

Workers power

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CDLM Iran

Usec NUPE

Zimbabwe 1905

DEFEATS SPEED LEGAL ATTACK

The 1980's opens for the ruling class with the prospect of their second major global recession since the second World War. The overthrow of their hired butchers in Vietnam, Iran and Nicaragua underlines the instability of their system on a world scale. The highest strike figures recorded since 1926 bear witness to a new bitter stage of class struggle opening up in Britain.

The British bosses enter the 80s with their Tory government clear and resolved in its strategy for waging the class war. It will ransack the social services, force up the dole queues hoping that the threat of unemployment will sap the resolve of the organised working class to resist.

It hopes that it can force open the divisions between public sector and private sector employees to weaken the ability of the class to defend its living standards and traditional organisations. For the Tories the cherished goal is the legal shackling of a demoralised and defeated working class. Already stage one of this attack is underway. Prior has announced his plans for eliminating effective picketing,

TORIES DRAW FIRST BLOOD

for undermining the closed shop and for intervening in trade union affairs to ensure class collaborationist leaders and policies through the institution of the secret ballot.

Furthering the Tories' drive to force women workers back into the home, Prior wants to remove the obligation on small firms to give women back their jobs after maternity leave and force women to provide written notice of when they intend to return before they are entitled to maternity leave provision.

This is but stage one in a legal attack which intends later to remove the legal immunities that exist for trade union action. These are not quirks or options for the ruling class. The employers are set on a desperate collision course to

save their ailing system by severely crippling the ability of workers to defend themselves.

In the camp of the working class such clarity and definitiveness of purpose does not prevail. Five years of anti-working class Labour government has reaped a serious

toll on a working class that toppled Heath from office. Callaghan and Wilson, as well as Benn who sat silently and loyally in their cabinets have performed inestimable services to the capitalist class.

While the number of workers in trade unions stands at its record level official unemployment figures stand at the 1.3 million mark with thousands of civil servants, car-workers and steel workers poised to push those figures to record post war levels.

There are now more shop stewards than at any other time in the history of the British working class but Leyland management have

succeeded in dismissing a convenor without even the two-week shut down that they had prepared themselves for.

At the head of a number of unions stand right-wing Callaghan men who will hold on to their power in the unions so long as the working class suffers defeat. This is most notably the case in the AUEW where, since Weakley's accession, the executive is more exclusively right-wing than at any time in the last 40 years.

The miners union has been internally divided by productivity deals pioneered by Labour and connived in by its right wing leadership. While the bosses have their sleeves rolled up for action and police picket busting squads, inherited from Labour, raring to go, the TUC General Council has launched its lame duck campaign to shore up the NEB, persuade the Tories to spend more on Social services and effect import controls to save British jobs at the expense of our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Against these right-wing leaders the Broad Left in the manual unions — particularly the engineering union — is at its lowest ebb since the Cold War days. The Tories have scored initial successes in their first months in office. Jobs are due to be lost with little or no fight in Leyland. Ford workers and the miners have both accepted pay deals which will barely keep them abreast of anticipated official predictions of an inflation rate of 20%.

Leaders of the manual workers in the public sector have sealed down their claim to between 15 and 17.5% as a starting point for discussions with the Tory govern-

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No tailing either mullah

Jimmy Carter's Christmas present to the Iranian people is a fleet of nineteen warships, including two aircraft carriers. The American and British press have been full of helpful suggestions as to what could be done with them — bomb the oilfields, bomb the 'holy city' of Qom, seize the Tumbs Islands as 'hostages', etc.

Miss Lillian, the born-again Christians mother, has said to wild applause that if she had a million dollars she would hire a hit man to murder Khomeini. Whilst a direct punitive strike is unlikely unless the hostages are put on trial, the Imperialists are busy confiscating Iranian assets held in American banks at home and abroad and mobilising an economic blockade that will squeeze the life out of the already staggering Iranian economy.

Ferment

There is no doubt that should the anti-US ferment threaten the vital Gulf oilfields, the US Government will send in troops to seize them.

In Iran, Khomeini's regime is in deep crisis. The new constitution that gives dictatorial powers to the Imam has met fierce resistance in

Kurdistan, in Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan, and in Baluchistan. The opposition to Khomeini comes from varying sources. The Ayatollah Shariatmadani — a political conservative who favours a constitutional monarchy with the Shiite hierarchy distanced to some extent from the regime, has become a focus for the resistance of the nationalities, and the bourgeoisie.

Aligned

The major forces claiming to be socialist, the Tudeh (CP) and the Fedayeen have aligned themselves behind Khomeini's 'anti-imperialist' stance, the Tudeh uncritically, the Fedayeen with considerable reservations. Even the HKS (Iranian section of the Usec) has issued a statement which accepts as good coin the anti-imperialist struggle being waged by the government.

Whilst it is the clear duty of revolutionary communists in Iran to give military support to any armed resistance to a US attack, and to defend the right to self-determination of the Kurds, Turk-Turkomans, Azerbaijanis, Baluchis and Arabs, to line up either with Khomeini or Shariatmadani will be suicidal. The limited legality gained because of the divisions in the mullahs' ranks must be exploit-

ed to win support in the workers and peasants committees for a consistent democratic, socialist and anti-imperialist programme. There must be no class truce in the name of spurious 'anti-imperialist' stances.

The plebeian followers of Shariatmadani are motivated by a democratism that must be saved from becoming the servant of the conservative Iranian bourgeoisie. The anti-imperialist aspirations of Khomeini's following must be diverted from powering the machinery of a vicious theocratic dictatorship. Both lead to chaos and defeat for the Iranian masses and the eventual return of direct American hegemony.

*US hands of Iran. Break the Economic and Military Blockade.

*Down with Khomeini's dictatorship — full democratic rights for all the peoples of Iran.

*Power to a workers and peasants government based on the armed 'shoras' (councils) to expropriate the domestic and foreign capitalists.

For further analysis of the Iranian crisis see page four.

C. Davies (Report)



ROOT OUT OUR TRAITORS

TRAITOR NUMBER ONE

THE LEADERS of Britain's second largest union, the AUEW, have refused to act in defence of the sacked Longbridge convenor Robinson and deliberately sabotaged the movement that developed in his defence.

In the face of an attack on the right of shop stewards to carry out their job, AUEW leaders Duffy and Boyd have displayed sickening treachery and pathetic cowardice.

Large sections of the BL workforce came out in support of Robinson. At Longbridge there was an immediate walk-out of the day shift. The Triumph plant at Canley came out on indefinite strike while Jaguar Coventry staged a 24 hour stoppage. At its height, 40,000 workers had joined the campaign in solidarity with Robinson. There were serious setbacks — Leyland

Bus and Truck voted against strike action — however, given a determined lead the strike movement could have been spread successfully.

The management were clear and unequivocal in their stand. The Austin Morris boss, Horrocks, declared. 'We will not tolerate people who are trying to sabotage the company and its plans!'

No such determination or certainty from the union leaders. The TGWU, representing two-thirds of Leyland's workers and with one of

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.. Tories draw first blood

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ment that intends to institute an incomes policy in the public sector. The 5% offer to Leyland, the 2% offer to the steel workers shows the fate in store for workers in 'unprofitable' industries if the Tories are not stopped.

Battles

In the face of this attack the trade unions leaders have learnt the lessons of the 1971-74 attack when the unofficial leadership was able to force the initiative in the fight against anti-union laws. They have moved quickly to set in operation, at local and national level, the bureaucratic apparatus of protest campaigns, lobbies even 'days of action' to keep the initiative in their offices and on their executives.

Despite the serious initial defeats suffered by the working class it would be wrong to utter cries of despair or to suggest in any way that all is lost. The response to the November 28th demonstration, the actions of the Corby workers, the potential strike in the steel industry all prove that major battles will be waged in the period ahead.

In the face of the defeats suffered by the working class there are those — most notably the Socialist Workers Party — who have already announced that the retreat has begun and that what is now needed is a return to the 'custom and practice' of trade unionism in the days before the developing sickness of capitalism forced Labour and Tory alike to pursue the class struggle more vigorously forcing left talking trade union leaders to abandon or even act against rank and file militants.

Basics

The world would be so much simpler for the SWP leaders if all that was required to stop the retreats was the popularised programme of the 'little things' — re-establishing day-to-day contact between stewards and the workers they represent, elementary shop-floor organisation and solidarity — combined with abstract propaganda against capitalism and for Socialism. Their policies constitute no more than this recipe of militant trade unionism in the here and now.

What they forget is that the 'custom and practice' of their idealised trade unionism of the 60s survived only in a period when the bosses too felt that recognising shop-floor strength didn't harm their vital interests. That is no longer the case.

Answers

Solidarity, mass support in the struggle to defend and advance trade union organisation and living standards can only be rebuilt if militants can answer the fears of millions of workers faced with a government and employing class hellbent on a programme of trampling on traditional trade union rights in their own class interest. Unless militants can convince the mass of workers that they have the answer to companies facing bankruptcy and threatening jobs, that they have policies that can defend wage levels and social services and build the necessary fighting strength to stop the Tories, then the militants will remain isolated however much they invoke traditional trade union norms.

The fight to stop today's defeats turning into a really massive retreat in the trade unions is a political fight to build a new leadership in the unions that will fight for new policies and that can mobilise the entire working class in the fight for its interests and stop the Tories attack. For us the key policies must be:

*For a general strike to smash the Tory union laws. All unions, at all levels, must be committed to no co-operation with the laws, to active defiance of their provisions and to strike action to stop the laws reaching the statute book.

Urgent

While we must demand of the trade union leaders that they prepare such action it is the task of all militants to urgently start the work of explaining how the proposed laws will strengthen the ability of the employer to attack living standards and intimidate and victimise shop-floor leaders. This message must be pressed home with urgency in the workplace bulletins and through shop and plant meetings.

Councils of action must be formed in every locality based on workplace delegates prepared to mobilise support for all workers in struggle and to instigate action to smash the anti-union laws.

Occupation

*Occupy all plants threatening redundancy, forcing nationalisation with no compensation to save all jobs. If jobs are to be saved, and fought for, then every organised workplace must commit itself now to solidarity stoppages with those facing redundancy, to no acceptance of new work or new equipment that will result in sackings.



*For unity between workers in the public and private sectors. The employers plans to cut the social services must be met by strikes and occupations in the public sector and solidarity stoppages for the stronger battalions of workers in nationalised industry and the private sector.

Secrecy

*Open the books of the employers to the direct scrutiny of the workers and their chosen representatives. Only in this way can the plans and workings of the capitalist class be made clear to all workers.

*Cut the hours not the jobs: for shop steward control of the hours worked and the speed worked. If the employers cannot provide work

workers power

editorial

for all then the trade union decide on the length of the ing day and force the employ maintainfull rates of pay.

Wages

*For the sliding scale of wages Workers living standards must be eroded by inflation. Each place organisation must set its own cost of living index in junction with housewives and organisations. All pay claims be protected against inflation the basis of a 1% rise in the living giving a 1% increase in home pay as calculated by workers themselves.

*Protect the jobs of women workers — for full social and der rights for women. Oppos all 'Women out First' solutions a vigorous struggle to open ions to women workers.

Racism

*Uncompromising hostility ism. Against all immigration and for the expulsion from unions of all known fascists

*Internationalism: no nation with the British bosses. In n partial struggles as well as in eral confrontation workers the support of workers in o countries if they are to secu ory. We must oppose the po the British ruling class be it land, Zimbabwe or in Britai must solidarise with all thos ing to break the exploitatio their wealth and the depriva their national democratic ri British imperialism.

No to jingo-ism in the w movement. Opposition to a aigns for import controls, t drawal of British capitalis the Common Market and p er against worker on the gr nationality or race.

Rank and File

Only the rank and file of tl who suffer the harshest eff the bosses attacks can forn solid basis for resistance. T movement must be built, s with the militants, to trans unions from the shop floor into democratic fighting or ions. As in the 20's with th al Minority Movement, thi draw on the best elements shop stewards 'movement' from the previous period v overcoming their specifi ness. Above all the lesson militant trade unionism is enough must be learnt. A ership armed with revoluti communist politics hold tl victory.

Party

A new party must be b ing the conscious vanguar various struggles. The elen such a party now march u ous bankrupt banners — i trade unionism, Stalinism rist left groups, the Left-v labour Party. United actic testing of leaderships and in struggle, open and hard criticism, will be the only in which a new revoluti ship can emerge. To this l ers Power devotes its sma sources in the 1980s.

Workers Power, the WSL and the general strike

THE FOURTH conference of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement (CDLM) was held on November 3rd and was attended by some 160 delegates and observers. Discussion centred around a resolution proposed by the organising committee which dealt with the general economic and political situation and the drive of the Tories to make the working class pay the cost of the developing crisis.

Conference

WORKERS POWER attended the conference, as it would any meeting of socialists and militants, in order to argue for our understanding of the tasks posed to the working class.

Not having recieved the conference resolution in advance, our delegation submitted two resolutions. One of these dealt with the need to propagandise for a general strike against the Tories' anti-trade union laws, the other called for the CDLM to approach the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) and the Rank and File Organising Committee (RFOC) for a joint conference on fighting the Tory attacks.

The first of these resolutions was accepted by the conference organisers, the second rejected.

The report of the CDLM conference which appeared in Socialist Press 174 (the paper of the Workers' Socialist League who comprise the political leadership of the CDLM) however, presented a very distorted version of the general strike resolution. What had been proposed by WORKERS POWER, it said, was an amendment calling for, 'preparation for the demand of a

general strike against the Tories."

In fact the WORKERS POWER resolution did not call for a, "preparation for the demand for a general strike against the Tories". It stated that, "the call for a general strike should form a central plank of the CDLM's work..." In other words that the call for the general strike was an immediate requirement, not something to be raised in the unspecified future.

A letter to Socialist Press pointing out this error added that the slogan, "For a general strike against the Tories" had been specifically criticised by WORKERS POWER at the conference.

Silent on the question of its incorrect reporting, Socialist Press argued, "in our defence we would point out that, if anything, a general strike against the Tories is a more comprehensive and satisfactory perspective than the restrictive demand for a general strike simply, 'against the Tories proposed anti-union laws'".

Vacuous

The slogan 'against the Tories' is so comprehensive as to be vacuous. 'Against the Tories' — obviously, but for what, for the hell of it? For a change of government? For a general election? For the dictatorship of the proletariat? Without a specific object the slogan couldn't be better designed for 'Left' windbags. It sounds militant but implies no commitment to action. When workers facing cuts ask them, "What are we going to do?" they can reply, "Ah What we need is a general strike against the Tories and we are preparing it."

Perhaps the WSL means, 'A gen-

eral strike to bring down the Tories" But this slogan manages to be both an ultimatum to workers (i.e. a political general strike to reverse a general election result, which is an unrealistic initial slogan to be addressed to a reformist labour movement, one with profound democratic illusions) and to suggest a parliamentary/electoral outcome to the strike. (A general strike to force the Tories to resign, call a general election and return a Labour government.)

Central

The comrades of the Socialist Press argue that the slogan against the anti-union laws is restrictive, that it could, "amount to little more than a protest action designed to force Thatcher to retreat..." But we are not talking about any old piece of legislation, we are talking about an absolutely central component of Tory strategy. If Thatcher were forced by a general strike, or the threat of one, to retreat on that then her government would be in ruins. It would have lost an been seen to have lost, just as Heath's was over the question of incomes policy. Even if that were all the general strike achieved we certainly would not sniff at it as a, "mere protest".

The difference in formulation, "For a general strike against the Tory anti-union laws" or "For a general strike against the Tories" is not, as Socialist Press philistinely puts it, "verbal quibbles." Behind the two alternatives lies a difference of political method and strategy. Dismissing such differences, or brushing them aside, does no benefit to the working class. Much less does misrepresenting another group's positions.

IN OUR LAST PAPER (WP10) we carried an editorial that outlined our criticisms of the orientation to the Labour Party (LP) of the supporters of the paper "Workers' Action" (WA). In WA 159 (November 17th) Andrew Hornung replied to our criticisms. We are grateful for the reply - it confirmed our belief that WA is profoundly mistaken in its current work around the LP. We welcome the opportunity of continuing the debate with the comrades on this issue so as to make clear to our own readers and, we hope, to the supporters of WA, the precise errors of Workers' Action's current course.

Andrew Hornung, praising the subtlety of Workers Power's tactical abilities, found a contradiction in our initial article. To lift the fog of subtlety shrouding this "contradiction" we will repeat the relevant words from our article: "...the key to the forwarding of this struggle (inside the Labour Party - WP) lies primarily in the unions. There we must take up the issues and demands linking up with constituency activists, using the forces mobilised to defeat Thatcher and defeat Callaghan - and Benn." (WP 10)

Tactics

Comrade Hornung claims that the contradiction we are caught in is that we suggest that the struggle against the right wing has a place in the unions and the constituencies, but that we only argue for it to be taken up in the unions. This supposed one-sided emphasis leads him to charge us with the crime of syndicalism: "Only people utterly blinded by syndicalist prejudices can call on workers to thwart the Right in the Labour Party and yet back away from proposing any action within the Labour Party."

However, given that we do say there is a possibility for some form of struggle inside the constituencies he can't quite clinch the accusation. So, far outstripping our own subtle expertise, Comrade Hornung proceeds to explain our position in psychological terms: "The attacks Workers Power make on Workers Action have less a basis in fact than a basis in fear".

Our feelings dictate our tactics, he claims. He concludes his argument by describing our criticism of WA's approach to the Labour Party in long term strategic terms rather than short-term tactical ones, as 'theological', that is, irrelevant. Then, defending the spotless record of WA, "Let the subtle tacticians of Workers Power prove otherwise!" - he refers back to his original theme: "Twist and turn as they may the comrades of Workers Power cannot extricate themselves from their central contradiction".

Contradiction

Let us first deal with this so-called contradiction. As the quotation from our last paper makes clear we believe that change in the LP will be brought about by the force that really controls the party: the unions. More specifically, we argue that it is the trade union bureaucracy, through the mechanism of the block vote, who determine the destiny of the LP, and the make up of its leadership. The union bureaucracy, fundamentally hostile to the interests of its own members, generally maintains an alliance with the Parliamentary Labour Party, ensuring that the party as a whole remains a subservient work horse for capitalism. Last winter the struggles of the union rank and file, combined with Callaghan's stubbornness over the 5% wage limit, ruptured that alliance. But, as can be seen from the machinations of the union leaders such as Basnett, Fisher, Evans and Co., the alliance is being feverishly restored. After the Committee of Enquiry reports, after the Right have been given a chastening shot across the bows by their union paymasters, the vote will be used, as its name implies, to block any serious advance of the party towards a democratic regime, let alone a programme for socialism.

Workers Power are in favour of using the intervening period of instability to cause maximum destabilisation inside the Labour ranks,

with the aim of winning militants inside to recognise the need for a new revolutionary communist party. The tactics needed to do this should be based on an appraisal of real class forces. We believe that control over the block vote is decisive. Winning rank and file control over it will not be achieved inside the constituency labour parties (CLPs), the wards, or on local councils. Even if trade union delegates flooded into such bodies the political control over such delegates would still have to be exercised by the bodies from which they are delegated, the union branches, the workplaces. It is within union branches and workplace organisations that the struggles on how to beat the Tory offensive will be conducted. Using those struggles to demand of the LP that it supports direct action, making delegates from branches tribunes of struggle will be crucial factors in challenging the right in the party and putting to the test all those 'lefts' who claim to stand with the working class. To realise this is not syndicalism, it does not exclude politics. On the contrary it breaks down the brick wall that has always existed between politics and economics, the Labour Party and the unions, that WA's glorification of the 'political wing of the labour movement' actually reproduces.

Dispute

These are the factors that lead us to argue that the main emphasis for revolutionary work in the coming period is inside the unions. Through challenging the right of the union bureaucracy to wield the block vote, by sending representative delegates from unions into the LP, by sending democratically controlled delegations to Labour conferences, using these mechanisms to drag the LP into the struggles of the working class, we will thoroughly destabilise the party and win its best elements to the revolutionary programme.

This task goes hand in hand with transforming the unions as they are at the moment. They must be thoroughly overhauled and placed in the hands of their rank and file members. But this does not mean that there is nothing for individual militants inside the CLPs to do. Certainly revolutionaries could play an important part organising support for struggles, arguing for the facilities of the party to be used to service workers in dispute, fighting to make life unbearable for the right wing routinists who can be found vegetating in every CLP. This role however, must be an auxiliary role. It must not be the main emphasis in LP work for revolutionaries. The CLPs do not represent the healthiest forums for revolutionary activity.

labour party - key focus for workers' action?

by MARK HOSKISSON

They are more often than not tiny, and usually composed of predominantly white collar workers, intellectual and generally middle class elements. As such they command little power externally, and even within the party, radical individuals pale before the big battalions of the trade unions. Quite simply they do not have the muscle to play the central role in any struggle inside the party, and no amount of cosmetics from WA will alter that.

There is therefore no contradiction at all in our tactical orientation to the Labour Party. We identify the unions as the crucial forum of activity and argue that the main emphasis of revolutionary activity should be geared towards them. Nor is there anything subtle in the conclusion we draw from this that work inside the CLPs and wards is secondary to this, but not excluded by it.

Lying behind Comrade Hornung's attempt to find a contradiction in our position is a failure to answer any of the major criticisms we have consistently made of Worker's Action's positions.

What we have argued is wrong is Workers Action's elevation of the transformation of the Labour Party into the central strategic question facing revolutionaries and militants. Lest of we are accused of misrepresenting them this is how they state their position themselves: "One of the major reasons for the divisions in the revolutionary marxist left in Britain has been different attitudes on what to do about the Labour Party. This is the major strategic question for militants trying to restructure and remould the British labour movement." (our emphasis) (WA 155)

WA's theoreticians operate with the position that while the Trade Unions stand as the economic and industrial wing of the 'labour movement' so the Labour Party represents its "political wing". The fundamental thrust of Workers Action is to transform this

political wing, and let any Workers Action supporter deny that, despite their industrial work, despite their calls for direct industrial action, this orientation does not constitute the fundamental hallmark of Workers Action's politics today.

The immediate justification for this is the debate on democracy and perspective that is taking place in the Party.

"The 1979 Brighton Conference of the Labour Party could go down in history as the point of take off to a renewal and regeneration of the political wing of the British Labour Movement." (WA 154).

As a result of this 'take off' Workers Action argued that: "Big tasks lie ahead for the left: it must reorganise itself and rebuild the constituency parties' membership around politics that serve the working class interests." (WA 154).

Obstacles

Workers Power does not deny the necessity of a revolutionary intervention in the crisis wracking the Labour Party at present. But we agree that there is only one basis for entering social democratic or centrist formations and that is uncompromising struggle for the revolutionary programme. The centrists we attempt to win, the reformist parties we attempt to break up, recognising them as historical obstacles to the liberation of the working class. This position we draw from the tactics advocated by Leon Trotsky to the marxists in France who entered a left moving reformist party the SFIO. In 1934 he argued:

"Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which, under certain conditions can be limited to an episode."

That such work cannot be built on a timeless perspective, as some long term strategy flows from the fact that the reformist leaders will

not, except in distinct circumstances, tolerate the strident and forceful presentation of the revolutionary case in their ranks.

United

The comrades of Workers Action claim that not being in a reformist party, as a norm is equivalent to 'abstentionism'. This is not the case. It remains possible, if outside the reformist party, to relate to workers who remain in that party on the basis of the actual struggles that they are involved in, uniting with them and at the same time fighting to direct them towards the goal of revolution. This can be done by united front action with such workers, and where possible their leaders. What is at dispute between ourselves and Workers Action is the programme and strategy that is advanced inside the reformist and centrist parties, and the relative priority of that work at given times, not the question of whether entry work is permissible or not. As Trotsky put it "entry in itself proves nothing: the decisive thing is programme and action taken in the spirit of this programme after the entry."

For Workers Action the perspective is one, not of breaking up the Labour Party, but of an attempt to "politically regenerate the political labour movement." (WA 154).

Debate

Regeneration, even renewal, (although what golden age we are supposed to be renewing we are never definitely told) becomes the goal of marxists in the Labour Party—a peculiar way of promoting destabilisation! Doubly so at a time when the left reformists themselves, are stomping the country crusading for their programme of "politically regenerating" the Labour Party as an alternative to direct struggle against the Tory Government.

We should be clear that the "democracy debate" backcloth to Workers Action's factual turn is in fact an 'after the event' justification. As long ago as August 1978 a leading supporter of Workers Action, John O' Mahoney declared, in answer to a question about the long term burrowing perspective inside the Labour Party: "it is necessary to keep at the centre of our perspectives the epochal task of revolutionaries transforming the labour movement." (International Communist No 9. Our emphasis.)

A sleight of hand turns the Labour Party into the Labour Movement and transforming it becomes a long term, indeed an epochal task. The recent articles

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Khomeini's dictatorship rocked by

anti-imperialist storm

As the anniversary of the great mobilisations which drove out the Shah and cracked his blood soaked dictatorship approaches, the mullah-dominated clericalist regime faces its most profound crisis yet. Khomeini's project of an Islamic Republic, despite his overwhelming personal influence is still far from any form of stability. Iran faces economic collapse, massive unemployment. The problem of the non-Persian nationalities and the agrarian question are both far from any solution. The total wave of anti-imperialist feeling generated by the occupation of the U.S. Embassy and the holding of fifty hostages whilst, in the short term, acting as a rallying point behind Khomeini, is already allowing the forces opposed to a theocratic dictatorship to mobilise for the first time since the repressive coup of July/August 1979.

The repressive measures, which included the closing down of the liberal and working class press, the arrest of scores of left wing militants and the banning and harassment of their meetings and demonstrations culminated in the proclamation of a holy war (jihad) against the Kurdish people. Khomeini, appointing himself commander in chief of the army sent squads of revolutionary Islamic guards (pasdars) to subject the region to a vicious dictatorship. Ayatollah Khomeini, the Imam's prosecutor, sent dozens of Kurds a day to the firing squad.

Rabid

The Kurdish resistance fighters (peshmerga) were forced to withdraw from the cities including the 'capital' Mahabad. But they easily regrouped, gaining massive support from the population including the peasantry, who clearly saw the pasdars and the pro-Khomeini committees not only as a rabid Persian-chauvinist army of occupation but as the backers of the land owners, feudalists and semi-bandit elements who exploited and batted on the meagre resources the land yielded them. On the 12th October the police chief in Mahabad was shot. On 16th the prime Minister's special envoy was kidnapped. By October 21st the peshmerga were reported as controlling Mahabad once again.

The result of the expulsion of the pasdars, the surrounding of a number of towns and garrisons and the rupture of government communication lines, was that the inflexible and infallible Imam changed his mind. The 'worst of the sons of Satan' suddenly became legitimate negotiators on behalf of the Kurdish people. Khomeini promised the progressive withdrawal of the pasdars and the cessation of the murderous activities of the revolutionary tribunals. At the end of October the Minister of the Interior announced the end of hostilities and the suspension of military operations. The jihad was over, for the time being, and Islam was far from victorious.

Eruption

October also saw the eruption of social tensions within other parts of Iran. In Teheran itself two large demonstrations of the unemployed took place in successive weeks and spread to other cities. Revolutionary guards had to fire into the air to disperse them.

In the Caspian Sea ports of Bandar and Euzeli, in mid October, demonstrators burned the police headquarters after pasdars had shot at crowds of fishermen protesting at a government monopoly of fishing rights. Khomeini was forced to rescind the government ruling.

In Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan, open conflicts erupted between the populace and the revolutionary guards. The Imam's personal envoy, Ayatollah Quzi Tabatabai, sent to investigate the nefarious doings of the revolutionary committee and



Ayatollah Mohammed Montazari — the gun can still be turned on the Left.

by Andy Smith

the pasdars, criticised them bitterly as "conducting themselves like Savaki." (He was shot leaving the mosque in Tabriz) (Le Monde 3.11.1979).

In Teheran leftist demonstrations began to be held again at the University. On 29th October 25,000 students demonstrated demanding the authorisation of political activities in educational institutions and the reinstatement of all those purged from July to September. Tudeh (the Iranian CP) and the Fedayeen e Khalq have held rallies of up to 40,000.

Even more ominous for the Ayatollahs the peasantry, hitherto relatively quiescent since the seizure of Pahlavi lands in February and March, have begun to organise peasant committees in southern Kurdistan and in Azerbaijan.

The burgeoning social and political conflict resulted in a major political crisis among the leading cadres of the Islamic Revolution. In mid-October Khomeini's son, Ahmed, exclaimed that "The Imam is totally alone today... just as he was in Qom in 1963. The Imam sees that he is surrounded by enemies, coming from all tendencies, parties and 'types'".

Khomeini, as the lynchpin of the conflicting factions and cliques within the clergy and their professional politicians was obviously feeling the strain of the tug of war between them.

The first victim of the faction fight was the largely pensioned off Bazargan Government. On November 4th the 'Moslem Stud-

ents Faithful to the Imam Khomeini', occupied the United States Embassy and took 63 hostages. On the 6th the Bazargan Government resigned and Khomeini handed power directly to the Revolutionary Council. The 'students' were and are in fact, a tightly organised grouping led by Asghar Moussari-Khoeni, holding the rank of hojatoleslam the first step on the ladder to becoming an Ayatollah. Khoeni, closely allied to the powerful general secretary of the Revolutionary Council Ayatollah Mohammed Beheshti, has controlled and directed the occupation. The slogans prominent on the walls of the embassy, besides the demand for the Shah's return and the threats to try the American spies, included the calls, 'No to negotiations' and, 'a second revolution greater than the first has begun.'

Symbolic

The Imam swung to the side of these 'radicals' and began to voice their slogans and programme. What does this amount to? Firstly, vigorous anti-imperialist, anti-American rhetoric, centring on the return of the Shah. Much as this butcher deserves his fate, totally justified as this demand is, as a political demand it is merely symbolic, a pulling of the American vulture's tail feathers.

It is a diversion from the real fight against Imperialism, away from the chronic problems that face the peasants, workers and the oppressed nationalities of Iran.

Using the grief and rage felt by millions of Iranians who lost their children, relatives, friends and comrades in the Anti-Shah struggle, the mullahs hope to divert the masses from the agents of oppression and exploitation who constitute the Iranian government and ruling classes. Sayed Hussein, Khomeini's grandson, explained this role in an interview with 'Le Monde'. This paper summed up his position thus, 'The blows of American Imperialism have pulled together all the internal tensions which were undermining the Islamic Republic, regrouped the whole population in all its component parts and political tendencies under the Imam's banner. The occupation of the embassy was the most popular

event which has occurred since the overthrow of the monarchy.'

Khomeini himself has added to his support for the hostage taking certain of the Islamic radicals' demands. He charged the incoming government with three priority tasks, to purge the administration, to assure the welfare of the must-aziffin (the disinherited — Iran's 5 million unemployed, the poor, the peasants etc.) and to proceed to, 'a new and profound agrarian reform.'

Concessions

The Imam and the Revolutionary Council have been forced to make a series of concessions to the masses whose confidence, expectations and demands have been encouraged by the huge mobilisations and the mullahs' demagoguery. The unemployed have continued their demonstrations. The oil workers have formed a national union and forced Islamic officials and management to re-instate sacked workers. 'Shoras' (councils) have been set up in many factories. In Teheran, in a clothing factory, the workers' committee has won a reduction in hours (half-day working) with no loss of pay. Peasant committees continue to be formed. The demands and expectations even of the peasants who have gained land continue to grow in scope and confidence. The Times (1.12.79) reports a village headman as saying, 'We want industrial agriculture. We want a doctor in the village. We want health insurance and another school.'



Bani-Sadr



The expectations of the aziffin of the Teheran slum likewise, been raised. Journalists of the 'Herald Tribune' (30) report the outspoken commander 'They (the Islamic Council) better look after us better or we will make a second revolution.'

Even with regard to democratic rights certain concessions have been made. Papers banned in August have been legalised. The organs of the Tudeh, the Marddeen e Khalq (the Islamic illas of a leftist orientation) Fedayeen e Khalq and the Iranian Socialist Workers Party have resumed publication. The state newspapers like Ettela'at have carried reports of protests against repression. On November 17th, Khomeini acknowledged on television that the Kurds had been wronged and that negotiations with their leaders were progressing well.

Rivalries

The Revolutionary Council is still riven with rivalries and contradictions. Abolhassan Bani Sadr who initially held both the Foreign Affairs and Economic Industries, advocates a policy of economic nationalism. This involves repudiation of foreign debt, attempts to break free of the means of payment for oil and reduction of oil prices to raise prices via OPEC. Yet Bani Sadr was hardly discovered by Western media as the 'new man' before he lost decisive control of the Revolutionary Council diplomatic concessions on the question of the hostages. He was obliged to resign the Foreign Ministry to his long-time rival Sadegh Ghotbzadeh. Bani Sadr recognises the dangerous game the grouping around Beheshti and Khoeni are playing. He noted the fragmentation of the Iranian state, 'the multiple centres of the decision-making centre the government's impotent control even a single avenue of capital' Moreover, 'the absence of a strong central government and extension of anarchy will not until it has challenged the authority of the Imam Khomeini himself can't govern a country by means of permanent populareity.' (Le Monde, 7.11.79)

Sweep

Of course Ayatollah Beheshti and the Islamic 'radicals' don't intend to do that. They want the Imams' prestige, an imperialist demagoguery having them to carry the profound democratic constitution, on December 2nd, will enable the Islamic Republican Party to take the board in the elections to parliament, and win the Presidency. The constitution is a violent affront to all democratic rights.

In the notorious section five, drafted by Ayatollah Beheshti himself, the religious guardian (Fahib) can displace the elected President, appoint the chiefs of the judiciary, the army and the revolutionary guard, and the members of the Constitution Protection Council (a minority of whom c

IRAN

CONT'D FROM PAGE 4

any law proposed by parliament). Thus not only will Khomeini's personal dictatorship be assured but it will be handed down to a successor in the Shiite hierarchy.

Opposition to the constitution has increased substantially the forces prepared to challenge Khomeini. In Kurdistan the boycott was almost total with few polling booths being open. In the Turkoman and Baluchi regions the turnout was low. In Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan, where the Muslim Peoples Party linked to the senior Ayatollah Kazem Shantamadani, condemned the constitution as "ushering in a dictatorship as bad as the Shah's" a demonstration of 30,000 protested the ballot and called for a boycott. The Mujaheddin and the Fedayeen organisations issued a similar call.

The advocates of an Islamic bonapartism, based on mosque-dominated plebiscites and demagogic "anti-imperialism", whatever their short-term successes, are caught on the horns of a dilemma. Iran faces an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions. An economic blockade by US imperialism will aggravate this to an unbearable degree. The aspirations of the working class, the "disinherited" urban sub-proletariat, the peasants and the nationalities as well as the students ('Islamic' or otherwise) will clash ever more sharply with the chaos presided over by the Revolutionary Council.

Utopia

The Shia hierarchy and the mullah caste cannot establish a stable or homogeneous block. A theocracy in the last quarter of the twentieth century is a utopia - and a black reactionary one at that.

One option is a 'left' course. This was voiced most clearly by Khomeini's grandson Sayed Hossein. Referring to the anti-imperialist "turn" he said: "It allows us to open a way to a strategic alliance between the Islamic movement, the lay organisations and the Left as well as a tactical alliance with the Soviet bloc." (Le Monde (Le Monde 30.11.79).

The influential Ayatollah Montazeri - the head of the so-called Libyan faction advocates an orientation to the 'radical' Arab states. The Tudeh party, shameless in their toying the Khomeini line could act as a 'go-between' should Iran need covert Soviet assistance faced with an American blockade or punitive military action.

Whichever faction within and outside the Revolutionary Council wins out, temporarily, before being ousted in its turn, the working class and oppressed masses have nothing whatsoever to gain from them or their fake 'anti-imperialism'. The working class above all must be won to an independent class programme and party which certainly must relate to the deep anti-imperialist aspirations of the whole Iranian people, to the democratic aspirations of the nationalities, women, the students and intellectuals, to the desperate need for land and agricultural machinery that the peasants express. But none of these goals can be met without the central leading role of the working class, organised in workers councils and led by a party that can make Iran's "second revolution" a proletarian one.

THE PATRIOTIC FRONT has long been preparing to sign a ceasefire with Carrington, Ian Smith and the Rhodesian regime. In the face of imperialist pressure wielded via the front line states and strong arm tactics by the Rhodesian regime, the Patriotic Front has been unable, and unwilling, to mobilise the necessary mass active opposition to the Muzorewa government.

During the course of the Lancaster House talks Rhodesian forces, with ever-increasing South African support, have stepped up the bombing of areas held by the guerillas. They have devastated large tracts of Mozambique's main agricultural land in the Limpopo Valley and cut off all Zambia's trade links, stopping desperately needed supplies of maize. Recruitment to private armies, from the urban unemployed, has gone on apace and numbers are now estimated at around 6,000.

Muzorewa's much publicised release of detainees is conditional on their not being 'politically active'. Most of the country remains under martial law.

The imperialist agencies have aimed to take the maximum advantage from the economic difficulties of the front line states. They have made clear to these states that increased aid is dependent on the enforcement of a settlement. Britain is keen to maintain stability in Zambia by propping up Kaunda, but has been content to watch the pressure increasing on the Zambian economy so that it can get an end to the major threat to stability in the area - the liberation war. The IMF loan to Tanzania was on such stringent terms, devaluation, cutbacks in public expenditure, raising interest rates, that Nyerere initially rejected it. Lonrho promptly demanded immediate repayment of compensation 'owing' to the company following nationalisation several years ago. So far, there has been no response to Machel's plea for aid which he repeated at a Mozambique economic planning conference in October, where he also announced his intention to deal with 'absenteeism and inefficiency'. (New Africa, November 1979)

Solidarity

The Patriotic Front has accepted a constitution that they themselves would have labelled racist but two months ago, and the principle of paying compensation for any land taken over. It justified these concessions by saying that such issues were not central; the questions of the ceasefire and the transfer of power were the key ones.

The Front, quite rightly, fears South African intervention in Zimbabwe. But the only real strategy for effective defence against South Africa must be direct and active links with the black workers movement in South Africa itself. That movement is once again going through a period of growth and confidence. In November, 700 black workers struck at Ford's, Port Elizabeth, over trade union rights. They were supported by solidarity stoppages in other plants in the town.

Force

Instead, the Patriotic Front proposed the intervention of a large force of imperialist troops from the UN or the Commonwealth. They have even pressurised Carrington to increase the size of that troop concentration. Although it suggested this force would be, 'neutral', the Front did not make this suggestion naively. Recent ZAPU publications have pointed to the role of UN troops in removing Lumumba in the Congo. The Commonwealth or UN troops will back up whatever force is considered the safest bet for imperialism, which means Muzorewa at the moment.

The leaders of the Front believe that the entry of troops at this

FRONT LEADERS PLAY FOR TIME TO SELL PEACE PLAN

moment will allow them a breathing space for its forces. It would also give them time to convince their supporters in the towns that the war had not been in vain and that real changes, to the benefit of the black population, have been secured.

Reports from Patriotic Front cadres returning from the towns, still under regular harassment from the Rhodesian security forces, indicate both a growing war-weariness and, among Front supporters, a mounting suspicion that the sacrifices have been in vain. The Front leaders hope to use the 'breathing space' afforded by imperialist troops, to reforge their links in the towns and to accustom their guerilla fighters to a new perspective of peaceful propaganda and electioneering.

Marxists do not criticise liberation movements for gaining breathing space for themselves or for occasionally beating a strategic retreat. But the Front's open invitation to imperialist troops is evidence of the inherent limits of their nationalist strategy. It is this strategy that we criticise.

Assets

Commonwealth troops and the British Governor may allow the Patriotic Front to electioneer - although it is doubtful if they will allow Mugabe's forces to, 'drive openly through Salisbury holding up their AK 47's' as he claimed in Newsweek (26.11.79) The real purpose of the imperialist troops will be to preserve British and other imperialist assets and prevent independent action from disaffected sections of the Patriotic Front forces, working class militants or the peasantry.

The multi-nationals are desperate to get at those assets which are suffering from declining profits as the war intensifies. For example, the profits of Rio Tinto (Rhodesia) fell from £2.06 million in 1976 to £1.8 million in 1977.

Such companies held back from forcing the Tory Government to lift sanctions only because the Muzorewa regime could not guarantee an end to the war. 'Sanctions hurt, but the war hurts more,' as The Economist put it last June.

In the pre-election period, the lifting of sanctions will allow the 'normalisation' of business and trading, allowing the multi-nationals to increase their support for their



Will the Patriotic Front leaders get him to put down his gun.

preferred candidate, perhaps involving the distribution of some pre-election handouts to win support for Muzorewa. In the event of an 'undesirable' trend, funds could be quickly removed.

This important stranglehold can only be challenged by a revolutionary movement of the working class in alliance with the peasantry. Such a movement would not settle for the bourgeois democratic constitution proposed by the Patriotic Front, which included, 'a general validation of the pre-UDI laws, subject to the specific repeal or amendment of 'offending legislation'. (Anti Apartheid News Oct.79)

The aim of a revolutionary Marxist party is to build for working class power - building factory committees, calling for the convening of a Constituent Assembly genuinely representing workers and peasants, leading independent action including the occupation and expropriation of the factories and the land of the imperialists and the bourgeoisie and building a workers' militia to lay the basis for rule by the workers and peasants themselves.

The nationalist parties turned their backs on that road quite deliberately, building guerilla armies based on the countryside with the aim of achieving limited political independence for Zimbabwe - with power in the hands of the new middle class. At no time during the course of the Lancaster House talks has the Patriotic Front appealed for mass action, preferring to urge its guerilla armies to fight harder - up to the time of an agreed ceasefire.

For ZANU, the more radical wing of the Patriotic Front, the rural strategy is linked to its plan for an independent Zimbabwe

which it sees as building up its economic independence by concentrating on the agricultural sector. The fate of many countries under the yoke of imperialism proves such a programme to be utopian.

The demands of imperialism - such as those of the IMF on Tanzania, necessarily lead to a concentration on producing those commodities needed by the metropolitan countries and to increasing underemployment in the countryside and the creation of a large reserve army of labour forced into semi-permanent unemployment or working at starvation wages in the towns.

Struggle

The Patriotic Front's aims for the land do not even challenge the multi-nationals' control of the best and most productive sectors. 7% of farms account for over 50% of the total area of European-owned land. Many of these huge estates, which remain profitable despite the general under-utilisation of white-owned land, are owned by multi-nationals such as Lonrho. Mugabe has not distanced himself from Nkomo's recent statement that land should be made available, 'without depriving anybody who has been using land correctly'. (Irish Times 14.10.79)

The Patriotic Front should not be allowed to settle the fate of the Zimbabwean masses over their heads. Revolutionaries cannot accept the limitations on the struggle imposed by the nationalist leaders. Taking forward the struggle includes the seizure of the land by agricultural workers and peasants, especially the most productive sectors.

Campaign

The ceasefire must not be recognised - South African, mercenary and auxiliary forces will certainly not recognise it! Those Patriotic Front forces who want to continue the struggle must arm the workers and peasants and prepare for defence against Carrington's intervention army.

All militants and socialists must mount the most vigorous campaign against the dispatch of troops to Zimbabwe - organising for the blocking of supplies and transportation and in solidarity with the forces fighting for Zimbabwean resistance, whatever the terms cooked up between Carrington and the Patriotic Front in Lancaster House.

Sue Thomas

Russia

1905

In the winter of 1904 the Russian Autocracy faced an acute political crisis. Tsar Nicholas II faced defeat after defeat in an Imperialist war with Japan in Manchuria. On December 20th, Port Arthur, the chief Russian naval base in the Far East, surrendered to the Japanese.

The crisis of Tsarism strengthened all the long-suppressed currents of opposition to the tyrannical regime. The liberal bourgeoisie mobilised a campaign of protest meetings calling for a constitution. The regime was faced with peasant disorder, mutinies in the army and navy and an upsurge of strikes.

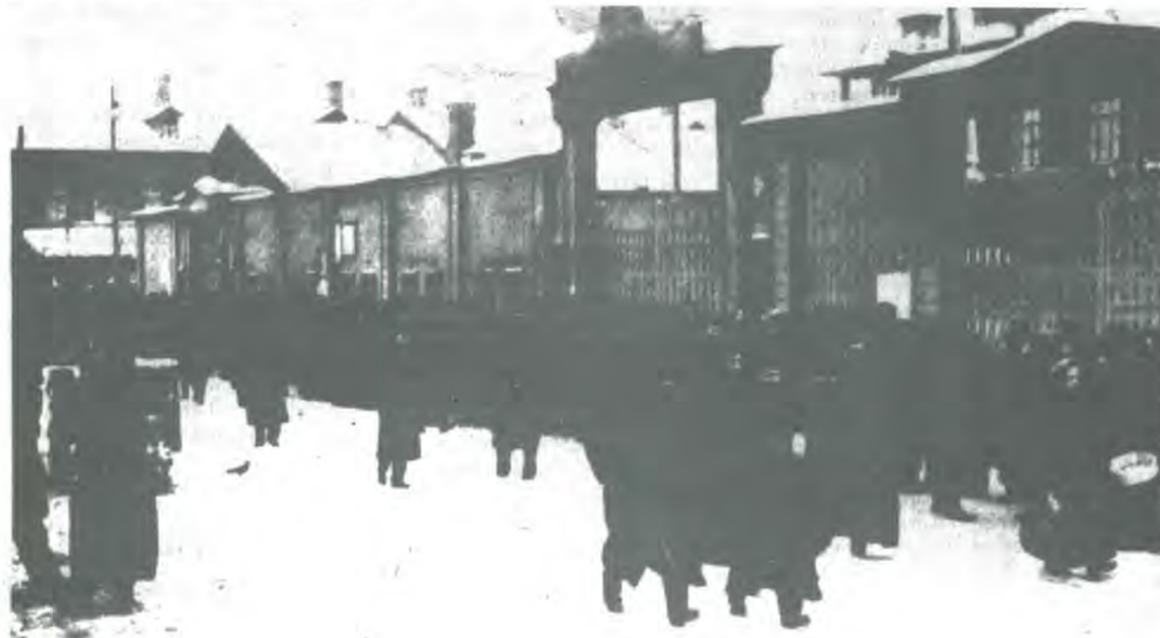
At the huge Putilov heavy metallurgical works a strike over the dismissal of workers who had joined a semi-legal workers society spread rapidly. The group to which they belonged was led by the priest Father Gapon and had been founded with the approval of the police chief Zubatov. The strike focused on economic demands; the eight hour day, a new wage scale agreed by the workers own representatives, a minimum wage for unskilled and women workers, creches in the factory, abolition of searches and fines for lateness etc.

Father

The pressure of the strike forced Father Gapon to mobilise a huge demonstration for 9th January. He gave it the religious form of a procession to petition the Tsar, "the little father", for the redress of grievances. But the demands the workers meetings put into the petition were far from patriarchal and included amnesty for political prisoners, freedom of speech, press, assembly, separation of church and state, an end to the war, a constituent assembly. Some 200,000 took part in the processions to the Winter Palace where the massed rifles of the guards poured volley after volley into the unarmed people. Hundreds were killed, thousands wounded. These volleys shattered the illusions of Petersburg's workers, even the most benighted in Tsarism. They also fatally undermined the police sponsored workers organisations, opening up the mass of workers to socialist influence.

The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was split into two factions—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Outside of and between the organised factions

Strike at the Putilov Works, St Petersburg 1905.



were prominent individuals like Leon Trotsky who did not fit into either camp.

The Bolshevik faction whose very purpose was to defend the party against the Mensheviks attempts to loosen and dilute the party organisation emphasised the need to destroy Tsarism after Bloody Sunday. Lenin, writing in the official Bolshevik paper *Vpered* noted: "The lessons of Bloody Sunday cannot pass without some influence on the masses. Now the demand for the Constituent Assembly has to become the main slogan of all Russian workers. And the practical programme of the day must be to supply the population with arms and to organise armed revolutionary action, in order to destroy the existing ruling power and all its institutions."

In fact the initial effects of Bloody Sunday was not a straight passage to political strike action. A massive railway strike at Saratov on the Volga on 12th January won the nine hour day and consolidated the railway workers union, an important factor in the coming year since it potentially put the key communications in the workers hands. Strikes of this sort erupted across the length and breadth of Russia. At Ivanovo-Voznessensk, a huge textile town, 50,000 workers stayed out for two months. Their city-wide strike committee was in fact the first soviet (council) of workers deputies.

Anarchistic

The Bolsheviks response to the economic strikes, which often incorporated political questions into their list of demands, was negative at first. They denounced the strikes as anarchistic. Lunacharskii in May 1905 described "a spontaneous strike over individual economic demands" as the weapon of a "still backward proletariat" saying that the Moscow Bolsheviks were quite right to be actively "discouraging disorganised striking

at present". To such actions he flatly counterposed "a political mass strike" adding that even as far as this was concerned "we can conceive of it only in conjunction with an armed uprising."

Correct as the Bolsheviks were to point out that Tsarism could only be smashed by an armed uprising, and that it was the duty of the social-democrats to prepare this, they failed to see in the mass strikes, and in the political general strike precisely tactics to mobilise, educate and organise the masses. Without the consciousness gained in struggle for a whole series of demands necessarily involving basic economic ones, and passing on to political ones, the need to overthrow the Autocracy would never become a mass demand.

Vanguard

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The Mensheviks, on the other hand, were looking for every way possible to link up with, even dissolve into, the masses. For them the question of the armed insurrection remained a distant one—one of preparation only. The Bolsheviks' views, in the words of Axelrod, the senior theoretician of Menshevism, were a "conspiratorial-insurrectionary mixture of anarchist and Blanquist tendencies, dressed up in the terminology of Marxism or Social-Democracy." Whilst he recognised that a rising or risings might become necessary "the party as such, as a political unit, can and should prepare itself and the working masses for that battle by political means and not military, technical, or conspiratorial ones." Against the Bolsheviks Axelrod argued for an "all-Russian workers congress". Martov, another leading Menshevik was also arguing for the forming of 'organs of proletarian self-govern-

MARXISTS

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Trotsky agreed wholly with neither the Bolsheviks nor the Mensheviks as to the likely development of the Russian revolution. With the Bolsheviks he believed that the liberal bourgeoisie could not lead the revolution. Moreover, "apart from social-democracy there is nobody on the battlefield of the revolution" capable of giving that leadership. Lenin believed that social-democracy must lead the insurrection, must take governmental power—but not alone. The petit-bourgeois revolutionary democracy, representing and leading the peasants must share the power.

Further, the workers party in government could not entertain the thought of socialist measures. The broadest, democratic freedoms must be the whole gamut of its programme. Here Trotsky disagreed. To the astonishment of most social-democrats he endorsed the view first stated by Parvus that "The Revolutionary Provisional Government of Russia will be the government of a workers democracy . . . (it) will be social democratic."

Trotsky also held that such a government resting on an alliance with the peasants to solve the land question, inevitably faced with capitalist and landlord sabotage and lock-outs would have to violate the rights of private property, confiscate factories and thus necessarily pass on to 'socialist' not merely 'democratic' tasks.

Insurrection

Trotsky differed most from Lenin and the Bolsheviks sharply on the question of the party. Influenced by the West European model and by Luxemburg's stress on the spontaneous organising capabilities of the proletariat in action he was not to find his way to Lenin's party till 1917. The strengths of Trotsky's overall perspective, of working class power, his tactical flexibility faced with the direct action and initiative of the masses allowed Trotsky to play a prominent role in the climax of the Revolution. He drew from this experience the most systematic understanding of the general strike and its organisational expression the workers council,—the basis for armed insurrection to achieve a workers government. The missing element was however, the party. Without this even a brilliant revolutionary tribune like Trotsky could not, at crucial moments, lead or mobilise the masses to decisive victory.

The strike wave abated in the summer and burst out on a new and massive scale in October. Started by the railway workers as a response to the arrest of a meeting of their delegates, it spread from one major centre to another, until it reached general strike proportions. In Moscow by the 10th October and St Petersburg by 12th and 13th, the cities were at a standstill. It focused openly on political demands, freedom of assembly, the press, the right to organise and for a constituent assembly—to draw up a constitution. The strike gained the support of

the middle class, even closed in protest. Some even compensated the for time lost by the st Constitutional Demo the major party of the bourgeoisie, declared for the strike. Nichol himself isolated in his huge repressive apparat Tsarist state was paral

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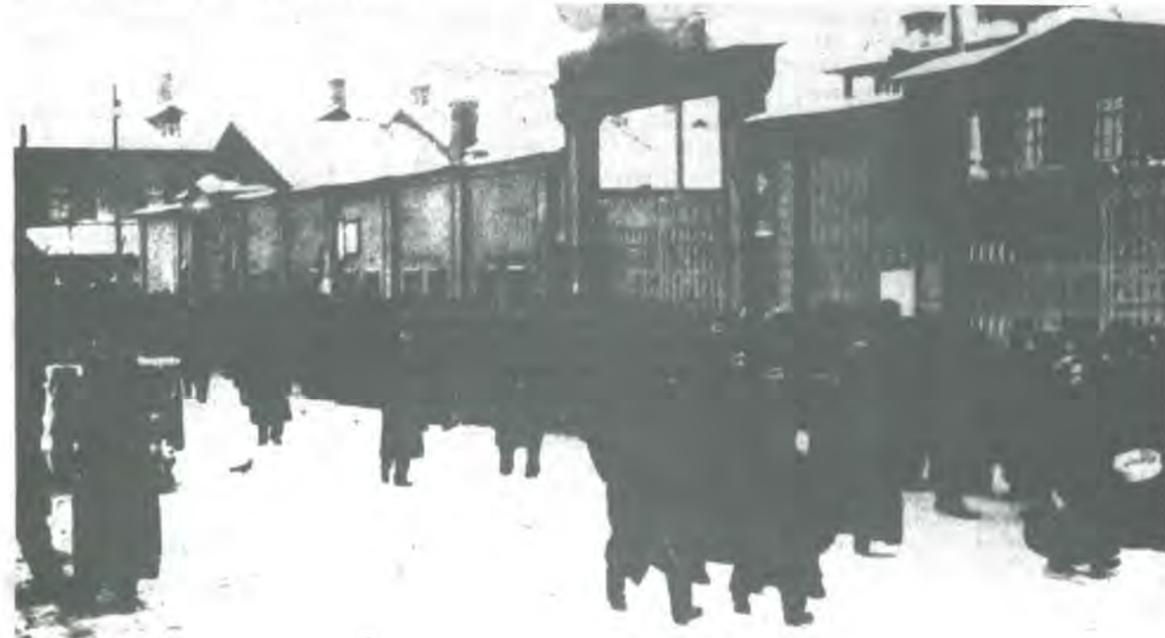
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MARXISTS ANALYSE

ment". Both the Menshevik leaders were guided by two perspectives. The Russian Revolution was a bourgeois revolution which would transfer political power to the bourgeoisie. The working class had to render assistance to this task but maintain its own class independence and organisations. For both Axelrod and Martov the 'normal party' was a mass East European party, like the German Social-Democracy bound up or linked to, mass trade unions. The "workers congress" in their view could act as a basis for fusing the illegal, conspiratorial RSDLP into it to form a 'real' labour party.

Trotsky agreed wholly with neither the Bolsheviks nor the Mensheviks as to the likely development of the Russian revolution. With the Bolsheviks he believed that the liberal bourgeoisie could not lead the revolution. Moreover, "apart from social-democracy there is nobody on the battlefield of the revolution" capable of giving that leadership. Lenin believed that social-democracy must lead the insurrection, must take governmental power—but not alone. The petty-bourgeois revolutionary democracy, representing and leading the peasants must share the power. Further, the workers party in government could not entertain the thought of socialist measures. The broadest, democratic freedoms must be the whole gamut of its programme. Here Trotsky disagreed. To the astonishment of most social-democrats he endorsed the view first stated by Parvus that "The Revolutionary Provisional Government of Russia will be the government of a workers democracy . . . (it) will be social democratic."

Trotsky also held that such a government resting on an alliance with the peasants to solve the land question, inevitably faced with capitalist and landlord sabotage and lock-outs would have to violate the rights of private property, confiscate factories and thus necessarily pass on to 'socialist' not merely 'democratic' tasks.

Insurrection

Trotsky differed most from Lenin and the Bolsheviks sharply on the question of the party. Influenced by the West European model and by Luxemburg's stress on the spontaneous organising capabilities of the proletariat in action he was not to find his way to Lenin's party till 1917. The strengths of Trotsky's overall perspective, of working class power, his tactical flexibility faced with the direct action and initiative of the masses allowed Trotsky to play a prominent role in the climax of the Revolution. He drew from this experience the most systematic understanding of the general strike and its organisational expression the workers council,—the basis for armed insurrection to achieve a workers government. The missing element was however, the party. Without this even a brilliant revolutionary tribune like Trotsky could not, at crucial moments, lead or mobilise the masses to decisive victory.

The strike wave abated in the summer and burst out on a new and massive scale in October. Started by the railway workers as a response to the arrest of a meeting of their delegates, it spread from one major centre to another, until it reached general strike proportions. In Moscow by the 10th October and St Petersburg by 12th and 13th, the cities were at a standstill. It focused openly on political demands, freedom of assembly, the press, the right to organise and for a constituent assembly—to draw up a constitution. The strike gained the support of

the middle class, even the shops closed in protest. Some employers even compensated their employees for time lost by the strike. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) the major party of the Russian bourgeoisie, declared their support for the strike. Nicholas II found himself isolated in his palace, the huge repressive apparatus of the Tsarist state was paralysed.

In these circumstances the most urgent need was to coordinate the strike, to make it total by denying the state forces transport, telegraph links, newspapers, whilst at the same time mobilising these resources for the strikes. The answer was a St Petersburg strike committee—a council of workers deputies, the Soviet. The initiative came from the Mensheviks in the city. On October 10th they called for the election of a "workers committee". For the next three days delegates were elected in the plants (one per 500 workers). Its first meeting on October 13th gathered together 40 deputies. The next day its size had more than doubled whilst on the third, it numbered 226 representatives from 96 factories and 5 trade unions in addition to 3 representatives each from the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. On the 17th October it took the name Soviet rabochi deputatov (Council of Workers Deputies), elected an executive committee of 22, and decided to publish a daily paper (*Izvestia*—News).

Soviet

On the very same day the Tsar was finally forced to make concessions. At first they appeared very significant. In a 'manifesto' he promised "to grant the people the immutable foundations of civil liberty—inviolability of the person and freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and union." Furthermore he promised a State Duma (parliament) which he said would eventually embody "the principle

that no law shall take effect without the approval of the State Duma." The Soviet, whilst it recognised the enormous confession of weakness embodied in the declaration of Nicholas the Hangman warned to the proletariat "We have been given freedom of assembly but our assemblies are encircled by troops. We have been given freedom of speech, but censorship remains inviolate—We have been given personal immunity but the prisons are filled to overflowing with prisoners." Rejecting the Tsar's Manifesto, the Soviet immediately demanded a total amnesty for political prisoners, the withdrawal of all troops from the city, the dismissal of the notorious police chief Trepov and expressed its total no-confidence in the new ministry headed by Count Witte. The strike was continued until October 22nd when it was ceremoniously terminated by huge funeral rallies in honour of those killed by the soldiers during the strike.

The 'good faith' of the Tsar and the reactionary court clique was quickly revealed for what it was in the mushrooming, under police encouragement of, Black Hundred recruited in Trotsky's words from "the petty shop keeper, the beggar, the publican and his perennial clients, the janitor and the police spy, the professional thief and the amateur housebreaker, the small artisan and the brothel door keeper. This sub-proletarian rabble was encouraged to organise pogroms against the Jews, to assault strikers and trade unionists and the socialist press. Its aim was to form a mass social base for reaction—in short many of the functions fascists was to perform in 'advanced' western Europe after the First

LYSE THE GENERAL STRIKE: Part 2

In this, the second in our series of articles on the development and application of the General Strike slogan, MARK HOSKISSON examines the events that took place in Russia in 1905

WORKERS POWER argues that we must organise now for a general strike to smash the Tories' anti-Trade Union laws. We do this in order to defend the interests of the working class against a fundamental and immediate threat. The outcome of such a strike cannot be determined in advance. 1905, a situation dramatically different to that facing revolutionaries today, still shows us some of the possibilities, and drives home vital lessons for the workers movement.



The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

World War. Throughout Russia, some three to four thousand perished in these pogroms. In Petersburg, however, no pogrom took place. The Soviet formed armed fighting detachments some 6,000 strong which broke up the scum before a pogrom could be organised. Regular night patrols were instituted and the working class press guarded.

The Soviet naturally became the focus and the forum for political debate as to the next steps, the way forward to achieve both democratic rights and the workers own class demands. Here the views and programmes of the organised socialists came to the fore—the Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and individuals like Trotsky.

The Bolsheviks understood more sharply than anyone else that the Tsar's regime—its police and military apparatus had to be overthrown by armed insurrection. Further they realised that a firm disciplined party was essential to act as the general staff and cadre of this insurrection. But at first the Bolsheviks adopted a one sided, tactically inflexible attitude to the general strike and, to the soviet of workers deputies. Thus, their Petersburg Committee only decided to call for a general strike on the night of 12th/13th October when it

A Barricade in Moscow.



In October 1905, the railway workers organised a General Strike: this is how Trotsky described the development of the Strike in his book "1905":

"It followed a grandiose plan - that of halting industrial and commercial life in the country at large - and in following this plan it did not overlook a single detail. Where the telegraph refused to serve it, it cut the wires or overturned the telegraph poles. It halted railway engines and let off their steam. It brought the electric power stations to a standstill, and where this was difficult it damaged electric cables and plunged railway stations into darkness. Where it met stubborn resistance, it did not hesitate to disrupt lines, break signals, overturn engines, put obstacles across lines or place railway carriages across bridges. It penetrated into lift systems and stopped the hoisting winches. It halted goods trains wherever it found them, while passenger trains were usually run to the nearest junction or to the place of destination.

Only for its own purposes did the strike allow itself to break the vow of immobility. When it needed news bulletins of the revolution it opened a printing works; it used the telegraph to send out strike instructions; it let trains carrying strikers' delegates pass.

Nothing else was exempt: the strike closed down industrial plants, chemists' and grocers' shops, courts of law, everything."

was already well underway, ordering its mystified agitators before that to "clarify the pros and cons of striking."

The first reaction by Bolshevik leaders to the soviet was suspicious, indeed hostile. Krasikov warned agitators against "this new intrigue by the Mensheviks. . . a non-party Zubatovite (i.e. police provocateur) committee". Bogdanov the leading Bolshevik in Russia saw it as the nucleus of an anti-socialist labour party and decided that the Bolsheviks must force it to accept the Party's programme and the tactical guidance of the central committee. The soviet should "ultimately dissolve in the party." If the Soviet refused then the Bolsheviks would walk out and "expose its anti-proletarian character before the proletarian masses." This ultimatum was submitted on 29th October. The Soviet declined to even debate it. Abashed the Bolsheviks kept their seats.

Trotsky was soon widely recognised as the ideological leader of the soviet. He gave it the political perspective of developing links with the mutineers in the army and navy, of support for Polish resistance to martial law. He repeatedly explained and politically prepared for the armed insurrection. But the Soviet was of necessity a

limited body for this purpose since it was a public body. Secrecy, conspiratorial methods are vital to the technical and organisational preparation of an armed insurrection. Without a party this was not possible. Likewise the Soviet leadership's links with the masses were sufficient for a direct revolutionary advance. But difficult manoeuvres, even a retreat presented problems that could only be solved by a party which had disciplined cadres in every workshop, well-respected and known. Of course no party—not the Bolsheviks—had this yet. But Lenin's first concern was to bend all the energies of his cadres in this direction.

The struggle for the eight hour day burst out spontaneously lasting from October 31st to November 12th. It started as an attempt to impose the reduction in hours by direct action (ie by stopping work after 8 hours). The employers replied by lock-outs. In two weeks the workers were exhausted and the Soviet, with bitterness of heart, had to order a retreat.

Deprived

Parallel to this lock out struggle the Soviet called a six day general strike to protest the government's threat to execute naval mutineers at Kronstadt and the imposition of martial law in Poland. Here again impressive and militant as the strike was at its commencement, exhaustion set in and a retreat had to be ordered when the government had only made a half-concession which spared the sailors lives and announced the future end of martial law. The government, sensing the time was right to put an end to the divided authority in the capital, struck at the Soviet on November 26th arresting Krustalev-Nosar its chairman. Trotsky, long the most militant single figure succeeded him, but the Soviet's days were numbered. On December 3rd, the whole Executive Committee plus two hundred deputies were arrested. The strike which followed petered out—this time after only a few days. Deprived of its leadership the Petersburg proletariat were incapable of maintaining a general strike or transforming it into a rising.

The situation in Moscow differed considerably from that of Petersburg. The ancient capital, its factories, were smaller than the mighty works of Petersburg (Putilov alone had approximately 30,000 workers). The result was that district soviets existed before a central Moscow Soviet and this body when it came into being was indirectly elected—its members were delegates from the local bodies. Bolshevik influence was considerable in Moscow and had been thrown against keeping the

October strike committee in existence. Thus it was November 22nd before the Moscow Soviet first met. It held only four full meetings before the insurrection.

At its last meeting it had only 120 delegates from ninety one factories. The Soviet as a city-wide body was thus weaker than the Petersburg Soviet without its record of fighting for control of the city with the authorities.

On the other hand the Bolshevik organisation was particularly strong in Moscow. The party had a party militia of some thousand members and a 'technical group' charged with preparing the insurrection. The garrison was considerably more disaffected than in Petersburg. Unfortunately the key mutiny in the garrison broke out just before the Bolshevik and the Soviet were ready. The Rostovsky Guards mutinied on December 2nd and elected a 20 man soldiers committee. But their mutiny was suppressed on the 4th. The appeal for a general strike from Petersburg came on 6th December. The Soviet immediately launched the strike and the insurrection followed. The main coordinating body consisting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was arrested on the 8th. Thereafter the rising lost coordination and the fighting became fragmented and of a guerilla type. Deprived of party leadership the Soviet handed over conduct of the rising to the district soviets. Even then the fighting went on until December 18th, only being finally crushed when the Semyonovsky Guards arrived by rail from Petersburg.

Production

Trotsky extended the analysis Luxemburg had made. Luxemburg saw the potential of the mass strike to break the stultifying trade union and electoral routinism of the West European labour movement. She saw it as a tactic that could put the masses on the road to the socialist revolution. Trotsky made this general perspective concrete in a fully developed revolutionary situation. He saw that the mobilisation of the masses for direct economic and political action necessitated a particular form of organisation and the soviet, the council of workers representatives was just this. In his work '1905' Trotsky stressed "The principal method of struggle used by the Soviet was the political general strike. The revolutionary strength of such strikes consists in the fact that acting over the head of capital, they disorganise state power. The greater, the more complete the 'anarchy' caused by the strike, the nearer the strike is to victory. But on one condition only: the anarchy must not be created by anarchic means. The class which, by simultaneous cessation of work, paralyses the production apparatus and with it the apparatus of power, isolating

January 9th: One of the many marches converging on the Winter Palace: Bloody Sunday.



parts of the country from one another and sowing general confusion must itself be sufficiently organised not to become the first victim of the anarchy it has created. The more completely a strike renders the state organisation obsolete, the more the organisation of the strike is obliged to assume state functions. These conditions for a general strike as a proletarian method of struggle were, at the same time, the conditions for the immense significance of the Soviet of Workers Deputies."

The significance of the Soviet is, as Trotsky pointed out, that it "is the organised power of the mass itself over its separate parts. It constitutes authentic democracy, without an upper and lower chamber, without a professional bureaucracy, but with the voters right to recall their deputies at any moment." This element of direct democracy was a facet that Lenin was not to fully recognise until the summer of 1917 when in 'State and Revolution' he understood that the proletariat organ of struggle must become the basis of the workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky understood clearly what the Mensheviks did not that the existing state with its military bureaucratic apparatus had to be overthrown.

Army

The general strike could mobilise the masses for the decisive contest, the seizure of power, but it could not as the anarchists and the syndicalists thought replace this. "The power still has to be snatched from the hands of the old rulers and handed over to the revolution. That is the fundamental task. A general strike only creates the necessary conditions; it is quite inadequate to the task itself". (Trotsky 1905). In 1905 in Petersburg and Moscow the political general strike "completed its mission by putting the opponents face to face"; it "brings the army of the revolution to its feet." If to use Trotsky's phrase, "the Soviet was a workers government in embryo" its birth trauma as a real government had to be the seizure of power.

In 1905 however, Trotsky still underestimated the role the party had to play as organised political leadership with organised roots in the masses. Firstly to point the way from the 'spontaneous' economic mass strike with its varying immediate demands to the political general strike which sets itself clear definite goals. Secondly to the transformation of this at the decisive moment into the insurrectionary strike. Thirdly to provide the technical planning and backbone of the insurrection itself. The role of the party in the soviets was neither to stick a party label on them, to dissolve them into the party, nor to abandon leadership to them. It was to win a majority for its slogans, its tactics, and its strategy for power.

with Moreno openly rejecting the theory of permanent revolution—“the dogma that only the working class can accomplish the democratic tasks is false. Sectors of the urban middle class and the peasantry are on occasion the revolutionary leadership.”

8 ★★★★★★

The Bolshevik Faction attacks the USEC for supporting uncritically the FSLN and the GNR government, for renouncing the need to build a Trotskyist party and for covering up Castro's real position, i.e. his support for a bourgeois democratic regime in Nicaragua. They declare that the SWP leadership represents a 'Castroite current' which, via a caucus with Mandel, has gained hegemony in the USEC and stifled democratic debate and discussion before and at the World Congress which might have enabled the 'FI' to correct this liquidationist 'anti-Trotskyist' position.

They accuse the USEC of having abandoned the method of the Transitional Programme and of adopting a popular frontist programme.

Yet, sharply as the Bolshevik Faction's tactics have diverged from the USEC's over Nicaragua, their fundamental common ground appears considerable.

The BF, for example, appear to share the ambiguity about alternative roads to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie — either through the construction of a revolutionary party or by the FSLN being forced to, 'take radical measures and expel the bourgeoisie' under the impulse of the masses and a hostile imperialism. The BF, like the USEC, see the creation of a bureaucratised / bureaucratically deformed workers' state as a 'second best'. They refer to the, 'glorious years of Castroism' and call for, 'a federation of Nicaragua and Cuba'.

For Trotsky, the bureaucratically deformed workers' state was, both with regard to the proletariat's advance to socialism within it, and in relation to the spread of the revolution, counter-revolutionary. Its progressive aspect lay only in the fact that its ruling bureaucratic caste was forced to defend their own social roots — which lay in the planned, statified economy and the monopoly of foreign trade. With regard to the proletarian vanguard (i.e. the Trotskyists and the spontaneous working class militants who oppose the bureaucrat's dictatorship) the usurpatory bureaucrats behave in a fashion not empirically distinguishable from right-wing dictatorship (i.e. they suppress publications, imprison, torture and even shoot their opponents). The experience of Stalin's Russia, Tito's Yugoslavia, Mao's China, Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam and Castro's Cuba exemplify most or all of these acts of repression. Why? Because the proletariat is objectively compelled to revolutionary struggle against these bureaucratic castes and the Trotskyist programme is one for not only the creation of an independent party but of a revolutionary party.

Therefore, a revolutionary programme in Central America can have no ambiguity with regard to the desirability of the 'Cuban Road'. The latter is the road to Stalinist dictatorship, 'Socialism in One Country' and a bourgeois limit to the revolution in neighbouring states.

9 ★★★★★★

WORKERS POWER recognises the overthrow of Somoza as a major victory for the anti-imperialist forces in Latin America, holding the potential of destabilising the

USA's semi-colonial system in the continent and threatening the whole chain of CIA-backed military dictatorships. Thus, we stand four square with the Nicaraguan revolution against imperial-



ist intervention, blockade or economic sabotage. As Trotskyists, however, we recognise that a lasting victory over imperialism can only be gained if the Nicaraguan anti-imperialist / anti-Somoza revolution becomes 'permanent', i.e. if the working class and its vanguard party press forward to a successful socialist revolution and the anti-imperialist and socialist revolution spreads to the surrounding countries.

The FSLN is a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement dominated by its pro-bourgeois wing who have tied it to the perspective of creating a stable bourgeois regime. They are thus tied to the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie in a popular front. This class alliance dictates 'peaceful co-existence' with the bourgeoisie of the surrounding states (i.e. the betrayal of revolutionary movements within them) and, despite rhetorical fireworks, to US imperialism in the final analysis. It also dictates the re-assembling of the fractured and disarmed state machine.

10 ★★★★★★

The prolonged resistance of Somoza (against US advice) resulted in the destruction of the army/national guard and the arming of the population. It led to the creation of mass workers' and peasants' organisations. The FSLN forces represented the major armed force in the state. Since the fall of Somoza it has, true to its project, set about consolidating its power by disarming the militias, setting up a professional army and police force, and bringing the Sandinista Defence Committees (which grew in the struggle against Somoza and took the form of independent workers' and peasants' councils) under its control. At present, in pursuit of its alliance with the bourgeoisie, the FSLN has taken a series of repressive measures against independent trade union and political organisations. It is possible that, given further attacks by imperialism, via its agents in Nicaragua, the latent bonapartist role of the FSLN will consolidate itself by repression of both the vanguard of the working class and the political forces of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. It cannot be excluded that it may be forced onto the 'Cuban Road' i.e. to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

11 ★★★★★★

The strategic tasks of revolutionaries in Nicaragua today is to win the worker and peasant masses away from the class collaborationist policies of the FSLN. Crucial to this is agitation addressed to the workers and peasants who place their confidence in the FSLN to mobilise to force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie. Thus, all workers and peasants' organisations must be won to the demands:

1. An end to the Sandinista - bourgeois coalition. Kick out the representatives of the bourgeois parties and organisations.
2. Stop the disarming of the militias. Arm the workers and the peasants in a democratically controlled militia with election of officers. Dissolution of the standing army into the militia.
3. For the confiscation, without

The split in the Fourth International



A strong regular army is needed to discourage counterrevolutionary invasions.

SWP (US)'s *Intercontinental Press* (22.10.79) hails the consolidation of a bourgeois state machine.

compensation, of all imperialist holdings in Nicaragua. Expropriation of the big capitalists and landowners under workers' control. Land to those who till it.

4. Immediate cancellation of debts owed to the imperialist powers. Workers' and peasants' inspection of the nationalised banks.

5. An end to repression of the workers' organisations. Freedom of the workers' press, of independent trade unions, of factory and peasant committees. Release of all working class and peasant militants held in jail.

6. For immediate elections through universal suffrage and secret ballot to a sovereign Constituent Assembly.

7. For workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils independent of the FSLN apparatus with free representation of all workers' and revolutionary-democratic parties.

8. For a workers' and peasants' government based on and responsible to the councils and militia, to carry through the full anti-bourgeois, anti-imperialist programme.

Whilst it cannot be ruled out in advance that no sections of the FSLN leadership will be won to elements of this programme or even its entirety, whilst united fronts with sections of the FSLN on these questions will be a vital tactic, no strategic compromise can be made with them on the perspective of a process of 'persuasion' or 'education' of them. The winning of the organised working class and peasants to the programme of revolutionary Marxism is the only effective education for the FSLN leading cadres.

12 ★★★★★★

The Government of National Reconstruction, as its name implies, is using the devastation of the Nicaraguan economy to demand enormous sacrifices from the working class and peasantry. The answer must be — sacrifices for the people's needs, yes — for the capitalists', the imperialist companies' and landowners' profits, no!

Workers' organisations must fight for:
Workers' control and inspection in the factories and in the banks to prevent sabotage and profiteering. For a massive programme of reconstruction under the control of the trade unions and factory committees. Obligatory labour service

for all sections of Nicaraguan society.

The only way to finally break the economic stranglehold of Imperialism is to spread the revolution. Somoza and Carter's defeat has sent shockwaves through the Balkanised states of Central America — For the Socialist Federation of Central America.

13 ★★★★★★

Events in Nicaragua, and the ensuing split in the United Secretariat reveal that no democratic-centralist International exists in the world today. Both the USEC and the international tendencies represented on the Parity Commission set up by the Bolshevik Faction, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency and the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, have no common programme which can be tactically applied in a revolutionary situation. The USEC leaders have abandoned any independent programme or party for the Nicaraguan revolution. The OCRFI leaders offer only a stagist democratic programme. The World Congress of the USEC proved incapable of resisting the collapse into opportunism. Can the World Conference called by the Parity Commission to fight, 'liquidationist revisionism' outline a coherent revolutionary programme or even take a step in this direction? The signatories of the declaration consider that, 'Only the most serious, democratically organised and exhaustive discussion can unmask revisionism and finish it off. It is a matter of the defence of the FI, its programme, its conquests and its continuity and its reconstruction or reorganisation as rapidly as possible.' WORKERS' POWER, of course, believes that any debate on programme, on key tactical questions on an international scale is an important opportunity. The deepening crises of world capitalism have given birth to powerful upheavals in the metropolitan heartlands of Imperialism and to revolutions in the imperialised countries. The most acute situations, Chile, Portugal, Iran, Indo-China, Southern Africa and Nicaragua are measuring rods for the degeneration, or regeneration, of the fragmented tendencies stemming from Trotsky's Fourth International. Only a re-elaborated Transitional Programme which pre-

serves all the key elements of the 1938 document, but which specifically evaluates the consequences of the last 40 years can act as the basis for rallying a new International, democratic-centralist, with authoritative congresses and international leading body. Whether the conference called by the Parity Commission can aid this process is yet far from clear. Also unclear is the exact conditions for attending the conference. The call for a conference is headed, 'Open to All Trotskyist Organisations'. Yet the document itself states that, 'the revisionism ... began with Pablo.' Further, the call is addressed to, 'all the organisations basing themselves on the founding document of the FI, on its foundation in 1938 and its reconstruction in 1943-53, its continuity despite its dislocation in 1951-53 under the effect of Pabloite revisionism.' It would appear that this definition excludes a wide spectrum of groupings considering themselves to be Trotskyist; tendencies which analyse the USSR and other Stalinist states as satate-capitalist, organisations like Lutte Ouvriere that reject the reconstruction of 43-53, 'Pabloite revisionists' etc. etc. And what about the 'Castroite Current' in the USEC itself? Yet the USEC is specifically invited. Considerable 'clarification and discussion' will be needed before the groups claiming to be Trotskyist outside the OCRFI/BF/LTT bloc can make a decision on whether attendance is possible. WORKERS POWER considers that a truly open conference with no preconditions other than each grouping's claim to the Trotskyist programme and its development according to the method of the clarification of positions and principled realignments as posed by the key struggles of our epoch centering, for the moment, on Nicaragua. To that end it will approach the Parity Commission for an answer on these points.

**Workers
Power
Political
Committee**

Open the unions to women workers!

by JANE BRUTON

A crucial component of the Tory strategy is their attack on working women - their rights and their jobs. Faced with massive unemployment levels the bosses and their government are only too willing to drive working class women, the most "expendable" section of the workforce, out of jobs and back into the isolation of the home. Vicious cuts in social expenditure, redundancies, proposed cuts in maternity benefits and, through the backdoor of a private members bill, an attack on the existing abortion rights, are their methods of realising their aim. In manufacturing industries they will play on male chauvinism to keep the workforce weak and divided, fostering "women out first" solutions.

Women are being hammered on every front of their lives - as workers, as wives, as mothers and as daughters. Patrick Jenkin has heard it on "good authority" that all of today's social problems from vandalism to political violence stem from children having been separated from their mothers during the second world war. This Tory minister for Health and Social Services, and seemingly part-time child psychologist, spelt out his meaning clearly: "I am convinced that a mother is by far the best person to look after her young children." (Our emphasis).

Nonsense

This nonsense has one purpose - to justify the savaging of the social services that Jenkin is overseeing. These attacks are throwing thousands of working class women out of jobs so that they will be forced to carry out the caring tasks for the sick, the old and the young that the state is no longer willing to carry out. These attacks are just as much a part of the Tories' attempts to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis as, for example, the attack on Leyland, and they must be met by direct action by women and male workers.

The reactionary ambitions of the Tories are illustrated by looking at the size of the section of the working class that they are forcing to bear the brunt of their cuts. Over the last 20 years the proportion of women in the workforce has risen to 41%. The 4 million women in the trade unions represent 20% of the organised labour movement. These working women have not simply been passively recruited. Struggles at Trico, Grunwicks, in the public sector and elsewhere, show that women have matched their increase in organisation with an increase in militancy. It is still the case, however, that the trade unions tend to exclude women from active involvement in their structures and their affairs. The struggles are noticeable as exceptions: exclusion is the norm. Unions have systematically failed or refused to take into account the domestic pressures on women that do not affect their male members. Location and timing of meetings and a persistent

lack of childcare facilities make it impossible for women to play the same prominent role in unions that men are able to.

The overwhelming majority of working women are to be found in the service industries, the public sector. At work they are pushed into playing the same "caring" roles that are their lot in the home. The very nature of these jobs, their supposedly vocational aspects, seem to obstruct the development of trade union militancy. The public sector, made up of many part-time women workers, is, not surprisingly, a poorly organised sector. The union that organises the majority of these women is the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE). It is instructive to examine how this union, made up for the most part of women, matches up to the needs of its members.

In the last 10 years the number of women workers in NUPE has increased by 329%. The pressure of having so many working class women beneath its banner was illustrated by the lead headline of the union's November '79 journal. "Tories Hit Working Women" it announced, but nowhere in that issue were any action proposals aimed at hitting back to be found. Indeed the very structures of this union militate against the active participation of the majority of its members. NUPE is the fifth largest union in Britain and has 530,000 women members, over ¾ of the entire union (712,312 members). In education 90% of the manual workers are NUPE women, while in health the figure is 67%. Despite these figures, NUPE remains a male-dominated union.

Anomaly

In 1974 only 37% of NUPE's stewards in education were women - this out of a 90% female workforce. The same picture existed in health, where women comprised only 37% of the stewards - more than in education but still leaving a male majority amongst the stewards representing a majority of female members.

Following a report from a group of researchers, NUPE were shamed into holding a special con-

BUT NO FIGHT FOR NUPE WOMEN



ference to deal with this anomaly. A document, "Organisation and Change in NUPE", pointed to women's oppression in society at large, and argued that the union was reflecting this through male domination of the apparatus. Quick to ensure that "fair play" was seen to be done, Fisher and Co., firm in their bureaucratic saddle, introduced reforms. Five of the twenty-six seats on the Executive Committee were to be specially reserved for women, and women stewards were to be encouraged to win facilities at work that would enable them to carry out their union tasks effectively. At present the EC has 8 women on it, but apart from this there are no other organisational forms that could tackle the manifold difficulties that confront women. The lack of an organised women's section and the discouragement of women's caucuses, the absence of a paper specially aimed at women, and the failure to orient union training schemes towards women all underline the inadequacy of the existing machinery in NUPE for dealing with the specific needs of the vast bulk of its members.

Control

The positive discrimination in favour of women on the EC is window-dressing. It was a move to pacify, not a measure to mobilise, the women members. It did not arise out of rank and file pressure but was the response of embarrassed bureaucrats to an academic report that pointed out the unacceptable level of male control over the union. On their own, women EC members can achieve little, and are just as likely to be integrated into the officialdom as men. Only a nationally organised women's section, to which such EC members would be directly responsible and which could guide the policies of the EC members, support them in struggles against the other members of the EC.

Although women's caucuses are allowed by NUPE's constitution, the officials discourage their creation in the localities. They argue that meetings are open and democratic and that women can participate and speak at them if they wish. One wonders why this isn't therefore the case - why branch meetings are dominated by male officials. Meetings are usually out of work time and away from the workplace. In short they exclude women, not constitutionally, but by failing to take stock of their domestic commitments. A common plea from local officials, whose wives are usually at home minding kids, is that husbands should carry out the necessary childminding activities to allow women to attend union meetings. They reduce the problem to an individualised struggle between husband and wife. They perpetuate the problem they claim to be fighting.

The same problem arises with regards to women stewards. Verbal encouragement is all very well, but if provisions are not made to give women the time to fulfill all of the obligations of stewardship, then they will be understandably reluctant to take on such positions. This is compounded by the union's failure to make its training schemes accessible to women. At a recent conference of Nurses in Defence of Trade Union Rights, a nursing shop steward pointed out that she had had to leave the training school she was attending early every day to go and pick up her kids from school. No creche facilities had been provided by the union for the duration of the training scheme. NUPE's policy seems to be one of practically obstructing what it nominally encourages!

Motion

The scanty organisational facilities that NUPE provides for the majority of its members is matched, if not surpassed, by its policies on women's issues. Formally it is committed to abortion on demand, equal pay and opportunities, nursery facilities and so on. But fighting for these policies, even debating them in the union, is a mammoth task for women militants. At the 1979 conference there were only two motions that related specifically to women. One was an anti-abortion motion, which fell, the other a call for better childcare facilities. These comprised merely half a page in the 60-page report of the conference! Once again NUPE reveals its talent for combining faultless theory with abysmal practice.

The low pay issue is central for NUPE's working class women members - they are the low paid, they are the hardest hit. Last winter NUPE initiated a campaign against low pay and for a minimum wage of £60. Launching the campaign which led to the "winter of discontent" the gallant champion of

working class women Alan Fisher declared that he was out "to eradicate low pay in the public services". He wanted to "win a fair deal for the exploited low paid workers in the public services". He is even inconsistent in his rhetoric - on the one hand he wants to get rid of low pay, on the other he accepts its maintenance but asks for a fair deal. The inconsistent rhetoric revealed the inconsistent policy. The £60 target was ditched in favour of the Clegg comparability report which eventually offered 20%. This offer gave the increased rates of inflation, leaves the low paid worse off now, and that after a winter of struggle. Fisher sees the whole thing as a great success story, stating that "If the government had offered 20% at the beginning of the year the strikes could well have been avoided and we might still have a Labour government".

Backsliding

So the £60 was never a real aim, despite the needs of the ancillaries, the nurses and NUPE's other low paid workers, mainly women. But then NUPE was originally prepared to accept even less than 20%. When the water workers were offered 14% Fisher hailed this as a breakthrough that demonstrated "that the government can be persuaded to find more money for essential services".

The real effects of this backsliding on pay are being felt for the most part by women who are in the lowest paid jobs, often working on a part-time basis. NUPE kept the majority of these women out of last winter's action by operating a policy of selective strikes. The union accepted the argument of the press and the bosses that an all-out strike would cause hardship and possibly deaths to the public. They accepted that their members would be responsible for such an outcome. Many hospital workers, ancillaries and nurses, were held back from being involved in their own struggle.

When the struggle, run by the officials, was sold out by the officials, leaving those women on low rates of pay, they opened the way to demoralisation. The will of women to be involved in a union that seemed to be selling them out was weakened, future participation was undermined, and the possibility of women turning actively against the union was risked.

If NUPE's bravado on low pay fails to stand the test of close examination, then the traditional cosmetic of social policy also fails to save face. The EC translated the union's radical position on abortion by calling on divisions to send 50 delegates to the TUC Anti-Corrie march in October '79. But no campaign was mounted inside the union on abortion to mobilise the members, let alone the divisional delegates, and the



NUPE members lead Low Paid Workers demonstration - January 1979 in London

Andrew Ward (Report)

EC decision was lost in an obscure circular to district officials. Only in a handful of places did the decision filter through to the branches. Many NUPE activists only heard of the decision through the National Abortion Campaign.

Cuts

To add insult to injury, the EC refused to take action against three NUPE-sponsored Labour MPs who voted for the anti-abortion Corrie Bill, against Union policy. At the 1979 conference it was agreed that MPs "accepting sponsorship should do so on the basis that where they do not act in accordance with NUPE's policies...their sponsorship will be withdrawn". Paper support for women's rights but a refusal even to put its own house in order on the issue, is a hallmark of the practice of NUPE's officialdom.

On the cuts, hitting nurseries, schools and hospitals, thereby affecting women as users and workers, the EC at a special meeting in November 1979 promised that the union would "respond in a very militant way to this latest act of Tory political vandalism". The record suggests the opposite. NUPE did little nationally to mobilise support for the anti-cuts demo in Lambeth in early November. Despite its turn-out on November 28th, we need only recall that almost 3 years ago to the very day, 80,000 public sector workers marched on a similar demonstration. Fisher gave a rousing 'left' speech, but after that what did the NUPE leadership do to initiate action to stop Labour's cuts? In the meantime while NUPE at the official level have sat idly by, women have been made redundant, services have been run down and for good measure, the pay battle was lost. The adverts in Tribune, plus a few posters and leaflets have been the sum total of NUPE's campaign against the cuts so far. Such half-hearted action will undoubtedly be greeted with cynicism by the thousands of people, particularly women, who are under threat from the Tory axe.

The resistance to the Tory offensive requires maximum working class unity. In order to overcome the division along sex lines that exists within workers organisations, the 4 million women trade unionists must be drawn into action.

Facade

More conscious trade unionists - usually male - have traditionally looked on women workers as the most backward and least conscious sections of the workforce. But only at their peril will they fail to challenge the structures and policies of the trade unions that diminish women's involvement and combativity. If that fight is not taken up now, less organised women workers, with a low degree of identification with the organised labour movement, will be used against the more conscious sections of the working class.

The example of NUPE shows that we cannot rely on the liberal facade displayed by the trade union leaders. Unions have not escaped the effects of prejudices in society at large. This is blatantly obvious with regard to women in NUPE. One or two formal shops substitute for the full and active integration of NUPE's thousands of women. To counter this we must win militants, particularly women, to a campaign to open the unions up to women workers. Women's sections must be built, must be open to all women members, and must have statutory representatives on all union committees. Caucuses should be encouraged so that women can meet

separately, not to hive off their concerns but to prepare for raising them with confidence in branch meetings, on stewards committees and so on. On committees and for stewards positions positive discrimination should be implemented, backed up with accessible training schemes designed to overcome the problems that many women face. Workplace union meetings in work time should be the norm for all branches and creche facilities must be won from the employers so that women will not be held back by childcare from union activities. In every workplace a massive recruitment drive, using relevant propaganda, needs to be initiated to unionise the many unorganised women in the workforce. In fighting for such measures women will develop the confidence and ability to challenge the dominance of the entrenched bureaucracy in the unions and link up with rank and file male trade unionists around common struggles.

Changes

Organisational changes are crucial but they will be meaningless without a fight to force unions to become the real and active champions of women's rights. In NUPE this means taking up the fight for a minimum wage, raising it from £60 to £90 and defending wage rises against inflation by a rise of 1% for every 1% cost of living rise, as calculated by price committees of trade unionists and housewives. Such committees can draw in working class women whether they are at work or in the home, and as such will strengthen the unity of the whole working class. Sections of largely women workers such as nurses should be protected from attacks on their trade union rights. NUPE must defend all nurses who strike against victimisation by the General Nursing Council who have ruled that strike action would be classed as professional misconduct. Such a fight would have to be linked in to the general struggle against the Tories' attacks on the trade unions.

Above all, women militants must be won to direct action against the cuts and closures, and against low pay. Strikes, occupations, pickets and demonstrations should all involve women to the full - reserved places on strike committees, special meetings, childcare facilities should all be integral features of strikes involving women. This way a solid basis for unity, for defending a woman's right to work, to a living wage can be laid. To enable women to work and lead unhindered lives, NUPE and other unions must draw up battle plans that must involve strike action, to win the right for women to control their own fertility - free abortion on demand and free contraception, 24 hour nursery facilities, guaranteed maternity and paternity leave and pay, are all demands that can break up the family chains that capitalism uses to enslave women.

Fighting for these policies in NUPE and other unions will not be easy. But if NUPE's 530,000 women can be turned into an active vanguard then they could become the rallying focus for thousands of other working class women, drawing them into struggles. And such struggles need not stop at winning a fairer deal under capitalism. A working class women's movement, won to communist policies, led politically by revolutionary communist women could contribute to destroying capitalism and replacing it with the direct rule of the working class, an achievement that would lay the basis for getting rid of women's oppression altogether.

Miners sold short again

The result of the National Union of Mineworkers' ballot has caused un-disguised glee from the Thatcher government. It was greeted by Joe Gormley with scarcely less delight, 'Let's get on with the job and get the damn thing accepted'.

The Left on the NUM executive will, doubtless, blame business-man (and business-unionist) Joe for the failure to secure a settlement safely above the soaring rate of inflation.

On the face of it they will be right. Gormley has campaigned, via the bosses' press, against the claim that was accepted by conference, against the executive's recommendation in the ballot, against the conference decision on a November settlement date.

He offered to accept the NCB's proposal if they raised it by a paltry 5% and swung a majority of the executive behind him. He declared that he hoped, 'to get the problem sorted out without industrial aggro' and has offered another dose of the deadly medicine of productivity - dealing, "I hope we can keep on increasing production and productivity. That is what we are in the game for."

Such disarming frankness is to be commended. Joe's 'game' is quite clear. It is the Tories' game. More pay only at the expense of miners' health, lives and conditions, and only for a minority of the workforce.

This strategy appeals to Gormley and his supporters not primarily because he is a bosses man (or because he himself is a company director) but because he is a bureaucrat, committed to bargaining within the system even when the system dictates (i.e. needs to make increased profits) worsening pay and conditions for the majority of his members. The prod. deals do not directly put any more money in his pocket. They do divide and weaken the fighting strength of his members. They avoid the, 'industrial aggro' that makes his sell-outs resistable by the

rank and file.

The record of the Left should, however, come under the close scrutiny of militants. Scargill and Mc Gahey have smugly thanked 'their' miners in Yorkshire and Scotland for the 'vote of confidence' that they regard their regional pro-strike votes as representing. Now, as good democrats, they will send their troops home for another year.

But, in fact, they did little or nothing to block and, when necessary, disrupt, Gormley's sell-out of the full claim. The ballot should not have been allowed to proceed whilst the issue facing miners was a strike for 5%. It should not have proceeded whilst Ezra's propaganda, containing the direct threat of pit-closures and job losses effectively went unanswered. The Lefts had no determined answer to the questions, "Where will the money come from?" and, "How do we save our jobs?" In fact these 'lefts' have already fallen back on the reactionary recipe of import controls. Scargill and Emyln Williams want to stop imports of Australian and American coal. "I think it is economic madness to rely on a policy of imported coal" Scargill exclaimed.

In a strike situation these, Internationalists' would doubtless call on their Australian and American brothers to help them by blacking exports. Yet now they appeal against the interests of foreign miners to Britain's 'national interest' and to what's good for 'British industry'.

Gormley has used the divisions between the various NUM areas saved by the productivity deal and the grossly undemocratic structure of the NUM to trounce the 'Lefts', as he has done every year since 1974. Yet Scargill can say complacently that he is, 'used to a movement away from conference decisions'. So he might be - but what does he intend to do about it? The answer is simple. Nothing. Why? Because

King Arthur keeps his seat in Barnsley on top of the same structure as keeps the right wing bosses safe in their respective bailiwicks.

Militant rank and file miners will have to develop a strategy that is radically different from that of Scargill, Mc Gahey and Williams. They must organise themselves to fight for a fundamental restructuring of the union that will make it impossible for leaders, 'left or right, to, 'move away from conference decisions'.

Firstly, miners must transform the pit organisation so that their branch/lodge committee men are elected in working time to directly represent sections of the membership and are instantly recallable. The balloting system must be changed so that pit head meetings of all members hear the proposed claim and the arguments for and against it and then vote on it. Delegates should be mandated to a national meeting of pit delegates that alone can accept or reject an offer.

The areas must be represented on the executive solely on the basis of their numerical size, without special over-representation for craft or foremen status.

A clear fight must be launched against any redundancies and to revoke the productivity agreements, consolidating them into the basic rate on the basis of parity with the best paid areas.

A clear commitment must be secured that the national union will respond with solidarity strikes and blacking in support of all miners facing redundancy.

The executive committee of the militant areas must be forced to call a conference of delegates from their pits to reject Gormley's pay deal, to resist the productivity strings and to prepare action now to ensure that Ezra and Gormley are not left to rule the roost once again.

Traitor number one

(cont'd from page 1)

their own members cautioned along side Robinson, offered to make the action official but bowed to the AUEW's 'precedence' in the matter. When Duffy executed his climb down, Evans of the TGWU called off the action.

Duffy ordered the return to work after a meeting with Edwardes which Duffy had been clamouring for ever since the dispute started. The AUEW inquiry, on which the call to go back to work was based, is to consider whether Robinson has been 'fairly' or 'unfairly' dismissed. It is dominated by rightwingers. One of its members, John Weakley, is best known for dragging the union through the courts in a row about Scanlon's use of a casting vote. Having met once, on December 5th, the inquiry immediately decided to adjourn for 12 days!!

Whatever its outcome, the inquiry is designed to break the momentum of the campaign to reinstate Robinson, to leave Robinson isolated after de-escalating the action on his behalf.

After his meeting with Edwardes, Duffy cheerfully said, "We have got the show back on the road." What he meant was that they had got the strike well off the rails. Duffy had been browbeaten by BL butcher 'Sir Michael' who had told him that, "...if we made the strike official every one on strike would be sent his cards at home on December 4th."

The bigger the threat, the more you retreat - that is Duffy's

wretched bureaucratic logic.

The issues at stake are bigger than the reinstatement of Derek Robinson alone. The right wing AUEW executive is set on turning their union into a tightly policed unit on the lines of their right wing predecessor, Carron, and their fusion partner Frank Chapple's EEPTU. They are prepared to connive at management sackings and to demoralise the membership to get their way. Either the right wing leaders will turn this massive union into a wretched hulk incapable of standing up to the Tories and the employers, or these leaders must be booted out.

Broad Left

In the face of the assault the tactics of the Communist Party-dominated Broad Left are not enough. They intend to orchestrate a campaign of no confidence in the executive. At the same time they hope to patch up their own tattered election machine to pit the ill-starred Bob Wright as their candidate against Duffy in the next elections.

If the Broad Left really wanted to force the issue against the right wing they would have supported calls for the recall of the AUEW's lay National Committee. At such a recall meeting they could have forced a reversal of the executive's position, since it is on the National Committee that the Broad Left's strength is concentrated. Instead they



Terry Duffy

opposed recalling the NC.

An active campaign must be waged for a recalled National Committee to reverse the executive's decision. A national stewards' conference should be held - sponsored by branches, districts and shop stewards' committees if the union leaders will not call it. That conference's job should be to organise national action for Robinson's reinstatement and for the overthrow of the right-wing executive.

The traitor Duffy, and his allies, must be ousted from the AUEW leadership by a new leadership based on the rank and file and fighting uncompromisingly for the real interests of the AUEW membership. The need for a national shop stewards movement, won to communist politics and led by revolutionaries has never been more urgent.

workers power

Save the jobs, Stop the wage cut

THE LEADERS of the main steelworkers union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) have called a national strike for January 2nd. It will be the first national strike since 1926. It has been called in response to management's wage offer of 2% — which, in the light of 17½% inflation is clearly an insult to all steelworkers.

The bosses of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) knew full well that such an offer could not possibly satisfy their workers. Nonetheless they went ahead with it because they felt confident that they could force it through. Why?

We have only to look at the record of the ISTC on the question of jobs to see the reason for their confidence. In 1974, the BSC workforce stood at 228,000. Today it is down to 182,000. Bemoaning the £800,000 a day loss that BSC has been making since April the BSC has recently declared its intention of shedding a further 55-60,000 jobs over the next two years.

The consequences of this unprecedented attack on jobs will be felt by every steelworker in Britain.

The plants facing the chop immediately are Corby and Shotton, where upwards of 15,000 are scheduled to be thrown on the dole. BSC have proposed that the Port Talbot plant lose a further 2,000 jobs. These sackings will follow on a total of 4,000 redundancies in BSC since March this year.

In the face of this jobs slaughter the response from the major steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) has been lamentable. The ISTC has, under the rightwing leadership of Bill Sirs, consistently accepted the run down of BSC over the past several years. Indeed, at Port Talbot, the union has already agreed to the loss of 530 jobs as part of a streamlining agreement before the latest proposals were announced.

Now, however, things have got out of hand and the full scale sackings that are taking place will inevitably weaken both the credibility and the base of the union. This consideration has forced even Sirs into activity — of a sort. When other unions, notably the GMWU, voted 35-1 against action to defend jobs at Corby and backed away from a fight to save the Corby steelworks, Sirs boldly announced, 'We can definitely go it alone and have exactly the same impact as if the other unions joined in.'

This bravado of early November was soon replaced by the tentative suggestion from Sirs to Tory industry man Keith Joseph that one way to save Corby might be to sell it off to private enterprise!

The ISTC campaign in defence of Corby, and other threatened plants has amounted to half-hearted protests, summed up in one section of the action proposals in a circular from Sirs to all Branch secretaries and dated November 2nd. 'Letters will be sent to Mr. Callaghan, the leader of the Opposition and other Members of Parliament to make representations for a public inquiry into the industry and to persuade the

government to change their existing policy with regard to the industry.'

The action proposals — selective strikes and an 'embargo' on overtime — underline the main thread of the campaign — protest aimed at changing the Tories' minds. It is little wonder that the failure of the union to mount a serious fightback caused the Shotton workers to vote overwhelmingly to accept redundancy payments. This is a blow to workers at Corby, but the responsibility for it lies at the feet of Sirs who has kept his union away from any action or struggles for years.

This blow, and the threat of some 60,000 more sackings in the pipeline, have forced Sirs to again don a militant mantle. From giving timid advice to Joseph he declared on 30th November, 'I was not going to plead with that man (Joseph) or the Tory government without the backing of strike action'.

Note that pleading is still the main plank of his approach to negotiations! Even more obnoxious is the notion that this man, after years of sabotaging his own union and keeping it a tame house union for BSC, is now posing as a militant and even suggesting that he is not getting enough support from his members.

Fightback

For steelworkers the strike from January 2nd must be the starting point both of a fightback against redundancies and low pay and also to oust the right wing leadership of their unions. Sirs has called the strike primarily because the stand taken by management underlined his past weakness in fighting for his members' interests. Past experience shows that he will try to use the strike solely to make BSC take his union seriously, not to make it back down all along the line.

British steelworkers will need to take a leaf out of the book of their French brothers if BSC is to be forced to back down on pay and jobs.

All plants threatened with closure should be occupied and the transportation of steel be prevented by flying pickets of road and rail transport. In this militants will find themselves up against the determinants not only of BSC but of the Tory government as well. To coordinate and enforce it will need the creation of a new leadership based on the rank and file, stewards' committees and occupation committees.

At a time when the Tories are introducing their new laws against the unions this action must be spread as widely as possible, involving not only the steel unions. In this way the fight to maintain steelworkers jobs and wages can be the starting point for a struggle to defend the interests of the whole working class.

Stop the witch hunt



Derek Robinson leads the march against his victimisation, Birmingham, November 26th.

Andrew Ward (Report)

ROBINSON'S victimisation by the Leyland management is a defeat for all workers. It clears the decks for Edwardes to sack 25,000 Leyland workers. It will encourage employers everywhere where whp are set on breaking shop floor organisation. A wave of attempted victimisations will surely follow in the wake of Edwardes success.

Despite Tory claims that the victimisation of Robinson was a 'Leyland only affair', it is an important test case for them in their bid to shackle the unions. A defeat for Longbridge workers, with their reputation for strong organisation, will create a favourable balance of forces for them to launch their legal attack.

Edwardes is out to break shop steward organisation in BL. By sacking Robinson, and threatening Adams, Brindle and Clarke, he was putting the 'unofficial' Combine Committee to the test. This body, composed largely of senior stewards, has long been recognised as a voice to be heard by both the union officials and the management. Edwardes needed to smash it before it could become a focus of opposition to his redundancy plans.

Boosted by the results of his ballot, which, he claims, proves that the stewards are not representative of their members, he has launched his attack on the leading steward in the combine committee. Pat Lowry, BL's personnel officer, spelt this out when he said, "Mr. Robinson was not disciplined in his capacity as the Longbridge convenor but as chairman of the Leyland Combine Trade Union Committee."

crisis

Trade Union organisation in BL faces an acute crisis. A leading convenor has been victimised by management and stabbed in the back by the Trade Union officials. A ballot has 'sanctioned' 25,000 sackings. Management has replied to a £24 claim with a pathetic 5% offer, tied to accepting an 85 page document which outlines management's requirements for speed up, the abolition of mutuality and mobility of the workforce at management's discretion.

The responsibility for this state of affairs does not simply lie with the right wing officials. Robinson and his CP supporters have grovelled before Edwardes. They have supported his participation machinery and his plans for Leyland ... until this time round !!

They organised no fight around the closure of Speke. In fact under Robinson's leadership shop floor organisation has been disarmed and demobilised to the extent that Edwardes could dare to kick 'Robbo' in the teeth — and get away with it.

A divided and demoralised workforce will be easy meat for Edwardes. The only alternative is a decisive reply — against all sackings,

for the immediate reinstatement of Robinson and for the full claim.

The call of the Cobine Committee to refuse to accept the transfer of work from threatened plants must be taken up now. The perspective of occupations, not the fruitless, unpaid work-ins, must be adopted to halt all threatened closures and the movement of plant and machinery.

Only if this policy is adopted by those plants not facing immediate redundancy can the workers in the 13 plants where sackings are due know that their jobs will not go the way of those at Speke.

arguments

To carry through this course of action, shop stewards cannot rely on simple trade union loyalty, old methods of communication with their members to win the arguments.

A very real crisis is facing militants. At Longbridge, for example, no mass meetings have been called on the sacking, the plan or the wage deal, for fear that they would be lost. This is a false comfort for stewards. Staving off defeat in the short term by not calling section and mass meetings will only fuel the possibilities of an anti-strike backlash in the long term.

Newspapers and bulletins, open to all shop floor opinions, must become regular features of shop-floor life. So must regular report back meetings. Only in this way will militants be able to counter the lies and distortions which are the stock in trade of the newspapers that most workers read.

conference

In addition to this a genuine shop-stewards movement must be built, not just of senior stewards and not just from particular plants. A first step should be the calling of a national shop stewards conference by either the Combine or the Longbridge stewards committee. Such a conference should have as its immediate aim the creation of a national action committee to fight the plan and win reinstatement for Robinson.

Only extensive shop floor democracy can ensure that any future phoney ballots called by the bosses are opposed by a workforce that is conscious of its separate class interests.

BL stewards have declared that, "We call on our members not to accept the imposition of changed working methods with the elimin-

ation of mutuality and continued low wages that the company seeks to establish on the back of the ballot result."

rearming

That call must be supported and turned into active opposition around the demand that BL meet the full claim of £24 across the board plus inflation proofing, and for a reduction in hours.

Only by the wholesale rearming of the shop floor organisation can Edwardes be stopped. The alternatives are either the further discrediting of the BL trade union organisation and demoralisation of the workforce, or an emergency campaign by militants to mobilise the entire BL workforce into action that can put their job-slashing bosses into headlong flight.

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