

# Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League

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## Halt massacre of workers in Iran!

**Statement by the WIL Central Committee**

*Down with the Khomeini regime!*

ON THE TENTH anniversary of the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, the Workers International League calls for urgent international working class action to halt the slaughter of Iranian and Kurdish workers in the prisons of the Khomeini regime.

Since the ending of the Iran-Iraq war in July 1988, the Iranian government has embarked on a blood-purge of thousands of political prisoners. These include members and supporters of the Tudeh Party, the Fedayeen groups, the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran, the Iraqi-backed People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran, and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran. Workers who led protests against the war have been arrested in large numbers. Their fate is unknown.

So great have been the numbers of prisoners executed without trial that their bodies have been thrown into mass graves, and their relatives denied access to carry out traditional burial rites.

These actions have been sanctioned at the highest levels of the Islamic regime. Last November, President Ali Khamenei justified mass executions, stating that 'opposition to Islam and attempts at misguiding the people will not be tolerated'.

The Iranian capitalist class and the clergy are themselves locked in bitter factional struggles. They are divided over how to restore the war-shattered economy on the one hand, and how to deal with the working class on the other. (It is estimated that reconstruction of the economy and infrastructure will cost \$400 billion over the next ten years.)

One group, headed by Prime Minister Musavi, fearing the weakness and division of the Iranian bourgeoisie, favours maintaining extensive state intervention in the economy. At present about two-thirds of industry is state-run, much of it having been turned over to war production. The Musavi faction has attempted on several occasions to introduce a graduated income tax and a limited land reform, and supports the continued 'export' of pan-Islamism.

The so-called 'pragmatists', led by the speaker of the Iranian parliament and head of the armed forces, Hashemi Rafsanjani, supported by President Ali Khamenei, favour the full restoration of economic and diplomatic links with the imperialist powers. Despite the rhetoric against 'Great Satan' and its 'Zionist agency', Rafsanjani has been at the centre of secret talks and deals with US imperialism and Israel for several years. He is also likely, following a constitutional amendment, to become president, with extended powers to appoint and dismiss the government.

One consequence of the reopening of diplomatic relations with the West has been the distancing of the Iranian



Kurdish prisoners being executed by Iranian Revolutionary Guards

government from support for the Hizbollah movement in the Lebanon, and the repeated offers to assist in obtaining the release of hostages thought to be held in Beirut.

The arrest in 1986, and subsequent trial and execution of Mehdi Hashemi, the son-in-law of Ayatollah Montazeri - Khomeini's designated spiritual successor - for exposing these contacts in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal, marked a sharpening of the faction struggle. In May 1988, a number of younger mullahs were arrested and imprisoned. The faction struggle erupted after September 1988 with the tit-for-tat execution of at least 32 mullahs. Having been compelled to 'drink poison' in accepting the cease-fire with Iraq, Khomeini now presides over the liquidation of his own supporters, the 'radicals'.

A further twist to the internecine warfare was given by an open letter addressed to Khomeini by Montazeri on January 12, which opposed the 'blood-letting' in the

prisons: 'It appears that in most cases those executed have been serving short prison sentences for minor political offences . . . I declare my opposition to these sentences, and I am sure there are a good number of people in this country who would share this with me.'

At root, this struggle is the result of the incapacity of the Iranian capitalist class to resolve the crisis of the economy or to remove any of the obstacles to creating a genuine national independence. The Bonapartist regime of the mullahs has monopolised command over the economy and politics for nearly a decade, relying primarily upon the petty-bourgeoisie and lumpen elements for support. Having been forced to accept the clerical regime as caretaker, and without control over the army, the big bourgeoisie was obliged to bide its time. With the long drawn-out stalemate of the war over, and the opening of deep rifts within the clergy, it now feels encouraged to press its demands for the restoration

of private industry, and the normalisation of trade relations.

The latter period of the Iran-Iraq war was marked by a resurgence of the working class in strikes and demonstrations. In order to restore the position of the national bourgeoisie and to make Iran a safe haven once more for the investment and the multi-nationals which fled in 1979-81, a massive purge of working class opposition has been unleashed.

Whilst Western businessmen through the hotel lobbies of Tehran touting for contracts, tourism is being revived and moves are underway to permit bourgeois opposition parties to function, all working class political parties and trade unions, together with the Kurdish and Baluchi minorities are savagely repressed. Refugees who fled from the war zone to Turkey have reportedly been handed over to the Iranian government for \$700 a head and summarily executed.

In the same way that it has developed close diplomatic and economic ties

with Turkey whilst the Ozal regime has suppressed the Turkish Communist Party, the Soviet bureaucracy has entertained regular visits from senior Iranian diplomats whilst members of the pro-Moscow Tudeh Party have been tortured and executed, and their party made illegal.

Despite substantial political differences with the various Stalinist and Maoist parties in Iran, the Workers International League unconditionally defends their members and supporters against the actions of the capitalist state.

- Solidarity with the working class in Iran!
- Stop the executions!
- Release political prisoners! Legalise all workers' parties and trade unions!
- Self-determination for the national minorities!
- Land to the poor peasantry!
- Nationalise major industries under workers' control!
- Bring down the Khomeini regime!
- Forward to the Iranian socialist revolution!

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## EDITORIAL

## Labour in crisis

**THE POLICY reviews launched by the Labour Party and TUC leaders in the wake of Thatcher's re-election for a third term in 1987 have encouraged a series of 'unofficial' versions, the majority of them calling for the shift to the right to be speeded up.**

Despite Labour leader Neil Kinnock's frequently stated objections to electoral pacts and proportional representation, the climate of 'change at any cost' is exactly what the policy review was intended to create. However, Kinnock, along with Ashdown, Owen and friends, are not the future face of coalition. Nor do Kinnock and the majority of the leadership have any intention at present of turning the Labour Party into the centrepiece of an 'anti-Thatcher alliance'.

The real rift which has opened up between the Labour leaders is over how best to distance themselves from the trade unions. There is general agreement amongst them that too close an identification with the struggles of the working class poisons their election chances. What the current round of infighting represents is not a conflict between principled and opportunist elements, but tactical differences between those who have essentially the same aims.

The problem is a tricky one for the Labour Party leaders because it is precisely their historical political ties with the working class – used to suppress its independence – which the Tories value. This is what lies behind Kinnock's reticence to proceed immediately to electoral pacts and a commitment to proportional representation. The balancing act which the Labour leadership has to achieve is between purging the party of 'socialism' in order to attract the support of the middle class, and maintaining its role – via the trade union bureaucracy – of policing the working class.

The dispute over alliances and PR, and whether or not Kinnock has a suitable 'media profile', is taking the spotlight off the real thrust of the policy review which is to impose total bureaucratic control over the Labour Party and the trade unions, shutting out the voice of the working class. Much more important to the leadership is the implementation of 'one member-one vote' in the Constituency Labour Parties, by which it hopes to swamp the left under a welter of paper members recruited through an advertising campaign and filed on a computer at the national headquarters. This, in turn, is designed to sufficiently 'sanitise' the CLPs so that the domination of the trade union block vote at the Labour Party Conference can be considerably reduced and the 'dinosaur' image which stands between the leadership and electoral success discarded.

Both strands of opinion in the current dispute – those in favour of pacts and those against – sense that unless they act decisively, they run the risk of losing the allegiance of the working class before they have built up a basis of support in the middle class, with the added possibility that substantial sections of the working class will be impelled to the left.

Those calling for some kind of electoral alliance or for electoral reform, or for a combination of both, range from the Kinnockite Labour Co-ordinating Committee and Kinnock's hitherto closest ally on the Labour Party national executive, the MP for St Helen's North, John Evans, through a variety of front and back benchers including Ann Clwyd, Jeff Rooker, environment spokesman Dr John Cunningham and health spokesman Robin Cook, to a number of organisations either outside or on the fringes of the Labour Party.

Their fear that their working class base will desert them was heightened by the overturn of the 19,509 Labour majority in the Glasgow Govan by-election last November. The lesson they drew from it was not that Labour's right-wing programme was creating an opportunity for the Scottish National Party to divert workers into supporting its reactionary middle class policies, and that it was possible to win them back with a fighting campaign to remove the Tories, but that the cause was lost. The demands for an alliance with the liberal section of the bourgeoisie grew to a clamour as more and more Labourites began to feel insecure. It has nothing to do with uniting the so-called 'anti-Thatcher consensus', but everything to do with keeping MP's bottoms united with the plush leather seats in the House of Commons.

The Labour leadership want the party to speak with a 'single voice' – that of 'reason' and 'moderation'. It is the voice which has retreated from even the pretence of a socialist economic policy, dropping all opposition to privatisation in favour of a 'share-owning democracy' and conditionally embracing the Tory free-market outlook.

The cause underlying the crisis in the Labour Party's leadership is the impossibility of providing reforms for the working class in a period of a rapidly escalating crisis of imperialism. Rank- and-file Labour Party members and trade unionists must resolutely oppose the attempts by the leadership to drive the party to the right. The defence of the independent interests of the working class must be the springboard to building a revolutionary Trotskyist party.

## FLEET ST SPARKS WALK OUT OF EETPU

**THE DECISION of the London Press Branch of the electricians' union to leave the EETPU and join the print union SOGAT effectively abandons the fight against Eric Hammond's ultra-collaborationist leadership.**

By substituting a bureaucratic manoeuvre for a political struggle, it prevents the bulk of EETPU members from developing a real understanding of the nature of their leadership. At the same time, it fosters the illusion that leaders of those unions which remain in the TUC, such as SOGAT, are less likely to betray their members. In fact, there is a division of labour in the

By David Lewis

business of betraying the working class between the openly corporatist wing which allies itself unashamedly with the employers and the state (led by Hammond outside the TUC and Bill Jordan of the AEU inside) and the rest of the trade union bureaucracy.

Another dimension is added to the defection by considering the role inside SOGAT of the Stalinists from the Communist Party of Britain. Mike Hicks and Bill Freeman, leading members of the CPB, played a crucial role in the defeat of the Wapping dispute. Des-

pite their 'militancy' (which saw Hicks sent to jail), they refused to take up a consistent struggle against the national leadership under general secretary Brenda Dean or the TUC. As with the ASTMS/TASS merger in 1988, the departure of the Stalinist-led London Press Branch to join SOGAT has been orchestrated by the CPB which is aiming to consolidate its niche in the SOGAT bureaucracy.

Together with the formation of the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU) by the former 'broad left' of the EETPU, this

latest move leaves the remaining EETPU membership at the mercy of Hammond and Co. Individual members, groups or branches of the EETPU who oppose the leadership would have been enormously strengthened if the large and influential London Press Branch had led a determined battle against the leadership.

Members of the EETPU should refuse to be stamped out of their union and should instead take up the fight for the expulsion of the right-wing leaders and scab elements, and in the process work for re-affiliation to the TUC. Such a fight would also develop the struggle against the treachery of the TUC leaders themselves.

## Demonstration against racist and fascist violence

**A DEMONSTRATION is being organised by Camden Trades Council on February 18 against the increasing number of racist and fascist attacks in the King's Cross area of London.**

The attacks have been carried out by members of fascist groups living in the Argyle Square neighbourhood. Members of the National Front and the British Movement, as well as European and American fascist organisations visiting London, use King's Cross as a centre for their operations against the ethnic communities. Their attacks have also been carried out against community centres, women's centres, synagogues and public houses in the area.

The Labour-led councils in Camden and Islington have done nothing to combat the attacks. On the contrary, in 1988 it was revealed that both Camden and Islington councils had issued travel warrants to forcibly repatriate Irish men, women and youths on the grounds that they were technically homeless.

## FUNDS

Workers News will soon be celebrating its second anniversary, but we need your financial support to ensure its continued success. From the very first edition, our paper has confronted the urgent question of working class leadership. It puts forward a revolutionary socialist programme in complete contrast to the treacherous policies of reformism, Stalinism and revisionism. Give our **£10,000 Building Fund** a good boost this month from its current total of £1,103.47. Don't forget the **£300 Monthly Fund**. Post your donations to:

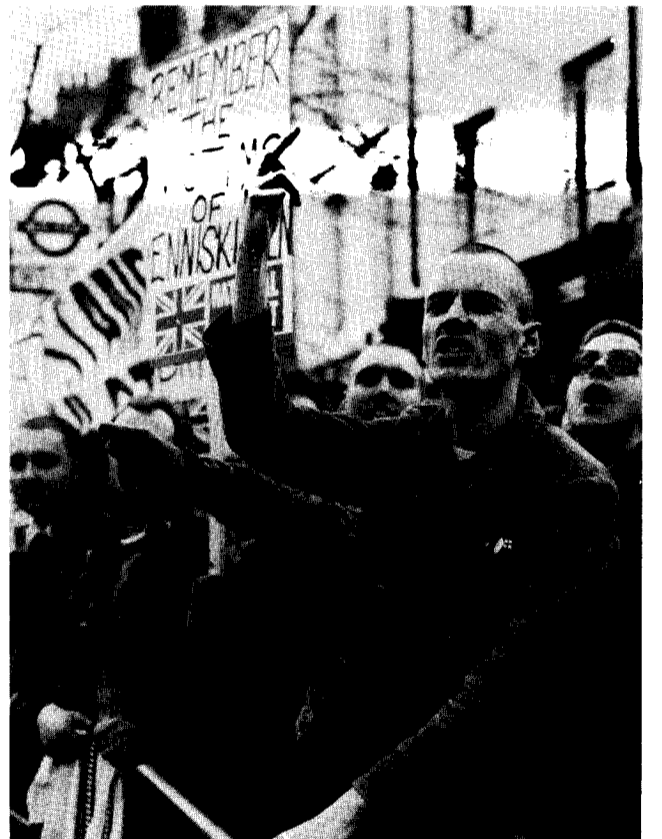
Workers News  
117 Meredith Street  
London EC1R 0AE

The following incidents have been documented by *Searchlight* magazine:

- 1985: 16 men living in the King's Cross area were convicted of offences including rape, armed robbery and possession of firearms.
- 1987: a white male was convicted of assault on an Asian newsagent; ten white youths stabbed and beat three Asian youths in Drummond Street.
- 1988: a white woman was convicted of serious assault on an Asian woman; a white male was convicted of throwing bricks through windows of the synagogue in Fitzroy Street; four white males were arrested for an assault on gay men outside a King's Cross public house; a white male was given a life sentence for the murder of Abdus Sattar; a white school youth stabbed an Asian youth at William Collins School.

In August 1988, Home Office minister Douglas Hogg stated in parliament that the number of 'racially motivated' attacks in London had risen from 1,733 to 2,179 since 1986.

Workers News calls on trade unions, working class parties and organisations and ethnic minority groups to turn out in force to support this march.



Fascists threaten a demonstration in support of Irish prisoners of war

## Electoral pact

THE EURO-Stalinists of the Communist Party of Great Britain, who gained less than 0.1 per cent of the vote in the last general election, have officially endorsed the call from within their own ranks for an anti-Thatcher electoral alliance.

On January 15, the National Executive of the CPGB announced that it would be prepared to withdraw candidates in an election if the policy was agreed by 'all political parties and democratic forces who want a different course for Britain'.

In a radio interview the following day, general secretary Gordon McLennan claimed that the Tories

would 'undoubtedly' be removed at the next election if proportional representation was introduced. 'That a minority government can rule for ten years,' he said, 'shows how seriously at fault our electoral system is.'

The CPGB's campaign is the outcome of discussions taking place around the document 'Facing Up To The Future' which provides a 'theoretical' justification for abandoning the last remnants of a class analysis of capitalist society. That it was issued as a direct challenge to Neil Kinnock only confirms that the Stalinists' want to shift Labour ever further to the right.

Camden Trades Council

**MARCH AGAINST RACIST AND FASCIST ATTACKS**

Saturday February 18  
Assemble 12 noon

Bidborough Street  
(behind Camden Town Hall)  
London WC1

**Bring your banners!**



## Attack on lecturers

THE ATTACK on education was stepped up at the end of 1988 with a call by directors of colleges and polytechnics for longer working hours for lecturers.

They have put forward proposals to increase the contractual working week from 22 hours to 37 hours and the number of contractual weeks per year from 38 to 45. In addition, lecturers would be required to work on any site and to co-operate in quality control measures including assessment of students, thus reinforcing divisions between students and staff.

The lecturers' union NATFHE has pointed out that lecturers, like schoolteachers, already work much longer hours than their contracts demand. In an endeavour to find an appropriate analogy, the union's deputy general secretary, David Triesman, said that the conditions proposed were like those on Youth Training Schemes. This is highly ironic since it is NATFHE members who provide much of the formal training in the government's cheap-labour schemes and the NATFHE leadership has consistently refused to take a principled stand in opposition.

The imposition of these new conditions can only be fought on the basis of opposition to all the policies which the government and the employers have developed to attack the working class and its organisations. In particular, the demand to boycott all aspects of cheap-labour schemes, whether for youth or adults, must be raised and fought for. Only in this way can the strength of the working class be brought to bear in the defence of education and the jobs of workers in education.

- University lecturers started a boycott of examinations on January 9 following the refusal of employers to agree a pay rise backdated to April 1988. The decision to take the action was reached at the December conference of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) after the employers had withdrawn from the national negotiating machinery earlier in the month.

The conference decision was ratified in a ballot of the AUT membership with a two to one majority in favour.

The response of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals was to threaten lecturers with a range of disciplinary measures: pay deductions for days when action was taken; a lock-out; or summary dismissal. Individual vice-chancellors were left to decide which option to follow.

The boycott means that lecturers are refusing to set or mark exam papers or invigilate exams. They are also withholding the results of exams already marked and of continuously assessed work.

The executive of the National Union of Students has voted to support the AUT protest.

# Tory crack-down on political opponents

THE THATCHER government is to extend its secret operations against trade unions, the left and the Irish republican movement with two new Bills. Under the cover of updating the Official Secrets Act and defining the role of the security services in response to middle class criticism, the Tories aim to enforce severe penalties for revealing 'official secrets' and legitimise the anti-working class activities of MI5.

The Official Secrets Bill and the Security Service Bill follow countless embarrassing leaks and several much-publicised court cases which have impressed on government ministers the need to tighten up the laws. These include the acquittal of Clive Ponting, who revealed some of the truth of the sinking of the Belgrano with the loss of 368 Argentinian lives, the 'Zircon' affair, Cathy Massiter's MI5 revelations, the imprisonment of Sarah Tisdall and, of course, the banning of 'Spycatcher'. Whilst the Tories have no interest in stopping the flow of leaks entirely - the parliamentary lobby system is based on leaks authorised by the cabinet - they intend to exact retribution for disclosures hostile to government policy and put a stop to drawn-out legal proceedings which publicise the state's repressive role.

The Official Secrets Bill,

By Jon Bearman

designed to replace Section 2 of the 1911 Official Secrets Act, defines several offences punishable with jail terms of up to two years. It will be illegal for any intelligence officer or former officer to make any revelations whatsoever about their service career; for anyone else, disclosing 'harmful' leaks will be illegal (and no amount of proof that it is 'in the public interest' will outweigh any 'harm' done to the interests of the state); prior publication - such as 'Spycatcher' abroad - will be no defence against any disclosures; and any leak of information entrusted to the state by a foreign government will be a criminal offence.

It is worth noting that whilst the media, the Labour Party and assorted liberals are making a furore



over the Bill, all accept the need for state secrecy. The Labour leadership would insert a 'public interest' clause which would allow, for example, a civil servant to leak information if it revealed crime, fraud, abuse of authority or neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct. This implicitly recognises the right of the state to carry on its secret conspiracies against the working class, and continues in the tradition of past Labour governments under which the most foul conspiracies have been hatched.

Putting MI5 on a legal basis for the first time, the Security Service Bill says that MI5's function 'shall be the protection of national security and, in particular, its protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of agents of foreign powers and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means'.

From this it can be seen that any trade unionist, republican or socialist can become a target for MI5 activity. The wording above is

also deceiving in that, by use of the words 'in particular', the full directive encompassed by 'protection of national security' is missing.

There are precise 'working definitions' of terms such as 'national security' and 'subversion' with which, even though they are something of a state secret in themselves, every senior politician and secret policeman is familiar. It was admitted in parliament in 1978 that the Labour peer Lord Harris had given the game away three years earlier. He said that 'subversive activities are generally regarded as those which are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means'.

The 1985 White Paper on telephone tapping and mail opening implicitly defined 'national security': 'The Secretary of State may issue warrants on grounds of national security if he considers that the information to be acquired under the warrant is necessary in the interests of national security either because of terrorist, espionage or major subversive activity, or in support of the government's defence and foreign policies.' In plain words, any individual or organisation holding views on defence or foreign policy contrary to the government is a threat to national security, and a legitimate target for MI5 activities.

Following four rounds of anti-union legislation, the consolidation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the ban on reporting Sinn Fein and numerous other attacks on the media, the two Bills come as a further attempt to criminalise all those who would speak out or organise against the Tories.

- At its delegate conference in December, the Association of University Teachers passed a resolution calling for the TUC to organise a trade union and labour movement inquiry into allegations that state agencies plotted against the Wilson Labour government and against the trade unions.

## Review prepares NHS sell-off

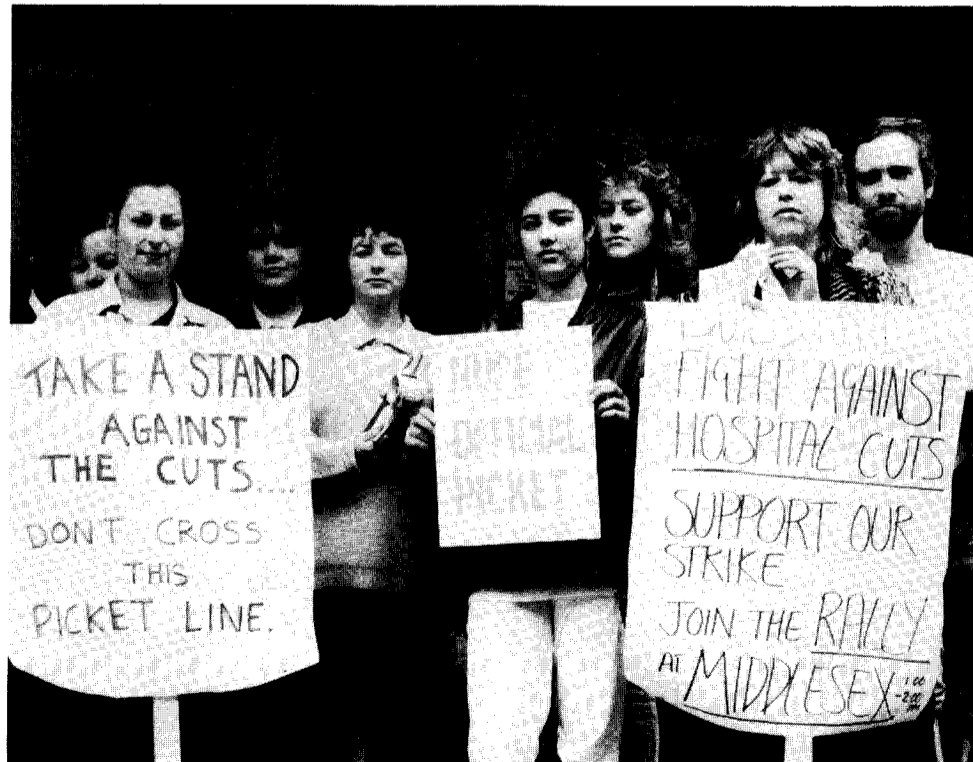
By Graham Fenwick

THE FIRST major step towards the privatisation of the National Health Service is contained in proposed legislation drawn up by Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke.

The White Paper on the NHS, the result of a year-long review headed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, calls for hospitals to be able to opt out of Regional Health Authority control and become self-financing. Instead of being subsidised by the state, they would raise money by contracting out services to the private sector, insurance companies and employers, as well as to health authorities. They would be allowed to borrow money from the commercial sector to meet any budget shortfall.

Hospitals which opt out would be able to hire and fire their staff, force ancillary workers to carry out the duties of nurses, and force nurses to perform some clinical duties usually the preserve of doctors.

The White Paper proposals are the latest stage in the Tories' longer-term plan to dismantle the NHS through privatisa-



Hospital workers striking against health service cuts

tion and herald a new round of health union bashing.

Between 1979, when the Tories took office, and 1986, 136 NHS hospitals closed whilst private hospitals mushroomed. The new legislation will speed up this process as older, poorly equipped hospitals become 'unprofitable' in the face of

the competition offered by large modern facilities. Their closure will provide a further source of cheap equipment and buildings for the private sector.

But the main purpose of the legislation is to rationalise the NHS prior to its eventual wholesale sell-off. The net effect will be to replace the present multi-site health service

with a handful of 'centres of excellence' run on commercial lines.

- West Midlands Health Authority have approved the sale of their computer and management consultancy division, the largest in western Europe with an annual turnover of £8 million. This will be the first major NHS division to be privatised.

## Economic crisis deepens in Ireland

By Terry McGinity

A STEEP decline in the living standards of the Irish working class and the highest emigration rate for decades are the fruits of the ruling Fianna Fail party's attempts to tackle the economic crisis.

A report by a Dublin-based charity, the Simon Community, reveals that during 1988 there were 5,000 homeless people living on the streets of the capital. The report condemns the 20 per cent reduction in this year's housing budget, already at an all-time low with only 1,000 housing starts in 1988 compared to 7,000 in 1984. 'The government's approach to public housing leads inescapably to a housing crisis of terrifying dimensions,' the report states.

Fianna Fail's economic 'achievement' has been to reduce the Exchequer Borrowing Requirement. This was partly the result of a one-off £500 million netted from a tax amnesty, the rest came from cuts in the health, social services and housing programmes. Unemployment stands at 243,000 - 18.7 per cent of the workforce - with thousands of young workers condemned to cheap-labour schemes and 1.3 million people living below the official poverty line. In the course of 1988, 36,000 were forced to emigrate whilst grant aid to organisations assisting Irish people newly-settled in Britain was cut.

Finance Minister Albert Reynolds claims that the government created 20,000 jobs in manufacturing during 1988. This is contradicted by economic observers who point out that many of the jobs were actually in the financial sector and that, moreover, redundancies in industry reached exactly the same figure. Trade union sources estimate a net loss of manufacturing jobs of 3,000. The one notorious area of expansion was in Co Wicklow where the Soap Company of Ireland has set up a factory to produce the highly dangerous mercury iodide soap, used as a skin-lightener, which has been banned in Europe since 1976. Unable to continue production in Manchester since a reluctant Tory government was obliged to ban its manufacture last June, the British-owned company simply moved to Ireland with a grant of IR£750,000 from the Industrial Development Authority.

The opposition party attacks on the government's handling of the economy in the weeks leading up to the budget on January 25 were hollow and hypocritical. Both Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats have supported previous austerity budgets. The Irish Labour Party, together with the ITUC trade union bureaucracy, have collaborated with the government's Programme for National Recovery - an exer-

cise in cheap-labour 'job creation'.

The Stalinist Workers' Party welcomed the 'better than anticipated' financial position but attacked the government's claims of having created jobs. Proinsias De Rossa, the Workers' Party leader, is advocating what he calls a 'rainbow coalition' of 'left' political parties, church groups, poverty agencies and trade unionists all expressing a 'common ground'. A quick look at the policies of the Workers' Party indicate on what grounds De Rossa seeks unity: virulent opposition to the Provisional IRA, support for a 'devolved' government in the six counties, for the Anglo-Irish Agreement and for extradition to Britain of wanted IRA members.

WORKERS NEWS condemns the vicious anti-working class campaign of terror being waged in Sri Lanka by the petty-bourgeois Sinhala chauvinist organisation, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

Behind its fraudulent 'Marxist' rhetoric and its calls for the overthrow of the UNP regime, the JVP campaign of assassinations aims to intensify the repression of the Tamil people in the north and east, and terrorise the workers' movement. The JVP opposes the UNP from the most reactionary standpoint - it sees the UNP's murderous war against the Tamils as being entirely inadequate, and calls for 'patriotic' sections of the armed forces to seize power. It opposes even the phoney 'regional autonomy' plans of the government as a concession. To this end, it has assassinated several hundred UNP officials, members and supporters.

The other prong of the JVP strategy is the physical elimination of workers'

### COMMENT

organisations, and it has killed dozens of trade unionists and militants belonging to the LSSP, NSSP and CP. On November 12, 1988, a group of about ten JVP members abducted R.A.Pitawala, a member of the Revolutionary Communist League, Sri Lankan section of the ICFI, and a prominent activist in the Ceylon Teachers' Union, shot him through the head and hung his body from a lamppost. Pitawala was singled out for assassination because he had refused to join anti-Tamil demonstrations organised by the JVP at gunpoint and had campaigned in his village for the policies of the RCL. Another RCL member, P.H. Gunapala, was shot by the JVP thugs on December 23.

The refusal of the LSSP, NSSP and

CP to mobilise the working class against the UNP regime and the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, and their abject failure to mount a principled defence of Tamil self-determination, have created the most dangerous conditions, which the JVP is seeking to exploit.

The JVP's evolution from 'Maoism' to the most extreme chauvinism is a striking illustration of the bankruptcy of peasant-based petty-bourgeois radicalism. In 1971, the JVP was in the leadership of the armed revolt of unemployed youth and landless peasants in the south - today it seeks to whip up support for military rule amongst the petty-bourgeoisie with its frenzied racist and anti-working class programme.

Only the socialist revolution and the establishment of a United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam can resolve the Tamil national struggle and defeat the Sinhalese bourgeoisie and military.

## Zionists announce austerity budget



SHIMON PERES

**THE COALITION** government finally put together between Likud and Labour following last November's inconclusive Israeli general election has embarked on a far-reaching programme of attacks on the living standards and jobs of the working class.

Reminiscent of that adopted by the Thatcher government in Britain during the early 1980s, the austerity programme will concentrate on slashing wage bills by driving up unemployment and rationalising the largely state-run economy as a prelude to privatisation.

High inflation, low productivity and stagnant economic growth, the rising foreign debt and the 14-month uprising of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have forced the Israeli ruling class to take action. A major onslaught on the Jewish working class is unpostponable and it is symptomatic of the depth of the crisis that it should be undertaken whilst the Intifadah continues. The conditions are being created to forge a unity between the Palestinian Arabs and Jewish workers in a struggle to resist the attacks of the Zionist state.

Standing in the way of this unity, however, is the Labour Party - the 'liberal' wing of Zionism which rests on the electoral support of the Jewish working class - along with the leaders of the Histadrut trade union federation. The new 'government of national unity' is the second in succession that Labour has entered into with Likud. Though Likud's Yitzhak Shamir is the prime minister, the all-important finance ministry is with the Labour leader, Shimon Peres. An indication of the

By Daniel Evans

scale of the crisis in Likud's ranks is the appointment of Yitzhak Rabin as defence minister, giving Labour responsibility for continuing the suppression of the Intifadah.

Peres's proposals form the basis of the ruling class offensive. His 'battling' during a 14-hour cabinet meeting ended in an 18 to two majority in favour of a £366 million budget cut, reductions and in some cases the scrapping of subsidies on goods and services, a plan to make families pay registration charges for schooling and a rise in university fees.

To set an example to industry, Peres announced a three per cent cut in the workforce in government ministries. He is currently negotiating with Histadrut leaders to reduce workers' inflation-linked cost-of-living allowances.

Peres's ambition to make Israeli manufacturers efficient enough to compete in Europe comes at a time when the agricultural sector's enormous debt is threatening banks, thousands of companies face bankruptcy (3,000 suffered liquidity problems in December alone), trade barriers are being lifted at the insistence of the US and the EC and industrial investment has slumped (it fell by 20 per cent in 1988). To come anywhere near achieving an 'efficient' industry, the cur-



PLO supporters demonstrate in London to mark one year of the Intifadah

rent unemployment rate of seven per cent will have to rocket.

The Histadrut leaders will not be offering much resistance. In fact, as one of Israel's biggest employers with countless ties with the Zionist state, they will be a reliable police force against working class unrest.

It is estimated that Israel's Gross National Product will rise by less than one per cent in 1989. With thousands of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories refusing to cross into Israel since the uprising began, the Israeli capitalists have seen the pool of cheap labour which they rely on to keep their factories profitable dramatically reduced.

A further obstacle to the unity of Arab and Jewish workers are the petty-

bourgeois leaders of the PLO and the Gorbachev leadership of the Soviet Union. Since the Intifadah, Yasser Arafat has recognised Israel's right to exist 'within secure borders' and has offered assistance to the US in tracking down 'terrorists'. Having used the heroic uprising to boost their own prestige, the PLO leaders are now begging for the franchise on a bantustan-type Palestinian state to be established in the Occupied Territories under the benevolent gaze of Zionism. The PLO's 'diplomatic coup', in reality a series of deep-going concessions to the strategic interests of Zionism and imperialism, has acted as an impediment to the development of the Intifadah.

The Stalinist leadership in

Moscow has afforded bourgeois nationalism an extended life in the Middle East. It proposes no independent programme for the working class but ties it to the Arab bourgeoisie, which it then cynically manipulates to further its own good relations with imperialism.

The sharpness of the economic crisis is rapidly driving the Israeli Labour Party, the PLO and the Stalinists further to the right. An unprecedented opportunity is presenting itself to unite the Jewish and Palestinian working classes on a revolutionary socialist programme: Defeat Zionism! Defeat imperialism! For a socialist state of Arab and Jewish workers - build a Palestinian Trotskyist Party!

# Stalinists abandon Kampuchea to its fate

By Martin Sullivan

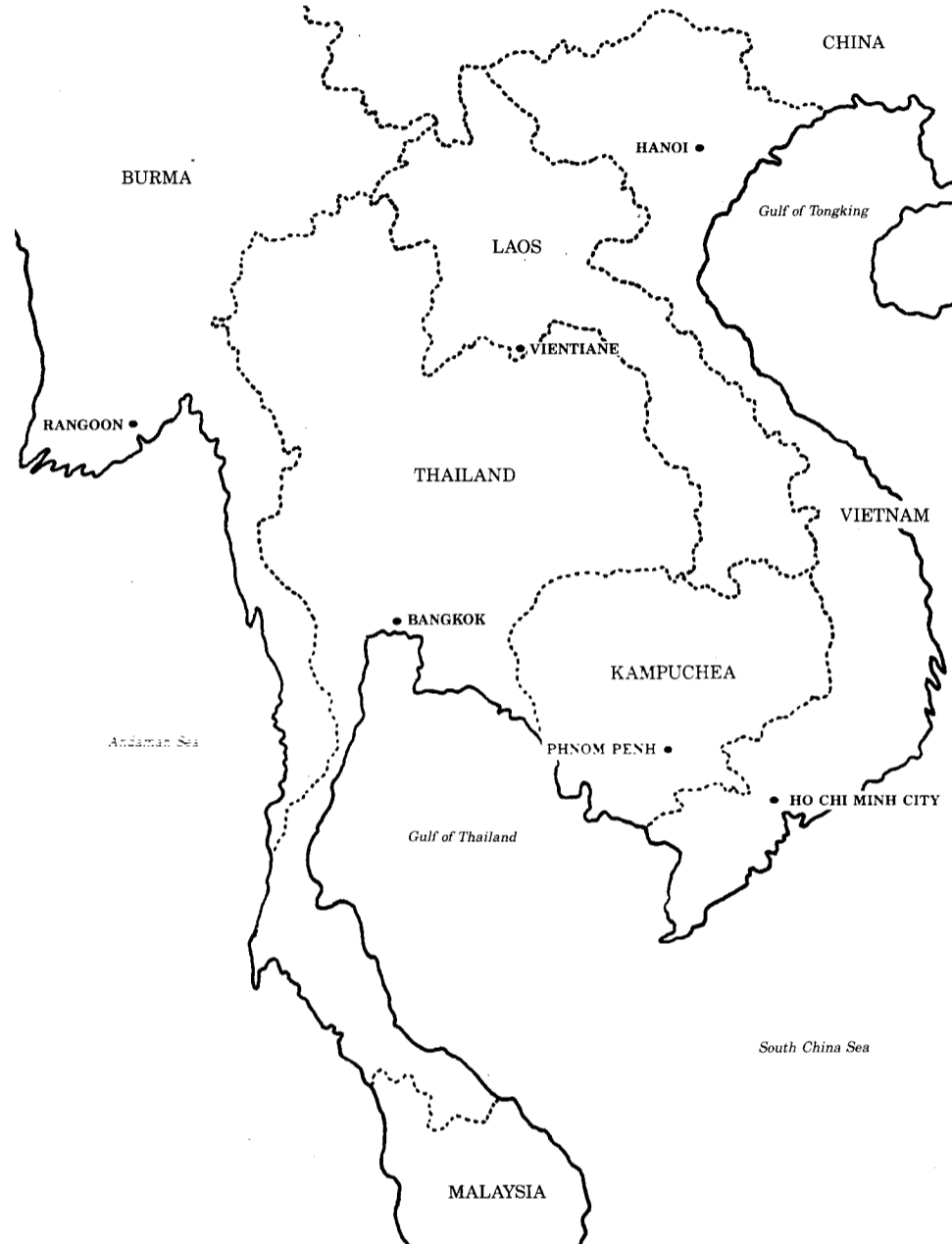
**THE STEADY** withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea is one of the latest in a series of 'regional settlements' which have been promoted by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Every one of these settlements, whether in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Namibia or Palestine, delivers the masses into the hands of imperialism and its agents. The betrayal of the workers and peasants of Kampuchea is, however, unique in that although the United States is involved, the main bargaining is taking place with the Chinese Stalinist leadership. But whilst one of the aims is to help re-establish good relations between the Chinese and Soviet bureaucracies, imperialism will be the main beneficiary. It also raises the spectre of the return to power of the Khmer Rouge, whose bloody rule from 1975 to 1979 led to the deaths of between one and two million people.

Under its leader Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge took power in Kampuchea, then called Cambodia, after a large part of the country had been devastated by US imperialism during the Vietnam war. The 'secret' bombing by American B-52s in 1969 was ordered by President Nixon in an attempt to destroy the supply lines and sanctuaries of the Vietnamese fighters. In 14 months there were 3,650 raids in which four times the tonnage of bombs used on Japan during the Second World War was dropped. This was followed up with an invasion by American ground forces in 1970.

The Khmer Rouge, a Chinese-backed peasant-based guerrilla movement, was founded by the minority of the Khmer People's Party which had remained in Cambodia after the Geneva agreement of 1954, following the defeat of the French armies at Dien Bien Phu by the Viet Minh. Its leaders were French-educated Stalinists who developed an extreme form of Maoism. They held that the towns were centres of imperialist domination and hence were the source of all ills. On taking power, they forced about two million people out of the capital, Phnom Penh, into the countryside, executed educated people as carriers of the urban disease and locked up all potential opponents.

In the following three years, they established a regime whose barbarism was almost without parallel, even amongst Stalinists. It was brought to an end by the invasion of the country in December 1978 by a joint force of about 180,000 Vietnamese soldiers and a smaller Kampuchean 'national liberation army'



under Heng Samrin.

In January 1979, the People's Republic of Kampuchea was established, headed by the faction of the KPP which had left in 1954 to stay in North Vietnam and those Khmer Rouge leaders who had broken with Pol Pot after he took power. Heng Samrin became president and Hun Sen, initially foreign secretary, has been prime minister since 1985. Under the PRK government, the towns have been repopulated and relative normality restored.

The response of the Chinese to the new regime was to supply arms, in ever-increasing quantities, to a coalition of opposition forces based just over the border in Thailand. The largest group is the Khmer Rouge which has 40,000 fighters; the ex-ruler of Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk, controls a force of about 12,000; and Son Sann, who was Sihanouk's prime minister, heads the 10,000-strong Khmer People's National Liberation Front.

The overthrow of Pol Pot by the Vietnamese was not directly prompted by concern for the Kampuchean

masses but was the outcome of a series of violent provocations by the Khmer Rouge forces, inspired by Peking and designed to undermine the newly-independent and unified Vietnam. Having defeated US imperialism and achieved peace after 30 years of almost continuous war, Vietnam was now perceived as the agency by which the Soviet Union would extend its control over South-east Asia, threatening the sphere of influence of the Chinese Stalinists. Armed clashes began in 1975 and escalated towards a full-scale border war in 1977-78. The Chinese army, meanwhile, was conducting similar, but more restrained, provocations along Vietnam's northern border region which culminated in a large-scale incursion into northern Vietnam in 1979. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, supported by the Soviet Union, was effectively a proxy war for control over the region, cynically instigated by the actions of the two major Stalinist regimes with no regard for the fate of the workers and peasants of Kampuchea or Vietnam.

The withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, demanded by Peking as the precondition for a Sino-Soviet summit meeting, is an equally cynical move by Gorbachev which subordinates the interests of the South-east Asian masses to his diplomatic manoeuvrings with imperialism. At the root of this historic betrayal is the impossibility of developing the Soviet or Chinese economies under the bankrupt Stalinist outlook of 'socialism in one country'. The depth of the economic problems confronting both bureaucracies now threatens their very existence as privileged ruling castes. Their over-riding fear is of being swept out by the working class in a political revolution; for this reason, they are intent on resolving their national-bureaucratic differences and ingratiating themselves with the imperialists. Gorbachev's strategy in forcing 'regional settlements' favourable to imperialism is to increase his credit rating in the eyes of capitalist financial institutions, and convince governments and corporations of

the secure investment potential in the Soviet Union.

The Vietnamese Stalinists, their own economy in a state of collapse with low productivity, high inflation and widespread corruption, are anxious to end the expensive occupation of Kampuchea, and are making their own overtures to capitalism. Approximately half their troops were withdrawn by the end of 1988, with the rest scheduled to leave by 1990.

The Chinese are pressing for a four-party coalition government consisting of representatives of the present regime, the Khmer Rouge and the two bourgeois resistance groups loyal to Prince Sihanouk. They have agreed to reduce the flow of arms in proportion to the reduction of Vietnamese troops and military aid. However, both they and the Soviet leaders know that the present government's army will be no match for the Khmer Rouge once the Vietnamese have departed – especially since the Chinese have provided them with a massive surplus of weapons in anticipation of the terms of the agreement.

Since its expulsion from Kampuchea in 1979, the Khmer Rouge has enjoyed the tacit support of imperialist regimes, who recognised its anti-communist credentials and allowed it to occupy Kampuchea's seat in the United Nations. There are those in the Khmer Rouge leadership who now want to re-open the country to imperialism as a means of re-asserting their authority. The remarks by Margaret Thatcher in the bizarre context of the BBC children's programme 'Blue Peter' last December that 'a much more reasonable grouping' exists in the Khmer Rouge which should participate in any future government bear this out.

Moves are also afoot under the present PRK/Vietnamese regime to break up the state monopoly on land ownership, return it to individual peasants and re-introduce a free market in agricultural produce. Small-scale private enterprise is already flourishing and the intention of the Stalinists is to woo the peasantry to support them against the Khmer Rouge by economic concessions at the expense of the working class.

The poor masses of South-east Asia have not fought for over half a century against French, Japanese and US imperialism, only to be handed back into the orbit of capitalism by their own leaders in order to defend the privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy. They must answer the criminal betrayals and intrigues of the Moscow, Peking and Hanoi cliques by building a Trotskyist revolutionary party – a party which will lead the masses to overthrow Stalinism in the political revolution and establish a genuine workers' state.

in brief . . .

## Hostel bombed

**THE RACIST** bombing of an Arab workers' hostel in Cagnes-sur-Mer, near Nice, on December 19, 1988, had the further aim of implicating French Jews as scapegoats.

The two explosions which ripped apart the hostel at 3.00am killed one man – a Romanian delivery driver – and injured twelve others. Planned at the scene of the explosion were anti-Islamic diatribes signed 'Massada' – a name used by a group which claimed responsibility for another anti-Arab attack in the region last May on behalf of a bogus 'national committee of French Jews'.

This cowardly provocation took place in an area in which support has grown in recent years for the fascist National Front led by Jean-Marie Le Pen.

## Socialism out

**IN AN ATTEMPT** to conciliate nationalist and feudal opposition, the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan is to abandon its pretensions to 'socialism' and 'Leninism'. 'The PDPA will be transformed into a liberal, nationalistic and democratic party,' a government spokesman stated on December 28, 1988. With Soviet troops being withdrawn, the PDPA government is desperately seeking a coalition arrangement with the Iranian- and Pakistani-backed mujahedin guerrilla groups. Soviet diplomats have meanwhile been in touch with ex-king Zahir Shah in an effort to draw him into a post-withdrawal settlement.

## Karpov exposed

**REMEMBER** Viktor Karpov? The man whose election to the secretaryship of the Soviet Writers' Union in 1986 was hailed by Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave as marking the beginning of the political revolution in the Soviet Union. It turns out that not only is Karpov in favour of retaining extensive censorship, but that his published works are littered with plagiarisms from other Soviet writers. Whether he was ever a political prisoner under Stalin is also in doubt – some sources claim he was arrested for thieving.



## How the split was prepared

FOR MANY years, the Workers League has found the SWP leadership guilty of the gamut of political crimes from failing to defend Trotsky in Mexico to abandoning the struggle for dialectical materialism the moment he was assassinated. North's sudden about-turn in 'The Heritage We Defend' to an extended defence of the post-war SWP is intimately linked to the need to revise the basis upon which the 'continuity' of the ICFI is to be upheld today. Since the claims of Healy and the British leadership to have led the fight against Pablo in 1953 will no longer hold water, and since there is not a single extant 'orthodox' document produced by the British or French sections at the time which could provide evidence of this 'fight', North is obliged to weight his allegiance – retrospectively – to the SWP.

Hence he waxes indignant at any suggestion that the SWP retreated from its international responsibilities after the war and played a central role in 'building up' Pablo, Mandel and the European leadership. He heaps scorn upon Banda's claim to have heard Farrell Dobbs admit that the SWP assisted in creating a Pablo 'cult' (p. 138). We have no evidence either way as to the authenticity of this conversation. One unimpeachable authority may, however, be cited on how the SWP understood its role in the Fourth International – James P. Cannon. In a speech to the majority caucus of the SWP that he made in May 1953, during the course of the Cochran-Clarke fight, he admitted: 'These were unknown men in our party. Nobody had ever heard of them. We helped publicize the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this, first because we had general agreement, and second because we realized they needed our support. They had yet to gain authority, not only here but throughout the world. And the fact that the SWP supported them up and down the line greatly reinforced their position and helped them to do their great work.'<sup>21</sup>

Although North states that 'by 1951, the year of the Third Congress, a powerful liquidationist tendency had entrenched itself within the Fourth International' (p.184) – a 'tendency', it should be added, with overwhelming support – he minimizes the importance of the support lent to the Congress decisions by the SWP which had the most experienced cadre in the International.

North sees the years 1951-53 as a temporary retreat by the SWP. It would be truer to say that the period 1953-54 represented a temporary reversal in an extended process of degeneration.

In order to establish on what basis the American, British and French 'orthodox Trotskyism' came together to form the ICFI in November 1953, it is necessary to sketch the nature of

# The revisionism

The second part of a review by Richard Price of 'The Heritage We Defend' – ICFI leader David North's attempt to mount an 'orthodox' defence of the 35-year history of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

their opposition to Pabloism. It is significant that North chooses not to take up one of Banda's few bouquets – his praise for Bleibtreau, a leader of the French section, the PCI. (Indeed he scarcely mentions the PCI at all, although it was a major component of the ICFI for 18 years). The principal document of the Bleibtreau-Lambert majority of the PCI, 'Where is Comrade Pablo Going?', published in June 1951, made a number of correct criticisms of Pablo's liquidationism in relation to the Soviet bureaucracy. On Chinese Stalinism, however, it presented its own brand of Pabloism, bitterly attacking the Chinese Trotskyists for failing to enter the CCP, on the grounds that it was no longer a Stalinist party: 'Thus: (1) The birth of the Chinese revolution was the beginning of the end of the Chinese CP's 'Stalinism'. (2) The Chinese CP stopped subordinating itself to directives from the Kremlin and became dependent on the masses and on their actions. (3) Its social composition was actually modified. (4) The Chinese CP stopped being a Stalinist party and became a centrist party advancing along with the revolution.'<sup>22</sup>

Involved was a specific revision of the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism, and a reversion, under entirely different circumstances, to the pre-1933 designation of the CPs as 'centrist', i.e., as possible to reform, and as oscillating between reform and revolution.

Not by accident, the PCI had, along with the British section, been the most enthusiastic supporter of Tito.

As we have already outlined, the British section, publishing *Socialist Outlook*, had already established a strongly pro-Stalinist line. It had no disagreements with the Third World Congress. Healy supported the main tenets of, and was on good terms with, the Pablo leadership until mid-1953, having backed, along with Cannon, Pablo's bureaucratic suppression of the French in 1952. Writing to three SWP leaders in February 1953, Healy argues that the Cochran-Clarke struggle is the product of an impending Third World War and adds, in relation to Pablo: 'I am fully aware that our secretariat has some defects, but it is the best – the very best we have ever had . . . There is agreement to support the SWP against a propaganda orientation towards Stalinism. There is agreement on the line of the 3rd Congress – these are the things which are most important.'<sup>23</sup> As late as May 1953, Healy writes to Cannon: 'The problem of Pablo has for some time been a source of great anxiety for me. For the past

few years I have been extremely close to him and have grown to like him considerably . . . Pablo suffers badly from isolation in Paris. That French movement is a "killer".'<sup>24</sup>

In July 1952, Cannon commended Pablo to the SWP Convention: 'I regard him as an orthodox Marxist and an orthodox Trotskyist, who is trying to apply the teachings of Marx and Trotsky to new phenomena that have never appeared in the world before.'<sup>25</sup> In America as in Britain, the principal impulse towards a head-on confrontation with Pablo was the emergence of a Pablo-controlled faction within the party pushing for an orientation directly towards Stalinist parties in their respective countries. Cannon and Healy had no qualms about deep entry so long as it didn't apply to them.

With the publication of Mandel's draft resolution for the impending Fourth World Congress, 'The Rise and Decline of Stalinism', sections of the SWP leadership began to take up a theoretical struggle against Pabloism. In particular, Morris Stein, in 'Some Remarks on the Rise and Fall of Stalinism', mounted a sharp attack on the false 'objectivism' which pervaded the document, and the liquidationist perspectives which flowed from it. But then, the SWP, instead of fighting for an international discussion and forcing a split at the Fourth Congress, responded to a series of provocations launched by Pablo through his supporters Cochran and Clarke in America and Lawrence in Britain, by launching a pre-emptive split. Wohlforth was correct when he wrote: 'The political break with Pablo was not at all prepared during the previous Clarke-Cochran struggle, though a certain behind-the-scenes organisational struggle with Pablo had taken place. Furthermore it came as a thunderbolt to the world movement, which was also not prepared for it. The international discussion had just opened in preparation for the Fourth World Congress. Cannon in effect split the world movement before he even attempted to politically clarify its ranks in this opening international struggle.'<sup>26</sup>

North treats Cannon's handling of the split as the apotheosis of 'orthodoxy', without apparently detecting any contradiction between this and his earlier statement (p.197) that 'had Trotsky been alive in 1951 he would have proceeded to organize within the Fourth International a protracted struggle against the revisionists, subjected their views to the most penetrating analysis and politically rearmed all those who

defended Marxist principles'. Exactly! And wouldn't he also have done so in 1953?

## The 'orthodoxy' of 1953

The 'orthodoxy' embodied in the 'Open Letter' which established the ICFI, was orthodox in relation to the Soviet bureaucracy. In its condemnation of the 'theory' of bureaucratic 'self-reform', in its denunciation of Pablo's positions in the recent East German workers' uprising, the French General Strike and of his bureaucratic abuse of authority, the 'Open Letter' was entirely correct. What it didn't do – in spite of North's description of it as 'the great political landmark in the history of the Fourth International' (p.212) – was draw an irrevocable line between Trotskyism and revisionism. It failed to account for the development of Pabloism. It neither broke with the decisions of the Third World Congress, nor challenged the revisionist outcome of the debate on the 'buffer zone' and Yugoslavia.

Wohlforth, although his own attempts to resolve the theoretical issues involved reached an impasse, recognised the significance of the question for the development of the SWP: 'It gave Stalinism one character in Eastern Europe as a whole, but when it crossed the border into Yugoslavia Stalinism suddenly acquired another character.'<sup>27</sup>

In the other two principal documents issued by the SWP at the time of the split, 'Against Pabloist Revisionism' and 'The Successive Stages of Pabloite Revisionism', the incomplete break with Pabloism is rendered explicit. The first document grants that under 'exceptional conditions' (civil war and mass pressure) Stalinist parties such as the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs could be forced 'onto the revolutionary road' and cites the Third World Congress approvingly. The second describes them as 'centrist parties of Stalinist origin'.<sup>29</sup>

Without discounting the political events of the next decade, *methodologically* the door was left ajar whereby, following the emergence of Castroism, the SWP and a majority of the ICFI could reunite with the Pabloites in 1963.

By not fighting for an international discussion and a majority at the Fourth World Congress, the IC leaders avoided having to account for their own previous support for Pabloism. Instead they asserted (without any evidence) that they *already* commanded a majority and believed that Pablo's house



French troops harass an Algerian boy during a round-up of FLN supporters.

of cards would come tumbling down. The reaction of Canadian leader Ross Dowson on hearing the news of a split was probably typical of many of the sections: 'Your Open Letter was like a bolt from the blue.'<sup>30</sup> Although the Canadian section joined the ICFI, many others could potentially have been drawn into a struggle against Pablo. As it was, he was able to beat the drum of international discipline and hold onto a clear majority. Proceeding from *national* criteria of preserving their own cadre, the IC leaders placed organisational questions above political ones. This is confirmed by the reports given by Cannon and Healy to the American and British membership in December 1953 and January 1954.<sup>31</sup> North's attempt, therefore, to compare the 1953 split with the struggle waged by Trotsky in 1939-40 against Burnham and Shachtman – whose positions diverged from Trotskyism even further than those of Pablo – is not only false but insulting. Trotsky fought at every stage to deepen the struggle, from 'concrete' political questions to those of method which underlay them, in order to train not only the cadre of the SWP, but that of the Fourth International. He also opposed a pre-emptive split which would fail to plumb the depths of the political differences. In February 1940 – the sixth month of the struggle – he wrote to Cannon: 'We must do everything in order to convince the other sections that the Majority exhausted all the possibilities in favour of unity.'<sup>32</sup>

The British section took almost four years to publish a single major document against Pabloism. The SWP's offensive lasted barely six months. Carrying

Pabloite luggage on its back, the ICFI was unable to mount a sustained challenge to Pabloism.

## Algeria – a detail of Healy's biography?

In a fit of remorse mixed with factional spleen, Banda made a substantially correct criticism of the International Committee's miserable record on Algeria in the 1950s, and in particular its support for Messali Hadj and the MNA. North's reply is a typical piece of bluff and bluster: 'Whatever the importance of these errors on the Algerian struggle for the biography of Healy and the historical record, they do not alter the objective revolutionary content of the struggle against the SWP's betrayal of Trotskyism.'<sup>(p.248)</sup>. (He should perhaps ponder the philosophical implications of an opportunist 'practice' which somehow doesn't alter the 'content' of a theoretical struggle!)

The 'historical record' in reality shows that the ICFI as a whole held a thoroughly opportunist position on the Algerian revolution for most of the epic national struggle – the most important colonial struggle of its period.

By 1954, when armed struggle began, the movement led by Messali Hadj in various incarnations (ENA/PPA/MTLD/MNA) was already eclipsed in Algeria by the FLN and moving to the right. Although Messali attempted fraudulently to claim responsibility for the launching of the armed struggle, defections from his organisation further weakened it, as the FLN's determination to fight French imperialism 'by all means' drew mass support.

# North defends



refused to condemn equally the murder of FLN members.

In January 1957, the MNA explicitly endorsed US policy in the Middle East in a telegram to Eisenhower,<sup>36</sup> and in September 1959, Messali Hadj welcomed De Gaulle's proposals for a 'settlement'. In 1961, De Gaulle was attempting to bring the MNA to the first session of the Evian peace talks to use against the FLN. By 1962, the MNA's reputation had sunk so low that French Intelligence was able to trap Salan, a leader of the fascist OAS, by posing as an MNA intermediary.<sup>37</sup>

North's only other comment on the Algerian struggle is located in the depths of the footnotes (p.517), where he writes: 'There is absolutely no trace of the shame of which [Banda] now speaks in the *Labour Review* article to which he now refers.' Banda's article, 'Marxism and the Algerian Revolution',<sup>38</sup> North claims, reveals 'a carefully documented analysis of the class forces represented by the different tendencies within the Algerian national movement', although it 'mistakenly' refers to the MNA as the 'precursor of a revolutionary party'. We can only suggest that North re-reads the article (which Banda claims he was instructed to write). It is notable only for its uncritical support for the MNA – remember, this is written after the Eisenhower telegram and the Bellounis affair – and for its failure to mount a principled defence of the FLN against French imperialism after the savagery and mass torture inflicted during the Battle of Algiers. As for the 'carefully documented' class analysis, Banda appears to draw heavily on a series of articles written by Shane Mage in the *Militant* in December 1957 and January 1958. Banda claims that the middle class made up less than one per cent of the Algerian population and the petty-bourgeoisie only six per cent. We are left to guess what constitutes the remainder, but it leads in the same direction as Pablo's specious theory of a 'people-class'. In any case, Banda made the key error of deriving from the MNA's support among Algerian workers in France that it was some sort of 'proletarian' movement, with the clear implication that a Trotskyist party was unnecessary.

Shortly after the Battle of Algiers (January-March 1957), Si Bellounis, a former lieutenant of Messali's (from whom the MNA never clearly split), established a 'third force' operating on the northern edge of the Sahara, financed and armed by French imperialism to fight the FLN. Until his usefulness was exhausted and he was liquidated by the French in July 1958, Bellounis showed the greatest brutality towards the Algerian population of the region.

Meanwhile, in Paris, 1957 saw the beginning of a three-year fratricidal war between the FLN and the MNA in which hundreds of Algerian nationalists were murdered. Whilst correctly condemning the killing of MNA trade union militants, the ICFI

FLN and the MNA;<sup>39</sup> when it came to the split with the OCI, the SLL lied again, blaming the French section for uncritically supporting Messali Hadj, and claiming it had lent merely 'critical' support.<sup>40</sup> As recently as 1983 at a WRP cadre school given by Banda on the theory of permanent revolution (!), the WRP leadership was still claiming that it had fought for a Trotskyist section in Algeria as against the OCI.

North's British supporters recently claimed that, since the United Secretariat had previously enrolled Burma as a 'workers' state', the blood of Burmese workers shot down by Ne Win was on their hands.<sup>41</sup> The logic of your hyperbole is irresistible, Mr North. The ICFI should shoulder its portion of the blame for the blood of one million Algerians murdered by French imperialism between 1954 and 1962.

## The ICFI and Latin America

In the course of his polemic with the Slaughter group over its abortive 'regroupment' campaign, North found it necessary to dig up some of the history of the tendency led by the late Nahuel Moreno, without of course relating it to the history of the ICFI.<sup>42</sup> In 'The Heritage We Defend', North omits any mention of the IC sections in Latin America between 1954 and 1964. The explanation is simple enough. While the exposure of Moreno's gross opportunism was a useful stick to beat Slaughter with, it is hardly an advertisement for the 'spotless banner' North claims to defend in his book.

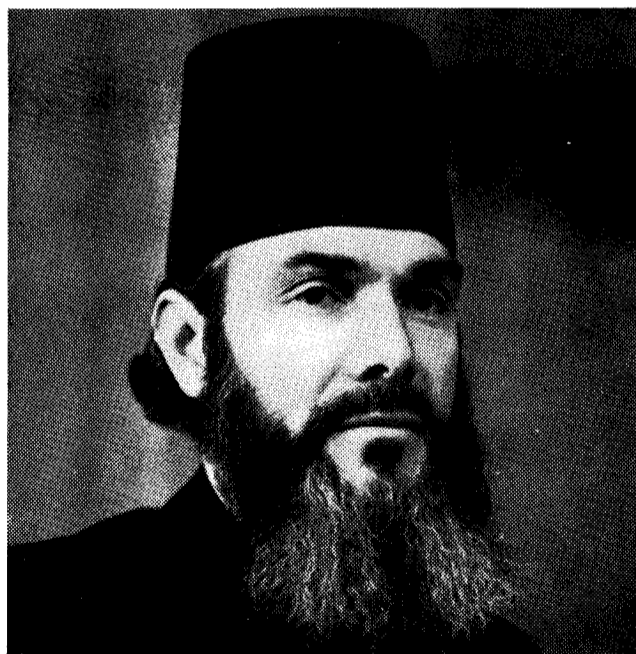
The theory and practice of the Latin American sections of the IC were characterised by systematic revisions of Trotskyism at least as great as those perpetrated by the official Pabloites. Moreno's adherence to the IC was by a circuitous route, which was entirely devoid of political principle. In 1951, Pablo, pushing for an orientation towards Peronism – the predominant national bourgeois movement of Argentina – recognised the group led by Posadas as the official Argentinian section of the Fourth International. Moreno's group opposed this turn, but only from the standpoint of abstention in the Peronist-led unions. The year 1954 saw a remarkable about-face by this political acrobat. In order to give its factional differences with Posadas and Pablo an 'orthodox' cover, Moreno's group affiliated to the IC. At the same time, it entered the pro-Peronist Partido Socialista de la Revolucion Nacional (PSRN). Peron was overthrown in September 1955, but Morenoite entryism deepened, with the group joining the '62 organisations', described by one author as 'a kind of

general staff of Peronismo in the Argentine labour movement'.<sup>43</sup> Of this period, Moreno subsequently wrote: 'We entered the 62 organisations . . . the only (!) requirements were formally accepting the discipline of the Consejo Superior Peronista [Peronist Supreme Council] . . .'<sup>44</sup> In one of his many shallow 'self-criticisms' – which typically preceded further opportunist lurches – Moreno candidly admitted: 'It is absolutely true that, beginning with our entryism, and especially with the publication of *Palabra Obrera*, our organisation suffered from serious opportunist deviations. All these deviations had a common origin: capitulation to Peronism and the union bureaucracy.'<sup>45</sup>

The newspaper *Palabra Obrera*, published by Moreno's entry group after 1956, announced on its masthead that it operated 'under the discipline of the Peronist Supreme Council'. In 1958 it endorsed the presidential campaign of the right-wing bourgeois candidate Frondizi. Having initially supported US-backed Cuban dictator Batista against Castro, Moreno trimmed his sails to the prevailing wind of petty-bourgeois radicalism in Latin America, and by the early 1960s was ad-

ditionalism' is similarly unrewarding. In 1961, a letter from the SLL to the SWP refers in passing to the crisis 'of our own movement in the Argentine',<sup>46</sup> but as the reunification with the Pabloites draws closer, the SLL leadership appears to be principally concerned to hold on to the Morenoites as a counterweight to the Pabloite Latin American sections rather than establish their political credentials. In 1962, Hugembert-Valdes, a leader of the Chilean POR, wrote to the SLL, characterising *Palabra Obrera* as 'a tendency which has abandoned the principles of Trotskyism, and has capitulated to the national bourgeois movement, Peronism, even going so far as to liquidate the Trotskyist organisation'.<sup>47</sup> The only item of correspondence from G. Healy to Moreno to have seen the light of day is a letter written in March 1963 – on the eve of reunification – which begins: 'We were overjoyed to receive your letter of March 6, 1963 and to learn that despite all your difficulties our movement in Argentina appears to have more than vindicated itself in the revolutionary struggles of the past year.'<sup>48</sup>

North's 'explanation' (not included in his book) for



MESSALI HADJ

vocating a fantastic eclectic mish-mash of Peronism, Castroism and Maoism. All this took place while the Morenoites formed the Argentinian section of the ICFI. And there is not the slightest evidence that any of the leading sections of the ICFI ever drew a political balance sheet of these events.

Moreno himself, in a document written in 1974, listed seven discussions within the ICFI which involved the Argentinian section, six of which were exchanges between *Palabra Obrera* and the Chilean POR led by Luis Vitale, and none of which appear to have been discussed by the European or North American sections. (The seventh was a criticism by Moreno of the French section's support for Messali Hadj's MNA). A trail through the 'official' ICFI history ('Trotskyism versus

Moreno's opportunism is to pin responsibility solely to the SWP, in a way that suggests that it was not an 'IC question': 'The fact that Moreno's political line in Argentina was not challenged within the International Committee was directly connected to the political degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party which was already moving rapidly toward reunification with the Pabloites'.<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere North argues that Pabloite bears the blame for liquidating Trotskyism in Latin America: 'In Latin America, the counter-revolutionary role of Pabloism was realized in the liquidation of the cadre assembled by the Fourth International into petty-bourgeois centrism and guerrilla adventur-

ism'.<sup>50</sup> All of which amounts to a refusal to face up to the 'heritage' of the ICFI in the continent.

The other IC sections in Latin America – the POR of Chile and the POR of Peru – which, together with *Palabra Obrera*, formed SLATO (the Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism) in 1957, were scarcely less opportunist. The POR of Peru was practising 'deep entry' in the bourgeois Belaundist movement, parallel to Moreno's entry into Peronism. In 1960, it too turned towards peasant guerrillaism, financed by 'expropriations' from banks in the cities.<sup>51</sup> From 1961-3 it 'regrouped' with petty-bourgeois and Stalinist groups to produce the FIR. The Chilean POR under Luis Vitale, despite its criticisms of Moreno, went down a similar liquidationist path, fusing with three other groups in 1964 to form the MIR, which subsequently acted as the left wing of Allende's Popular Front.

The liquidation of the IC's three Latin American sections cannot be palmed off simply as an 'SWP question' or a 'Pablo question'. Above all, the national-opportunism all three groups exhibited was made possible by the lack of a genuine democratic-centralist structure within the IC and the absence of any agreed international programme and perspectives. That this should be tolerated was itself a reflection of the IC's incomplete break with Pabloism, and its failure to elaborate international policies based on a thorough grasp of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Only with a 'self-governing' continental bureau (SLATO) and with the European and North American sections turning a blind eye, could such a state of affairs be arrived at.

## NOTES

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**To be concluded**



# IN DEFENCE OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

## PART TEN

THE CONGRESS of the Peoples of the East held in Baku in September 1920, directly after the Second Congress of the Communist International, represented the first step by the Bolsheviks to rally the oppressed masses of Persia, Armenia, Turkey and other eastern countries to the side of the international working class. This bold initiative, aimed at spreading the revolt against British imperialism and strengthening the fledgling workers' movement in the region, received a considerable response. Nearly 1,900 delegates attended the Congress.

The theses adopted by the Second Congress on the national and colonial question were, as we have stressed, of an entirely principled character. They were, however, of necessity, conditional and provisional in so far as they dealt with bourgeois-democratic movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, many of which were of very recent origin. In 1919, Lenin had warned communists from the eastern republics of the Soviet Union that correct tactics on the part of the communists towards the vast movement of oppressed eastern peoples could not be learnt by rote: 'You will have to tackle that problem and solve it through your own independent experience.' (Lenin: 'The National Liberation Movement in the East', p.253).

The Baku Congress, therefore, aimed to generalise these experiences on the plane of action, seeking to forge a fighting unity between Soviet power and the rising national movements, many of them predominantly peasant in composition. Herein lay both the strengths and weaknesses at the Congress.

Zinoviev, the chairman and senior Bolshevik present, and Radek made a series of speeches which centred upon rousing denunciations of, and calls to take up the fight for a 'holy war' against imperialism. Consequently, the specific programmatic tasks of communists in the east occupied a relatively small place in the proceedings. That being said, the Congress unanimously adopted an extensive series of theses on the agrarian revolution, embodying the establishment of peasant soviets. On the emancipation of women in

By Richard Price

Moslem countries – often dismissed by latterday epigones as diversionary or even counter-revolutionary – the Congress took a clear stand. The theses warned against tail-ending bourgeois nationalism: 'The mere establishment of the political independence of the Eastern countries, such as Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, etc., as also the proclamation of the merely political independence of the colonial countries – India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Arabia, etc. – cannot liberate the peasants of the East from oppression, exploitation and ruin... For complete and real liberation of the peasantry of the East from all forms of oppression, dependence and exploitation, what is further required is overthrow of the rule of their own landlords and bourgeoisie and the establishment in the countries of the East of the Soviet power of the workers and peasants.' ('Baku: Congress of the Peoples of the East', New Park, pp.142-3).

When the Turkish nationalist adventurer Enver Pasha attempted to gate-crash the Congress, it issued a sharp disclaimer: 'The Congress notes that the general-national revolutionary movement in Turkey is directed only against foreign oppressors, and that success for this movement would not in the least signify the emancipation of the Turkish peasants and workers from oppression and exploitation of every kind.' (ibid, p.82).

Seizing upon weaknesses in Zinoviev's formulations at the Congress, the WRP/News Line group has sought justification for its uncritical support for Khomeini. 'Col-



Zinoviev (speaking) with Radek (to his left) at the Baku Congress

in Stevens' (Steve Colling) attempted to equate this with the agreement reached between the Soviet government and Kemal Ataturk ('Kermal Attaturk', sic). ('Trotskyism and the Iranian Revolution', *Marxist Review*, Nov-Dec, 1986). Colling wilfully confuses the necessity of the Soviet Union having to manoeuvre for time on the diplomatic front at the end of the Civil War with the strategic tasks of revolutionary internationalism. As an example of a 'revolutionary alliance', the Turkish experience far from proves Colling's position. He either does not know or does not care that Kemal Ataturk virtually liquidated the youthful Turkish Communist Party and had 17 of its leaders executed. (Indeed, if Colling is going to cite Soviet treaties as proof of the existence of a 'revolutionary bourgeoisie', then why not add the military treaty with the German Weimar Republic?).

The most detailed programmatic position of the early Communist International on the national struggle is contained in the 'Theses on the Eastern Question', adopted by the Fourth Congress in December 1922. (See 'Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International', ed. B. Hessel, Pluto, pp.409-19). Once again, the malicious distorters of the *News Line* group have attempted to smuggle opportunism into the principled stand of the Communist International. Reprinting the theses (*Marxist Review*, May 1987), they added the following introduction, like the proverbial teaspoonful of tar in the barrel of honey: 'The division of the world into oppressed and oppressor nations is more extreme that it was in Lenin's day... From this follows the conception of

the anti-imperialist united front - temporary (!) alliances between sections of the world party of socialist revolution and non-proletarian, bourgeois-feudal elements in the struggle against imperialism.'

Nowhere in the theses, in fact, did the Communist International speak of alliances with 'bourgeois-feudal elements', and it is an outright fabrication or the work of an ignoramus who has not read the document to suggest that it did. Indeed, the entire weight of the theses is directed towards the liquidation of feudal survivals in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and the preparation of independent struggle on the part of the working class, drawing support from the poorer layers of the peasantry.

The Fourth Congress drew attention to the changes which had taken place in the two years since the Second Congress, including the extensive development of national struggles, the awakening of an independent workers' movement and the building of Communist Parties in many of the eastern countries: 'These four facts indicate a change in the social basis of the colonial revolutionary movement; this change tends to intensify the anti-imperialist struggle and at the same time challenge the exclusive control of this struggle by feudal elements and by the national bourgeoisie, who are prepared to compromise with imperialism.' (Hessel, p.409).

On the role of the bourgeoisie, the theses had this to say: '... the differentiation of bourgeois democracy from feudal-bureaucratic and feudal-agrarian elements frequently proceeds in a lengthy and round-about manner. This is the main obstacle to a successful mass

struggle against imperialist oppression, for in all the backward countries foreign capitalism turns the feudal (and in part also semi-feudal, semi-bourgeois) elites of these societies into agents of its rule... (ibid, p.410). And again: 'The basic aim shared by all the national revolutionary movements is to bring about national unity and achieve state independence. The actual realization of this aim depends on the extent to which the national movement in any particular country can break all links with reactionary feudal elements, embody in its programme popular social demands and so win the support of the broad working masses... the oppressed masses can only be led to victory by a consistent revolutionary line that is designed to draw the broadest masses into active struggle and that constitutes a complete break with all who support conciliation with imperialism in the interests of their own class rule.' (ibid, p.411).

Seventy-five years later, the *News Line* group, far from challenging the 'exclusive control' of bourgeois and feudal elements, far from breaking with 'all those who support conciliation', far from 'breaking all links' with feudal elements, and not even advocating the 'differentiation' of bourgeois democracy from feudal elements, advocates an alliance with bourgeois-feudal elements. This places it, formally at least, to the right even of Stalinism in its eternal hunt for the 'progressive bourgeoisie' in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The 'Theses on the Eastern Question' have drawn an opposite, although scarcely less erroneous, reaction from the WRP/*Workers Press* group, which claims that the tactic of the anti-imperialist

united front is an 'outdated formula... which serves to cover up a popular front policy' on the grounds that it has been perverted in the past by opportunists such as Lora in Bolivia. ('Tasks of the Fourth International', Vol.2, No.1, p.4).

It is necessary to stress that the Communist International advanced this tactic solely on the basis of the complete political independence of the proletariat and in no way sanctioned participation of proletarian parties in bourgeois governments. On this basis, 'the proletariat supports and advances such partial demands as an independent democratic republic, the abolition of all feudal rights and privileges, the introduction of women's rights, etc., in so far as it cannot, with the relation of forces as it exists at present, make the implementation of its soviet programme the immediate task of the day'. (Hessel, p.416). Such a tactic acquires a burning practical significance today. Should the proletarian revolutionaries of Palestine and Sri Lanka adopt an attitude of indifference and permit the Zionists to crush the Intifadah or the Indian army to exterminate the Tamil Tigers? Should they not seek limited agreements for the purposes of common struggle, whilst fighting for the political independence of the working class and retaining full freedom to criticise their temporary 'allies'? Slaughter's position leads to sectarian abstentionism, or more likely, flopping over into opportunism towards bourgeois nationalism the moment the wind changes.

That Lora, the SWP of the United States, the LSSP – and we might add Cliff Slaughter – have perverted this tactic over the decades, in no way invalidates it.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

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**THE WORKERS, poor peasants and Kurdish minority in Turkey are the most brutally exploited workforce in Europe. The civilian government, led by Prime Minister Turgat Ozal, has proved itself the natural successor to the three years of military rule by donning the mantle of vicious class dictatorship bestowed on it by President Kenan Evren.**

Five years after taking office at the instigation of the then ruling military junta in 1983, Ozal's government continues with the military's programme of mass trials of political and trade union activists and Kurdish nationalists. Political and criminal prisoners are routinely subjected to torture to extract false confessions and maintain a regime of terror in the crowded prisons.

The living standards of workers and poor peasants have been decimated by inflation – by November 1988 it was running at an annual rate of 87 per cent – with the take-home pay for a fully employed worker and his family averaging £25 per month. For casual workers, the unemployed and the rural poor, the return of civilian government and 'democratic' elections has been marked by a descent into grinding poverty.

### Press censorship

Not content with the ruthless prosecution of the working class in Turkey's military courts, the Ozal government has instituted press censorship, the like of which has not been seen in Europe for decades. The Belgium-based bulletin *Info-Turk* recorded the following actions, amongst others, against the press in 1988:

□ The seizure by the police of numerous issues of left-wing periodicals. Amongst those affected were *Yeni Cozum*, *Emegin Bayragi*, *Isciler ve Toplum*, *Yeni Oncu* and *Emek Dunyasi*.

□ The arrest and imprisonment of journalists, editors, publishers and film-makers including Muzaffer Erdost, Ali Ozgenturk, Sefik Calik, Aslan Alap, Orhan Calislar, Cemal Ozcelik, Dogu Perincek and Fatma Yacizi.

On September 1, 1988, the International Press Institute protested to Ozal over the police-state actions taken against publishers of 25 periodicals in the city of Istanbul alone.

The assault on publishers, journalists and intellectuals is determined by the regime's need to cover up the scale of its persecution of political activists, the working class and the Kurds. Newspapers or magazines which have attempted to report the struggles of workers, discontent among layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the guerrilla warfare conducted by some political organisations and Kurdish groups have been singled out for prosecution. Entire editions have been seized from the news-stands by the police and pulped in the Izmit paper mills. On numerous occasions trials have been halted whilst defence lawyers are themselves arrested and charged with being members of 'subversive organisations'.

Trade unions, newspapers and legal and human rights organisations outside Turkey have documented the use of torture to extract 'confessions'. Their reports have confirmed those coming from groups suffering oppression at the hands of the

### By Ian Harrison

Ozal regime. According to the *Cyprus Weekly* of December 9-15, 1988, the state tribunals and military courts had given a total of 5,000 years imprisonment to journalists and editors working for socialist periodicals over the last five years of civilian rule.

### The constitution

Since coming to power, Ozal's Anap (Motherland) party – a coalition of right-wing secular nationalists and Islamic fundamentalists – has continued to use the constitution drawn up by the military junta in 1982. Anap rests on the big bourgeoisie, speculators and profiteers, and relies heavily on the 500,000-strong army, backed up by the police and the state and military tribunals to maintain its rule.

In addition to its reactionary press laws prohibiting even bourgeois norms of 'free speech', the constitution deprives workers of the right to organise their own parties, to strike or to demonstrate.

It reinforces the oppression of the Kurds, banned from agitating for national autonomy by the Ataturk regime in 1924, by denying them the right to conduct a defence before the courts in Kurdish. They are also forbidden to use their own language for day-to-day conversation in Turkish jails. Under the 'democratic' constitution, the Kurds, who constitute eight million of Turkey's 50 million population, virtually do not exist and have only limited rights of citizenship.

The death penalty, frequently resorted to by the military junta, has also been retained in the constitution. Seven hundred workers, youths and Kurds – many of whom were convicted on the basis of false confessions obtained under torture during 1980-83 when the junta was in power – have been sentenced to death and are awaiting execution.

### Mass trials

On August 24, 1988, the mass trial of 811 members of Devrimci Yol (Revolutionary Path) entered its final phase. The defendants were charged with organising an independent town council in Fatsa and electing their own mayor in 1979. They were rounded up after the military coup and systematically tortured at the Deviet Arastirma Labuatuvvari – the state research laboratory. Among the staff at the laboratory, workers' organis-

# The struggle of the working class in Turkey



PHOTO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Istanbul, 1986: police arrest a worker on the May Day demonstration

ations have identified supporters of the old official fascist party, the MHP.

Eight of the defendants have been sentenced to death, 14 received sentences of 20 to 29 years imprisonment, 130 got 15 to 20 years and a further 177 were sentenced to up to 15 years. During the course of the trial, which began in 1982, 15 defendants died as a result of torture, according to Turkish emigre sources based in western Europe.

The same sources have recently reported that the trial of 1,243 alleged members of Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) arrested in 1980 is drawing to a close. The military prosecutor is demanding the death sentence for 88 defendants, while others face long terms in prison. They are accused of forming an illegal Marxist-Leninist organisation for the purpose of overthrowing the 'constitutional order'.

### Gorbachev's new diplomacy

Last year saw the beginning of the trial of leading Turkish Communist Party

(TBKP) members Haydar Kutlu and Nihat Sargin. They returned to Turkey on the eve of the free elections in November 1987 with the intention of setting up a legal Communist Party based on the nationalist outlook of 'euro-communism'. It was widely reported in left-wing papers and periodicals that a secret deal had been struck between Moscow and Ankara to establish a legal 'Marxist' party to give a democratic veneer to the Ozal regime.

Kutlu and Sargin had released statements to the Turkish press prior to their return from exile emphasising that the new party would work within the existing constitution and oppose any but parliamentary methods of reform or change. They renounced previous statements which condemned the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1975.

Agreement or no, Kutlu and Sargin were arrested, interrogated and forced to reveal the names of leading party members in Turkey, who now stand on trial with them. A measure of the treacherous role played by Gorbachev's new era of in-

ternational diplomacy can be seen in the decision of the Stalinist bureaucracy to allow Turkey to open banking facilities in the Soviet Union whilst Ozal moves unhindered to suppress Communist Party members.

In November 1988, the seven Warsaw Pact nations agreed with leaders of NATO to exempt Turkish troops from arms limitations agreements, specifically those troops active in eastern Turkey suppressing workers' organisations and Kurdish nationalists in the border regions with Syria, Iraq and Iran.

### Resistance to Ozal regime continues

In spite of the battery of repressive measures employed by the Ozal government, and the treachery of the Stalinist bureaucracy the Turkish working class has continued to organise strikes and demonstrations, many in direct support of political prisoners and the aspirations of the Kurdish minority.

A new wave of hunger strikes by political prisoners began in October 1988 which was also observed by relatives outside the prison gates. At Bursa, 180 left-wing prisoners took part in a hunger strike, whilst in Diyarbakir, in eastern Turkey, Kurdish prisoners supported by women relatives undertook a second hunger strike, demanding the right to speak their own language.

Leaders of Europe's social-democratic parties and trade union federations have consistently ignored the plight of the Turkish working class. They have failed to mount even a single co-ordinated protest action. In Britain, Turkish and Kurdish workers' organisations regularly provide the largest contingent for the annual May Day celebration – it would be a sparsely attended affair if left to the trade union and Labour Party leaders. Yet Norman Willis and Co have only tea, sympathy and abstract appeals for 'internationalism' to offer them.

In West Germany, immigrant Turkish and Kurdish workers have been exploited for decades as a source of cheap labour. A TV documentary shown in Britain last year revealed that scab labour contractors regularly used them for cleaning contaminated areas of nuclear power stations and chemical plants. The workers were not informed of the danger they were exposed to and were frequently cheated out of their wages. Since the onset of unemployment, the treacherous leaders of West Germany's trade unions and Social Democratic Party have readily agreed to the 'repatriation' of Turkish and Kurdish workers in order to avoid mounting a fight to defend jobs.

Workers News calls on the European working class to mobilise in defence of Turkish and Kurdish workers:

- Demand that the trade union, Social Democratic and Communist Party leaderships co-ordinate a European-wide campaign in support of the working class in Turkey!
- Down with the Ozal regime!
- Self-determination for the Kurdish people!
- Build a Trotskyist leadership in the trade unions throughout Europe!



PHOTO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Prisoners in the exercise yard of Mamak Military Prison, Ankara, in August 1987

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'BRIDGWATER,' Victor Gollancz informed members of the Left Book Club in November 1938, 'is, without doubt, the most important event since Munich.'

He was referring to that month's by-election in the Somerset constituency, which in the aftermath of Chamberlain's capitulation to Hitler over Czechoslovakia had resulted in the victory of the 'Independent Progressive' candidate, *News Chronicle* journalist Vernon Bartlett, in a straight fight with a Tory. The event was indeed of some historical significance, representing as it did the sole electoral success in Britain for the counter-revolutionary Stalinist policy of the Popular Front.

This strategy had been formally launched in 1935 at the Seventh (and last) Congress of the Communist International, in reaction to the threat which Nazi Germany posed to the Soviet Union. For the next four years, the policies of the Comintern's national sections were to be subordinated to the exigencies of a Soviet foreign policy which aimed at constructing alliances with the 'democratic' imperialist powers. Cross-class blocs between Communist Parties and any organisation or individual prepared to declare in favour of the Soviet bureaucracy's 'anti-fascist' policy were now on the order of the day, and defenders of independent working class politics were attacked as agents of fascism.

In Britain during the latter half of 1938, the Popular Front traded under the name of the 'United Peace Alliance', which had as its object the unity of 'democratic peoples of all political parties' to establish 'a People's Government pledged to join Britain to the democratic countries in a strong Peace Bloc which can stop war'. This placed the CPGB to the right even of the Labour Party and trade union leaders, who looked to the replacement of Chamberlain's National Government by a Labour administration. But it found a favourable response within the Liberal Party, for whom the Popular Front offered a welcome opportunity to reverse the collapse in their political influence which had accompanied the rise of the Labour Party. The *News Chronicle* acted as a mouthpiece for this pro-Stalinist element in Liberalism, the paper's support for the Moscow Trials winning its editor congratulations from CPGB secretary Harry Pollitt at the party congress in September 1938.

In its campaign for a 'People's Government', the Communist Party placed particular reliance on a group of Tories opposed to Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. The leading figures in this group were

# Bridgwater and the Popular Front

In 1935, two years after Hitler took power, the Communist International adopted the policy of the Popular Front with the aim of cementing an alliance between the Soviet Union and the 'democratic' imperialist countries. It sought a

multi-class front against fascism, uniting Stalinist, Social Democratic and bourgeois parties. Bob Pitt critically reviews a recent pamphlet on the Popular Front's only electoral success in Britain — at Bridgwater in November 1938.

Anthony Eden and the avowed admirer of Mussolini, Winston Churchill, whose enthusiasm for fascism as an antidote to Bolshevism did not prevent him pressing for a more aggressive defence of British imperialism. The refusal of these Tory dissidents to mount an effective rebellion against Chamberlain does not negate the fact that — under the slogan of peace! — the CPGB was attempting to rally the labour movement behind the most warmongering representatives of the British ruling class.

Unfortunately, we turn in vain to Brian Smedley's recent pamphlet — 'Vernon Bartlett: the Bridgwater By-election' — for a Marxist account of these developments, his summary of the political background to the election consisting of mere warmed-over Stalinism. According to this interpretation, the Popular Front was not a betrayal of the international working class, but a principled stand against fascism and war. The fact that it failed to prevent either is blamed on the ill intentions of the 'Liberal Democracies'. The obvious question — what sort of 'Communist' policy was it that depended for its success on the good will of a section of the imperialist bourgeoisie? — is never posed.

Smedley's study is nevertheless of interest for the details it provides concerning the Communist Party's role in engineering Bartlett's candidature. The main agency for this was the Left Book Club, the front organisation through which the CPGB promoted Stalinist propaganda among the liberal intelligentsia. It was two members of the Left Book Club, Liberal MP Richard Acland and a Reverend Cresswell Webb from the club's Minehead branch, who approached Bartlett and persuaded him to stand.

The Reverend Webb succeeded in gaining the approval of the Minehead Labour Party, while in Bridgwater itself, according to Smedley, a 'caucus of clandestine Communists' within the Labour Party gathered support for Bartlett. Although they



Vernon Bartlett in 1937

could not secure official backing, it seems that the split provoked by the Stalinists on this issue was the primary reason why Labour failed to contest the election.

Bartlett's campaign in fact depended largely on the electoral machine of the division's Liberal Party, which had unanimously endorsed his candidature. In addition, a 'Council of Action (sic) for Peace and Reconstruction' was set up, to urge that 'party and personal prejudices should be put on one side and a united vote cast for a policy of real peace and security'. Only a few individuals from the labour movement figured in this organisation, its main support coming from Liberals, Justices of the

Peace and, as the *Daily Worker* noted with satisfaction, 'many well-known clergymen'.

Bartlett did receive a message of support from 39 Labour MPs, of whom George Strauss — soon to be expelled from the Labour Party for advocating the Popular Front — travelled to Somerset to speak on behalf of Bartlett. But most of the prominent figures who appeared on Bartlett's platform had no connection at all with the organised working class. As well as Acland, who was responsible for co-ordinating the campaign, these included Lady Megan Lloyd George, Lady Violet Bonham Carter and a former editor of the *Times*, Wickham Steed.



Launching his campaign at Minehead, Bartlett appealed for national unity under a government 'more really representative of the nation'. He proposed a series of measures, including abolition of the means test and lowering the qualifying age for pensions, which were clearly intended to win working class backing for such a government. But the central emphasis of the campaign was on foreign policy. Here Bartlett's attack on the Chamberlain government was characterised by a fervent patriotism, calling for a 'virile British policy' as the only way to 'save this great country'. Bartlett was a firm opponent of Germany's territorial claims in Africa — not because he upheld the right of the colonies to independence, but on the grounds that conceding to German demands would 'split the Empire'. Although he stood as a peace candidate, this belligerent advocacy of British imperialist interests made it impossible for Bartlett to refute the accusation that he was pushing a 'war policy'.

In both its domestic and international aspects, this programme was almost indistinguishable from that put forward by Eden, whom Bartlett went out of his way to commend as 'a man of progressive ideals'. It was scarcely surprising that, as press reports from the *Times* to the *Daily Worker* confirmed, Bartlett's campaign made considerable inroads among traditional Tory voters.

It cannot be denied that Bartlett also gained substantial support from the working class. Not only was he able to capitalise on workers' hatred of fascism, but in the absence of a Labour candidate he undoubtedly attracted an anti-Tory vote. Moreover, the right-wing Labourites who opposed the Popular Front carried little conviction as champions of class politics — nor, it goes without saying, did their call to put Labour in office involve any attempt to organise the extra-parliamentary action required to oust the Chamberlain government. On the other

hand, the Popular Front gained credibility from the participation of rank-and-file CPers with a history of commitment to the class struggle. Smedley attributes an important role in Bartlett's campaign to one Bud Fisher, a militant leader of the Unemployed Workers' Movement in Bridgwater.

In the event, Bartlett was able to overturn a Tory majority of 10,000 to win by 19,540 votes to 17,208. Lloyd George greeted this as a 'historic triumph', while the *News Chronicle* commented editorially that the result was a blow against 'party exclusiveness and the wearisome insistence on political labels of exactly approved colours'. These Liberal sentiments were echoed by the *Daily Worker*, which applauded 'one of the most dramatic, sensational and significant election victories of recent years', expressing the hope that it marked 'the first step in unifying the forces that stand against Chamberlain and for a real policy of peace and progress'. Bartlett himself declared that his election was definitely 'a victory for the Eden policy'.

At Bridgwater, the announcement of the election result was followed by dancing in the streets. Despite this euphoria, in reality Bartlett's programme offered no way forward for the working class. The policies of Chamberlain and Eden merely represented different roads to a war which, given the imperialist rivalries of the period, was inevitable — outside of the overthrow of the system that generated such conflicts. When they claimed that peace was compatible with the continued existence of capitalism, the Stalinists lied to the workers, and they did so in a cynical attempt to bolster the international manoeuvres of the Soviet bureaucracy. Far from promoting peace, by tying the working class to imperialism the Popular Front only helped to clear the way for another world war.

The fundamental illusion of the Popular Front — that reaction can be overcome by bringing 'progressive' people of all classes together on a common programme — is still being peddled today. This type of movement is proposed as the answer to all the central tasks facing the working class, from defeating the Thatcher government to ending the military occupation of the north of Ireland. In opposition to such movements, it is the duty of Marxists to fight for the political independence of the working class, which is the essential precondition for any successful struggle against capitalism. The history of the Popular Front in the 1930s, on which the Bridgwater election sheds a revealing light, only serves to underline this elementary principle.





# TORY POLICIES DRIVE UP HOMELESS FIGURE

A RECENT report published by the housing charity Shelter shows how the Tories' so-called 'enterprise' economy has led to a huge rise in homelessness.

One of the central planks of Tory policy has been the ending of the post-war commitment to the large-scale provision of housing for the working class by the state. The report contains a mass of statistics which show the result of their drive to increase private-sector housing by cutting local authority building programmes.

In 1978, the year before the first Thatcher administration took office, there were 79,733 council houses completed in Britain. In 1987 the number had fallen to 18,880 - 24 per cent of the 1978 figure. This has been accompanied by rocketing property values - privately-rented accommodation at an affordable price is unobtainable in most areas - and a significant decline in real income for a growing percentage of the working class.

It is not surprising, therefore, that homelessness is on the increase or that growing numbers should be sleeping rough on the streets. In central London alone, there were between 25,000 and 40,000 young people sleeping rough in 1987. Thousands of children are being brought up in hotels and hostels and, in 1986, 513 children were taken into care solely because their families became homeless. Women with children account for two out of three of those accepted as homeless in London.

In 1987, 128,345 households in Britain were acknowledged as homeless by local authorities. According to Shelter's calculations, this represents approximately 370,000 people.

This is virtually double the number recognised as homeless in 1979, but still represents a massive under-estimation of the real figure of homeless people which runs into millions. The legal definition of 'homeless' used by local authorities to determine their responsibilities does not cover many groups,

By Lizzy Ali

the largest being single homeless people.

Of the total number who approached local authorities asking to be housed, only half were accepted as homeless within the terms of the homeless legislation. About a quarter did not fall into the priority groups which councils are legally obliged to house and were only offered 'advice'. Of the households who were accepted as homeless, only half were actually given permanent accommodation. It is clear from these statistics that councils fall a long way short of fulfilling even their legal obligation to 'households containing a pregnant woman; one or more dependent children; anyone regarded as "vulnerable" on the grounds of youth, old age, illness, disability or other reasons; or those made homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire or flood'.

The problems of legislation which goes nowhere near tackling the real extent of homelessness is often compounded by the attitude of councils themselves. Shelter explains how even those in priority need under the legislation have been blocked, citing the Tory-controlled Cheltenham Borough Council where homeless people have frequently been denied the right to make applications. The housing department is also prone to 'confuse' homelessness with normal waiting list applications. Even those who are obviously vulnerable have been



Homeless teenagers in a medium-stay hostel

PHOTO: RACHEL MORTON

turned down.

A factor that has increased homelessness is the Tory government's so-called 'Care In the Community' programme. Masquerading as a more humane way of treating psychiatric patients, it is, in fact, a money-saving exercise at the expense of the most vulnerable section of society. The report quotes official figures which show that whilst 23,000 psychiatric hospital beds have been closed in the past ten years, only 4,000 new

residential places have been created to replace them. Another 29,000 beds are due to be lost and the responsibility for the patients turned over to local authorities which have neither the financial resources to provide suitable accommodation nor the necessary expertise. Unable to fend for themselves, many ex-psychiatric patients are ending up sleeping rough.

Whilst the number of people without homes has increased, there has been a

corresponding growth in those who need re-housing because they live in appalling conditions. Council waiting lists jumped by over 170 per cent between 1983 and 1987 to well over a million - with less chance than ever before of being moved to decent accommodation.

Though the report points to the policies of the Tory government as being responsible for the fact that 'Britain is increasingly less able to house the rapidly growing

numbers of those who are homeless or without decent accommodation', it diplomatically limits its survey to the period since Thatcher came to power. However correct it is to outline changes in housing tenure, for example the sale of 1,002,894 local authority and new town homes between 1980 and 1987, and blame it on 'the government drive to promote owner occupation and reduce the public sector', it is necessary to assess the role of Labour governments and Labour-led councils in the homelessness crisis.

When 'caring' Labour leaders get to their feet in the House of Commons or the council chamber to berate the Tories for their 'heartlessness', they are merely electioneering. Their record on housing is one of bad design, cheap materials and decades of neglect. The responsibility for abandoning the fight against rate-capping is theirs. Only a socialist programme for housing can provide decent, low-rent accommodation for all who need it. The first step towards this must be the mobilisation of the working class around socialist policies to drive the Tories out!

## Employers' grip on training strengthened

By Daniel Evans

THE GOVERNMENT'S latest Employment Bill, published at the end of November 1988, provides for the abolition of the Training Commission. A White Paper, 'Employment for the 1990s', published less than a week later, outlined its proposed alternative.

Over 100 Training and Enterprise Councils are to be established throughout the country over the next four years. They will be run by local employers and over-

seen by a National Training Task Force, consisting of the chairmen, managing directors and chief executives of some of the biggest business monopolies in Britain. TECs will take over responsibility from the Training Commission for the Youth Training Scheme and the new Employment Training programme launched in Sep-

tember and will be able to dictate terms to young workers and the unemployed in line with the day-to-day and regional requirements of capitalism.

The Tories have been encouraged in this move by years of TUC collaboration with government schemes and their half-hearted opposition to ET. Last year, the TUC voted at its Congress to boycott ET for two years. Since then the General Council has overturned that decision in favour of co-operation with 'good' ET schemes. The government has now appointed Bill Jordan, the right-wing leader of the engineering workers' union, to the National Training Task Force. He will be the only union representative on the 14-strong committee but will nevertheless serve to give legitimacy to the Task Force.

The White Paper announces the formal ending of the Training Commission, on which the TUC used to sit until they were thrown off following the Congress 'boycott' decision. The

Tories' tactic is now to spurn the TUC and cultivate individual right-wingers like Jordan and Eric Hammond, leader of the expelled electricians' union. Hammond was recently appointed by the government to the National Economic Development Council, the body on which employers, government and trade union leaders collaborate over economic policy.

The government wants 600,000 unemployed adults to pass through ET every year on an average six-month stint, for their benefits plus £11 per week, but is falling well short of this target so far. Contrary to the TUC's assertions, the unemployed will not feel 'abandoned' by the trade unions if they boycott ET. It is by collaborating with the scheme that the TUC alienates the working class.

The Workers International League calls for a fight to make the TUC implement a permanent, all-out boycott of ET and the YTS! Break all trade union ties with the capitalist state! Full trade union rights for the unemployed! Training under trade union control at the employers' expense, leading to guaranteed employment!

## Call for one-year national service

THE RIGHTWING pressure group Youth Call has launched a campaign for a form of national service. It wants the government to force young people to spend a year doing community work.

The organisation has written to other pressure groups and MPs thought to be sympathetic to its aims. Its chairman, Nicolas Stacey, a former director of Kent social services and director of the Aids Policy Unit, said:

'Ministers have been making a great deal in their speeches about the need for active citizenship, but it's now time they put their hand, brain, leadership, and money where their mouth is.'

When it was founded in 1981, Youth Call was suspected of being in favour of the return of compulsory military service. It claims that its latest scheme would be voluntary, and confined to tasks in health, educa-

tion and the social services, but is calling for up to 90 per cent of young people to take part and for the government to ensure that universities and large employers give preference to applicants who have completed a year's service.

Youth Call's renewed campaign for a national youth labour scheme is in response to the difficulty the Tory government has experienced in enforcing its own cheap-labour

'training' programmes. If the idea was taken up, it would compel youth to give their labour free to either boost private employers' profits or help run second-rate, underfunded welfare services. Those who refused to serve would find their job or education prospects affected. It would be a means of disciplining youth on a national scale to accept low wages and the loss of democratic rights in later adult employment.