortem on

By DAVE SPENCER

Chernobyl at the International Atomic Energy Agency HQ in Vienna spoke of between 20,000 and 50,000 people eventually dying from the effects of radiation from Chernobyl. Others claim that this is a conservative estimate.

In addition the radiation creates a "genetic time bomb" with unknown effects on children yet to be born.

The *Observer* also reported on land in the Ukraine too contaminated to farm for 10 years at the minimum — at the worst it could be too dangerous to grow crops for 3 centuries.

Soviet Academician Legasov gave a 5-hour presentation on how the disaster occurred and the experts emerged "ashen faced" and "badly shaken".

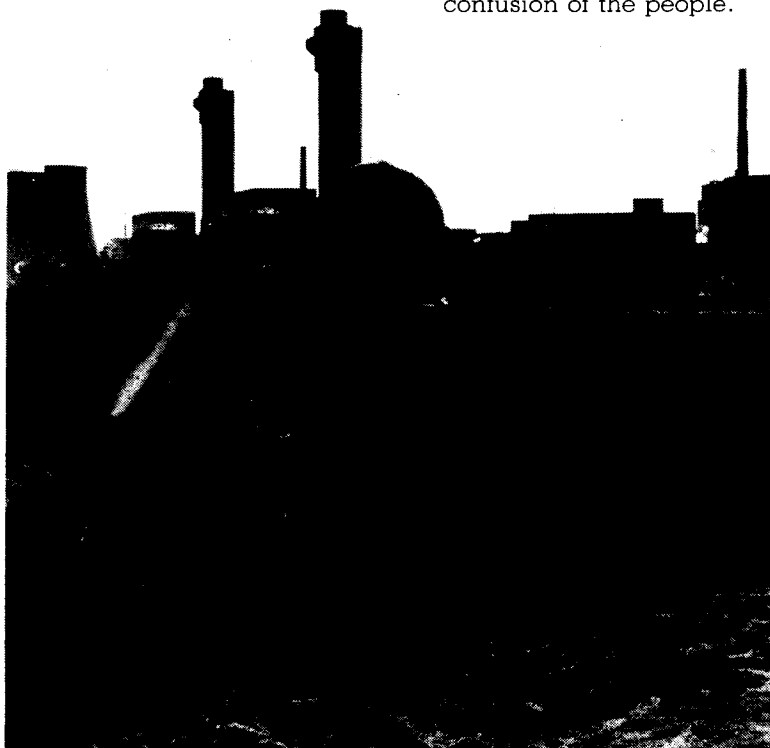
Apparently a main explanation he gave was over-confidence in the safety of nuclear reactors which led the operators to lose all sense of danger and to make "deliberate systematic and numerous violations of safety procedure."

A much more likely explanation however was given by a Ukrainian woman engineer exactly one month before the accident in *Literatura Ukraina* (March 27).

Here she complained of the bureaucratic bungling in the construction and development of the Chernobyl plant. She spoke of "slackening standards", "deficiency in providing basic supplies" and "an accumulation of an enormous number of unresolved problems."

Here we see the result of the lack of workers' control over industry, the lack of accountability to democratically elected Soviets.

The absolute manipulation of the media by the bureaucracy adds to the alienation and confusion of the people.



This bureaucratic system must produce many ecological and industrial disasters in an increasingly worsening situation.

Boris Komarov in his samizdat book *The Destruction of Nature in the USSR* details a frightening catalogue of little reported incidents.

He states:

"More than 85 per cent of the population have no means of getting any real information about pollution. If they think at all about ecology it is probably only after they have contracted some form of living cancer."

On this later point he reports on the industrial area around Donetsk in the Ukraine, where deaths from lung cancer are 3 times higher than the average elsewhere in the USSR.

He also speaks of a nuclear disaster in 1957 in the Urals which wiped out 30 villages.

Another subject for concern is the "unbelievable carelessness" of the Soviet authorities in disposing of nuclear waste. Apparently several workers were recently killed by radiation only 10 miles from Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, where nuclear waste taken from Soviet nuclear submarines was being kept in primitive conditions.

This is all a far cry from Trotsky's famous speech to a workers' audience in 1918, "A Paradise in this Earth". The dynamic of workers' democracy is missing from the nationalised industries in the bureaucratised USSR.

All of the dissident groups in Eastern Europe who have spoken out on the issue (e.g. Solidarnosc, Charter 77, the Moscow Trust Group) have all stressed the link between the Chernobyl disaster and the absence of democratic rights — to reliable information to organise to control your own life, or to protest.

The enormous frustration and anger that has been built up in the Ukraine and the surrounding areas can only be imagined — at the moment there are few visible outward signs of its expression.

On April 28, geiger counters in a monitoring station in Mikolajki (N.E. Poland) recorded 2.5 milliroentgens — 500 times higher than normal. The army arrived and took the place over.

Warsaw Radio and TV on May 3 complained of "exaggerated reports" of the Chernobyl disaster, and attempts by subversives to "poison the political atmosphere."

On May 7 they were still talking of "malicious rumours" verging on sabotage. Such was the bureaucracy's reaction to the biggest disaster ever known concerning nuclear power. It was left to Solidarnosc, the Independent Peace Group "Freedom and Peace" and their underground press to give information, to organise protests, to demand answers.

There were 2 protest demonstrations in early May, in Wroclaw, organised by Freedom and Peace and another in Krakow on June 1 with 2,000 participating. A petition of 3,000 was organised in the town of Bialystok demanding a halt to the construction of the Zarnowiec nuclear plant.

The Committee of the Malopolska Region of Solidarnosc asked for nuclear scientists and experts to make documents and analysis available to their uncensored press.

They also reported that 5,000 workers demonstrated at the Nowa Huta steelworks despite heavy police presence. Workers spoke of "the cloud of friendship" from Chernobyl — a sarcastic reference to the relationship between Poland and the USSR.

On May 6, Charter 77 of Czechoslovakia released document no. 15,86, complaining about the

misinformation given out officially by the Czech media.

Again, the whole disaster was played down and referred to only as a "slight increase in radioactivity".

They see the key issue as that of the right to information and independent organisation. On May 6, also, the Soviet Independent Peace Group, the Moscow Trustbuilders, circulated an open letter.

They declared that after a series of reports and discussions on Chernobyl in their Group they had decided to add opposition to nuclear power to their peace programme. Above all they insist on the whole truth being told to the Soviet public.

The fall-out from Chernobyl affected the whole of Europe. It is clear that nobody has been told the whole truth — East or West — about the dangers from radiation as a result.

In the West we have to demand an end to nuclear power installations. At the same time we have to support those groups in eastern Europe demanding essential democratic rights — without those, another Chernobyl or worse will occur and it could be too late.

(Source of much of the information *Voice of Solidarity*, 215 Balham High Road, London SW17 7BN).

Ireland More Cracks in the Accord

By DAVID MOSS

The primary objective of the Anglo-Irish Agreement — to isolate Sinn Fein politically and militarily defeat the IRA has patently failed.

Since the Agreement, IRA attacks on RUC barracks and armed observation posts have been spectacularly successful, and the state's resources have been further tied up by effective threats to kill those supplying or servicing the security forces.

The claim that the threats against civilian personnel are motivated by sectarianism ignores the nature of the six county state as a garrison colony, where a large proportion of the workforce is linked to the military in some capacity.

Nor does the claim that it is a desperate move against soft targets carry much weight in the light of the

IRA's continued ability to attack armed Army and RUC patrols, as the daring daylight killing of three RUCmen in Newry demonstrated.

Desperation is evident in the Unionist camp however. So far their campaign against the agreement has failed to budge the British government. The war against the nationalists has been stepped up by increasing sectarian attacks, which took on a more alarming aspect with the invasion of the village of Swatragh by hundreds of Loyalists.

Peter Robinson's foray into Clontibret in the Free State and the subsequent deonstrations at his court appearance at Dundalk, despite its resemblance to a black comedy, has more sinister overtones.

Loyalist paramilitaries have often made clear that all "Republicans" are legitimate targets and have previously on occasion carried the war over the border. Making Robinson into a crusading martyr will

legitimise future raids and bombings.

The fear of the Dublin government that the "troubles" in the six counties will come home to the South are looking more feasible. It is ironic, but predictable, that it is the Hillsborough Agreement, intended to stabilise the situation, that is acting as the catalyst for this escalation.

Fitzgerald's optimistic aspirations for the Agreement are looking increasingly hollow. Toadying to the Tories to preserve it is one thing — but ignoring incursions by Loyalist thugs is quite another. As his government increasingly looks like the white between the orange and the green, the Loyalists may realise that the lever against Hillsborough is best applied in Dublin rather than London

or Belfast.

Meanwhile the Labour Party leaders reaffirm their continued support for the tattered Agreement, a principled adherence to their time-honoured policy of "out-Tory-the-Tories" in pursuing a "bipartisan" approach to Ireland.

Relying on years of carefully nurtured ignorance among the party rank and file and the entrenched opposition of Trade Union leaders to any new policy which might upset their Loyalist members (aided and abetted by those on the "hard left" like *Militant* who cannot get over the conceptual confusion of "Unionism" with "trade Unionism") the Labour

leadership is hoping the problem will have gone away by the time they come to office.

It is essential that, through the Labour Committee on Ireland, we carry out the basic tasks of education and bring home to the labour movement that it is not a problem of IRA gunmen and Loyalist bully-boys, but of British imperialism and state oppression.

In so doing we can demonstrate that the Anglo-Irish Agreement holds no promise of peace in Ireland and indeed that there is no solution this side of socialism.

On that basis we can build support for the anti-Imperialist forces waging the struggle in Ireland and for the withdrawal of British troops.

Another kind of bonfire party Internment — fifteen years on

On pieces of waste ground in the nationalist housing estates, near the partly demolished Divis Flats and along the Falls Road, kids put the finishing touches to massive bonfires.

Often crowned with a Union Jack, they are lit as midnight arrives.

The crowd, bathed in the heat and glow gradually thins out as mothers and children and the older folk drifted home, leaving groups of youths silhouetted against the blaze.

It could be Guy Fawkes night in Britain but for the absence of fireworks.

They come later — the product of Brock's factory in Dumfriesshire — in the form of plastic bullets.

It is the traditional August 9 commemoration by Republicans of the anniversary of internment without trial, imposed with 350 arrests in August 1977.

The crackle of the flames and the chatter and laughter hid the roar of the Army and RUC jeeps along the streets, their appearance heralded by headlights cutting the darkness. At the arrival of the invader the mood changed.

Paving slabs were broken up — in the shadows came the clink of milk bottles. Stones crashed ineffectually against the armour of the jeeps. The occasional petrol bomb bursting on the bonnet looked spectacular but did little more damage. As the plastic bullet guns banged the young streetfighters dodged and scattered, then regrouped.

In the morning the bonfires were still smouldering. Some had served as barricades stewn across the road, buckling the tarmac. Burnt debris, bricks and broken glass marked the scenes of the

By **DAVID MOSS** and
DANIEL PARKES

worst fighting News reports came in. Dozens hurt by plastic bullets, a British Army patrol attacked by a blast bomb on the Falls, a clash between IRA Volunteers and Army in New Lodge, a ten minute gun battle at the Rossville Flats in Derry.

For most comrades from Britain it was their first close encounter with plastic bullets, and it gave added poignancy to a meeting with members from the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets that afternoon.

The campaign was set up after John Downes was killed at the internment commemoration rally two years ago, shot point-blank by a plastic bullet as he rushed to try and prevent the RUC battoning and shooting men, women and children sat in the road.

His wife Brenda tells movingly in her own words about her treatment by the authorities since her loss. No action has been taken against the killer and she has still not received a death certificate.

Others tell their own stories. The father of 14 year old Julie Livingstone, Jim McCabe who lost his wife, Emma Groes blinded in her own home by a rubber bullet shot by a British soldier. They all have the same message. Plastic bullets are being stockpiled in Britain for use against working class people, and it is only a matter of time before they are used. That night more are fired on the streets of Belfast, breaking limbs.

Sunday afternoon. Outside the Dunville park people begin to gather for the march up the Falls Road. Military vehicles career up and own the road or nose menacingly through the waiting crowd. Foot patrols take up firing positions behind walls and at street corners, sometimes training their rifle sights on selected individuals. It is usually a charged atmosphere, but this year particularly so.

The Ulster Freedom Fighters, a cover for the Ulster Defence Association, has declared an open season on anyone attending Republican meetings, or even selling or reading Republican literature or using nationalist Black Taxis.

The Royal Marine Commandos are in town with a reputation for brutality and



provocation to equal, if not surpass, the Paras. And how will the RUC react?

For months they have been the target for Loyalists angry at having their marches rerouted away from Nationalist areas to appease the Dublin government.

They are demoralised and frustrated, their restraint against the Loyalists has on occasion cracked, and now they are under pressure to show their impartiality by banning the march up the Falls Road.

Technically it is illegal, Sinn Fein not notifying the authorities of a state whose legitimacy they don't recognise.

The para-military uniformed life and drum bands begin to form up in the road each at the head of contingents with banners carefully marshalled. Tension mounts.

The head of the army is confronted by a line of jeeps and Saracens several deep across the road. One jeep displays a placard: **Police Warning. This procession is illegal. Please disperse.** The RUC deputy chief constable reiterates this demand through a loudhailer.

The vanguard of the march, headed by Gerry Adams and other elected representatives, are not impressed. They affirm that "We are marching up our road." The

crowd surges forward. Troops with plastic bullet guns ready leap onto the tops of the vehicles and people on the pavements retreat to the shelter of side streets. Anything could happen.

The RUC also realise what a critical situation is developing as the densely packed march will not be moved. It would need a massacre before the world's TV cameras to do it.

A great cheer goes up as a space the width of a vehicle is opened up for the march to filter through.

Headed by hundreds packed shoulder to shoulder across the road the bands and marchers regroup and in three files pass along the three mile route, applauded by onlookers and under the sneers and guns of the Brits and RUC packed at the entry to each side street. The Troops Out Movement delegates, including banners from SOGAT and Midlands Women against Pit Closures, receives particular attention from both sides.

Outside Connolly House, the SF offices in Andersonstown, the rally is hemmed in by dozens of military vehicles with RUC standing on their tops.

Soldiers occupy the roofs of neighbouring buildings while the ever

present helicopters hover even lower and almost drown out the speakers with their clattering.

British POWs in British gaols is the theme of this year's rally, and Tony Clarke, released after ten years, describes the plight of prisoners; Geraldine Quigley, whose husband is serving 35 years, speaks of the harassment and anguish of the relatives.

Enthusiasm reaches a climax as Gerry Adams speaks, summing up the spirit of the rally and the struggle:

"They tried to defeat us in 1969. We stayed strong and we were not defeated. They tried to intern us in 1971. We stayed strong and we beat them. They tried to criminalise us in 1976. We stayed strong and we criminalised them.

They tried to fool us at Hillsborough. We stayed strong and we were not fooled. They try to intimidate us here today but we stay strong and are not intimidated.

Stay strong, brothers and sisters, and we will see an end to foreign rule in our country. Your strength and the cutting edge of the IRA are our guarantee of that."

Absolute truth discovered in Japan

MANY SOCIALISTS will have been horrified at the recent sweeping electoral victory in Japan of Prime Minister Nakasone.

Nakasone recently hit international headlines with an astounding racist outburst that brought back unpleasant memories of the fascist ideology that drove the Japanese bourgeoisie into its imperialist expansion during World War 2.

Castigating the American population as "less intelligent" than the Japanese, an arrogant Nakasone blamed the US racial "mix", and in particular the black and Hispanic minorities.

In view of the growing economic tensions and pressure towards protectionist trade war between US and Japanese bourgeoisies, these kind of statements can be more significant than a casual throw-away remark.

Meanwhile in Japan itself, one left wing party, the ultra-Stalinist Communist Party (Active), led by its revered Chair Otake Reiichiro, is far from downcast about this latest turn of events.

An English summary of the August 25 lead in its paper *Akahata* tells us that:

"The inauguration of the Nakasone Cabinet which characteristically shows the political trend of recent Japan poses the basic problem of class confrontation



Japan's PM paints a reactionary picture

and class struggle. Everything verifies the absolute truth of Otake Thought and the line of the Active."

The explanation offered up for Nakasone's victory is equally a triumph of Marxist clarity:

"Everything is related to the question of power. Nakasone exerted the power, enforced the simultaneous election with the power as his weapon, and thus ensured the 304 seats, the highest number in history. Power and the real force broke the deadlock for the election for the third term and other purposes. This cannot be realised without power."

Having proved that with power in its hands a bourgeois government can win re-election, the CP Active goes on to inform us that:

"The essence of the simultaneous

election and the process of forming the new cabinet has taught us the correctness of theoretical principles of Otake Thought as genuine Marxism. We have to learn the absolute truth of the Otake Thought, especially the thought of Proletarian dictatorship, from the process of forming the new cabinet by Nakasone government and bourgeois dictatorship."

And in case there were any lingering doubts, the comrades bang home the point:

"Everything depends on the power and force. Those who reach the final victory are only those who continue to struggle on principle toward the power."

Neil Kinnock plainly learned everything he knows from Chairman Otake!

From Wilson to Kinnock — union rights sacrificed to profits

By ALAN THORNETT



THE dominant feature of the class struggle in Britain in the 1980s is the repeated use of the law by the employers against the trade unions. The courts are used both in industrial disputes to ham-string the unions and inside the unions to prevent the advance of the left. Judges now make up the law as they go along in line with what they see as the political requirements of the day.

In front of this offensive the leaders of the official labour movement have collapsed. The NGA was betrayed at Warrington in what has been shown to have been an historic defeat of the trade union movement. The TUC allowed the NUM to stand alone in the face of the sequestration of the whole of its funds in the middle of a national strike. They allowed the right wing of the AUEW and the EETPU to flout the policy it established in 1982 by holding a Special Congress to officially abandon the policy itself.

The results of all this are clear in the Wapping dispute. High Court injunctions have all but rendered the picketing ineffective, whilst the unions see their role as complying with the law in order to "defend the unions".

In assessing the long term effects of this situation as we look to the possibility of a Labour Government next year it is important to look back on the role Labour has played in creating this disastrous situation.

In fact the strength of the trade unions and the shop floor movement have been a major political issue of every Government — whether Labour or Tory since the war. The Attlee Government retained war time compulsory arbitration and introduced an incomes policy. The Macmillan Government introduced a "pay pause" in 1961 under Selwyn Lloyd and made tentative moves towards industrial legislation.

It was, however, with the Labour Government of 1964-70 that the issue of trade union power became an overriding obsession. That Government, even more than the Tory

Government of Edward Heath, was the forerunner of Thatcher's policy in bringing the courts directly into the trade union movement in Britain.

Barbara Castle published the White Paper — *In Place of Strife* — the Wilson Government's proposals for industrial legislation, in January 1969. The main provision was the establishment of a new "Industrial Board" — a type of industrial court — with powers to order strikers back to work for a 28 day "cooling off", or order a secret ballot.

She argued against automatic compulsory strike ballots on the basis that this would make the situation worse at times when the membership was more militant than the leadership, and that there should therefore be discretion as to when a ballot should be used. In order to argue that her measures would not involve trade unionists going to prison, Castle proposed that fines on individuals should be recovered by direct deduction from the wages of those concerned!

The public attitude of the TUC and the leaders of the main unions was one of complete hostility to the measures, but behind the scenes, it was a very different story. TUC General Secretary, Vic Feather, strongly supported the measures, and people like AUEW leader Hugh Scanlon, the "left" in the TUC, were saying one thing in public and another in private to Castle herself.

All this meant that despite the great public outcry and the breakdown of the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Government the physical opposition to *In Place of Strife* was organised by the unofficial movement. There was a series of successful one day actions, initiated by the Communist Party and the Trotskyists of the Socialist Labour League (although these organisations differed over wider action), which were all opposed by the official movement.

In Place of Strife was eventually withdrawn by Wilson in favour of a pledge by the TUC, at a Special Congress, that individual unions would use their own rule books to discipline members who stepped out of line by taking unofficial strike action. It was a defeat for Wilson, but it did prepare the ground for the victimisation of militants at a later stage.

A year later, the Tory Government of Edward Heath took up the baton where Wilson had dropped it with the Industrial Relations Act. This established an industrial court — the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) with wide powers to order strikers back to work, order secret ballots and impose fines and financial sanctions on unions.

Although this legislation was adopted by Parliament in 1971 it faced ferocious opposition and created the most militant period in British post war labour history. The official



Wilson as Prime Minister, speaking to a bosses' lunch

movement was forced into opposition to the Act. The authority of the NIRC was effectively broken in the summer of 1972, after escalating unofficial strikes and the threat of a one day general strike secured the release of five jailed Pentonville dockers by the intervention of the celebrated "Official Solicitor". Heath was brought down by the miners in February 1974 and replaced by a new Labour administration.

In sharp contrast with the problems we face today, the 1974 Labour Government had no alternative than to repeal the Industrial Relations Act soon after the election, which pushed the AUEW to the brink of national strike action against the threat of sequestration. It was repealed within a year and replaced with a series of measures including the establishment of Industrial Tribunals.

This did not mean, however, that the Wilson/Callaghan Government stopped attacking the working class. The attack came through wage control, productivity drives, higher levels of unemployment, factory closures and the introduction of class-collaborationist "worker participation" schemes designed to compromise the independence of the shop stewards movement which had grown rapidly over the previous 15 years.

These policies brought Labour back into full-scale confrontation with the working class. In 1978 a 5% wage limit was introduced under conditions of 20% inflation. The authority of the Callaghan Government was eventually broken whilst it was trying to impose the 5% "norm" on low paid workers in the so-called "dirty Jobs" strike in the winter of 1978-79.

Where the Thatcher Government of 1979 differed from previous Labour and Tory Governments was not in its general strategic objective, but in its greater determination to achieve it. It came to power with a

detailed plan designed to take on and defeat the trade union movement, introduce a new package of anti-union laws and create mass unemployment over a period of 5 or 6 years as the basis on which to increase the rate of exploitation of the working class, and thus restore profitability in British industry.

To this end Thatcher provoked a series of well chosen confrontations with sections of the trade union movement. In early 1980 she took on and defeated the steel workers over jobs — 90,000 jobs were directly lost as a result. In 1981 she took on and defeated the rail unions over wages and working practices. In 1982 she took on and defeated workers in the civil service and the NHS. At the same time a series of confrontations with BL workers in 1979, 1980 and 1981 broke the shop stewards movement and a 90,000 were lost as a result in that industry.

It was not that the Thatcher Government possessed an inherent strength which none of the other post war Governments had had, or that the rank and file of the trade union movement was less willing to take on a struggle than they had been in the 1960s or the 1970s — the steel workers strike could not have shown that more clearly. Nor was it the effect of mass unemployment, which had initially been created by the Labour government. It stood at 1 million when the Tories were elected and grew at almost a million a year over the next three years.

The overwhelming factor in the success of the Tories was the attitude of the trade union leaders. Their reaction to the raw determination of the Thatcherites to address the fundamental needs of the capitalist system and the escalating unemployment figures and the economic problems of British capitalism was to decide that it was necessary to compromise.



Thus each of the strike confrontations of the 1980-83 period saw a new determination from the trade union tops. Most of those struggles were actively broken, rather than simply betrayed, by the union leaders. In BL the behind-the-scenes deal ratched with Labour — to stop strikes and make the Company profitable — continued under Thatcher. Each strike was destroyed by the intervention of one union leader or another. In the NHS the union leaders refused to break from their disastrous selective strike policy despite widespread support for all out action, and backing from the rank and file of other unions.

The determination of the TUC to stop struggles against the Tory Government could be seen in the isolated cases where the leadership of a union was prepared to make a stand, as in the case of ASLEF who made a firm stand over "flexible rostering". ASLEF was a powerful union, capable of defending their jobs and conditions. They were clearly picked out by the Tories to be defeated on the issue of working practices. But they were not defeated by the Tories: they were broken by the active intervention of the TUC! This was carried out in the most cold-blooded and brutal way. After the BR Board threatened to sack the entire ASLEF membership, they were actually instructed back to work by the F&GP of the General Council and threatened with expulsion from the TUC unless they ended their action and returned to work on the employers' terms!

Nor was the record of the TUC any better on the issue of the Anti-union laws. In 1980 the Tories introduced their first package of laws. Their approach differed from Heath in that they did not attempt to set up an industrial court, but legislated for action by the regular courts. This first tentative package limited the number

PRINT WORKERS say

**'NO'
TO
THE
BILL**





1972 Miners' strike: the historic picket of Saltley Gates.

of pickets to six and attacked the closed shop by providing for huge sums of money as retrospective compensation for those who lost their jobs as a result of refusing to join a union.

The second package in 1982 was much more serious. It removed the union's immunities at law in respect of action for damages from strikes — an immunity which the trade unions had established at the turn of the century. In future political strikes would be declared illegal; workers would only be able to picket their "own" workplace; and other picketing would be regarded as "secondary action". These provisions could be enforced by the employers, or others, through the regular courts by means of an injunction. The third package in 1984 made secret ballots a legal requirement before any form of industrial action could be taken.

Taken together these three packages represent by far the most restrictive legislation enacted against the trade union movement in this country this century and was bound to bring about a very substantial shift of advantage towards the employers and the Government.

Despite this the reaction of the official movement to the legislation from the outset was, in reality, one of the tacit acceptance of it as an inevitability and looking towards a future Labour Government possibly to repeal it. They did of course denounce the new laws, but even at that level their reaction was very different to 1980. There were no rallies, no demonstrations, nothing to warn the movement of the seriousness of what was happening. Nor was their reaction any surprise. In 1970 many of the

unions had been supporting official action against the Heath Government over wages and other issues; by 1980 the order of the day was to stop all strikes taking place. To have promoted a serious campaign against the Prior and Tebbit legislation would have flown in the face of that.

In any case they were selling out so many struggles and strengthening the employers and the Government by giving them so many victories that the union leaders quickly got into a position where action on the laws would have been hard to get.

In April 1982 the TUC called a conference of executives to determine the policy of the movement on the issue of the anti-union laws. At that conference they were not prepared to initiate a campaign against the legislation or begin any form of action against the laws.

The policy they adopted was to wait until the laws were used; then would be the time to take action. Until then, they would build up a "fighting fund" to support that fight when it came.

Within the terms of this approach, however, what they adopted was, on paper at least, quite a hard line policy. It was decided that in the event of any union finding itself under attack from the laws they could come to the TUC and they would receive the full support of the movement including strike action even if that strike action was illegal! This point was spelled out strongly by Len Murray.

Thatcher, however, was in no hurry to use the laws. She wanted to get all three packages legislated and



AUEW leader Scanlon

she wanted to make sure that when the laws were used they would be successfully used!

The key confrontation came a year and a half later, in November 1983, at Warrington. Newspaper publisher Eddie Shah, obtained a High Court injunction under the 1982 legislation requiring the NGA to remove the picket they had placed on his plant. The NGA refused, and were fined £150,000 for contempt of court. Fleet Street struck for two days in solidarity and the newspaper employers filed claims for £3m in damages for lost production against the NGA.

After a picket of 5,000 was smashed by riot police, the NGA was fined a further £375,000 and the whole of its assets were sequestered. In response, the NGA named the day for a national one-day strike of their membership and called on the TUC for support under the terms of the April 1982 policy decisions.

The response of the General Council triggered an historic defeat for the trade union movement from which we would suffer for a long period of time. Instead of giving the support pledged in 1982, they denounced the proposed action and told the NGA to work normally and comply with the law!

That betrayal stands behind all the attacks which have taken place on the trade union movement since. The TUC betrayal became known as the "new realism". It meant the systematic collapse of all trade union opposition to the employers and the Government, and the surrendering of everything which had been won in previous decades.

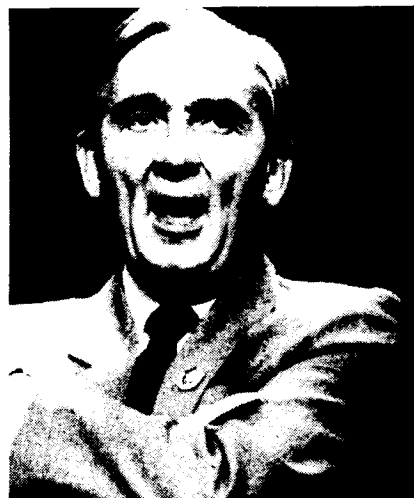
During this time the Tories had pressed their advantage on the shop floor. The shop stewards movement developed in the 1960s and the 1970s was under constant attack by management, strengthened directly by government. Working conditions established over several decades were being destroyed and massive speed-up taking place at the point of production.

Even at this late stage this situation could still have been reversed. Although the defeats were being imposed on the big organised sectors of the working class they had not created a situation where the working class were not prepared to take action. At the same time the most powerful union — the NUM — had not yet been brought into the battle. In a careful tactical game, the Tories had made concessions to the NUM on both wages and jobs in order to avoid provoking a confrontation with them until they were ready.

When the confrontation with the miners came, the rank and file of the NUM responded, and the national leadership of the NUM rose to the challenge, fighting the battle for the first time on the basis of the principle



Class war cabinet



Class collaborator Murray

of jobs and rejecting the Government's profitability argument. It was a strike which could and should have been won. The national leadership stood firm and the rank and file mounted an historic struggle for a whole year against everything which the NCB and the state could throw against them.

Winning the strike raised the political question of an adequate strategic approach to its central problem — the isolation of the NUM. If the miners remained isolated they would eventually be defeated. Breaking the isolation meant essentially breaking the grip of the dead hand of the TUC which had betrayed the NGA at Warrington and was now more determined than ever that there would be no generalised industrial action against the Government.

Despite his strength it was a political problem which Scargill could not resolve. His politics were left Labour and he was essentially a left, even if very left, segment of the trade union bureaucracy. He failed to confront the TUC leaders in their

attitude to the strike or their failure even to mention the sequestration of the South Wales NUM in August 1984 — let alone implement the 1982 policy. Instead he did a behind the scenes deal with TUC General Secretary Len Murray, which effectively perpetuated the isolation of the miners (from strike support) and made the strike extremely difficult to win without a reversal of the decisions of the 1984 TUC Congress. When the NUM had the whole of its funds seized and a government official was put in to control the union's financial affairs, there was not a murmur from other trade union leaderships.

At the same time Scargill failed to challenge the role of the Communist Party and the influence it had on the strike. From being opposed to the mass picketing, the CP moved to favour a ballot and initiated the moves for a return to work through the South Wales Area.

The defeat of the miners was another historic defeat for the trade union movement. It not only put the Government in a powerful position, but it triggered a further shift to the right in the trade unions, immeasurably strengthened Kin-nockism in the Labour Party, and opened the door to a new witch-hunt of the left.

The most sinister development in the trade unions, however, has been the activities of the EETPU, which have for some time represented the development of US-type business unionism, joining with the employers to break other independent trade unions. For some time the EETPU have been signing single union agreements — often over the heads of existing trade unions — based on sweetheart clauses and no strike provisions.

It was the EETPU with the AUEW which challenged the TUC on the on-

ly point of opposition to the anti-union laws which they were still sticking to — the acceptance of Government money for strike ballots. The refusal of the TUC to expel these two unions for their flagrant breach of Congress policy was a major victory for the right wing and strengthened the kind of business unionism which EETPU leader Hammond represents. They were able to make links with the UDM and work with unions like the AUEW who have already gone a long way in the same direction.

At the same time a serious slide to the right was taking place right across the trade union movement. The swing of the T&G behind Kinnock and Ron Todd's acceptance of an incomes policy under a future Labour Government against the policy of the union, the election of Bill Jordan to the leadership of the AEU and the evolution of NUPE from a left wing union to a leading witch-hunter of the left are all examples of the rightward move.

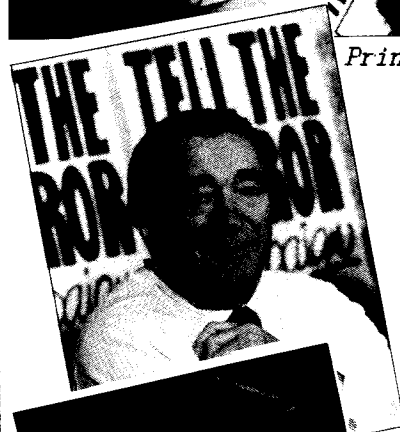
A symptom of these changes and particularly the development with the EETPU was the print dispute over Wapping. In January 1985 Rupert Murdoch announced the imposition of new working conditions on the News International workforce. Many of the proposals were taken straight out of some of the agreements negotiated by the EETPU: no-strike clauses; no negotiations at local level; no closed shop; complete flexibility; no job security; management's exclusive right to manage; and legally binding contracts. Fleet Street, probably the best organised section of the trade union movement, with a history of principled support for other sections of workers, was being taken on in a struggle which would challenge the very existence of union organisation in national newspapers in Britain.

On January 24 the News International workforce struck against the imposed conditions they were promptly sacked. Within 24 hours Murdoch had moved his production to Wapping and was running his presses with the EETPU electricians who had installed the machinery, plus others specially recruited through the EETPU Southampton office. Four national newspapers were now being produced without the involvement of the print unions.

Again the TUC refused to act. The EETPU was "called to account" and then asked to accept a number of conditions relating to Wapping which were carefully couched in terms they could accept. They were not required to withdraw their members from Wapping or to instruct them to stop crossing the picket lines of the print unions. Hammond accepted the conditions — and nothing changed. Soon after that the General Council called an emergency Congress.



Print bosses set union-busting pace



As with the miners' strike, the Wapping dispute has faced problems of leadership, but they have been of a very different order. The leadership of the print unions — even the NGA — were right wing and were pushed into the strike because of the harshness of management action. From the start both union leaderships — particularly SOGAT — have been trying to get out of the situation.

The strike has rested on two central issues; the ability to spread the strike to Fleet Street — which in turn involved the second — a willingness to defy the courts (the decision of SOGAT, after sequestration of its assets, to purge its "contempt" and comply with the law was a disaster for

the strike, making it impossible to spread the fight without changing that policy).

Nor have the problems of leadership been simply at national level within the print unions. The organisation at chapel level has been the driving force of the strike. They are the ones who have maintained the remarkable levels of organisation and involvement in picketing which have continued throughout. The chapel leaderships were responsible for the remarkable vote rejecting Murdoch's offer of the Gray's Inn Road building plus redundancy money. Yet these same militants — strongly influenced by the *Morning Star* have not been equipped to tackle the political problems of the strike. The national leadership won the argument on the strategy of the strike early on and that has never been challenged from the chapels. Apart from a minority of militants they have always rejected the fight to bring out Fleet Street.

As with the miners' strike, the Communist Party has been a dangerous conservative factor at every stage, opposed to any serious challenge to Dean and Dubbins. At the SOGAT Conference they persuaded the chapel delegations to withdraw motions calling for a policy of defying the courts — in return for a resolution of general support. As a result of this, Brenda Dean was able to get unanimous votes to back a policy of not defying the law and putting full control of the strike in the hands of the National Executive. On top of this the CP has had a dozen of its own members crossing the picket lines at Wapping and going into work.

The series of defeats and setbacks suffered by the trade union movement in the last six years poses a number of political questions which cannot be answered simply by listing the record of betrayal of the top



leaders. Why was the shop stewards movement which developed so powerfully over the previous two decades unable to counter those betrayals more effectively? Why were they not able to point to a class struggle road independent of the top officials? Clearly they were not politically equipped to do so; the stewards movement has played a much more militant role than the officials throughout that period, but was not *politically* distinct from the official movement. Layers of branch officials and shop stewards were all the time pulled back into the official movement.

These questions cannot be adequately answered without looking at the role of the Trotskyist movement over the past 30 years. With each of the major Trotskyist currents over that period the problem has been achieving a consistent orientation to trade union work. If there was a lack of political development in the shop stewards movement none of those currents were in a position to make a significant contribution to resolving it. The most important contribution was made by the Socialist Labour League in the 1950s and 1960s. Important trade union militants were won from the CP after 1956 like Brian Behan and bases were built in the Liverpool docks and on some of the building sites in London. In the 1960s a large base was built in the Cowley car plants and large number of workers recruited from a range of

industries. The Oxford Liaison Committee and after it the All Trades Union Alliance were originally significant rank and file groupings with some influence in sections of industry. Workers were recruited to the SLL on a political basis, but the profound crisis of that movement, politically advanced even at that time, was to strangle the healthy side and turn trade union work increasingly towards the sectarian project of "build the mass revolutionary party".

As the SLL politically declined, the IS (SWP) grew. They recruited in the trade unions but based their work on "rank and file" conceptions which could not challenge the syndicalism which held back the movement, or tackle the matters of breaking the grip of the conservative top leaders of the movement.

The IMG came out of the student movement after 1968, based on conceptions of student power, and never came to terms with serious work in the trade unions.

When it came to the major strikes of the past three years the problems of this legacy remained unresolved. Yet the miners' strike, and to a lesser extent the Wapping strike, represented a unique opportunity for an effective intervention by Trotskyists. The miners' strike could not have been more open. Both have been long strikes, with major political problems to be resolved if they were going to be won (these problems are still unresolved in the print strike).

Both have had support movements in which the far left had, in the case of the print strike still has, full access.

The record of the various tendencies in the course of these strikes has been no better than the historical record would suggest. The SWP in the miners' strike, for example, were still trapped in crass rank and fileism. In typical syndicalist fashion they saw the road to victory through more picketing. They opposed confronting the TUC and opposed the call for a general strike at every stage of the strike and, like Scargill, saw Saltley gate of 1972 as the model which would bring victory. It is true that picketing was very important: but the reality was it could not of itself win the strike. They had a sectarian attitude to the support groups because they did not see them at first as the best place to recruit to the SWP; they only became involved with them after the first seven months of the strike, when it became impossible to remain outside.

In the print dispute the SWP did recognise the key importance of bringing out Fleet Street — but has generally linked it only with the need for bigger pickets at Wapping. They have generally kept out of the print support groups.

In the miners' strike the WRP was still caught in the horrors of the Healy period and were consequently reduced to endless calls for a general strike irrespective of its relevance at a particular time. They were pulled out of

the support groups after some initial work in them. They have not reorganised sufficiently after the expulsion of Healy to make an effective intervention into the print strike.

Militant operated in their normal sectarian way in both the miners' strike and the Wapping dispute, keeping out of the support groups unless it suited them in a particular area. They were a long way to the right of Scargill in the miners' strike. It turns out they had been in favour of a ballot throughout but had decided not to make this public until after the strike, arguing that to state their position at that time would have been "divisive"! They were therefore dishonest as well as wrong on the issue. Their leading members in the strike — Ian Isaac — voted for the return to work at the crucial South Wales delegate conference which authorised the South Wales Area leadership to fight for an end to the strike.

The Socialist League (formerly IMG) were the most crass tailenders of the Scargill leadership, arguing that the criticise Arthur Scargill was to "cross class lines" — though there was an internal division on this which emerged as the split with the "International" Group. The SL in the post strike situation are even worse. They have played little role in the print dispute, but in the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign they have joined up with bureaucrats and Stalinists and used Stalinist methods against others on the far left in order to gain positions for themselves.

Workers' Power recognised the problem of the isolation of the miners' strike and advocated a general strike at key times, but their means of achieving it were bizarre. Their own SWP past made them shrink from demanding that the TUC call it; they called instead for *Scargill* to call a general strike directly to the rank and file of the other unions, over the heads of the leaderships of those unions and over the heads of the TUC! In the print dispute Workers Power have done some useful work but have made a fetish of the development of a rank and file movement of print workers, and divided the Union of Print Support Groups by proposing that the support groups try to organise a rank and file movement inside the print unions.

The RCP were in favour of a national ballot of miners from the outset of the miners' strike; at the end of the strike they were calling for an end to the check-off system as an immediate high-priority demand for the NUM! *Socialist Organiser* have tail-ended Scargill and yet also opposed the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC over their scabbing at Wapping.

The clearest example of the ineffectiveness of the far left in the miners' strike was the role played in the conference organised by the Mineworkers' Defence



Committee in December 1984. The Committee was comprised of a coalition of the main far left groups and the conference was held at the time of the sequestration of the NUM. Yet by a majority decision, the groups concerned voted to exclude all resolutions on the strategy of the strike the anti-union laws' the issue of a general strike or the spreading of the strike to other industries. All such resolutions were ruled out of order — not by the right wing, but by the far left. A huge and representative conference was denied a view on the course of the strike. All that was allowed was "solidarity with the miners". The anti-union laws were not even mentioned in the entire day.

Meanwhile, in complete contrast, in the real world, the NUM Executive was meeting in emergency session to consider the implications of the sequestration. They voted under Scargill's leadership to call on the TUC to organise strike action in their support. It was a call for a general strike in all but name. (It became defused because it was left to Eurocommunist Mick McGahey to take it to the TUC). The miners delegates were way out in front of the "far left" at that point. This does not make Scargill a Marxist; rather the far left were once again irrelevant to the situation at one of the most crucial points of the strike.

This raises the question as to what is the role of Marxists in industrial struggles. Is it simply to be the best builders of solidarity? Or is it to give political leadership to workers and seek to take the struggle beyond where militant left leadership is able to take them?

Do Marxist organisations not have an obligation to equip themselves with the lessons of such struggles in order that they can effectively carry out that role? Do they have to train themselves to intervene effectively, or do they have to train themselves to be the best cheer-leaders of the workers and their existing leaders?

It is not surprising that these issues, as they related to the miners' strike, have already been major factors in the splits which have taken place in the Trotskyist movement since then. They were a factor in the moves within the WRP which led to the expulsion of Healy, and they were a

part of the political platform of the "International" Group which split from the SL.

These developments have posed the possibility of an important recomposition of the Trotskyist movement in this country. But such a recomposition must be based on a new approach to trade union work which breaks from the mistakes of the past, and recognises that work in the trade unions cannot be based on short term switches of orientation, but looks instead towards some long term consistent work in the unions.

There are large areas of the trade union movement where the far left show little interest until a dispute takes place, and the most of the groups move in to make propaganda and move out again as soon as they judge that there is nothing to be gained for themselves.

This can be seen in the public sector manual unions, where no section of the far left does any consistent work. There is little interest in the 1.25 million NHS workforce, 75% of which are women and a large percentage black. Yet they are a section of workers with an important record of militancy. The far left is hardly active on the huge issues of privatisation and cuts in the health service which have decimated jobs and wages in that industry. This attitude has given a free hand to the leaders of unions like COHSE, GMBATU and NUPE, and facilitated the shift to the right.

Similar points apply to other sectors including the 1 million local government manual workers. The far left has nothing to say about the basic issues of unionisation of the hotel, catering, and retail industries, where such a vast proportion of low paid youth and women workers suffer the extremes of exploitation, plus racist and sexist oppression. Yet it is only by seriously relating to the fight to organise, mobilise and improve the conditions of such basic sections of ordinary workers that Marxists can really build a foothold in the working class.

It has to be recognised that trade union work involves demands and pressures greater than other areas of political work. In the unions it is not only a matter of arguing a point of view but of fighting an employer at the same time. There is the constant question of victimisation, and problems of maintaining support under the pressure of the employer and the media. Militants have to face witch-hunts and moves by the employers to isolate them at the key moments. These pressures, under which so many capitulate, need to be seriously addressed and the necessary political back-up provided.

Through having this basic approach to work in the unions we would be better equipped to take up the general political problems which dominate the trade union movement.

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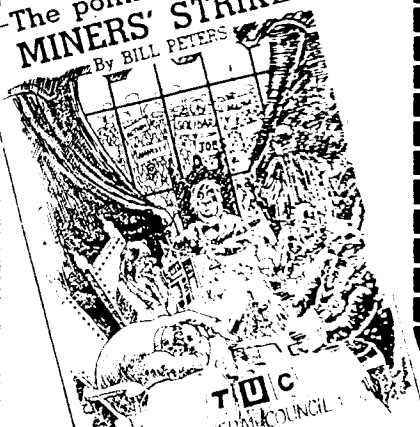
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