

# Workers power

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## SOVIET WORKERS SHOW THEIR ANGER

# REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

**MILLIONS** of Soviet workers have used the opportunity provided by elections to the Supreme Soviet to say exactly what they think of the bureaucracy that rules them. In city after city working class voters said no to the candidates most clearly identified with the privileges and oppressive rule of the bureaucracy.

Whatever Mikhail Gorbachev may have thought he was doing when he created a new electoral system in the Soviet Union, the elections have enabled the Soviet workers to give voice to their own frustrations at Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

All around them they hear talk of radical change. Yet material life, if anything, is changing for the worse. The election gave them the means to serve notice to the ruling bureaucracy, that they are not prepared to go on in the old way.

In Moscow the City Mayor was fought to a dead heat by a working class woman, leader of a team of house painters. He refused to be interviewed by *Moscow News* because he was too busy. She told the paper,

"My rival is certainly a worthy person, but I intend to fight him. We workers have a lot of problems. And that's why I'm precisely the one who should stand up for the interests of working people."

### Victories

Those who "stand in lines" at the shops—as opposed to those with special shops and perks to save the queuing—scored victories time and time again in the elections.

In the USSR's second largest city, Leningrad,

Gorbachev's loyal Politburo member, Solovyov, was struck off the voting paper by 55% of the electorate in a working class district.

Most significantly, Leningrad's party boss Anatoly Gerasimov received only 15% of the vote compared with 74% for a 28 year old shipyard worker.

### Struck off

In Kiev party leader Masik and Mayor Zgursky, both standing unopposed, were struck off the register by most electors. Two thirds of the voters struck off Masik's name.

In the Baltic republics only party leaders supporting demands for greater national independence were returned.

In Armenia, where national feelings run high after Gorbachev's refusal to grant Nagorno Karabakh's demand to join Armenia, opposition to the bureaucratic regime took a different form. Officials had to keep the polling booths open for an extra two hours to even meet the 50% quorum required.

In Moscow Boris Yeltsin, kicked out of the Politburo 18 months ago for his open attacks on bureaucratic privilege, was swept to a decisive victory winning almost 90% of the vote.

Yeltsin's ability to relate to the anger of the masses, his openly populist cam-



paign, which mobilised thousands of workers in factory meetings and street demonstrations, stands as a warning to Gorbachev of the dangers he and his clique of rulers face as the mighty Soviet working class is roused from decades of political slumber.

What the elections will mean for the USSR's political future is not yet certain. Over 2,000 elected deputies are now due to vote in a supreme Soviet of just over 500. That in turn will elect a President, presumably Mikhail Gorbachev.

The election results, in reality, give him a stronger platform to stand as the only man who can hold the ring between Yeltsin and Ligachev, as the candidate who can stand above the factions.

80% of the election's can-

didates were members of the Soviet Communist Party. Of the 2,000 elected representatives a significant proportion represent the nominees of "social" organisations such as the All-Union Voluntary Temperance Society and the All-Union Society of Inventors and Rationalisers.

### Decide

In the last analysis the ruling bureaucracy will decide on the composition of the new Supreme Soviet.

But that bureaucracy remains riven with conflict. Gorbachev's ability to hold the competing factions in any kind of unified leadership is further weakened by the election results.

Gorbachev himself received a blow when twelve Central Committee mem-

bers voted against him in the election of the Party's 100 guaranteed seats. Ligachev did even worse, with 78 rejections.

The Soviet press has an air of embarrassed silence about the results. Press chief Gennady Gerasimov has expressed the shock to the bureaucracy delivered by the working class by announcing that: "The Party will decide why it happened".

Sorry Mr Gerasimov, the workers already know why it happened. It happened because the working class will no longer tolerate the system for which you are the spokesperson.

The working class of the USSR has spoken. But these elections are not enough. Even if a Supreme Soviet of 500 Yeltsinites was elected, the political power, the obscene privi-

leges and the parasitic rule of the bureaucracy would remain, in all fundamentals, intact.

Attempts to reform the bureaucracy, however radical they may be, are doomed to failure. They cannot change its essentially counter-revolutionary nature. They cannot overcome its determination to preserve its reactionary rule.

Only the independent organisation of the working class under the leadership of a revolutionary party can, through political revolution, sweep away all the bureaucratic obstacles that today block the transition to real communism in the USSR.

**Forward to  
the political  
revolution!**

## THATCHER Friend of the earth?

IT IS not so long ago that Thatcher regarded environmentalists as part of "the enemy within".

Now she claims to have joined their ranks. At a meeting of the Royal Society last September she astonished everyone by delivering an "impassioned appeal on behalf of the planet". Since then she has spoken out on ecological causes from world population growth to the greenhouse effect. Last month she presided over a 110 nation conference on the threat to the ozone layer.

What has caused such a transformation? Her supporters claim that she had been "profoundly affected" by a report on the world's climate written by her UN Ambassador Sir Crispin Tickell, an amateur climatologist. *Marxism Today* sees it simply as one of the indicators that "an important and possibly permanent shift in the politics of the environment took place in 1988".

For the likes of Jonathan Porritt of Friends of The Earth who reject the view that the environment is a class issue, Thatcher's green turn is taken at face value. She is applauded as having "done as much for raising the profile of environmentalist issues... as any other politician in our country". Even the *Economist* has declared that "Green is the world's new political colour".

There are, in fact, hard political considerations behind Thatcher's new found concern for the environment. First, it represents a necessary response to the outbreak of attacks on the government's envi-

ronmental record. For Thatcher, the consummate politician, the important thing is to appear to be doing something.

Secondly it relates to the growing middle class fear of the threat of further house building spilling out into a sanitised countryside—the green belt. Thirdly it coincides with the fact that "greenness" has been shown to be profitable.

Two major marketing organisations undertook studies which show that many consumers (particularly women in the south east) would prefer to buy a "greener" product. This has seen Tesco, followed by Sainsbury's, launch their Green Consumer campaigns.

Finally it enables the government to promote Nuclear Power because it is better for the environment than fossil fuels and to justify higher water prices as the cost of tackling water pollution!

But behind the rhetoric little has changed. There are no propos-

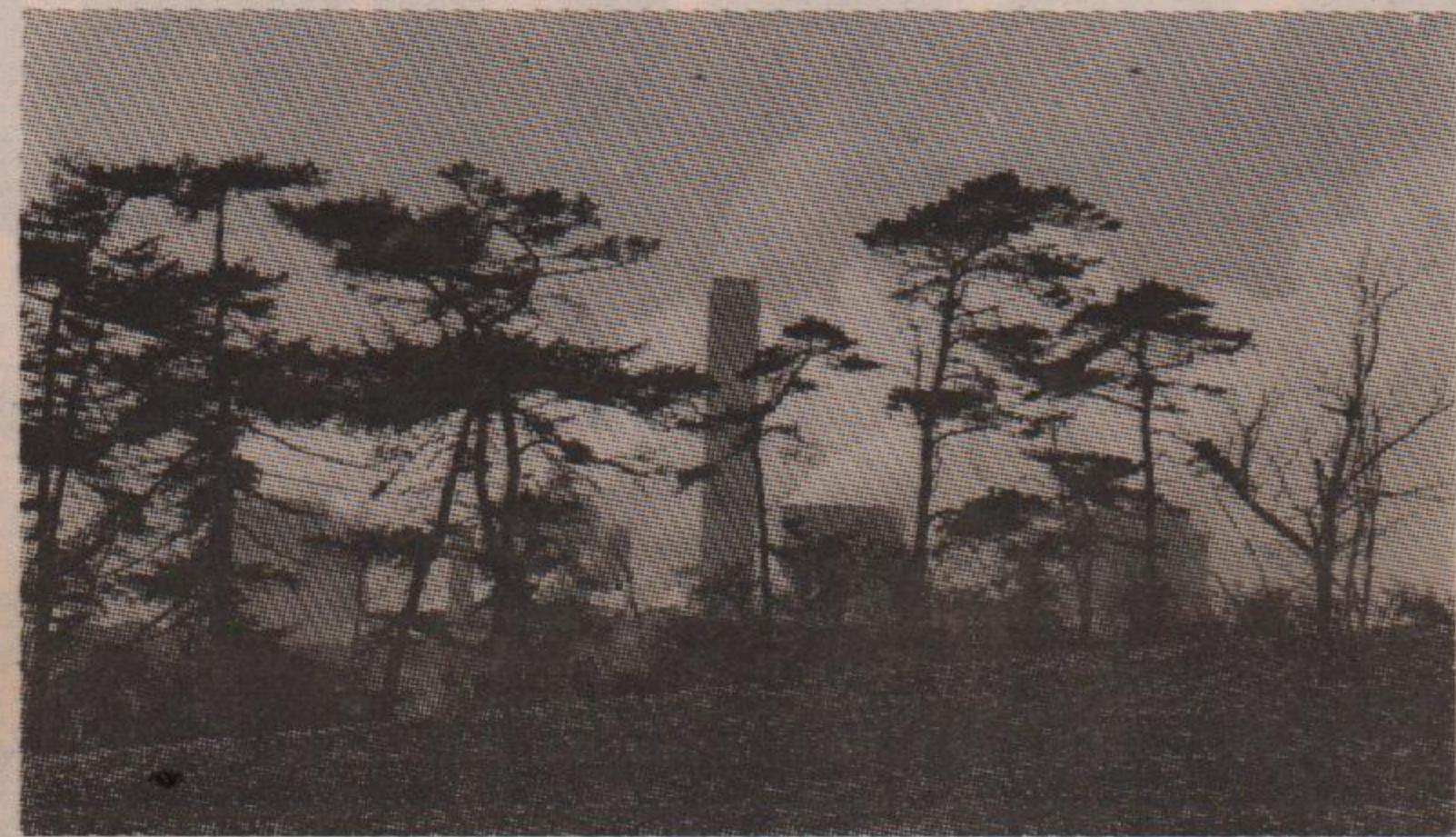
als to strengthen the Inspectorate of Pollution, the main waste dumping watchdog, which is presently 20 staff short of its complement of 210.

Not surprisingly, there were only six prosecutions for breaking waste regulations last year.

Nor have the Tories any plans to stop the pollution of the Irish Sea from Sellafield, or prevent sewage dumping in the North Sea. At present less than half of British beaches pass the EEC minimum cleanliness levels. The government has even applied for exemption from EEC regulations on permitted levels of aluminium, lead and nitrates in water.

What reveals Thatcher's forked green tongue is that, despite her spoken concern, she is quietly closing public health laboratories leading to the loss of over two thousand researchers who are vital to monitoring microbiological and chemical pollution of the food chain.

A system that puts profits first will always cut corners on environmental questions. Firms will continue to dump waste and pollute the atmosphere. A privatised water industry will be even less able to deal with the state of the rivers and sewers. Far from being friends of the environment, Thatcher and her class are in reality its bitterest enemies. ■



Acid rain in the making

John Harris/Report

## Cardiff bay

THE GOVERNMENT sponsored Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (CBDC) is a prime example of Thatcherite hypocrisy on environmental issues.

The CBDC plans to redevelop Cardiff's dockland without regard for either the needs of the local working class community or the environmental implications.

Part of the plan is to build a "superlative maritime city" through the construction of a £100 million barrage across the Taff and Ely rivers, creating a huge inland lake. The CBDC is ignoring local objections to this scheme. The objectors point out that the lake would lead to disease problems due to the high level of pollution and the rise in the water table would lead to waterlogging of basements and increased risk of flooding.

The objections of the conservation lobby have also been ignored. They point out that Cardiff Bay is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and that the barrage will destroy the winter feeding ground of 8,000 wading birds. If the bay is flooded it will be the first such site to be destroyed. This would leave the way open to other developers who have plans for marinas or barrages around Britain's coastline.

The CBDC claims that its aim is to "establish Cardiff internationally as a superlative maritime city which will stand comparison with any similar city in the world".

What does that mean in reality for the Cardiff working class and in particular the black communities of Butetown which will mainly be affected by the plans? The corporation plans to build 5,500 new "residential units". Of these only 25% will be for social housing while current housing stock is converted into "townhouses"

priced out of reach of local residents at a minimum of £75,000.

The CBDC claims that their plan will create 25,000 new jobs. Yet 4,000 local manufacturing jobs will be lost to make way for the new industries. Most of the jobs created will be either in the shopping centres, in the service and tourist sectors which will be part time and low paid, or white collar jobs in the financial sector.

The scheme is meeting large-scale opposition. Residents' groups have formed a campaign against the barrage. But the opposition groups will need to go beyond organising petitions, lobbying councillors and producing newsletters if they are to defeat the Corporation's plans.

The CBDC has draconian powers such as compulsory purchase and the ability to grant itself planning permission. There is no public enquiry or formal appeal procedures.

Working class action, and in particular trade union involvement, will be needed to defeat the plans. This means occupation of CBDC sites and offices, fighting for houses and employment for local workers, particularly the black community.

Labour politicians such as County Council leader Lord Brooks must be told to get off the Board. Currently Brooks is earning £13,000 a year for his dirty work.

Cardiff's dockland is indeed in urgent need of regeneration. But the local working class must decide what sort of investment is needed. That means a fight for a massive programme of public works under workers' control and funded by local and central government to meet the needs of all the run down areas of the city. ■

## Defend Rushdie – sack Keith Vaz!

THE SALMAN RUSHDIE affair continues to mobilise mass demonstrations by British Muslims calling for the banning of *The Satanic Verses*. In the process it is revealing the utter cowardice of Leicester East MP Keith Vaz who has become the most resolute supporter of calls to ban Rushdie's book.

He placed himself at the head of a 3,000 strong demonstration calling for the book to be banned in Leicester last month. This is as much as workers in Vaz's constituency have come to expect from this unprincipled careerist.

But if he expected any clear stand against calls to ban the book from Labour's Black Sections they were to be disappointed. Only a week after Vaz led the reactionary demo through Leicester he was guest of honour at the Black Sections AGM.

Part of Vaz's rationalisation for supporting the ban on Rushdie was to argue that to oppose the bans would leave us supporting free speech for fascism. But fascism carries out organised pogroms on black communities, Rushdie does not. And fascist attacks would not be stopped by legal measures against *Mein Kampf* or fascist papers. They are stopped by physical defence of the communities and the physical destruction of fascist presses, offices and organisations—actions which Vaz and co have never been in favour of.

His speech also contained a furious attack on a resolution, submit-

ted by *Workers Power* supporters, opposing censorship of Rushdie's work and calling on Black Sections to "Fight Racism, not Rushdie".

The organisers of Black Sections then proceeded to rule the motion out of order, ensuring that the AGM did not discuss the arguments of those Black Sections members who are fighting within the black community against the influence of the muslim clergy. An issue that has brought tens of thousands of black people onto the streets was not worth discussing as far as the self appointed "leaders" of black people in the Labour Party were concerned.

Calls from the soft left *Tribune* newspaper for Vaz to be de-selected by his constituency party have been quickly attacked by the Labour front bench who justified his stance by claiming that he had "a duty to represent his constituents' views".

Vaz has also been quick to hit back at his local critics. He has mobilised the mosque-based political machine to unseat Campaign Group councillors who publicly opposed the campaign to ban Rushdie. The Leicester mosques can mobilise hundreds of muslim workers within the Labour wards and CLPs.

To date they have consistently used this influence for reactionary purposes. In 1983-84 they mobilised to ensure the closure of the Red Star youth centre because it has been a centre of secular political activity and social life—despite an occupation by Asian youth. The pro-

mosque organisers in Leicester South CLP have also openly stated their opposition to muslim women attending Labour Party meetings.

Yet these same mosque leaders have refused to mobilise for demonstrations against deportations or against US attacks on Libya.

Within the black communities of Leicester and elsewhere it is necessary to fight the influence of the clergy. They will mobilise the youth to shout "Kill! Kill!" against Rushdie,

but are prepared to stamp on any real fightback against deportations, police racism and racial attacks.

Their lack of commitment to any kind of "socialism" was demonstrated by the easy transfer of allegiance of one group to the Tories in the 1987 election. *Workers Power* supporters in Leicester took the lead in organising a leaflet campaign in the city centre on the day of the "Ban Rushdie" march.

In collaboration with the SWP, ISG

and independent socialists we issued a leaflet aimed at confronting the racist backlash stirred up by the march and clearly defending Rushdie's right to publish.

It is a tragedy that the Black Sections chose to miss an opportunity to campaign against the influence of Islamic reactionaries within the black working class. But its leaders share with Vaz a deeper concern for their careers than for socialist principles and democratic rights. ■

## Turks deported

ON SUNDAY 5 March more than 3,000 marchers took to the streets of Hackney, mobilised at less than 72 hours notice to form the biggest demonstration the London borough has witnessed in decades. The vast majority of the marchers were themselves Turkish or Kurdish immigrants enraged at police raids on local sweat-shops which had resulted in 37 arrests, five of those arrested were subsequently forced to return to Turkey. One is still in custody.

The bulk of Hackney's 10,000 strong Turkish emigré community is made up of refugees from the brutal tyranny wielded by the Evren and Ozal regimes following the crushing of working class and peasant militancy in the late 1970s. Several of those shipped out of Britain face detention and torture in Turkey's notorious prisons.

The Tories, however, are keen on painting a sanitised image of the Ozal dictatorship to smooth Turkey's entry into the European Community. Thus the Home Office routinely rejects applications from Turks and Turkish Kurds seeking political asylum in Britain. Among the fourteen sweat-shop workers

detained were four who are presently appealing against deportation orders after asylum had been denied. Subsequent raids have focused on shops and restaurants resulting in further arrests.

The Hackney raids are clearly part of Thatcher and Hurd's crusade to seal all Western European borders as tightly as Britain's in the run-up to 1992 and the single European market.

The deportation of Viraj Mendis has indeed given the green light to the British state to escalate systematic harassment of immigrants, whether they have fled political persecution or simply the economic chaos wrought by decades of imperialist exploitation.

But there are also distinct local features in the case of the Turkish workers in Hackney. While forming a large part of the workforce in the borough's miserable rag trade, and often employed for less than £1 an hour, many immigrant workers had begun to fight back against their ruthless bosses. In recent months more than 300 had joined a newly formed textiles branch of the TGWU.

The evidence suggests that the

"anonymous tip" to the immigration authorities came from a sweat shop manager or employer keen to root out "troublemakers" and intimidate other workers with the threat of deportation. Thus the raids are also another blatant attack on the right to join and build trade unions.

The Hackney raids, arrests, and deportations again highlight the urgent need to build a national campaign against deportations in general, rooted in the labour movement. However active and determined the Turkish community in Hackney is, it cannot win on its own. That makes it imperative to gain the full support of trade union and Labour Party activists to defend immigrant workers and to smash the whole battery of racist immigration controls. *Workers Power* supporters in the two Hackney Labour Parties have to date successfully put forward motions not only deploring the raids and deportations but calling for the scrapping of all immigration barriers. The battle to turn this paper policy into concrete action and raise the arguments in union branch meetings and workplaces for meaningful solidarity with Turkish and Kurdish brothers and sisters both abroad and in our own backyard is now the key task we face. ■

# Southern Africa: peace on whose terms?

"LONG LIVE Comrade Thatcher" said one banner in Zimbabwe during Thatcher's recent African tour. It was a sickening sight. But it confirms that her strategy for southern Africa—a peaceful transition to limited independence in Namibia and negotiated reforms in South Africa—involves enlisting the support of the black leaders of the "front line states".

In this endeavour she is presenting herself as a new Macmillan. Echoing his "wind of change" speech in South Africa almost thirty years ago she declared: "This is the time of new hope for southern Africa."

Though Chissano of Mozambique and Mugabe of Zimbabwe differed in their degrees of enthusiasm for her project, both have indicated that they believe she is on the right course. Both see in this imperialist ruler a politician who can at least make the apartheid state listen to proposals for change.

The bosses of the major imperialist powers know that the relative peace of the last two years in South Africa has been achieved only by the apartheid state's massive use of brutal repression. The attempts by the Nationalist Party regime to create an incorporated black middle class keep running up against the contradictions of apartheid itself. The black trade unions are still growing, and although union bureaucracies are growing too, they are nowhere near established and rooted enough to guarantee class peace.

The western imperialists, together with their allies amongst South African "progressive" business interests, want to make the country safe for capitalism. This means a gradual process of reform: gradual enough to allow the Nationalists time to convince a significant section of their white working class base that change is inevitable—but fast enough to convince substantial sections of the black opposition that they too can satisfy their supporters that real change is on the way.

The rewards of success would be enormous—the continued exploitation of the huge natural resources

and the labour of South Africa, together with the further opening up of the mineral wealth of Angola and Namibia. The price of failure will be equally dramatic—the spectre of revolution looms large in the nightmares of South African bosses and western investors.

Thatcher and her US backers are hoping that the leadership shifts inside the Nationalist Party will bring in a group seeking a faster pace of change. There is no guarantee that this will happen, but US imperialism and its allies are already buoyed by the apparent success of the Namibia/Angola settlement. This involves the removal of Cuban troops, the confirmation of Angola's presence within the fold of imperialism, and an end to the long war of liberation in Namibia. South African imperialism is proving relatively willing to reconcile itself to the settlement. The terms of the deal leave Pretoria with an economic and strategic stranglehold on the country through its control of the deep sea port Walvis Bay, and a continuing influence on the security forces inside Namibia. At the same time, the African National Congress (ANC) is losing its bases inside Angola.

However, if the struggle in Namibia looks like getting out of hand, there is no doubt that the South African armed forces will pour in—notwithstanding the UN peacekeeping force—and do their utmost to smash SWAPO. This much was clear when, after a major border clash between SWAPO and South Africa which left 142 dead, Pik Botha threatened military action "until SWAPO comes to its senses".

Thatcher and the western imperialists have been given this "window of opportunity" by the conscious intervention of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's diplomats and academics have been busy persuading Moscow's clients that they must subordinate their own struggle in the interests of global harmony. First the Angolan leadership was told that the USSR would no longer underwrite the costs of the

## EDITORIAL

Cuban presence. SWAPO was encouraged to come to the negotiating table. And over the last year the ANC leadership has been under increasing pressure to modify its stance on the armed struggle and the prospects for a deal inside South Africa.

The Soviet Union and the major imperialist powers would like to settle the fate of the South African masses over their heads. The danger is, that despite some critical noises about the "new course" from inside the ANC leadership, the fundamentals of Congress' existing political programme open the road to retreat. The ANC's "Freedom Charter" is a programme for a capitalist South Africa, purged of apartheid laws. The influential South African Communist Party has always made clear that it sees the achievement of national liberation and democracy as the immediate task. Fighting for socialism is postponed to a later date.

At present the ANC is making the release of its leaders, especially Mandela, and the legalisation of its activities, preconditions for talks and an end to the armed struggle. It is not clear yet whether the Nationalist Party can deliver such substantial changes, or whether Moscow will have to exert further influence on Congress.

Political reforms—even the extension of the franchise and the removal of more apartheid restrictions—will not solve the problems of oppression and exploitation of the South African black working class. Land hunger will feed the pressure on the cities. The squeeze on profits will mean the bosses continuing to keep wages down and using the laws and forces of the state to enforce their class rule. Meanwhile, the South African working class would be disarmed both literally and politically as its fate was decided.

Democratic rights and other gains won in struggle can only be made permanent if the capitalist class and its state are overthrown. But both Thatcher and Gorbachev are determined to prevent that outcome. Workers revolution in South Africa will act as a beacon to workers everywhere and in doing so will shake both Thatcher's class, and Gorbachev's bureaucracy, to their foundations. ■

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## A NEEDLESS EPIDEMIC

THOUSANDS OF people are dying unnecessarily in sub-Saharan Africa from meningitis. The reason for the rapid spread and deadly consequences of this epidemic is clear—imperialist exploitation.

The disease is curable with simple antibiotics and in most cases can be prevented through vaccination. Yet the major countries affected—Ethiopia, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya and Sudan—are unable to prevent these deaths.

What use are antibiotics, vaccines and other medical advances when these areas lack the basic facilities to get supplies to the affected populations? Chronic underdevelopment, plus super exploitation of the land with cash crops for imperialist profits,

leaves these countries lacking basic road and transport systems. Nor do they have the health centres and medical personnel necessary to carry out a simple public health exercise.

What use are antibiotics if the nearest health centre is five days walk from the villages affected? Most people die within 24 hours of getting the first symptoms—unless, that is, they get prompt treatment.

Malnutrition and overcrowding—both direct consequences of imperialist plunder—provide ideal conditions for the spread of disease. In one village in Ethiopia, 60 people died of meningitis out of a total population of 410. This is the deadly reality of capitalism's pursuit of profit. ■

## Student conference

SOCIALIST STUDENTS in Nols (SSiN) have called a conference for left activists in the NUS. Supporters of Militant, Socialist Outlook and Workers Power plus individual activists are also building for the conference.

The left unity conference will discuss key attacks facing students at the moment, such as loans, the Poll Tax and Tory plans for further and higher education. Groups or individuals can submit resolutions and documents for discussion.

Workers Power supporters will be arguing that the conference

needs to adopt a fighting programme of direct action against the Tory attacks. Any unity which the conference achieves must be based on a firm commitment to building and taking action.

The conference is being held in Sheffield on 22 April 1989.

For further details phone 01 - 639 7667.

To find out what Workers Power supporters will be doing at the conference contact us via our Box Number.

## IN brief

### Euro privileges

AN UNNAMED Euro-MP has recently been accused of fiddling expenses to the tune of £100,000 over the past four years. Whatever the truth in this particular case, it's well known that MEPs have no problem making ends meet. They can claim up to £1,530 expenses each month and £100 for every day away from their constituencies.

First class air travel and vast expenses for spurious "study visits" all add up to a comfortable existence as they go about their daily task of pretending to represent our interests. And all this in addition to their basic salary of £24,000 a year.

Perhaps Nicholas Ridley should apply for a transfer to a Brussels job. The expenses might help him to pay for the upkeep of his three houses—the £1 million town house in London, the £750,000 country house in Stow-on-the-Wold, and the little two bedroomed retreat in Cumberland valued at a mere £200,000 which, by the way, he is applying for planning permission to extend across a public footpath. What a marvelous spirit of sacrifice these elected representatives of ours possess. ■

## Irish Chunnel misery

THE CHANNEL Tunnel is held up as a miracle of progress by modern capitalism and as a shining example of Thatcher's enterprise culture. But the 3,000 Irish workers at the Dover end tell a different story.

Many are working seven days a week on 12 hour shifts. There is no holiday or sick pay. In contrast to the racist "navy" image, Irish workers are amongst the most skilled engineers in the tunnel. Yet they are shunned by local hotels and forced to live in military style

barracks where alcohol and women friends are barred. Security on the site and in the barracks is heavy and menacing.

Workers for Trans-Manch Link, the main contractor, face instant dismissal if they talk to the press. The company has tried to cover up accidents because they "affect share prices". Already there have been two fatalities. Even the Tory controlled Health and Safety Executive is concerned about the site.

Unemployment and low pay force tens of thousands of young Irish workers to emigrate from the Republic every year. Imperialism cannot develop the Irish economy to meet the needs of the Irish people for work and security. So like the largely Algerian workforce at the French end of the Chunnel, imperialism has given Irish workers a passport to wage slavery and racist abuse. ■

## Korean shipyard siege

14,000 riot police and troops last week stormed the Hyundai shipyard in South Korea where over 20,000 workers have been on strike for three months. In a combined air, sea and land attack the state forces smashed their way into the shipyard. They found 1,000 strikers in dormitories and, after a pitched battle arrested 700 and injured at least 20. The strikers were armed with steel clubs and "missiles for democracy"—flaming bottles containing paint thinner, iron nuts and bolts.

The strike was over higher pay and union recognition, and the bosses claim it has cost them £70 million in lost income. It is one of 300 strikes already this year over

the spring round of wage settlements.

Police using tear gas clashed with students at local universities who were demonstrating in support of the strikers. The state are clearly intent on preventing any generalisation of the struggles, and will use similar repressive measures in an attempt to crush the 78 strikes which are still going on.

The brutality used by the state to smash the Hyundai strike is an indication of the new authoritarian mood of the Seoul government, abandoning the democratic image which it attempted to cultivate for last year's Olympic Games. ■

# Kinnock climbs the polls

BY DAVE STOCKING

ACCORDING TO Tory economic theory an "invisible hand" is supposed to be at work in a market economy, arranging things so that private capitalist greed works for the health and happiness of all. But in the last few months it is almost as if that same invisible hand has been methodically ripping away the facade of popular capitalism.

The Tories have been hit by a series of embarrassments: one rail disaster after another; criticism after criticism of Tory plans for the NHS from "professional bodies"; a public relations nightmare over water privatisation; and rocketing mortgage rates for the home-owning middle class who have voted Thatcher into office three times running.

So "strong" is the British economy that the government dare not spend the billions it has accumulated from privatisation and taxation in case inflation roars into double figures.

The result of all this is the revival of Neil Kinnock. Suddenly Labour and the Tories are neck and neck in the opinion polls. It has been like this before in mid-term Thatcher governments. But this time even the Tory press are prepared to voice discontent with Tory policies.

They have crucified Paul Channon and Nicholas Ridley across their front pages. Kinnock's student union rhetoric and second hand jokes in Parliament are being hailed as masterly statesmanship. Thatcher's pompous put-downs are no longer approved by the political correspondents of the Tory press.

Why should Kinnock, Prescott, Gould and co suddenly become popular with the Fleet Street hacks, when only at last October's Party Conference they were going for the kill?

Because Kinnock is on the verge of completing the job that the right wing put him there to do: restore Labour as a safe alternative for capitalism. Labour has effectively sabotaged a mass campaign to defy the Poll Tax in Scotland. True, they had to lose a by-election to do it. But one Scottish constituency is a small price to pay for the kind of media coverage Kinnock's new "responsible" Labour Party is receiving.

After a year's plotting and planning, Kinnock's supporters in the T&G—with a helping hand from the scab leaders of EETPU—are confident they can swing the union behind Kinnock's new multilateralist "disarmament" policy. After this year's party conference Kinnock will be able to offer a safely multilateralist Labour Party to President Bush and the British



"... and if I drink this will I win?"

Kayte Brimacombe/Report

bosses.

In addition to this Kinnock and his front bench have been putting together an economic policy which, in the *Guardian's* words, places "unprecedented reliance—for a British Labour Party—on market forces". They have been spreading this gospel in a series of speeches and broadcasts, under the name of "supply-side socialism".

Kinnock and co sense that the bosses and the middle class are sick to the back teeth of transport chaos, a decaying environment and being pestered, on their nights outs at London's Opera Houses, by dozens of homeless beggars. Labour has highlighted Thatcherism's fundamental opposition to strategic planning and state investment. They have seized the moment when Thatcher can't throw cash at the problem because of her fears of inflation.

They are putting together an economic programme that could be entitled "Thatcherism without the dogma". At the same time they

are busy reassuring the bosses that Labour will act as a ratchet to stop any roll-back of Thatcher's attacks on the working class.

What does this proposed economic wonderland hold in store for workers? Will union rights and freedoms be restored? No! Will local government services be restored to meet workers' basic needs? No chance! Will the unemployed be set to work? No-one in Labour's economic team is making any promises.

Whether the bosses become so exasperated with Thatcher that they turn to Kinnock's "market socialism", whether enough middle class voters take the bait at the next election, cannot be predicted.

But Kinnock has trampled on the left. Despite Socialist Conferences galore it has failed to come up with a coherent strategy to compare to Kinnock's. And he has finally convinced the bosses that, whoever wins the next election, another term of Thatcherism is in store. ■

## Women's TUC

BY LAURA WILLIAMS

YOU WOULD not have known it from the TUC women's conference, but its opening day, 8 March, was International Women's Day. The historic struggles of women workers commemorated on this day got no mention from the conference's bureaucratic organisers.

Even the presence of women such as Khola Mayekiso failed to ignite a serious debate on the international struggles of women. Instead the 150 delegates at Blackpool were treated to a business as usual conference that decided to do very little.

Ten years ago the TUC adopted an Equal Opportunity Charter for women. Yet women workers earn, on average, 11% less than male workers. Employers continue to use this inequality to their advantage. In the print for example, compositors' jobs, previously the preserve of men are being largely done by women in SOGAT. Yet the women working with new technology are rated at a lower level than the men—simply because they are women. This means they are being paid less than men who do exactly the same work.

An amendment to the Charter seeking equal pay for work of equal value is coming up for adoption at the next full TUC conference. While this should be supported, the lesson of the last ten years is that unless women organise to fight for real equality, the bosses will continue to treat us as second class workers and pay us second rate wages.

Part of this fight must be to turn the women's TUC itself into a body committed to organising and mobilising women workers for action. At the moment, it is still a purely advisory body which big brother Norman and his colleagues in the general council can heed or ignore as it suits them. Pressure for a more active role has produced a few concessions, including the opening last year of a TUC women's rights department employing a number of full time staff.

While such concessions should be used for all their worth, the need for a democratic structure that can embrace the real representatives of women trade unionists remains urgent. Only if the Women's TUC can be forced to open itself up to these women, and beyond them to the mass of unorganised working class women, will it be able to play a useful role in combatting the inequality of wages and opportunities that women in work face. Only then can it help combat the general sexism and oppression that women workers are subjected to on a daily basis. ■

THE AEU is far from being a perfect democratic union. But compared with the police regime in Hammond's EETPU its structure and rule book do provide some important openings for the membership to influence policy and control the bodies that carry it out.

The system of district committees and the membership's right to elect all officials are democratic aspects of the AEU that need to be defended and extended. The latest information trickling out from the secret merger negotiations indicates that these features of the AEU's rule book are under threat.

The executive in the EETPU is all powerful. In the AEU it is not, and that is galling to Jordan and Laird who had to suffer the "indignity" of having their last flexible working package turfed out by the AEU. As part of the merger therefore, they are suggesting that the district committees be dismantled in favour of regional industrial committees. These new bodies, involving the complete integration of shop steward representatives from both unions are to be the basis of a fully integrated industrial structure. Although it is claimed that the new industrial committees will have powers similar to the present AEU district committees, it is generally agreed that they will be "gutless" EETPU style advisory bodies!

All full time officials in both unions are to be guaranteed

## AEU

# Democracy at stake

their positions at the time of merger which is in direct contradiction of AEU policy on the right to elections and accountability. To take some of the sting out of this thoroughly undemocratic proposal it is being recommended that a membership ballot should decide on whether to elect or appoint its officials.

But this sop to the membership is to take place, surprise, surprise, no later than five years after the merger. What a far cry from the hard stance taken over amalgamation with TASS when Ken Gill's union was sent packing because of the undemocratic way it appoints its officials!

Interspersed with one or two carrots to entice the membership—like the possibility of more generous benefits and the possibility of some kind of appeals body—is this gem of an offering; policy making conferences will meet every two years and rules revision conferences every six years. But wait, there's

more! In classic bureaucratic fashion, decisions taken at conference are to be both binding and yet not binding. A future executive would have discretionary powers to challenge the authority of conference by balloting the membership on policies and union rules it did not agree with.

In order to push the merger through Jordan is likely to give a trial run to the cynical manipulation of democracy that would be the norm in a joint AEU/EETPU outfit—a ballot over the heads of the policy making conference in the union. This will have the two-fold advantage of dealing a blow to the power of the National Committee prior to the merger and allow Jordan's friends in the bosses' press to massively influence the outcome of a vote.

Jordan knows that the National Committee cannot be trusted to deliver the goods even with an in-built right wing majority, because of National Committee policy which calls for

meaningful amalgamations on the basis of the union rule book.

The issue is so shrouded in secrecy that it is not even down on the conference agenda. Too many National Committee members, despite being faithful to the right wing and well versed in Jordan and Laird's brand of new realism, are sticklers for the rule book. They will not see it compromised in any old crude manner.

Jordan must therefore tread carefully. He really needs to unite the right-wing amongst the layer of national officials and at executive level before the ballot is taken—and won! Its timing will be crucial.

Not only will a merger strengthen scab unionism in Britain, it would, in advance, undermine any possibility for the members within the new union to determine policy, control their leaders and turn the tide on Hammond and Jordan. Every AEU member has a direct interest in ensuring this does not happen. For if it does, the ditching of the rule book will only be the beginning. The ditching of every other gain, the sacrificing of our every interest will rapidly follow.

A successful fight against the merger, on the other hand, can open the way to further struggles to massively extend rank and file democracy in the AEU and help destroy the power base of the right-wing altogether. ■

# Defend the closed shop

BY HELEN WARD

THE CLOSED shop—100% trade unionism in the workplace—is an essential weapon to prevent scabbing and attacks on jobs, conditions and living standards. During their ten year reign the Tories have been systematically attacking this, and a whole host of other key weapons of effective trade unionism.

A parliamentary agenda for the year isn't complete unless there is at least one piece of anti-union legislation planned. The latest attack, revealed in a recent green paper from the Employment Secretary Norman Fowler, aims to further weaken the closed shop.

In 1978 five million workers were covered by closed shop agreements. By last year this was down to 2.6 million, about 12% of the workforce. Previous legislation made it illegal to sack anyone for not being a union member. The new legislation will take this one step further. The "pre-entry closed shop", under which workers are obliged to be in or agree to join the relevant union before being given a job, has been targeted.

The Tories now plan to make a refusal to employ someone because they are not and will not become a union member illegal. Potential scabs will be able to take companies to an industrial tribunal if they believe they have been "discriminated" against because they are not in a union. You can bet your bottom dollar that they'll get more of a hearing than the numerous trade unionists, sacked because of their activities, who have had their cases rejected by industrial tribunals.

This new legislation is aimed at the print unions, Equity, the TGWU road haulage section and the London food market workers in particular. The real purpose behind the attack on the pre-entry closed shop, which covers about 1.3 million workers at the moment, is to lower wages. Fowler argued that the closed shop limited employment opportunities for workers. The green paper makes clear that the Tories view the pre-entry closed shop as a restrictive practice.

Behind their hypocritical "concern"

for the individual freedoms of workers and bosses, their real objective is to deal a further blow to trade unionism. The green paper argues:

"The effect [of the pre-entry closed shop] is to increase labour costs artificially, which in turn destroys jobs."

In other words, the closed shop keeps out scab labour and stops the undercutting of union rates by non-union labour by ensuring that all pay and conditions agreements are

negotiated through the union. Without the closed shop economic advisers to the government estimate that labour costs would be 10% lower in Britain than at present. So, defending the closed shop is not simply an abstract question of rights. It is part and parcel of defending the whole class against intensified exploitation by the bosses. We must not let the Tories get away with their fifth round of trade union "reform". These union bashers must be stopped. ■

## BIRMINGHAM Labour council, Tory policies

**FRESH FROM** hob-nobbing with the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, the Dick Knowles led Labour Council in Birmingham has celebrated the city's centenary by drawing up yet another cuts programme for the working class of the city.

Council house rents are to be increased by an average of 12% with £1.5 million to be lopped off funds for voluntary sector grants. Another £3 million is to be cut from public sector monies which can only mean attacks on jobs and services in city council departments.

No such cut-backs have been planned for the council's "prestigious" projects such as the International Convention Centre and the numerous promotional events.

The Knowles Labour Council is continuing its tradition of carrying through Tory cuts. Perhaps the most pernicious attack of all, is the proposed £4 per week flat rate charge for all those currently paying for the "luxury" of a home help.

For years the pragmatic right wing Labour Group has boasted that it has been more successful than "left" councils in protecting its citizens and workers from the ravages of Tory cuts. This budget gives the lie to that claim. Any council that refuses to lead a fight against the Tories ends up carrying out their cuts.

The revolt of the "Birmingham 21" ended up as a damp squib. Last

year, these councillors had defied the Labour Group whip over cuts affecting a special needs holiday home. Many also threatened to vote against Knowles' cuts budget but when the crunch came, pressure from Party official Joyce Gould resulted in all but two toeing the line.

Birmingham's council employees are already feeling the pinch, in the form of job freezes, "regrading" and actual wage cuts. Sixty Nalgo members from Birmingham rate rebate department have been on strike for a month in protest at downgrading in the department, with workers standing to lose between £500 and £2,000 a year.

The action has spread to Housing Benefit workers who are also faced with job cuts and increased workloads. So far the Labour council has refused to even negotiate with the housing workers.

The action must be spread further to prevent individual sections and departments being singled out for regrading and other cost-cutting exercises one after the other.

Meetings should discuss not just the two current disputes, but the similar issues facing every section. A united and concerted fight back now could force Knowles into retreat. And council workers must explain to other Birmingham workers that the cuts in jobs and services are the direct result of Labour doing the Tories' dirty work. ■

# New militancy on London tubes

BY A LONDON UNDERGROUND WORKER

"NO TRAINS, no profit!" At a packed meeting of train operators, one tube worker pointed out that this was the only message London Underground Limited (LUL) understood.

The mood of the 1,000 strong meeting was defiant and militant. Operators from the entire underground system demanded £6.43 per hour, with no strings, based on the train operators' rate plus half the guards' rate.

On the platform sat an EC member from each rail union (ASLEF and NUR) and sectional council reps. They explained the official union position. In a nutshell it was, "there's nothing we can do".

The two reasons given for this miserable cowardice are the sacred cows of the new realist leaders. First, action would disrupt the "negotiating machinery"—bureaucratic form filling which is more like the complaints procedure at the local nick. Secondly, they cited the law as an obstacle to doing anything. While these gutless fat

cats openly admitted that the Tories' "employment" laws were thoroughly anti-union, they also told us, the members, that we had to surrender before them.

Despite the militant mood of the meeting most of those present bought the bureaucrats' line that "we support you but our hands are tied". The leaders duly filed out of the meeting while the strike vote was taken to avoid being implicated in any "unlawful" action. Now they are in a position to refuse support for any militants victimised as a result of the one day strike agreed upon for 5 April.

The official position was made a lot clearer in a letter to all depots from the general secretary of ASLEF, N F Milligan. He quotes an executive resolution that:

"All members are instructed by this EC not to participate in unofficial action and to work normally."

Members are told to have faith in the "machinery". At the same time a letter from the management has warned us:

"Management will not respond to threats of strike action, nor

pressure applied outside of the recognised machinery of negotiations."

Differences on a postcard please! As we go to press the outcome of the strike on 5 April is not known. Management, however, are unlikely to buckle after one day's unofficial action. But what has been shown by these events is that large sections of the rank and file are prepared to take on the LUL bosses.

What is needed is organisation: not only to combat an ever more vicious management but also to turn our unions into class struggle, fighting bodies, willing to defend the members' real interests. Around the slogan "with the union leaders if possible, against them if necessary" and around a strategy for building a new leadership altogether in the rail unions, a rank and file movement, with its own bulletins and structures, can and must be built amongst LUL workers. Immediately we must fight for:

- Official backing now for all actions decided by mass meetings;
- Strike against any victimisations carried out by the bosses as a result of the one day action;
- For an indefinite all out strike on the underground until the £6.43 rate is won;
- Build an Underground workers' rank and file movement now!



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

### What is GATT?

This month sees a crucial round of international trade negotiations. Behind closed doors and darkened limousine windows the world's finance ministers will try to solve some of imperialism's most intractable problems. Can they? What happens if they fail? Keith Hassell explains.

US imperialism is living way beyond its means. Not only are its assets abroad less than the assets of other countries inside the US; year after year the US is exporting less than it imports. It cannot pay its way. To bridge the gap it has to attract the available surplus funds of Europe and Japan to meet all current spending plans inside the country.

The effects of this are considerable. One is that spending and employment in the US are kept high and class peace is more or less maintained. Another is that US interest rates (the cost of borrowing money) are kept high in order to convince the moneylenders to keep it coming.

Many commentators believe that this situation cannot go on indefinitely. Papers like the *Financial Times* argue that a recession in the USA is needed to cut back on demand and so bring imports in line with exports. But the *Financial Times* does not run the US government. Those who do—the new Bush administration—are under political pressure to prevent a domestic recession and yet still do something about the worsening trade situation.

The line of least resistance is to take measures against the USA's trading partners. On the one hand the government can provide export subsidies to farms and industries to lower their prices in international markets; on the other, they can erect barriers to other countries' imports. Yet such measures increasingly threaten the whole post-war system of managing trade between the capitalist nations. That this threat is real and pressing is shown by the resumption this month of the "Uruguay Round" of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The International Chamber of Commerce warns of 'tragic' consequences if the 96 member countries fail to agree on measures to halt the growing protectionism in world trade. What's at stake?

The GATT was set up in 1948 and like the IMF and World Bank it was a result of a US initiative to open up all the countries of the capitalist world to the goods and capital of the USA. As the most productive and competitive nation it could only benefit by destroying the old trading privileges of the empires of France and Britain and preventing the new semi-colonies from erecting barriers to trade.

While the US was not as successful with the GATT as with the other institutions, the founding charter did commit itself to "a substantial reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade". In the early 1950s the average import tariff (i.e. a tax on foreign goods) on manufactured goods was 40%. By 1974 this had been reduced to less than 10%. This success for the US helped see world trade expand at an average of 8.6% every year between 1950 and 1970.

Of course, it was a system designed to benefit imperialist countries above all and important exceptions to the principle of free trade were built into GATT. The most important of these remains the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) which puts severe quotas on semi-colonial exports of textiles to the "developed" nations.

So long as the world boom continued GATT was a forum for negotiating successive reductions in trade barriers. The "Kennedy Round" (1964-67) and the "Tokyo Round" (1973-79) each negotiated a 30% reduction in tariffs between the major imperialist nations. But since 1974 protectionism has grown. This is especially so in terms of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), quotas on the volume of goods allowed in.

The last major world recession (1979-82) witnessed an acceleration of this trend. Between 1981 and 1986 (i.e. during the recovery itself) NTBs in the way of EC exports to the USA have grown by over 20%. For example, in 1985 the US government set a limit on steel imports from abroad to 20% of the home market. By 1986 the proportion of semi-colonial countries' exports subject to NTBs at the hands of their imperialist oppressors had grown sharply to 20%.

But the worst is yet to come. When GATT was founded, trade in farm products was exempted from the rules of free trade. And it is this which is the main subject of the present "Uruguay Round" of negotiations. They had to be suspended in December last year for fear of total collapse. The main row is Europe versus the USA. In 1987 the US subsidised its capitalist farmers' profits to the tune of \$25 billion, while the EC did the same to its farmers with the sum of \$33 billion.

The US wanted a total elimination of subsidies on both sides in a fixed period of time because it reckoned that its farmers could best compete in unprotected markets for agricultural produce. The EC will not agree. At present the GATT is attempting a compromise but its credibility as a forum for reducing conflict is on the line. A failure on this round could see the dam burst and the GATT pushed aside as unilateral protectionist measures by one country after another break out. GATT was founded on the high ideal of liberalising world trade. Now it is the scene of horse trading to slow down the spread of protectionism.

And the cost of wholesale protectionism would be high for world capitalism. Already, it depresses output and sucks up resources in the form of subsidies that could be used for investment. The future could be much worse. Export subsidies by one country invite retaliation by another in the form of quotas; quotas on one product invite retaliation by imposing quotas on other products. A major world recession is unlikely to be started by a sudden jump in protectionism by one or more of the major imperialist nations; but once a recession is underway then protectionism could become rampant as each nation tries to maintain its share of a falling volume of world trade.

The spectre of the 1930s, when regional blocs and preferential trading partners became the norm, haunts the GATT negotiators. In the 1990s the major multi-nationals in industry and agriculture have adjusted their scales of production to world markets; to squeeze these back into regional or even national limits would result in an unbearable and explosive agony.

THE LAST two months have seen a renewed campaign to win state funding for muslim schools. 900 school students boycotted classes in support of state funding for a local muslim girls' school. In Brent an Islamic primary school took its case for funding to Kenneth Baker.

The context of this renewed campaign is Baker's Education Act. There will be less support in state schools for pupils whose first language is not English. Bangladeshi, Gujarati and other languages spoken by Britain's black community are not recognised as major languages. And the history school children will be taught under Baker will glorify imperialism and ignore the struggles of those who fought against it in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

On top of all this the Tories now want to revive the compulsory "act of Christian worship" in state schools, giving life to a long-dying ritual. The class traditions through which British colonial settlers taught slaves and starving peasants to sing "All Things Bright and Beautiful" are alive and well in the Department of Education.

Faced with this, with racism from white pupils and teachers, and discriminatory uniform rules and food provision, some black parents have moved their children into private schools. But this course of action is not open to the majority of parents.

That is why Labour Education Authorities, the Tory Department of Education and the teaching unions are increasingly facing the demand for Voluntary Aided Status for muslim schools. This means that the state would pay 85% of the running costs whilst the schools would remain under the control of the mosques.

Behind the test cases currently in progress stand many more schools—not just muslim but hindu, sikh and orthodox-jewish schools. Campaigners point to 4,580 pre-existing schools for catholics, anglicans and non-orthodox jews.

Workers have no interest in fighting for new religious schools. We should fight religion in state education, both on principle and as any kind of solution to the racism of the British education system.

### Important

Revolutionary socialists are militant atheists. We recognise that whilst religion plays an important part in the social and moral life of workers the world over, it holds no answers to their exploitation and oppression. In the struggle against exploitation and oppression, religion plays a reactionary role. Generally it pacifies the poor and down-trodden with visions of a better life after death. Occasionally it whips up the anger of the masses only to direct it at false enemies—a trick currently being performed with great skill by the muslim clergy in Britain.

Religion remains a key justification for the oppression of women, the oppression of youth, lesbians and gay men, whether it is preached from the mosque or the christian pulpit. It is a tool in the hands of the imperialists wherever they want to divide and rule: from colonial India to Britain's inner-cities today.

Despite all this, revolutionary communists have nothing in common with the Stalinist dictators who have brutally suppressed religion. Only a struggle against the economic system which creates the need for religion can gradually free the minds of millions from the myths, legends and superstitions that underpin the world's various religions.

*In Britain today most schools are, officially at least, religious. The majority are anglican, many are catholic. Of late, pressure for state funded muslim schools has been growing. Kate Ford explains why all religious schools should be opposed.*



Muslim pupils boycott classes in Dewsbury

# No to religious schools

But the fight against religious ideas, and in favour of a totally secular education system, has to be carried out now. A key demand in this fight is the separation of the church from the state.

This means fighting against all forms of official state religion, compulsory observance, and against all religion being taught as doctrine in state schools, while demanding that facilities for private observance, special diets etc, are provided for all religious believers in schools. There is nothing uniquely "communist" in the demand for the complete separation of the church and state—it was expressed by the capitalists when they were a revolutionary class in the eighteenth century. It is a recognition that religion is a private affair.

It is from this basic democratic principle that our opposition to all state funding of religion comes.

"But what is democratic about the current situation?" comes the objection of supporters of muslim schools, "Is it not racist for catholics and anglicans to have schools but muslims to be denied theirs?" It is undoubtedly racist for the bosses to extend privileges to religions largely followed by white people and not to Islam, Hinduism etc. But this is what Voluntary Aided Status remains: a privilege, not a right.

It is a privilege which allows the priests to spread religious propaganda as though it were a universal truth. The existing catholic schools integrate into their curricula precepts which brainwash children into believing that science, history and art are funda-

mentally the work of god mediated through his subjects, human beings. In particular—and muslim schools would in their own way replicate this—the morality that is enforced within such teaching is a means of repressing the sexuality of school students and enforcing social controls which persist throughout adult life.

Indeed the entire content of education is distorted in such schools. All of this enormously outweighs the fact that catholic schools originated partially as a means of providing working class catholic communities with access to education that the anglican dominated system had denied them.

### Purging

Secular teaching means purging teaching of all precepts based on faith. Science, history and art and indeed the development of all religions themselves need to be taught from a materialist standpoint—as products and developments within human society, as the actions and ideas of real people in particular historical circumstances.

Such education trains school students to make objective judgements about the world they live in. It provides the rock solid foundation for genuine anti-racist teaching, explaining the actual causes and nature of racism, and dispelling the irrational prejudices which capitalism has utilised to sustain it as a divisive ideology.

It is no answer to racist "privileges" to demand their "equal distribution". We do not demand the

equalisation of immigration laws but their total abolition. We do not fight to extend the blasphemy laws for the use of reactionaries of every creed, but their total repeal.

Likewise it should be the aim of every workers' organisation to abolish state subsidised religious schools and smash the law which stipulates a "daily act of christian worship" for our children.

As a reaction to Tory racism, the fight for religious schools or—as some have called for—black-only schools is a disastrous diversion.

Thatcher's agenda for black people in Britain is clear. For a small stratum of businessmen, professionals and church leaders there is to be integration into the British establishment. The mass of black workers subject to high unemployment rates, low pay, police harassment and deportation will be left on the scrapheap.

Separate religious schools are not a way of fighting this racist project but of carrying it out. Not surprisingly, the supporters of separate black and religious schools have become the biggest opponents of anti-racist education.

"We are sick of all this anti-racism" was the recent message from muslim, seventh day adventist and Chinese "community leaders". They advocated a thorough education in the "British way of life" to help black children "get the qualifications to go to college or university or to get a good job".

But it is the racist, British "way of life" which condemns black youth to the low paid jobs, the dole queues and the prisons in numbers vastly disproportionate to the size of the black community.

The answer to racism, to the enforcement of christianity in state schools, is a united fightback by black and white workers, by students and teachers.

Against the Tory strategy of bourgeois integration we should fight for the revolutionary integration of black workers, women and youth into the struggles and organisations of the white working class. It is the years of failing to fight for this, of rampant racism in the labour movement, which have forced muslim and other black communities to look to the mosque and the muslim school as havens from racism.

### Abolition

Labour councils and teachers' unions should not only oppose new Voluntary Aided Schools but fight for the abolition of Voluntary Aided Schools altogether. It is their duty to fight twice as hard for this to prove they have no truck with the colonialist-racist attitudes of the Tories.

Teachers and school students should conduct an active fight to defend anti-racist education. Under workers' and students' control this could be extended and purged of the tokenistic liberal bias which was criticised in the Burnage Report as well as by black parents and students alike.

Teachers, students and parents must unite against the Education Act itself. To stop christianity being rammed down children's throats we must destroy Mr Baker's two tier education system altogether and replace it with state secular education for all. ■

# Another "British solution"

*Northern Ireland—the political economy of conflict*  
by Bob Rowthorn and Naomi Layne (Polity Press £8.95)

BY BREDA CONCANNON

MANY ON the left have greeted this book as a "coherent and well argued case for British withdrawal from Ireland". But it is a case based on yet another "British solution" to Ireland's problems. Rowthorn and Layne's whole argument is designed to convince British capitalism that its best interests lie in pulling out the troops and sponsoring the creation of a capitalist united Ireland.

Those who have been following recent debates amongst Irish solidarity activists in Britain will know the reason for the book's appearance. It is designed to provide the leadership of the Time To Go campaign with academic credibility and a pseudo-economic justification for dressing up anti-imperialism as capitalist common sense.

The dangers *Workers Power* has

fought against within Time To Go—of pandering to chauvinistic sentiments and pro-imperialist rationalisations for "withdrawal"—are all represented in this book. The case for withdrawal it presents is summed-up as follows:

"Britain is fighting a war it cannot win... to preserve a state which should never have been created and which cannot be saved. The costs are economically burdensome and morally unacceptable."

Of course the authors note that Britain is responsible for the present situation, and that the results are "deeply divisive". But this is pure left cover for the arguments that follow; only Britain can find a solution, Britain must ensure that withdrawal is followed by reunification; Britain must insist on adequate guarantees for the protestants within a united Ireland; Britain must use its economic strength to ensure the guarantees are honoured.

The book shows how "morally unacceptable" and "economically burdensome" the British occupa-

tion is. But nowhere does it explain why British troops remain despite the high economic cost.

Nowhere is role of the border in dividing and weakening the whole Irish working class discussed. The book does not offer a solution to the result of this: the semi-colonial dependence and exploitation of the 26 county economy.

Instead the authors' view of a future 32 county Irish economy is based on it remaining one where "relatively low wages, an educated labour force, very generous tax concessions..." make it "an attractive location for multinationals".

In addition Britain would continue to provide substantial aid to the North to ensure not just the jobs of protestant workers, but "additional jobs for both communities".

Such arguments do not strengthen the campaign to get British troops out of Ireland. Britain will have to be forced out of Ireland. Only a mass movement of Northern and Southern anti-unionist workers can do this. Only a movement committed to destroying semi-colonial dependence and

the confessional state in the South would have a hope of splitting the loyalist minority along class lines. Only a movement which set itself the task of expropriating British, Irish and multinational capitalism can free Ireland in a progressive way.

As opposed to Rowthorn and Layne's schema, in which everyone is a winner from 32 county unity, this would mean a defeat for British imperialism strategically and economically.

And the legitimacy of the fight against British occupation does not come from the "communal" nature of Britain's war. It comes from the democratic right of the whole Irish people to decide their future free of foreign interference, a right we defend because it has conflicted throughout this century with the role of British imperialism.

Britain's presence does not, has not and never can play a progressive rule in Ireland. That is why we argue for Troops Out Now against all forms of "phased withdrawal".

Rowthorn and Layne, and the leading lights of Time To Go can continue to dream up ever more detailed schemes for the imperialist lion to "lie down with the lamb".

But we must politically defeat them and orient Irish solidarity work to the only slogans which sum-up the anti-imperialist tasks in Britain:

- Troops out now!
- Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole!

# The victim accused

LESLEY DAY REVIEWS  
THE ACCUSED

IN "THE ACCUSED" Sarah Tobias is gang-raped in a bar. Yet because she is a woman who drinks, has a drugs conviction, overtly displays her sexuality and is working class she becomes the "accused". Like so many rape victims, she is accused of "asking for it".

Sarah's well groomed, success orientated lawyer believes Sarah has been raped, but decides to "plea bargain" with the rapists' lawyers. The men are put inside but for "reckless endangerment", not rape.

## Betrayal

Outraged at this betrayal, Sarah confronts Murphy. To make amends and save her own conscience, her lawyer goes back to court. This time it is to prosecute the witnesses to the rape, the men who cheered and jeered it on in the bar, on a charge of "criminal solicitation".

This film has turned rape into a juicy contemporary media issue. Hollywood is congratulating itself at churning out a series of social concern "issues". Jodie Foster has now won an Oscar for her portrayal of Sarah and box office receipts are on the up and up.

It is not surprising then, that some have questioned the inclusion of the rape scene. Critics here and in the USA have argued that it is gratuitous and potentially titillating, that it feeds men's fantasies of rape.

It is without doubt an incredibly powerful and uncomfortable scene. This mood switches from Sarah's flirtations to the hatred on the faces of the men who are chanting and holding her down while she is raped.

Coming as a flashback at the end of the film means the rape is already set in the context of its consequences—the bruises, blood, scratches and trauma. The length of the scene rather than being titillating makes it an endurance test that takes the audience through a whole range of reactions from shock through sympathy to anger.

The film effectively demonstrates that rape is a product of distorted sexuality. It concentrates on the contorted faces of the men and their need to live up to a twisted notion of maleness in front of their mates.

## Refuses

This film also refuses the easy option of setting up a false sisterhood between the working class victim and her middle class lawyer. They live in different halves of class society and the film never pretends otherwise.

At the end of the film two statistics appear on the screen. In the USA a rape happens every six minutes. A quarter of those involve two or more men.

What this obscures is the reality that the majority of rapes, between 70 and 80%, are committed by men known to their victims. In doing so it avoids the key issue of the role of the family in the development and distortion of sexuality, as the main site of women's social and sexual oppression.

It leaves the film open to the feminist interpretation that rape is the expression of collective "male power".

None of this should lead us to ignore the strengths of the film. Jodie Foster gives a heartbreaking performance as Sarah, whom she plays with vitality and dignity. She is never just a pathetic victim.

Go and see it: make your friends, workmates and partners talk about it. It's well worth the pain. ■

AT THE end of March Harry Wicks died. He was a lifelong class fighter, a founder member of the Communist Party and of the British Trotskyist Left Opposition. Unlike many of that generation, Harry persisted in his attempts to build a revolutionary socialist party right through to the end of his life. He died an irreconcilable opponent of the capitalist system.

Harry was born in Battersea, South London in 1905. He grew up in an atmosphere of working class struggle and revolutionary political ideas. As a youth he joined the Battersea Herald League and in 1920, still only a teenager, played his part in forging the, then, revolutionary Communist Party of Great Britain. He was a tireless activist and propagandist for Marxism inside the working class. During the general strike of 1926 he helped bring out several factories that had initially wavered. For his pains he was victimised by the bosses, losing his job as a railwayman.

Aged only 22, Harry was sent by the CP to the Lenin School in Moscow in 1927. Here, in the face of the growing Stalinisation of the Comintern, he demonstrated his capacity for independent political thought and displayed a proletarian moral fibre that ensured he resisted the despicable bureaucratic servility that was increasingly infecting the ranks of the communist movement.

He returned to Britain suspicious of the Stalinist leadership that was emerging. Along with a handful of others in the early 1930s, he formed the Balham Group—the British Trotskyists. For their revolutionary principles, for their criticism of Stalin's criminal policy of refusing to build a workers' united front against the Nazis, they were expelled from the Communist Party in 1932.

The degenerates who ran the Communist Party proved every bit as vindictive as the bosses and sacked Harry from his job with a Soviet trading firm. Through the difficult years of the Moscow trials, the Spanish Civil War and the spread of fascism across Europe, Harry and his comrades kept the revolutionary flame burning. Without those efforts we would not be here today.

Harry's political life did not end, as happened with many others, after the war. He was an active trade unionist during the years of the long boom. With the working class resurgence in the late 1960s, he once again entered organised politics. Neither youth nor old age was ever an excuse for doing nothing. Harry's commitment transcended the obstacles associated with age, and should serve as an example for revolutionaries, both old and young, today.

He joined the International Socialists (the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party—IS/SWP) in 1970 and carried out his duties energetically. While he embraced the fundamentals

## OBITUARY

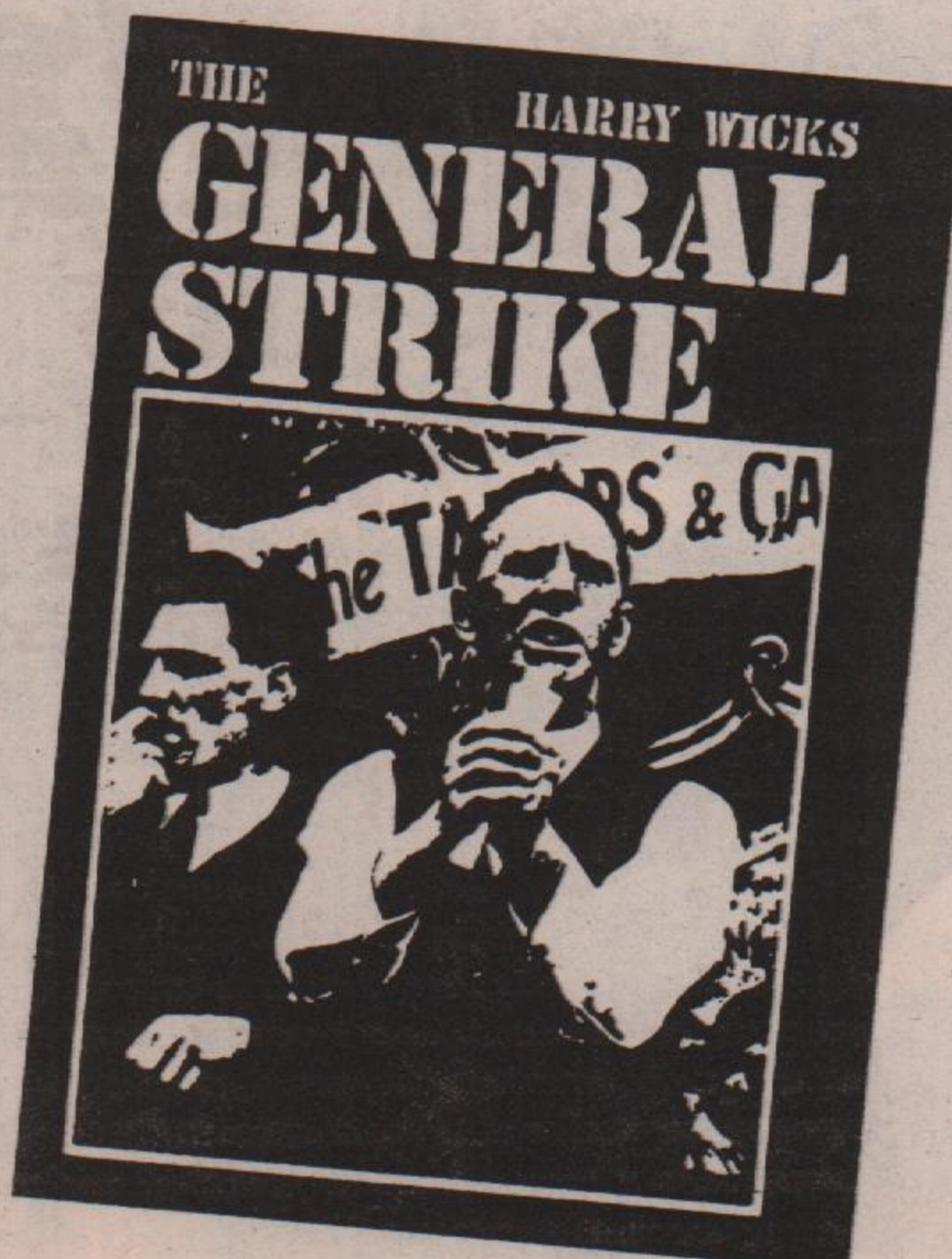
# Harry Wicks

BY MARK HOSKISSON AND  
KEITH HASSELL

of IS politics—state capitalism in particular—he had a keen eye for any tendencies towards bureaucratism.

Sure enough when Tony Cliff began to impose a series of anti-democratic centralist measures inside the IS, Harry placed himself in the ranks of the IS Opposition, a faction that opposed Cliff's bureaucratic moves. The end result was that he parted company with the IS when the Cliff leadership began to conduct a massive wave of expulsions against all oppositionists.

In the face of catcalls and heckles from the likes of Chris Harman, Harry addressed a joint meeting of the left faction (forerunner of Workers Power) and the IS opposition to protest against



the undemocratic purge.

Undeterred by this setback, Harry now in his seventies, struggled to try and build the Workers League. In this period he wrote a pamphlet on the fiftieth anniversary of the general strike. Unlike the many academic tomes written on this subject, Harry told the story from the vantage point of a combatant, of a militant participant in the events and of a Marxist.

In a passage describing the foundation of the Minority Movement two years prior to the strike he used an anecdote to make a telling point about the cowardly left-wing bureaucrats who betrayed the general strike:

"In the town hall vestibule was a man with a friendly face, a big hat and wide girth. It was George Hicks, a rising star amongst the left trade union leaders... Yet to push open the door leading from the vestibule to the conference and identify himself with the Minority Movement was something he never did."

The politics of the IS Opposition/Workers League proved incapable of building an alternative to the IS/SWP. Its hundred or so members were bound together primarily by an opposition to bureaucratism within the IS. Once placed outside its ranks and faced with the urgent task of defining a programme, the political heterogeneity of its forces was revealed.

As it disintegrated some of its members were to join Workers Power, others drifted into the Labour Party (including Rob Clay MP), most—including the engineering shop stewards at the core of Workers League—sank into trade union routinism.

The organisation had broken up by 1977. But Harry, even as an individual, continued to speak to socialist audiences, spreading the anti-capitalist message as best he could.

We had the pleasure of working alongside him and getting to know him personally during the days of the IS Opposition and Workers League. We were entertained and educated by his recollections of the early days of the Left Opposition.

He taught us the value of democratic and fraternal debate during the policy arguments within the Workers League. Above all, we were inspired by a man in his seventies who spoke with enthusiasm and unyielding optimism about the prospects of our class settling accounts with the bosses once and for all.

We were saddened by Harry's death. But his life was a shining example to us and to every revolutionary. In paying this parting tribute to Harry, we are convinced that the memory of him will encourage every one of us to redouble our efforts to complete the job he dedicated most of his life to—building a truly revolutionary workers' party. ■

**FIFTY YEARS** ago rivalry between Europe's imperialist powers erupted into war. Today, if we are to believe the current rulers of these same countries, Europe stands on the threshold of a new period of political and economic unity.

A single European market by 1992, with the unrestricted movement of goods and capital, is the goal the politicians and bosses have set themselves. The workers are promised a Europe of "social justice". Can such measures abolish inter-imperialist economic rivalry? Can Europe be politically unified under capitalism by successive measures of economic co-operation?

The short answer to each of these questions is no. The whole history of the EEC (now more commonly referred to as the EC) confirms the Marxist view that the contradiction between an international economy and competing national states is fundamental to modern capitalism.

In 1958 the EEC was created to assist the "liberalisation" of trade in Europe and to create a market for US goods. Today it has become the major economic rival to US imperialism and increasingly denies the USA a market for its goods.

The foundations of the EEC were laid as part of a post war economic order designed to benefit US imperialism. The USA had entered World War Two determined to prevent Germany and Japan from carving out economically separate colonial regions, and to dismantle the empires of its British and French allies.

It imposed on both its enemies and allies a "liberal economic order", a world market with no protected areas but open instead to North America's all powerful industry and agriculture. The USA established the dollar as a world currency and itself as the world's banker.

With the onset of the Cold War between the USA and the USSR after 1947, Europe became a key battleground. Consequently, the USA was obliged to abandon plans to reduce its strongest rivals, Germany and Japan, to the economic status of semi-colonies. Instead it rebuilt them as subordinate imperialist powers.

For twenty or so years after the war the overwhelming superiority of the USA provided the conditions for a boom in which all the imperialist powers prospered and rivalry between them was muted. Yet as this boom progressed West Germany and Japan eventually outstripped even the USA in economic performance, thus laying the basis for the fragmentation of the post war economic order that is now happening.

Today US political dominance no longer corresponds to the economic balance of forces. The economic organisations such as the IMF and GATT (see page 5) that were put into place by the USA after 1945 to enforce its domination are more and more the site of conflict between the USA and its powerful rivals.

**1992**

In 1951 European collaboration took a step beyond simple reconstruction of war-torn economies with the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC's system of quotas and subsidies was intended to consolidate Europe's heavy industry as a potential rival to US industry. The US Treasury's objections to this were overruled by the State Department in the interests of maintaining the USA's military alliances at the height of the Cold War.

In the early post-war years French imperialism took the lead in forging a common European interest, under its leadership, as something distinct from the needs of the USA. Having failed to make significant progress towards a European Defence Community (EDC), France took the lead after 1955 in the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC). The 1958 Treaty of Rome committed France,

Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg to creating a customs union by dismantling import taxes. France demanded—and received—the unique right to bring its former colonies into a privileged association with the Common Market.

Britain remained aloof from this process. Why? Essentially because, unlike France, it still wanted to be a world power. The 1950s saw Britain's economic growth constantly retarded by attempts to keep sterling as a world currency and the Commonwealth (Britain's ex-colonies) as a protected trading area.

British imperialism approached European economic collaboration via the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). By 1960 this included the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Switzerland and Britain. Within EFTA Britain was unquestionably the major power, but it was strictly second division compared to the EEC. Members of the EEC prospered within their common customs union, something EFTA did not possess.

In the decade after its foundation the EEC ensured that unnecessary economic rivalry between European imperialists did not slow down the boom. But the more effectively the customs union was consolidated the more imperialist rivalry intensified over who was to dominate Europe.

In 1965 France staged a walk-out from the European Council of Ministers. France realised that it was Germany which had become predominant in the EEC and returned only on the condition that "overriding national interest" would allow individual member countries to veto further collaboration. This set the scene for the transformation of the EEC in the 1970s. From being the forum for dampening inter-imperialist rivalries the EEC now became an arena for fighting them out.

As boom turned to recession in the 1970s, with their room for manoeuvre restricted by a tide of workers' struggles, the European imperialists could not evolve a common response to the new situation. The 1970s saw no further leaps forward in economic co-operation. Instead the momentum created by the completion of the Common Market led to a slow but steady growth of intra-European trade. The 1970s also saw Britain, Ireland and Denmark admitted to the EEC and the consolidation of West Germany's predominance in Europe.

It was only with the second recession of 1979-82, and the preparedness of the USA to engage in trade war with the EEC that the European imperialists rediscovered a common purpose.

In 1978 the EEC renewed its attempts at monetary unity with the foundation of the European Monetary System (EMS). In 1979 the European powers drew up a set of binding agreements to effect a controlled destruction of "excess" capacity in steel, coal, shipbuilding and textiles. In the early 1980s they decided to admit three big agricultural producers to the EEC; Portugal, Greece and Spain. In 1985 they agreed to the removal of all "non-tariff" barriers and to create a single European market by 1992. They pushed the Single European Act through their respective parliaments, reversing the 1966 deal on "overriding national interest".

These decisions have set the agenda for the EEC's consolidation as a regional economic block. Each one is designed to deepen and widen free trade within the EEC. In prospect is a unified market of 300 million people, with an economy bigger than the USA and twice as large as Japan. But precisely because of this, every act of capitalist "internationalism" in Europe is at the same time an act of economic rivalry against Japan and the USA. For example, further progress with the EMS could create a regional

**1992**

# Only socialists can unite

By Col

currency to rival the dollar.

But the greatest short term antagonism arises over the EC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Set up in 1964, the cap is a system of guaranteed prices of production and a common market in agricultural goods. It is protected from external trade rivals by quotas and tariffs; in short, the CAP has become exactly the kind of protected enclave the USA fought a war to abolish.

The expansion of the CAP has not only robbed the USA of three agricultural trading partners; it means still greater amounts of subsidised agricultural produce being dumped into the US and third world markets. The more effectively Europe has created a free internal market, the more it has created a market protected from US goods. As a result a simmering trade war has developed between the EC and the USA, using weapons such as quotas and the rigid, not to say bureaucratic, enforcement of purity standards.

At the same time, the more tangible are the spoils of economic collaboration, the more inter-imperialist rivalry has been renewed within the EC. The powerful integrating tendencies within the European economy, unleashed by the foundation of the EEC itself, are beginning to come up against the limits of national capitalist states.

It is impossible for the capitalists, who remain a national, reactionary class to solve this problem. World economic pressures are intensifying the need and the possibility of a regional economic bloc in Europe which could rival the US and Japanese economies. But this cannot be achieved without one national capitalist class imposing its will on the others.

It took North America's undisputed dominance to create a world "liberal economic order" after 1945. Likewise it will take a victorious and predominant economy to reassemble the "liberal economic order" behind European trade barriers. This is the source of the increased friction over 1992 between Britain and its imperialist rivals in Europe, as well as within the British ruling class itself.

**1992**

Despite its sluggish performance in the 1980s boom, West Germany stands poised to dominate any real "single market" which 1992 ushers in. It has the most powerful economy and the strongest currency.

Britain, despite being the financial powerhouse of the EC, could not compete in many sectors of an open European market. Yet British imperialism cannot stand outside the process of consolidating the single market. Its best hope is to create the market under terms and conditions which prevent Germany achieving total dominance. This means stalling and weakening initiatives like the EMS, sabotaging the creation of a Central Bank, speaking out against any talk of political union within Europe and preparing to take advantage of the one economic situation that Thatcherite capital-

ism thrives in—recession.

When the next economic recession hits Europe Thatcher, of all the imperialist leaders, will be best placed to pass on the cost to the working class. This is because she has spent a decade battering the trade union leaders into submission and destroying shop-floor organisation.

The German bosses—with their Federal state, their worker participation schemes, their higher level of state benefits, training and education—would be poorly placed to inflict devastating attacks on the working class. As a strong and prosperous imperialism Germany has developed the so-called "social market" economic strategy; big profits for the bosses, but with a much greater amount of state planning, spending and intervention than Thatcherism would ever support.

Whereas Thatcher has emphasised "caution" over 1992, the German multi-nationals have been arguing that 1992 heralds a "Europe of social justice". This is not just hot air. But their concern for "social justice" owes nothing to the German bosses' sympathy for British, Spanish or Portuguese workers.

It is simply good business. In the single market German imperialism does not want its own industry undercut by countries which use cheap labour, which pay for fewer benefits, which contribute less to training.



Jacques Delors at the 1988 TUC Conference



# Capitalism in Europe

by John Lloyd

Which of the major imperialisms will win is a matter of struggle. And that struggle is at present opening up not just in Brussels but within the Tory Party itself.

There is a growing alliance of both "hard" and "wet" Tories around elements of the "social market" strategy. Lulled by the economic boom, and impatient at Thatcherism's lack of direction for industry in boom conditions, Tories as different as Heath and Heseltine have become enthusiasts for 1992, EMS, and the "social market".

This is not the City-industry split often longed for by the *Guardian* and Communist Party. If anything, the City of London stands to lose most from any serious dislocation of Britain from the European economy. Instead it represents the fortunes which await different sections of British capital in Europe.

The major multi-nationals, whose interests spread far and wide and who compete "freely" and profitably in the world market—such as ICI—are little troubled by the prospect of 1992. But companies who have relied on state subsidy and protection, particularly the defence and electronics industry in Britain, (e.g. GEC) are facing much starker choices over 1992. During the present boom they are able to conduct relatively amicable mergers and collaborative projects with their European rivals. Take away state subsidies and procure-

ment deals, add recessionary conditions and the scene is set for a series of vicious take-over battles between Europe's defence and electronics companies. There is simply no room for several profit-making European companies in this field in conditions of a free market.

Tories like Heseltine actively seek collaboration between British and other European capital now so as to secure the most favourable conditions for survival. Thatcher on the other hand, prefers to link up with US capital wherever there is a choice.

Future take-over battles will demonstrate the contradiction between national states and world economy in a forceful and direct way. National capitalist states may go a long way towards collaboration between defence industries. But not one of them could afford to see its "own" defence industry taken over by its major rivals, least of all Britain, which maintains an enormous military machine both independently and in NATO.

In addition Britain remains the second major world political power after the US and possesses the second largest financial assets in the world. Protectionism and trade wars between Europe and the rest of the world would be very much against Britain's interest.

Unsurprisingly, the newest converts to the "Europe of social justice" are the TUC and Labour Party leaders. Having failed completely to stop Thatcher ravaging jobs, services and benefits they now look to Brussels for protection.

The union bureaucrats, including some of the biggest chauvinists in the "buy British", "build in Britain" lobby, gave EC President Jaques Delors a standing ovation at last year's TUC Congress. They would like nothing better than the opportunity to enforce class peace with both feet under the boardroom table like their West German counterparts. But Delors has made it clear, as a concession to Britain, that any Brussels legislation on "worker participation" will involve "a minimum of regulation" and be optional as to whether companies follow it.

While Bryan Gould still makes occasional demands for import controls, the Kinnock camp in general has a growing suspicion that 1992 and "social justice" might just be the "big idea" Labour has lacked for three elections.

In fact only the Labour left remains committed to a capitalist Britain outside Europe. The reason is clear. Their re-hashed version of Keynesian economic planning, based on the intervention of a strong national state (a "socialist Labour government") would be constantly undermined by a single European market. Their programme for a national state capitalism is at odds with a capitalist economy increasingly enmeshed with the EEC.

Faced with 1992, with the developing split in the ruling class, the workers' movement faces two dangers. The first is to ally itself with the pro-1992 bosses and union leaders in the mistaken belief that a capitalist Europe could ever guarantee "social justice" for work-

ing men and women.

The second is to go along with the strange alliance of Thatcherites and Bennites who reject 1992 because it "threatens Britain's sovereignty". The working class must develop a strategy toward the single market which is independent of either of these capitalist answers.

In 1975 *Workers Power* argued for abstention in the referendum on joining the EEC, whilst the centrist, Stalinist and reformist left flocked to the polls alongside Enoch Powell to vote against joining the "capitalist EEC".

In Austria today our fraternal organisation, the Arbeiterstandpunkt Group, is faced with similar arguments. In or out of the EC our own bosses remain our worst enemies. They exploit us during economic booms, and throw millions of us on the scrapheap during recession, with or without the benefit of international collaboration.

Whilst 1992 will mean take-overs and job losses in the most unprofitable industries, there have been more than enough of these in the last ten years to demonstrate the futility of asking British bosses to protect us. Instead workers in Britain must forge real fighting links with European workers.

Instead of the levelling down of benefits and services we must fight to extend them, before and after 1992. Instead of breaking our backs to entice Ford, Nissan or anybody else to "give jobs to British workers" we must demand full employment now, with the nationalisation of failing companies and a massive programme of public works to create real jobs.

The more bosses are able to equalise the reproduction prices throughout the EEC, the more we must fight for wage parity across Europe. Most of all we need to fight for rank and file links between workers across Europe.

The union bureaucrats' internationalism only extends as far as the next free trip to Strasbourg or Milan, courtesy of the EEC. When it comes to rank and file links, the union leaders will often not defend them even within big firms in Britain, let alone internationally.

## 1992

Today the whole momentum of the European economy is towards greater integration, towards a united Europe. But capitalism cannot unite Europe except by conquest. The nearest to a United States of Europe capitalism has ever got was during German imperialism's war of conquest, 1939-43.

Whatever form the single market takes after 1992 the enormous economic potential of Europe will continue to be stifled by imperialist economic rivalry. Only the working class can unite Europe politically and economically, by destroying capitalism and ousting the national capitalist rulers.

A Socialist United States of Europe is not a utopia: it is the only form of political rule which corresponds to the potential of the European economy. And it could be a possibility if the European workers' movement was raised from its knees by a new, internationalist leadership.

That is why, for revolutionaries, the building of an international revolutionary party is not some hobby, or diversion from the national or local class struggle, but a task corresponding to the strategic questions facing workers today, from Birmingham to Bologna. ■

## IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



### How to fight fascism

TEN YEARS ago this month, Blair Peach was brutally clubbed to death by the police thugs of the Special Patrol Group. Blair was a teacher, a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and a militant anti-fascist. He was killed during a demonstration against the National Front (NF) in Southall, which was viciously attacked by the police.

In the 1970s, the NF were attracting significant support, even polling 119,000 votes in the 1977 Greater London Council elections. Today they rarely attract the headlines, having abandoned electoral struggle in favour of the underground training of "political soldiers". But the threat posed by fascism is still very real. In France and in Germany, large fascist parties are gathering strength (see page 12). On the anniversary of Blair Peach's death it is worth looking closely at the lessons of previous anti-fascist struggles in preparation for the future.

What is fascism? The first movement bearing this name arose in Italy at the end of the First World War. Under the leadership of Mussolini, bands of fighters were organised from the lower middle class and urban poor. With the support of big capital, these gangs attacked picket lines, left wing meetings and prominent workers' leaders. They used nationalism, racism and other prejudices to divide the working class. Their aim, in Trotsky's words, is:

"... that the workers' organisations are annihilated... and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the independent crystallisation of the proletariat".

#### Destruction

The destruction of independent workers' organisations in Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1930s and the genocidal policies of the Nazis from 1938 onwards were the direct results of the rise of fascism. It could have been prevented, but blinded by the Stalinist policy of "social fascism" (the ludicrous idea that social democracy was "in essence" no different from fascism), the German Communist Party refused to unite with the reformist workers led by the Social Democratic Party to crush the Nazis. Both communists and social democrats were duly wiped out after the Nazis took power in 1933.

During this period only one voice put forward a strategy to prevent this tragedy taking place—the International Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky. They argued that a united front of all workers' organisations was needed to eliminate the fascist menace. In the face of a reign of terror organised by the Nazi Brownshirts in Germany, the Left Opposition demanded that the fascists be denied all opportunity to organise and to disseminate their poison. Crucially they called for the establishment of a workers' militia, armed detachments of workers and youth to counter and break up the fascist gangs, defending workers' meetings from attack.

The rise of Hitler in 1933 proved the Trotskyists right. Too late the Stalinists changed their policy. But recognising the threat that Nazi Germany represented to the USSR, Stalin looked for support not to the European workers but to the "democratic" imperialists of Britain and France. Their new policy, the popular front, sought alliances with capitalist parties.

But of course the bosses were not prepared to countenance the type of militant struggle needed

to exterminate fascism. Throughout the 1930s the British state defended Mosley's fascists from working class resistance. Police were deployed against demonstrators at Cable Street in 1936 and the notorious Public Order Act was introduced, supposedly as a check on fascist activity. It has been used almost exclusively against the left ever since. And French and British imperialism, with the aid of the "Communist" Parties, used the genuine hatred of the working class for fascism as an excuse for re-militarisation in preparation for the almighty war of plunder that constituted World War Two.

In the 1970s in Britain, mass demonstrations took place against the rising NF. At Lewisham in 1977, the SWP organised a force of some 5,000, including local black youth. Despite a massive police presence, they prevented an NF march going ahead. The SWP have every right to be proud of Lewisham.

Quite correctly, they went on to launch a campaign against the NF. But the new Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was set up to attract "the thousands of people who hated the Nazis but disapproved of the SWP strategy of physically confronting them on the streets" (*Socialist Worker Review* 3).

The ANL attracted a number of notable "public figures", including pop stars, MPs and even Brian Clough! It included scam like Labour MP Sid Bidwell who was on the Commons Select Committee calling for tighter immigration laws.

To keep these figures happy the ANL refused to adopt consistently anti-racist policies, and the opportunity to win hundreds of thousands to oppose immigration controls was lost. When fascist marches were banned (to prevent successful mobilisations against them), the ANL ignored the lessons of the 1930s and claimed this as a victory.

#### Scandalous

Most scandalous of all were the events of September 1978 during the ANL's second mass anti-fascist carnival in London. While 100,000 people were dancing away in Brockwell Park the NF were marching through Brick Lane, an area of East London with a large Asian community. The carnival organisers (the SWP) knew of this, but refused to direct the anti-fascists there to confront the NF and their police escort, for fear of losing the support of the ANL's public figures. This betrayal was a direct product of the ANL's "all class" strategy, a strategy all too similar to the Stalinist popular front of the 1930s.

The SWP will be using the anniversary of Blair Peach's murder to boast of the ANL's success. But the decline of the NF's vote since the late 1970s has far more to do with Thatcher's infamous speech in which she appealed to fascist voters on TV, claiming that Britain was being "swamped by an alien culture". Since 1979 the Tories have stepped up attacks on black immigration with a series of racist laws.

Fascism is a deadly enemy of the working class. It must be smashed. As long as capitalism exists, economic and political crises will arise in which the bosses have to resort to fascism to tame the working class. Through the strategy of the workers' united front we must build defence organisations that can not only prevent the rise of the fascist gangs but go onto the offensive against the very capitalist system that creates and nurtures them. ■



John Harris/IFL

# THE LONGEST WAR

## Loyalist death squads and sectarian violence

LOYALIST MURDER squads have unleashed a campaign of sectarian terror in the last two months. Their targets have been both selected republican activists and catholic victims attacked at random.

In February loyalist gunmen killed lawyer Pat Finucane and Sinn Fein councillor John Davey. The shooting of Belfast catholic Tony Fusco marked the beginning of a series of random shootings and bombings aimed at the anti-unionist community which has continued sporadically since then.

Loyalist paramilitaries have bombed clubs and sprayed bullets from speeding cars on several occasions. In one attack this led to the killing of Jim McCartney, doorman of a republican pub in Springfield Road.

The British media and politicians have done their best to portray this campaign as part of a tit-for-tat outbreak of senseless sectarian violence perpetrated by both sides.

### Bigotry

British workers are encouraged to see it as an archaic clash of religions or a "tribal conflict". Despite the Orange bigotry of the protestants the conflict is not about creeds but national freedom and political and social equality. The protestants enjoy systematic political, social and economic privileges and defend and justify them with semi-religious ideology. The "catholics" are mobilised under a democratic secular ideology, republicanism, which, despite its petit bourgeois character and its concessions to the social views of the clergy, remains progressive. However, it is clearly in Britain's interests to present it all as a tit for tat series of bloody murders.

But this is not the case. The overwhelming majority of the IRA's targets in the last three months have been, as usual, members of the British army, the RUC and active loyalist paramilitaries.

When gunmen sprayed the loyalist Times Bar, killing one protestant, the IRA denied involvement and condemned the shooting. When an IRA active service unit killed two innocent civilians in the course of assassinating UVF commander Leslie Dallas in Coagh the media, loyalist politicians and the SDLP were able to claim this as evidence of a sectarian campaign by the IRA, supported by Sinn Fein.

But Gerry Adams made clear that Sinn Fein did not condone civilian deaths. An IRA statement made clear that this was not a sectarian attack but a military operation which went wrong. They reiterated their opposition to a sectarian campaign after shooting top UVF commander John Irvine in March.

"Contrary to what sections of the media will speculate we are not working through a hit list of loyalists named by paid perjurers a number of years ago. Our targets are active loyalist paramilitaries. We have a duty to protect the nationalist community from sec-

tarian murder campaigns." (AP/RN 23 March)

The media deliberately depicts the IRA as mad sectarians with a thirst for protestant blood in order to obscure the real nature of the war in Ireland.

British troops went into Northern Ireland twenty years ago to stem a rising tide of mass protest against the injustice of the Orange state.

Northern Ireland was set up by Britain in 1921 after the majority of Irish people voted for independence in 1918. Its borders rigged to ensure a protestant majority, the sectarian statelet systematically discriminated against catholics in jobs, housing, votes and civil rights. It cannot be reformed and must be smashed as part of the struggle for a workers' republic of Ireland.

Despite the fact that we believe that their strategy of guerrilla warfare is profoundly misguided and cannot achieve its objectives, despite the constant risk and occasional reality of innocent civilian deaths that results from it, we know which side we are on. The IRA and Sinn Fein represent a progressive legitimate struggle against British imperialism. The British state forces, the Orange police force and paramilitaries represent the deepest reaction. They protect and foster sectarianism in all the senses of the term.

### Invaluable

The loyalist murder campaign is, on the other hand, an invaluable adjunct to state repression. It is the tip of the iceberg of a daily campaign of harassment, death threats and abuse carried out by soldiers, police and paramilitaries alike. It is designed to terrorise catholics into passivity, to make those engaged in peaceful and legal protest fear for their lives daily.

It is encouraged by Tory and loyalist MPs who habitually equate Sinn Fein with the IRA. Tory Minister Douglas Hogg fingered Pat Finucane in a Commons speech when he accused certain lawyers of being "unduly sympathetic to the IRA". Within weeks Finucane, who had just won a new inquest for the RUC's shoot to kill victims, was dead.

And the loyalist campaign is actively encouraged by rank and file RUC officers, whatever "disciplined, law abiding" image is fostered at the top. The British and Irish media ban Sinn Fein and the IRA so that their own accounts of military actions, including their self-criticism, is hidden from the eyes of British workers.

Orange sectarianism is a systematic and functional element of repression. Sectarian killings on the nationalist side when they occur are exceptional, desperate, wrong reactions to this brutality and oppression.

Whatever our criticisms of the republican movement's strategy and tactics they are fighting a legitimate war of liberation against an occupying army. The loyalist paramilitaries, however, are Britain's death squads. ■

Eight hundred dead and 5,000 injured. Diego Mocar reports on what the IMF's package of austerity measures imposed by the new president of Venezuela, Carlos Andres Perez, mean to the Venezuelan masses.

VENEZUELA HAS long been the most prosperous state in Latin America and what the United States' media calls a "shop window of Democracy".

On 26 February, that window display was demolished by the stones, sticks and even the bare hands of the impoverished masses from the "ranchos" (shanty towns), disillusioned and furious with Perez. Only months before, he had swindled them into voting for him on the promise that he would stand up to the IMF.

Perez entered office with invitations to Fidel Castro, Daniel Ortega and the US Vice-President to attend his inauguration. He offered to play a mediating role in the civil war in El Salvador. Yet within months, the IMF had persuaded him to launch an austerity package which meant a 90% increase in petrol prices and transport costs. The masses of the shanty towns descended by their hundreds of thousands into the glittering consumer paradise of central Caracas to demonstrate against this savage attack on the poor.

They were met by police and military repression and days of struggle ensued. The unarmed masses were gunned down in their hundreds by the hirelings of the IMF and the Western banks. The massacre brings home the utter subordination of Latin America's governments to the imperialist banks.

The masses' rage gave them enormous courage but alas they had no revolutionary leadership. The reason for this lies in the history of Venezuela.

### Growth

Between 1921 and 1930 Venezuela experienced a rapid and deep economic penetration by foreign capital, in particular from North America. Oil production expanded from 69,000 tons in 1920 to 20 million tons in 1930. This decade saw economic development, based on oil, change the features of Venezuelan society. There was a massive growth of the proletariat and the emergence of a modern urban middle class.

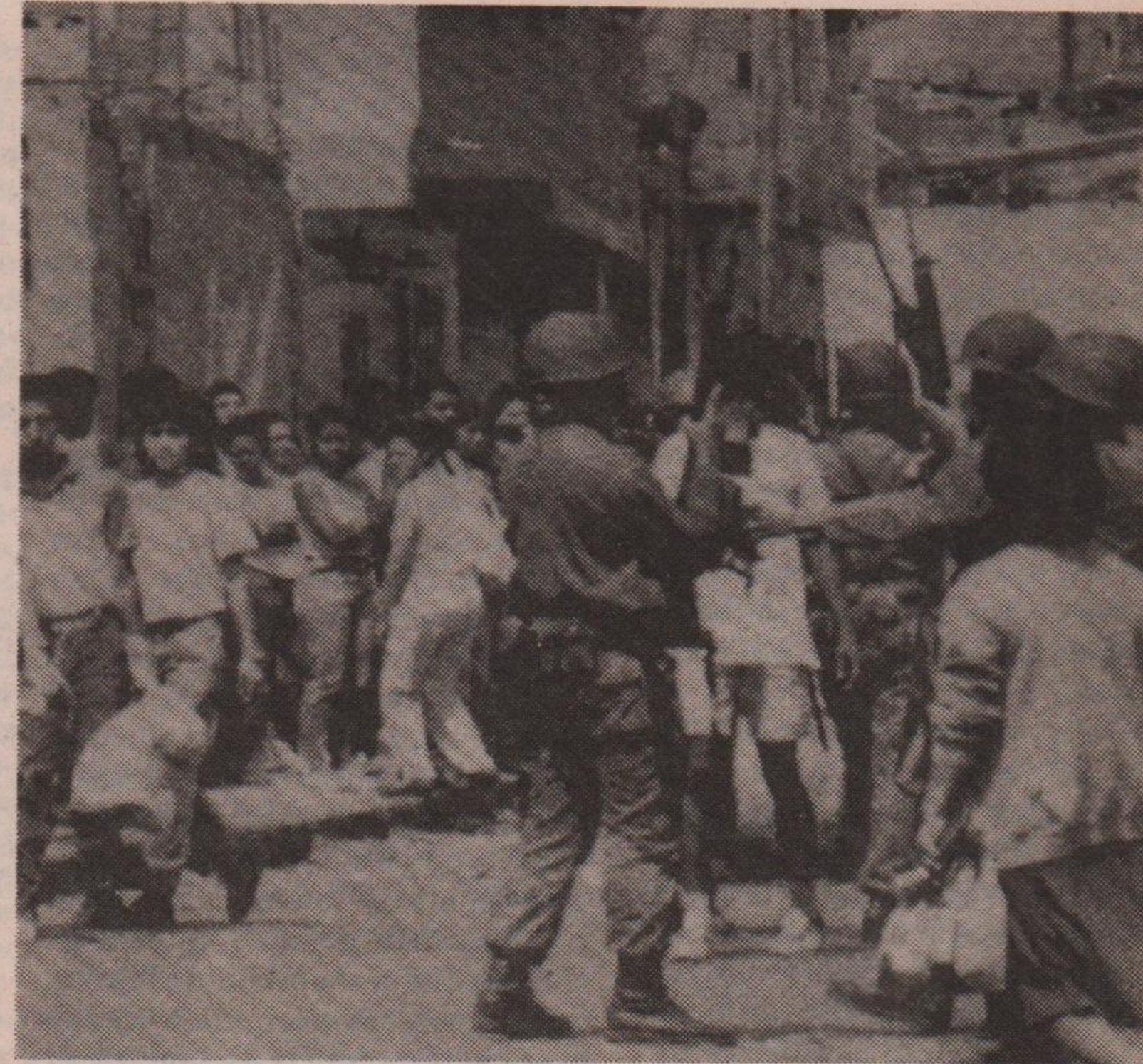
In exile in the United States in 1924, the Union Revolucionaria Venezolana was founded. In 1928, one of its founders, Ricardo Martinez, attended the fourth congress of the Red International of Labour Unions in Moscow. The URV gave way to the Partido Comunista de Venezuela (PCV), but the party was Stalinist from birth, deeply influenced by the Soviet bureaucracy.

It followed all the latter's twists and turns from the ultra-leftism of the Third Period to Popular Frontism in the 1930s and 1940s. It tried to annihilate any left opposition to Stalinism in the workers' movement, viciously denouncing it as "Trotskyism".

Like other Stalinist parties during the war, it slavishly supported the governments loyal to US Imperialism (Gomez and Medina). Even when the war ended in the name of continuing the National Anti-Fascist Front, they clung to General Medina Angarita's regime.

The PCV paid dearly for its servility and was completely discredited when the government fell to a coup d'etat in October 1945. This coup was led by young army officers and Accion Democratica (AD), a bourgeois nationalist party of which Carlos Andres Perez is the present leader.

## Massacre in Venezuela



The 1945-48 civilian-military regime of the party's founder Romulo Betancourt conceded serious economic and social reforms to the labour movement at the same time as splitting off the more radical left elements and creating a docile reformist trade unionism. Accion Democratica, flush with oil revenues from renegotiated agreements with the USA created a trade union bureaucracy that kept the labour movement subordinate to this bourgeois national party.

The repeated betrayals of the Venezuelan Stalinists are the real reasons why the masses found themselves without a leadership when they collided headlong with the party which they had long thought was their own. These betrayals have not all been of a right opportunist character. The party has occasionally indulged in adventurist zig-zags.

### Campaign

Thus in 1962, together with the MIR (Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left) they launched a three year guerrilla campaign. This only further weakened the labour movement, tying it yet closer to Accion Democratica. These foquista (guerrillaist) years of the PCV produced a split in its ranks. The MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) was born, initially calling itself Marxist-Leninist but later accommodating to a "historic bloc" with the urban middle classes and christian sectors.

The MIR, the PCV's guerrilla partner, has ended its evolution as a reformist organisation with pronounced social democratic inclinations.

The enormous economic strength which oil production gave Venezuela, combined with the disastrous policies of the PCV, enabled it to sustain an almost entirely bourgeois political line on a formally "democratic" basis. Bourgeois parties (COPEI and AD) alternated in power and the AD domesticated and incorporated the unions throughout the long Venezuelan boom.

The boom has ended and the country has suffered a sharp de-

cline as a result of the fall in oil prices. Over the last five years it has been paying out 50% of its oil revenue to service its debt (32 billion dollars).

In the last year, debt service charges took 70% of the country's oil revenue. During the boom years the Venezuelan bourgeoisie failed to significantly develop the country's industrial base.

They demonstrated their parasitic nature by investing in property, financial speculation, commerce, transport and construction instead.

The uprising expresses the masses' deep disillusionment with the AD and their hatred of imperialist domination. The economic, social and political conditions are present today for the Venezuelan proletariat to break from the AD's tutelage. But they will not be able to do so without shedding at the same time the rotten legacy of Stalinism.

An action programme is needed to rally the forces of class independence, of revolutionary struggle against the IMF and its loyal servant the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. It should start by demanding that the foreign and domestic capitalists pay the cost of their crisis. The external debt should be repudiated and the austerity programme revoked.

Instead a programme to devote all of the country's resources into a programme of public works, to put the unemployed to work, is needed. A sliding scale of wages must protect the working class against inflation. The nationalisation of imperialist and "national" capitalist property is necessary to carry out these measures.

Needless to say, neither bourgeois nationalist parties nor Stalinist reformist parties can mobilise the workers to fight for this programme. For this the Venezuelan proletariat, leading the urban and rural poor needs a revolutionary workers' party built on genuine Leninist and Trotskyist foundations.

Now it is vital to break the trade union federation, the CTV, with over a million and a half members, from the AD, oust the corrupt bureaucrats and regain the unions for the rank and file. ■

# Troops enforce Serbian rule

DURING THE last week of March thousands of Serbians took to the streets of the capital of their republic, Belgrade, in jubilant celebrations. Serbia was once again "united" with the passing of constitutional changes ending the autonomy of Kosovo, the "cradle of the Serb nation" and Vojvodina.

Simultaneously in Kosovo itself thousands of ethnic Albanians were involved in fierce clashes with the police and army. At least 24 people are dead, hundreds wounded and even more detained.

Kosovo has now been placed under a partial state of emergency, including a dusk to dawn curfew, in order to suppress the revolt of the Albanians against their forced incorporation into a "Greater Serbian" republic.

Kosovo is a province in the South of the Republic of Serbia. Serbia itself is one of a series of republics which make up the Federation of Yugoslavia. Within Kosovo 90% of the population are of Albanian origin; two million people compared with about 200,000 Serbians.

In 1974 Kosovo along with another Serbian province, Vojvodina, were granted extensive autonomy by Tito, including control over the judiciary, security and planning. It was hoped that by granting such autonomy to Kosovo the state and party could be "Albanised", through incorporating ethnic Albanian leaders, and allowing economic development to take place.

## Unemployment

However, despite \$1 million pouring into Kosovo each day from the Yugoslav federation, its economic and social problems remain dire. Unemployment is over 50% in some areas; productivity is low (30% of that in the rest of Yugoslavia). Miners' wages are barely enough to avoid starvation and in rural areas land shortages lead to an almost subsistence level of production.

These are the fruits of the "market socialism" practised by the Yugoslav bureaucracy.

In 1981 there were riots by ethnic Albanians in Kosovo protesting at anti-Albanian chauvinism and falling living standards. In the aftermath of this rebellion a coalition of Serbians was formed, determined to reverse the trend towards Kosovo becoming a purely Albanian province. Rabidly right wing Serbian nationalists, disaffected "lefts" in the party and state and members of the Orthodox church came together to promote a "new course" for Serbia.

Slobodan Milosevic became the undisputed leader of the Serbian party in 1987 and set about achieving the goal of this "new course"—the triumph of Serbian nationalism—by forcibly reuniting the republic.

He started to mobilise Serbian workers into a nationalist frenzy against the Albanians in order to convince the Kosovo assembly and the Yugoslav federal leadership that an end to autonomy was necessary. Milosevic repeatedly raised the spectre of civil war if his demands were not met.

He accused the Albanian nation of genocide against Serbians and promoted the belief that the Yugoslav CP and in particular the Kosovo party were involved in an anti-Serbian campaign. The resulting brutal purge in the party and state apparatus of anyone believed to be soft on Albanian nationalism

was carried through under the guise of a struggle against a supposed Albanian backed "separatist counter-revolution".

It was this hysterical anti-Albanian chauvinism, organised through party-backed mass rallies and demonstrations throughout the republic which led to ethnic Albanians taking action.

In November 1988 there was a miners' strike followed by a five day march to the province's capital, Pristina, involving half a million Albanian workers and students.

They were demanding the reinstatement of two of Kosovo's party chiefs who had been "persuaded" to resign by the Serbian leadership who considered they were too soft on the Albanians. Along with the slogan "we will not surrender our cadres" the protesters also demanded an end to the proposed constitutional changes.

In February this year, as it became clear that the Milosevic leadership would win their constitutional reform, Albanians

once again took action. Demonstrations had been formally banned since November but political strikes once more led by the miners from the Stari Trg mine, spread quickly.

The Kosovo assembly formally adopted the constitutional changes surrendering autonomy on 23 March. It was this victory that Milosevic had been building for, since without their consent he could not re-unite Serbia. He achieved it through a massive purge in the party, the pressure of a threatened civil war, plus the "interviewing" of delegates one by one, by members of the Belgrade secret police.

## Mobilisations

With news of this decision, mass mobilisations began, with young Albanians playing a prominent role. Demonstrations were met with 15,000 special militia, backed by the army. Tanks went into the streets enforcing a curfew, a ban on public gatherings of more than

three people and the closure of schools and cinemas.

On 28 March, when the Belgrade parliament adopted the constitutional changes, the violence continued. In the village of Zur 200-300 demonstrators armed with guns blockaded the police station. The police opened fire on them and at least two demonstrators were killed. In other clashes two policemen were shot. In Orohovac a demonstration of school students was broken up by police, whilst in Pristina helicopters bombarded whole areas with tear gas.

Continued repression temporarily halted these uprisings. However, the anger of the ethnic Albanian youth remains and will doubtless re-emerge over the coming weeks and months.

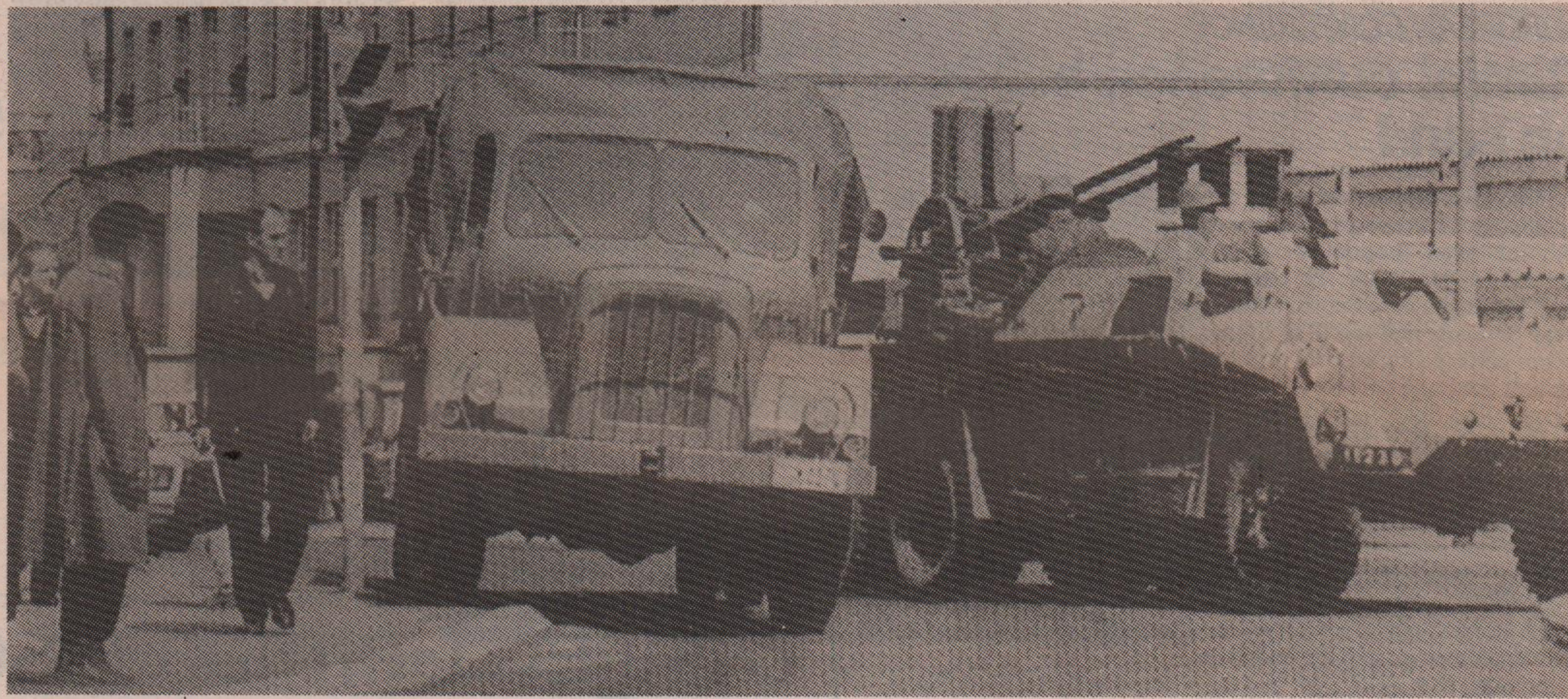
Milosevic's Serbian nationalism is thoroughly reactionary. The province of Kosovo should be accorded the same autonomy and status as the republics.

Many ethnic Albanian workers will respond to Serbian chauvin-

ism by advocating increasing autonomy, possibly to the point of separation. Whilst we defend their right to self determination such a trajectory could only increase the economic and social problems they face.

Kosovo's economy is completely bound up with the rest of the Yugoslav federation, indeed it receives two thirds of its budget from that source. Rather than attempt a separate road, Kosovo workers should combine their demands for full autonomy with a programme of economic development through political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

As with other Yugoslav workers and peasants, the ethnic Albanians lack a coherent political leadership. Against the dead end of nationalism—Serbian or Albanian—a new Trotskyist party must be built. It must fight for the overthrow of the whole Stalinist bureaucracy to take Yugoslavia forward to socialism as a voluntary federation, not a prison house of nations. ■



The army move into Pristina, capital of Kosovo

## Yeltsin taps mass anger

THOUSANDS OF Soviet workers and students in Moscow joined in mass meetings and street demonstrations in support of an open attack on bureaucratic privilege. This political activity around the elections showed the explosive potential of any loosening of the bureaucratic repression in the USSR.

The clearest evidence of a groundswell of mass hostility to the bureaucracy was the campaign and victory of Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. In the popular imagination Yeltsin has great advantages. He was booted out of the Politburo for his too open attacks on bureaucratic privilege.

His speech at last year's special Party Conference, which castigated bureaucratic conservatism naming Ligachev as arch culprit, earned him even more popularity. When the party decided to cap this by establishing a committee of enquiry into his electoral campaign Yeltsin was again given the aura of being the one that "they"—the apparatus—were against.

Rallying behind Yeltsin unprecedented street demonstrations raised the cry to "Bash them, Boris." And by "them" they meant the ruling bureaucracy. As one slogan ex-



Boris Yeltsin

pressed it "Yeltsin—yes, the bureaucratic system—no." At Yeltsin meetings speakers regularly denounced bureaucratic privilege—as one speaker put it to rapturous applause: "the rouble must be the same for everyone." There should be no doubt that the pro-Yeltsin campaign had, at its base, a profoundly anti-bureaucratic essence.

Yeltsin is a populist who has fallen out with his one-time partners in the reforming wing of the Soviet bureaucracy. And he has discovered that he can make political capital out of his exclusion from the bureaucracy's inner sanctum.

It is therefore not surprising that Yeltsin could achieve a massive victory, with five million votes against the manager of the Zil plant. Zil produce only one type of car—luxury limousines for the bureaucracy. Years of hostility to bureaucratic privilege and political oppression were expressed in Yeltsin's landslide victory.

However his ability to articulate aspects of working class hostility to the bureaucracy, and the fact that his campaign served to ignite open and sharp debate on Moscow's huge working class estates must not blind us to the inherent limits of Yeltsin's politics.

He is currently an outcast from the court of Mikhail Gorbachev. He was previously an arch supporter of the reforming wing of the bureaucracy, but was kicked out of their charmed circle when he went too far in his criticism of bureaucratic privilege.

His outspoken campaign against

special shops and services made him a liability in the eyes of Gorbachev's more conservative friends, notably Ligachev. Statements such as, "I think the right to consumer goods should be equal for everyone from the worker to the First Secretary" and "the ministers should have to go to the same hospitals as everyone else", made him popular with the Moscow masses but outraged sections of the bureaucracy.

However Yeltsin remains committed to the programme of *perestroika*, albeit with more *glasnost*. He differs with Gorbachev on the estimation of how far the purge of bureaucratic privilege needs to go.

Yeltsin recognises that the Soviet bureaucracy is sitting on a time bomb. The working class' ever greater anger at the material hardships of their daily life compared with the cushioned life of the bureaucracy is set to explode. And having failed to win the bureaucracy to his programme, he is fueling the anger of the masses in order to make a political comeback.

However, his project is for the reform of the bureaucracy not its abolition. In any revolutionary crisis he will seek to harness working class anger for his own purposes.

That is why the Soviet working class needs its own organs of struggle, independent from all wings of the ruling caste. That is why it needs a new party altogether that sets as its goal the destruction of the bureaucracy's power and the establishment, once again in the USSR, of genuine workers' power. ■

# the MRCI

## NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

### MRCI CONFERENCE

## Peruvian group joins MRCI

WE ARE proud to announce that Poder Obrero is now the official section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International in Peru. The comrades' application for membership was accepted at the MRCI's Easter meeting in London, which was attended by delegates from all the sections. This is a major step forward for our movement, being our first section outside Europe. In the course of our relationship with Poder Obrero the MRCI has already learned much about applying the Trotskyist programme in the difficult conditions of militarism and Bonapartism in Latin America.

The Easter meeting also discussed and adopted a set of theses on women's oppression, dealing with its origins and changing form in differing class societies, the family in imperialist and semi-colonial countries and key issues of programme and organisation. In adopting these representing the position of our entire organisation the MRCI again showed itself to be on course for its transformation into a democratic centralist tendency at its Congress later this year. ■



### EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

## Rimini conference builds on sand

DURING THE weekend of 17-19 March representatives of the MRCI participated in an open conference in Italy of organisations that identify with Trotskyism. The conference was sponsored by the GOR of Italy and the RWP of Sri Lanka, the International Trotskyist Committee (with representatives from Britain, USA and Italy), the LTT(FI) of Belgium and West Germany and the IF of Britain. Apart from the MRCI the other groups participating were the IKL of Austria, the Preparatory Committee, the WSL (US) and the FSP (US). The LRP of the USA sent an observer.

Over three days the meeting debated the Fourth International, Gorbachev, Poland, Iran, South Africa and received a report on the current situation in Sri Lanka. The sessions were very democratically organised and because of this the serious programmatic differences that divided the sponsors from one another as well as the MRCI were obvious. The conference confirmed our view that to accumulate widely differing organisations under the rubric of a supposed common "Trotskyism" or around the slogan of some sort of restoration of the Fourth International is not the way forward. It does not help resolve the deep seated programmatic questions.

The WSL, FSP, GOR, RWP and the IF voted to establish a European Co-ordinating Committee with links to a similar committee established in the US last year (see *Trotskyist International 2* for a report). The ITC abstained but agreed to participate in it.

Clearly these groups, and especially the Rimini conference's initiators, the GOR, see this grouping either as a tendency in itself or as an instrument to create a larger (but equally amorphous) grouping with the Preparatory Committee (WRP, Varga-ites and the recent splinters from Morenoism in Argentina, the USA etc). Whilst the MRCI takes any international discussion seriously, as the production of our "22 Theses in Defence of Trotskyism" shows, we repeat that any tendency not based on a re-elaborated programme will be built on sand. ■

### IRISH WORKERS GROUP

## Irish Labour Party witch-hunt

THE IRISH Labour Party (ILP) conference in March voted 900 to 500 to ban support for, or sale of, the *Irish Militant*. The IWG, while not members of the ILP, have actively opposed the witch-hunt through the trade unions affiliated to the ILP. *Militant's* sectarian attitude to any democratic campaign for their own defence certainly handed the officials of the ILP an extra weapon. Hundreds of *Militant* supporters will be immediately targeted in this small party of 6,000. The IWG sold over fifty copies of their latest paper which includes an extensive critique of the *Militant* tendency's politics. ■

### FUND DRIVE

THE EXPANSION of the MRCI presents Trotskyism with great opportunities. If we are to assist our Peruvian comrades in advancing a revolutionary action programme for the working class in the current pre-revolutionary situation the MRCI needs money, and lots of it. Over the last two months we have received £469-30 from British supporters. But if we are to meet our £3000 deadline by the summer we will need much more. Rush your donations to:

MRCI, c/o Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

### The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

The MRCI  
Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)  
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)  
Irish Workers Group  
Poder Obrero (Peru)  
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)

Workers Power Group (Britain)

Guia Obrera (Bolivia) is a fraternal group in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

AT MIDNIGHT on 3 March, one of the most important strikes in the USA since 1980 began. At airports across the country the International Association of Machinists (IAM) threw up picket lines against the plans of Eastern Airlines' chief, Frank Lorenzo for a massive pay cut.

The dispute recalls the air traffic controller's strike in 1981 when the newly elected Ronald Reagan set the tone for the rest of his presidency by jailing leaders of the air traffic controllers' union PATCO. Now President George Bush, eager to shed his "wimp-like" image, is siding with Lorenzo's union-bashing provocation. If he wins it will have serious consequences for the US labour movement into the 1990s.

Eastern Airlines was taken over by corporate raider Lorenzo in 1985. This ruthless free marketeer has hived off the company's shuttle and computer reservation system, and is now taking on the 8,500 machinists. He aims to save \$150 million per year on wages. He is an avowed asset stripper and union buster, dead set on confrontation.

The workers' response was unexpectedly militant. The strike called for 3 March was almost totally obeyed and has been enforced at airports right across the country. The real shock to Lorenzo, and the bosses generally, has been the attitude of the pilots. Widely regarded as pro-Republican self-interested professionals, they have overwhelmingly respected IAM picket lines thereby bringing Eastern to a halt.

Solidarity has also been forthcoming from airport workers in Canada and railworkers refusing to handle cargo that has travelled on Eastern flights. And in Miami, where the company has been hiring scabs from amongst Central American refugees, IAM speakers have appealed for solidarity on Spanish language local radio.

This is a popular strike. The

# EASTERN AIRLINES A crucial strike

BY DAVID GREEN

American public has been deeply unsettled by one of the effects of cost-cutting—falling safety standards. This and the extortionate prices charged by the handful of monopolies now owning the airline companies, have created a substantial pool of sympathy for the strikers. This must be turned into active solidarity from trade unionists across the USA.

The bureaucrats who run the IAM do not share this strategy. They are running scared. The union's leader William Winpisinger has called for Bush to force both sides into negotiations. Jesse Jackson, who got some support from Winpisinger in his bid to secure the Democratic candidature in last year's election, has publicly prayed on his hands and knees for a presidential intervention!

Calling on the US state, the principal guardian of "free enterprise" in the world today, to mediate can only end in disaster for the machinists. This is the lesson of every other major strike the state has intervened in. What's more, Reagan has spent years stuffing the Federal Labor Bureau with anti-union appointees. They have consistently "mediated" in the bosses' favour.

The other strategy touted by the IAM bureaucracy has been to find a "pro-Labor" capitalist to buy out Lorenzo and take over the firm. Since Lorenzo put Eastern into bankruptcy, the bureaucrats have

thrown in their lot with a succession of shady corporate dealers: Peter Ueberroth, who runs the hugely profitable US baseball association, Kirk Kerkorian, a Californian gambling billionaire, and even Carl Icahn, the ruthless and avaricious chairman of the massive Transworld Airlines.

The whole episode recalls the plot of the film "Wall Street"! Michael Douglas plays a corporate raider whose takeover of an ailing airline is backed by the unions. They are then powerless to stop him laying off the workforce and stripping the company down. And believe it or not, Lorenzo's takeover of Eastern Airlines back in 1985 had official union support!

Rank and file strikers should reject Winpisinger's manoeuvres and rely on their own strength. Elected strike committees must take over the running of the strike, setting up picket line defence squads to give any scabs a militant education lesson they will never forget. The rank and file will also need to organise to kick out the bureaucrats that run the IAM and to build one union across the USA's crucial air industry.

A clear call to railworkers, teamsters and all transport workers to strike alongside the IAM could gain massive support. This will be vital if the strike is to win and build a new confidence amongst US workers that could roll back the defeats of the Reagan years, and prepare for the battles ahead with George Bush and his billionaire backers. ■

# Danger: German fascism on the march

BY PETER MAIN

AS THE centenary of Hitler's birth (20 April) approaches, Germany's extreme right wing is celebrating a series of electoral advances. Since last September, the German People's Union (DVU), the Republicans (REP) and the National Party (NPD) have, between them, won seats in local parliaments in Bremerhaven, Frankfurt and Berlin. The REP will have two seats in the Bonn parliament from next year.

The reasons for these successes are not difficult to see. West Germany has over two million unemployed. There is a serious shortage of housing. Many fear that 1992 will wipe out small businesses, both urban and rural. The Federal Government is increasingly seen as incompetent and indecisive.

The existing trade union and social democratic leaders are offering no decisive alternative to the working class against these ills. What we are witnessing is the creation of the political and economic conditions in which the ideas of the old fascists once again fall on fertile ground.

At present the German bourgeoisie has no need for fascism on a large scale. But it would be criminal to allow this fact to obscure the very real threat that the right poses. Already the ruling CDU is looking for tougher cuts in welfare spending and considering anti-immigrant measures.

Of course in formal terms, the REP, NPD and DVU are not Nazi organisations on the pattern of the twenties. But their policies such as the abolition of trade unions, the scrapping of welfare, forcing those on benefits to work, compulsory

training for young women in the ideals of "motherhood", restrictions on the rights of AIDS sufferers and the return of territory supposedly lost, including the whole of East Germany and parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USSR, are all the common property of the fascist far right in Europe.

Their recent electoral supporters are not all dedicated Hitlerites. Nonetheless, these parties contain organised fascists who are creating an arena in which to grow. Every success will encourage them to go beyond parliamentarianism and to organise direct physical action whether that be demos in immigrant areas, attacks on left wing meetings or supposedly symbolic actions such as ceremonies around the Germania statue on Germany's national day.

After decades of semi-secrecy, the fascists are not united either organisationally or programmatically. Increased public activity will help them to overcome these problems. Already the NPD, set up twenty years ago mainly by old Nazis, has succeeded in presenting a joint electoral slate with the DVU. In Berlin, where the constitutional ban on fascist organisations is enforced a bit more rigorously, the new REP has acted as an umbrella for the proscribed organisations.

The advances they have made are reflected in the financial backing they now receive, particularly the DVU, which is backed by the millionaire publisher Gerhard Frey. In January they spent £2 million for the European elections.

Fascism in Germany, then, is not a left wing paranoid fantasy. It exists and it is growing. The fight to destroy it will be central to the building of a revolutionary communist party. The key policies needed in such a fight are:

- No reliance on the capitalist state—no to state bans on the fascists which only serve to prevent working-class mobilisations against them.
- For direct action to stop the fascists. Take the campaign into the unions and the factories. Every mobilisation by the fascists or their front organisations should be physically confronted on the largest possible scale. Build anti-fascist defence squads... no one who goes on a fascist march should come away feeling the better for it!
- Build on the example of Dusseldorf postal workers who refused to handle mail connected with the DVU's postal campaign. No to "popular fronts" with the "anti-fascist" bourgeoisie who will run a mile from effective working class action. After all, the fascists hope to recruit by identifying the left with the parliamentary windbags of the SPD and the pacifist clap trap of the priests.
- Unite the forces of the left. For a united front against the fascists! There will be no shortage of conferences and resolutions against fascism. Within them revolutionaries will pose the tactics outlined above and cut through the empty rhetoric of reformists and pacifists by demanding a commitment to action.

The trial of Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of the South African metal workers union NUMSA is due to start again this month. Moses and his four co-accused are charged with treason for their part in the Alexandra Action Committee which built a democratic community organisation in the period before the imposition of the State of Emergency in 1986.

International trade union pressure has already succeeded in getting Moses released on bail for a period, but there is no guarantee of a successful outcome to the trial.

It is vital that pressure is increased through resolutions, messages to the British and South African governments, pickets and demonstrations.

Resolutions should go to the TUC calling on them to mount a national demonstration.

Moses' wife Khola and Bongani Mkhungo, chair of the BTR national stewards committee, have been touring the country speaking to many meetings of trade unionists calling on the movement to give further support. *Workers Power* interviewed Khola at the end of the tour.

# Free Moses Mayekiso

**WP: Can you start by telling us why you are visiting Britain?**

**KM:** To get support for our call for the unconditional release of Moses and his co-accused. We believe they did nothing illegal, but the state is trying to make everything illegal.

**WP: And what are you asking British workers to do?**

**KM:** We think workers in particular can put pressure on their bosses. They in turn can put pressure on Mrs Thatcher who can pressure the Botha regime to release Moses and his co-accused. Also workers should write letters, cards etc to Botha to show the levels of international solidarity. This solidarity can bring change, as we have seen.

**WP: We've heard recently about the hunger strikes in South Africa, can you tell us about the outcome?**

**KM:** Before I left South Africa the

hunger strike was called off because after a meeting between the bishops and Adriaan Vlok, the law and order minister, Vlok agreed to release all the detainees. But there are still some in jail, so it's possible the strikes will continue.

**WP: What is the situation now in Alexandra?**

**KM:** It is very difficult for anyone to be active. Many people were detained when the Emergency was declared in 1986 and others had to flee. So this has kept the level of organisation down.

**WP: Can you tell us a bit about the current state of the trade union movement. For instance the number of strike days lost in 1988 was down on 1987. Is there a lowering of struggle or is the union movement still growing?**

**KM:** The trade union movement is

still growing but the state is still trying to cripple the unions by imposing the laws and extending the use of Labour Act.

For instance last year after NUMSA balloted for national strike action, the state announced it had gazetted (outlawed) the strike at midnight, when the strike was due to start in the morning. Workers feel they are being victimised by the state.

Also, the effect of the State of Emergency means that workers both in the community and workplaces feel they have to keep a low profile in the struggle. The State of Emergency allows the regime to detain people for an unlimited time and to detain whole gatherings. All this means that the spirit of people has lowered a bit.

But there are still some movements active. Organisations exist but it is very difficult for them to operate, they have to do everything

underground to avoid detention.

**WP: In that situation, has NUMSA been able to retain its idea of workers control over the union through things like the shop stewards network?**

**KM:** NUMSA is a democratic organisation. It still has worker control. As a result every upper structure of NUMSA is comprised of workers. For instance the president of NUMSA is a worker from the shop floor.

And Moses himself worked originally in the mines when he came to Johannesburg, then in Toyota. He was sacked from Toyota in 1979 following a strike there. After that MAWU, the metal workers union which later merged with others to form NUMSA, employed him as an organiser. Later he became a regional Secretary of MAWU and then he was unanimously elected General Secretary of NUMSA when he was in jail.

**WP: Your spoke of the effects of the Labour Act and the Emergency. We argued that a general strike will be necessary to stop the imposition of the Emergency and will be to end the Emergency and to stop the labour laws being used. Are workers discussing this and do they think a general strike is necessary?**

**KM:** Yes the general strike will be useful at the end. The opinion of the people is that they must continue protesting. As I said there are still some movements, organisations operating who can issue pamphlets calling for Stay-Aways. I think that people are going to take general strike action to protest against all of these unjust laws. There is such a feeling developing now.

**WP: What do workers think of the talk of negotiations involving Thatcher, Botha and maybe the liberation movements?**

**KM:** We should start from the feeling about Botha and de Klerk. People have no confidence in the South African leadership. The argument at the moment is just a power struggle between themselves. Even if de Klerk takes over, nothing will improve—he could be worse than Botha.

And workers have no confidence in what Mrs Thatcher has been preaching. They are suspicious of what lies behind what Thatcher is saying now, of her motives.

## ITALY

# PCI's "New Course"

The 28th Congress of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which took place in March, marked a further step on its road to social democracy. *John McKee* examines these developments.

Achille Occhetto, the leader of the PCI elected in June last year, outlined the party's "new course" in his keynote speech to the party congress.

This course aims to integrate the PCI into European social democracy by removing the last traces of the programme which links it to Stalinism and the Soviet Union. (Its links with Leninism were severed long ago.)

Occhetto is openly pressing to be allowed to join the Socialist International. More immediately the party has set its sights on joining the social democratic group of deputies in Strasbourg after the European elections in June.

Occhetto is not afraid of disposing of old shibboleths in the "post-communist" PCI. Having been told by the German SPD and other Socialist International leaders that the name "communist" might be an obstacle, he and the other PCI leaders have decided to be rid of it. After all what's in a name?

Of course this was not done before the congress (why worry the members?), but all those in the know believe they will be members of an "Italian Labour Party" within a year. Hammers and sickles on the Party flags were believed to be another "embarrassment" that will soon be dropped.

These important symbolic changes reflected a deep and thoroughgoing transformation of the Party that has been underway since the early 1980's.

First there was the failure of the Euro-communist project. The principal lesson the PCI drew from the overthrow of Allende in 1973 was that he and the Chilean Communists had failed to draw into their popular front the major section of the bourgeoisie represented by the Christian Democracy.

Therefore in Italy the PCI launched its quest for an "historic compromise", for a coalition gov-

ernment between itself and the Italian Christian Democracy.

Despite the PCI's attempts to prove itself to the bosses as a reliable governmental partner, its support for NATO and constant attacks on the "Soviet Model", the Italian ruling class refused to accept the offer. Between 1976 and 1979 the PCI, in return for a few chairs of parliamentary committees, kept Andreotti's Christian Democratic government in power while it attacked the workers through austerity measures. The result was a decline in the Party's working class base and especially in its support amongst Italian youth.

### Trouble

By the mid-1980's the party was in serious trouble. Its vote fell from a high of 34.5% in 1976 to 26.6% in the 1987 elections. Meanwhile its rival on the reformist left, the Italian Socialist party, continued its decline. The conclusion that the party leadership drew from this decline was not that its right wing politics were losing it support, but that it needed to make a definitive break with its communist and Stalinist past in order to be accepted by the Italian and European bosses (and of course by the Americans) as a suitable partner in government.

The debate before the previous congress in 1986 revealed the growing strength of this view within the party.

Luciano Lama is the leader of the main Italian trade union organisation, the CGIL, which is dominated by the PCI. He said in an interview in 1986 that the PCI should henceforth orient itself to a struggle to improve the present system and drop any "abstract conceptual exercises about a 'fuoriuscita' [way out] of capitalism". He ended by declaring that "most



Moses Mayekiso

International Metalworkers Federation

ing that "most Italian communists, if they were in Germany, would be in the SPD". It is this right wing which now represents a majority following the recent Congress.

On the economy Occhetto has made a name for himself by being an outspoken supporter of the market mechanism. His two and a half hour speech to this year's Congress referred to it as the necessary "measure of efficiency in the whole economy". This is a theme he has made his and his Party's own.

In 1985 he declared it was necessary "to surmount the false alternative between statism and neo-liberalism". It is little wonder that "comrade" Occhetto has declared that the PCI identifies more closely with the (bourgeois) principles of the French Revolution than with those of the October Revolution in Russia.

These moves have not gone unopposed. Pietro Ingrao and more openly Amando Cossutta represent a "Stalinist" opposition in the sense that they oppose the complete liquidation of the party into social democracy, and in particular the criticisms of the Soviet Union.

Cossutta was removed from the leadership at the 27th Congress but remained on the Central Committee. He probably carries the support of 10% of the Party and has a stronger base in the apparatus.

But in no sense do these leaders represent any "left" critique from

the point of view of revolutionary communism. Both refer back to the tradition of Togliatti, the leader after the war who laid down many of the foundations of the current PCI's politics, and even to Berlinguer, architect of the "historic compromise". Cossutta was proud to declare in *L'Unita* before the last Congress his agreement with the "gradualist line which marks the history of the party".

The opposition were not helped at the March Congress by an especially friendly greeting from Gorbachev who virtually endorsed the "new course" by drawing a positive parallel between the PCI's search for "new solutions to the new problems of our time" and the CPSU's Perestroika.

### Cheering

It is little surprise that hardly before the social democratic ink was dry on the PCI Congress resolutions Martin Jacques, one time guru of the Euro-CPGB, was cheering the death of Euro-communism in his regular column in the scab Murdoch paper the *Sunday Times*.

"The International Communist movement is dead", crows the editor of *Marxism Today*,

"Gorbachev envisages a relationship between a range of political forces and traditions. His vision is pluralistic ... Gorbachev, like Euro-Communism, further erases the distinctive character of communist parties and serves to em-

phasise the discontinuity in the Communist tradition".

For Jaques Euro-Communism was only a staging-post on the road to social democracy and to a lasting alliance with the bosses' parties.

Indeed the Stalinist movement's international organisation (the Comintern) is long dead, killed by Stalin's concept of socialism in one country. In 1928, Trotsky pointed out that if you believed socialism could be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia then so it could be in every other industrial country. "It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of Social Patriotism".

Long ago the parties of the Stalinist Comintern travelled this road offering support for their own bosses in times of war and peace. There always remained the possibility however, given these parties' links with the degenerated workers state in the USSR, that they could be forced—often for their own self-preservation—to expropriate the capitalists and reproduce a new degenerate workers' state.

The PCI is the first Stalinist party as a whole to consciously set about removing this fear for the bourgeoisie in order to gain governmental power. If it overcomes the internal opposition and completes its transformation it will no doubt become the model for many more. ■

IN JUNE 1988 the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG) was formed, as a split from the Direct Action Movement (DAM). The central issue in the split was trade union strategy in Britain today. The DAM majority favoured the ludicrous project of building independent, purely syndicalist unions ("dual unionism"). Put another way, they decided to turn their backs on the millions of workers organised in the established trade unions.

The AWG opposed this suicidal turn by the DAM and argued in their founding statement: "We instead begin from the need to defend existing trade union organisation and existing trade union rights." They recognised "the need for unity with reformist workers within the existing unions" and committed themselves to a strategy of "rank and file organisation" as a means of combatting the reformist misleaders. This position was entirely correct.

The AWG's pamphlet *In Place of Compromise* puts them in the tradition of Tom Mann. He too fought dual unionism and, along with other leading syndicalist like J T Murphy and Willie Gallacher, saw in the shop stewards' movement of the First World War the means of imposing rank and file control over the existing unions; the means of capturing the unions from the bureaucrats. The AWG note that:

"This rank and file strategy, which saw the interests of the rank and file as conflicting with those of the bureaucrats, came close to realisation in the wartime shop stewards' movement."

This identification with Mann and the shop stewards' movement marks the AWG out from other syndicalist and anarchist trends in Britain. It places them in the tradition of *revolutionary syndicalism*. However, the AWG need to confront the limitations of revolutionary syndicalism, limitations which led all of its best representatives—Tom Mann, Bill Haywood, Alfred Rosmer and many others—to join the ranks of the revolutionary communist movement.

In the first place the AWG are wrong on the question of leadership. They argue: "Unlike some socialists we do not believe that trade union leaders sell-out simply because they are traitors who should be replaced by better leaders."

Thus, the purpose of the rank and file organisation is not, even partially, to challenge the bureaucrats for leadership, but to:

"... contest with the union leadership over the political content of their arguments."

### Leadership

Here we find the classic syndicalist view of leadership as, inherently, bad. The AWG is echoing the "bad side of leadership" section of *The Miners' Next Step*, which sees leadership as meaning power, and "power inevitably leads to corruption". One glance at the example cited by the AWG proves, however, that leadership is decisive in struggle and that the key question is what the political content of the leadership is and whether or not it is under real democratic control.

The comrades analyse the miners' strike and explain that the National Rank and File Miners' Movement "did little more than engage in an amnesty campaign rather than take on the bureaucracy politically". Why did this happen? The movement—which had over 100 miners and women from the mining communities at its founding conference—was genuinely rank and file and impeccably democratic. Yet it failed to confront the bureaucracy. The AWG cannot give us a scientific explanation

Mark Hoskisson discusses *In Place of Compromise*, a pamphlet by the Anarchist Workers Group

# Syndicalism or communism?



Rank and file miners Scargill would not organise

tion of this anomaly.

*Workers Power* was at that conference, unlike the majority of centrist groups who boycotted it. We fought for policies that would confront the bureaucracy. We lost the vote. Why?

It was because the majority of delegates were led, not by traitors, but by reformist militants. We fought these people for political leadership of the movement. We represented an alternative leadership at that conference, an alternative to militant Scargillism. It was the fact that we lost that struggle for leadership that explains the demise of the movement.

Every struggle requires a leadership if it is to have a chance of winning. It requires revolutionary leadership in a period where reformism and mere trade union militancy cannot answer the tactics of the bosses.

In a strike, a strike committee is elected by the workers to organise picketing, co-ordinate solidarity, raise the money needed to sustain the strike and so on. What is such a committee if not a leadership, people elected because they have the proven abilities to do the job. Of course we fight for such a leadership to be under rank and file control, but this does not alter the fact that it is a leadership.

And in the unions as a whole we proceed along a similar path. We do not "contest the ideology of the bureaucrats" while allowing them to maintain their organisational stranglehold over our funds and resources, our apparatus. We fight to oust these treacherous leaders, replace them with leaders who represent the real interests of the working class, leaders who will accept that they are controlled by the rank and file.

This way the fight against the bureaucratic leaders can be linked to the fight to dismantle the bureaucracy itself. The revolutionary programme for rank and file control of the unions demands regular election and recallability of union officials, and that they receive the average wage of the workers they represent.

We fight to transform the unions into revolutionary organisations,

not because we think they alone can lead a revolution, but because this fight is a crucial adjunct to the fight for workers' councils, factory committees etc. This is especially true where millions of workers are permanently organised by the unions as in Britain.

The AWG's argument that, when necessary, the rank and file can "bypass the leaders" is a get-out. If these leaders remain at the helm they can, and invariably do, use their position of influence to mobilise the backward sections of the union against the militant sections. Rank and file control of a particular strike, indispensable as it is, does not get round this question. Only a fight to defeat and replace the bureaucrats can prevent this occurring.

For example in the recent nurses' regrading strikes, rank and file militants were able to call strikes in the face of bureaucratic resistance. But this could not stop the bureaucrats signing a deal with the Tories: only a fight to change the policy and leadership of NUPE and COHSE could do that.

### Shop Stewards

But the AWG do half-recognise the need for leadership. While they underestimate the political inadequacies of the International Socialist/Socialist Workers' Party's National Rank and File movement of the 1970s, they are obliged to concede that this failed because of a wrong leadership.

On the shop stewards movement in the First World War they acknowledge that in 1918 the "decisive moment had passed" because of a split in the movement's leadership, the National Administrative Council (NAC). They should add that it was the wrong leadership which led to the opportunist errors of the CPGB—led National Minority Movement (NMM) before and during the General Strike.

They write; "The NMM's attitude towards left bureaucrats was partly a result of the Comintern's application of the united front tactic. This attempt to unite reformist and revolutionary workers around a fighting programme of transitional demands was also

accompanied with the tactic of trying to forge unity between trade union bureaucrats". In fact it was the mis-application of the united front tactic, by a Communist Party which had already abandoned genuine Bolshevism under the guidance of the centrist Comintern leaders, which led to the NMM's refusal to criticise left bureaucrats.

The united front tactic as conceived by the Leninist Comintern of course included the attempt to forge unity with the bureaucrats in action wherever possible. But it did not fail to add the need to criticise them and to act without them if necessary.

This is why *Workers Power* called on Scargill to organise independent, rank and file action, to fight for solidarity strikes etc, during the miners' strike. We did so without ever waiting for Scargill, without ever refusing to criticise Scargill.

Placing demands on the bureaucrats, exposing their treachery and incompetence in action, is a key element of the united front, an indispensable weapon for building a rank and file movement.

The AWG reject the concept of leadership, not just for the unions but in the whole class struggle. Despite adopting whole chunks of the revolutionary communist legacy; defence squads, workers' councils etc, they cling to anarchism's rejection of the revolutionary party as the decisive weapon of class struggle.

They argue, correctly, that the working class cannot spontaneously arrive at a revolutionary consciousness. It is divided by the capitalist system itself, and these divisions lead to different levels of consciousness. To overcome this uneven consciousness inside the class, the AWG, like the revolutionary syndicalists, recognise the need to organise the conscious minority.

In the unions they argue for rank and file "propaganda groups" made up of revolutionaries and militants. In society at large they argue for the formation of a political organisation: "The Anarchist Workers Group is therefore committed to creating a political pole of attraction which can tackle the ruling class offensively ideologically."

### Contradictory

This "political organisation", however, is not to be democratic centralist since this "militarises the relationship between the central organs and the rank and file in its political organisation" and is therefore, "undemocratic". Nor, despite the fact that the organisation is to be made up of the most class conscious workers, will it be a "vanguard" organisation.

These positions are completely contradictory. The idea that the political organisation is needed only to play an educative, consciousness raising, role is self-defeating. This propagandist idea of organisation—an echo of Tom Mann's Industrial Syndicalist Education League—ignores the key lesson of the failure of the old shop stewards' movement.

Its militants were very well educated. This did not prevent the movement going down to defeat at the hands of the state. They were not organised for a co-ordinated fight. Militants in Glasgow, Sheffield, Coventry and Liverpool did their own thing on a local basis in the 1918-19 strike wave and this proved fatal.

What was needed was a centralised organisation prepared for combat against a ruthless and united enemy. Propaganda had to be supplemented with organisation; education with action; the

ideological struggle with the practical one. In other words the political organisation needed was a party—a group of people unified by a common programme and discipline and capable of leading the struggle.

If a party is serious about action in the class struggle then democratic centralism is essential. By rejecting it the AWG are falling into the very error they criticise the DAM for, a lack of "theoretical and tactical unity".

Democratic centralism was not invented by Bolshevism. It arose as a requirement of the class struggle itself. In strikes once the decision for action was democratically decided upon the strike had to be made solid. Discipline over scabs had to be imposed once a group of workers had voted to act. What is this if not democratic centralism?

It does militarise the relationship between the leadership and the rank and file in action. But surely the comrades recognise that such a relationship is necessary if the action agreed upon is to be successfully carried out, if "tactical unity" is to be preserved.

Is "class war" simply a radical sounding phrase or does it mean a ruthless fight to impose the will of the working class against the bosses? This question goes to the heart of the difference between Marxism and anarchism.

### Transition

Marxism answers yes to the latter. And it draws the conclusion that workers must centralise their organisations against a centralised and militarised enemy. Not only this, Marxism recognises the need to centralise workers' councils in a workers state, and centralise workers' control into a democratic plan of production which will gear the whole economy to the socialist transition.

In recognising that the state "must be destroyed and replaced by the power of workers' councils"; that workers "do not spontaneously become revolutionary," the AWG begin a break with the tenets of anarchism. But it is not a complete break.

What is "the power of workers' councils" if not a workers' state? What is "a political organisation of anarchist workers which can win workers to libertarian communist ideas and intervene decisively in the class struggle" if not a party?

Afraid to embrace revolutionary Marxism, the AWG clings to the idea of "libertarian communism". Now while the AWG is right to point to a proud tradition of revolutionary syndicalism which added much to the programme of the Comintern, "libertarian communism" has never been anything but the hobby horse of dilettantes. Just how "libertarianism" leads to a communist society is never explained, because it never can.

The shop stewards of the First World War were committed to syndicalist ideas. They confronted a crisis of leadership, of organisation, in 1918-19. The NAC, which the AWG appear to approve of in their pamphlet, proved insufficient to the task of leadership that was proposed before it.

Six out of its eight members concluded from this experience that a revolutionary communist party was needed. They became founder members of the Communist Party. The AWG need to make the same transition. But in the 1980s it is within the ranks of *Workers Power*, not the Stalinist "communist" parties, that they will find authentic revolutionary communism. ■

# Labour leaders and the Poll Tax

Dear Comrades

I was interested to read your articles on the Poll Tax and to me they illustrated where you go wrong. You start off, quite correctly, by saying that the Poll Tax can only be defeated by "the collective action of thousands". But then you fall into the typical Trotskyist trap of making demands on the leadership of the labour movement—"only a campaign of workers' action will force the Labour Council to resist".

How many more painful and bloody lessons are you prepared to endure until you realise that the leadership of the labour movement is an entirely rotten and pro-bourgeois grouping? From Kinnoch to Ellis, their prime role is to sell the working class to capital and sell capital to the working class—and their essential task is to contain, divert and control our class anger.

The Labour Party and the trade union leadership are going to do nothing positive in the struggle against the Poll Tax—already they are trying to confuse and contain. To suggest that they might do is as diversionary (and thus pro-bourgeois) as their tactics. To smash the Poll Tax (and no-one can deny that for the working class this is pretty crucial), we have got to take on the bureaucratic leadership, not call upon it.

This is not some elitist, ivory towered theoretical approach—I know that there are many decent militants within the Labour Party and I have worked with them on many occasions.

But we don't break them from the Labour Party by making foolish demands upon its leadership which give it credibility. We do so by practical example of class struggle—and the same is true for the rest of the class. Come a revolutionary upheaval, you will be calling upon the labour movement leadership while

the working class will be beheading that body.

Because Trotskyism has little faith in the ability of the working class to self-thought and self-activity, its positions are those of "leading" the working class to communism through "transitional" demands. By calling upon the leadership, you are merely acting as the loyal opposition rather than a revolutionary force.

In solidarity  
Norman  
London N16

Reply  
The approach the comrade is proposing is a sure way of letting the labour movement leadership off the

hook. The question is not whether we realise the nature of reformist leadership, but how to convince the working class of their "rotten and pro-bourgeois" nature. That, unfortunately, takes more than name-calling.

Putting demands on the existing leaders allows their own supporters to judge their performance against the real needs of the class.

# What sort of PR ?

Dear Comrades

I am writing in response to the article on Charter 88 (WP114) to question Workers Powers' support for proportional representation (PR). With PR on the agenda of both GMB and USDAW national conferences and with increasing support from Labour MPs the question is an important one. But the article does not make clear what form of PR is supported.

The article is right to point to the advantage of any form of PR in enfranchising Labour voters who are a minority in Tory constituencies. PR would also put pressure on complacent Labour MPs with five figure majorities to campaign for every vote.

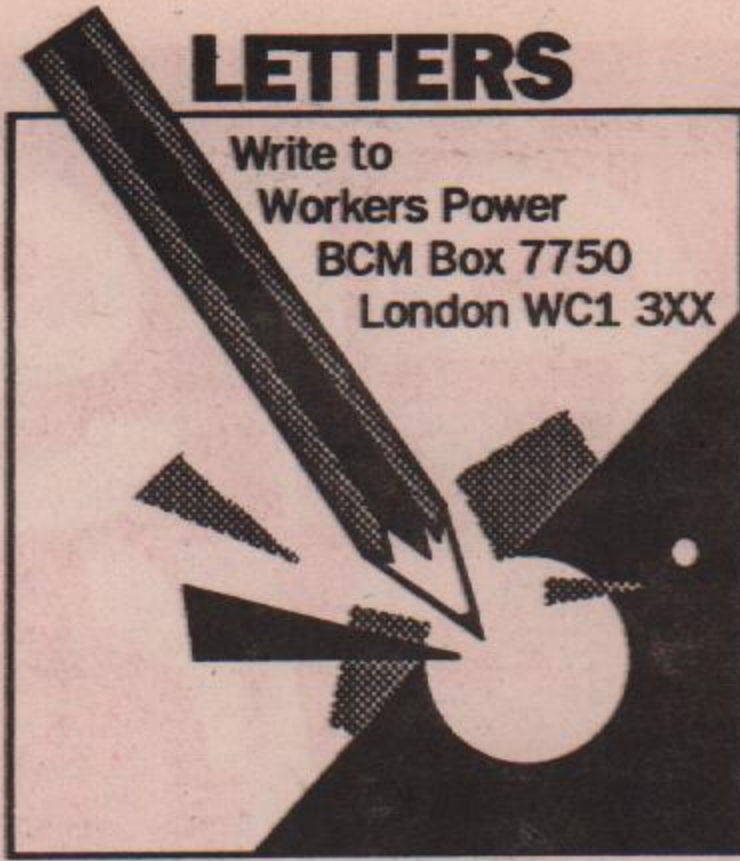
But the drawback with the type of PR advocated by Charter 88 notable, where votes are aggregated nationally and seats then distributed around the country, is the lack of local accountability. How could a Labour MP who after running a close second in one constituency is given a seat somewhere else, be made

accountable? It's not exactly easy now to make Labour MPs accountable to their party or electorate but with this system we'd have no chance at all.

We should advocate a system of PR based on local areas which would maximise the chance of enforcing accountability. Whilst recognising that PR won't alter the facts of capitalist rule and the sham of parliamentary democracy, Labour MPs must be put to the test—they must be made to answer for their action. The local working class must be able to call them to account, both as electors and through the local union and Labour Party organisations.

At the same time we want to increase debate and democracy in the workers' movement as a whole. PR would give other working class candidates, including revolutionary communists, a chance to argue for their programme.

Yours in comradeship  
Stuart Crosthwaite  
Sheffield



# Anarchists Reply

Dear Workers Power

We read with interest your article on anarchism in *Workers Power* 114 (Feb 1989). We agree that anarchism is indeed gaining influence—in part because of the reformism of the "official" labour movement and the opportunism of Trotskyism. Indeed, your attempt to smear anarchism as "petit-bourgeois" is an example of this opportunism.

It has never been the contention of anarchism that workers should "keep out of politics", merely that bourgeois politics of any shade cannot be progressive for the working class—our power lies at the point of production. Bakunin's "faith in the industrial proletariat" can be gauged from the following quote: "Today, they [the workers] are beginning everywhere to understand that no despotism has nor can have, either the will or the power to give them economic equality." The programme of the International is very happily explicit on this question, "The emancipation of the toilers can be the work only of the toilers themselves."

However, Marxist thinking on the nature of the state is extremely fuzzy. You say: "Marx defined the state as, in the final analysis, special bodies of armed men at the service of a class of exploiters" (our emphasis). Then you say the proletariat must seize state power, not destroy it. You attempt to soften this by calling the "workers' state" a "semi-state". What does this mean; that those at the head of the new state only exploit the workers half as much, or that they need half as many armed men to maintain their rule? The

democratic organisations of the working class in times of revolution (mass assemblies, councils, militias) will be instruments of class power and will be used to crush attempts at counter-revolution—this is not a state but the basis of a stateless society. States don't wither—they represent the power of an exploiting class and must be smashed.

The Leninist conception of the role of the conscious minority led to a situation in Russia where, ideologically and organisationally, the fate of the revolution was centralised into the property of an elite of individuals at the head of the Bolshevik Party. The belief of those like the workers in the factory councils and the Kronstadt Soviet, that the content of socialism lay in the control of the means of production by the workers, was shunned by the Bolsheviks, unable to loosen their grip on the reins of power.

The existence, however, of groups like the veterans of the Russian Revolution who wrote the "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists", and the Friends of Durruti in Spain, does not indicate a strand of anarchism moving towards Marxist conceptions, but a revolutionary tradition stretching back to the First International. The Anarchist Workers' Group represents the continuity of this tradition, and is confident of the continued growth of genuine anarchist ideas.

For Libertarian Communism Anarchist Workers' Group (London)  
These points and others raised will be taken up in our paper over the next period. See page 14

## workers power

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## Debate with The Leninist

Last month Workers Power held a public debate with the Leninist in London over Afghanistan and the tasks of revolutionaries. Over fifty people attended the debate and a lively discussion was held.

The emphasis of the Leninist was that our refusal to call the Stalinist PDPA revolutionary proved that we Trotskyists were abstract dogmatists. In reply we proved that not only was the PDPA a classically bureaucratic party in terms of its internal structures, but also that its policies consciously obstructed the establishment of genuine workers' power in Afghanistan. Its strategy of a revolution by stages ensured that the working class, through its own independent organs, did not get a whiff of governmental power. Moreover, its bureaucratic implementation of the land reform helped drive thousands of peasants into the arms of Islamic and tribal led reaction.

If it is abstract and dogmatic to refer to these home truths, then we plead guilty. The Leninist, who continue to refer to the Soviet Union as the world's revolutionary centre, clearly have a lot of dogma to get rid of (derived from the Stalinist milieu they inhabit) if they are to develop a consistently proletarian revolutionary perspective.

Still, the debate did clarify differences and was conducted in a fraternal and democratic manner.

## FUND DRIVE

This month we received £214. We now only have one month left to hit our £3,000 target. With £2,845 raised so far we need £155 between now and the beginning of May. The upkeep of our machinery, the printer's bills and our quest for new premises all make our fund raising efforts urgent. So get the money in quick and get ready for our new fund drive in June. Thanks to readers and supporters this month in Bristol (£4), East London (£5), Leicester (£59), South London (£120) and Reading (£26).

### CORRECTION

In last month's "In Brief" column we reported that a majority of the French section of the USFI had joined Juquin's organisation. Of course we should have said a minority. We apologise for this error. However, the political point of the article was not changed by this mistake, and we stand by its conclusions.

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## Meetings this month

### Birmingham:

Marxist Discussion Circle  
Looking back on the Miners' Strike \*

### Central London:

Public Meeting  
Racism, imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism  
Friday 21 April 7-30  
Conway Hall

### North London:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Ten years of Thatcherism  
Thursday 20 April 7-00 \*

### Leicester:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Three component parts of Marxism  
Thursday 20 April 7-30 \*

### Oxford:

Public Meeting  
How to fight the Poll Tax  
Tuesday 18 April 8-00  
Oxford Old Town Hall

### Sheffield:

Public Meeting  
Stalinist betrayal in Afghanistan  
Thursday 6 April 7-30  
Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, West St

\* See seller for venue

# Workers power

## INSIDE

- Thatcher goes green
- Khola Mayekiso interview
- Massacres in Venezuela

## AEU - EETPU merger

# FIGHT SCAB UNIONISM!

THE PROSPECT of scab unionism making a big step forward in Britain is posed by the planned merger of the engineers' union the AEU and the electricians yellow union the EETPU. Every worker has an interest in stopping this merger going through.

Bill Jordan and the right wing leadership of the AEU are desperate to push the merger through quickly. During the recession of the early 1980s the AEU suffered a heavy loss of members. The ensuing financial pinch threatened the incomes and comforts of the union's top brass.

### Pursued

Instead of leading a fight against closures and redundancies they pursued a twin-track policy of signing sweetheart deals with the employers and seeking merger partners who could once again swell the ranks of the union and replenish its coffers.

Eric Hammond's EETPU seemed an ideal merger partner. Hammond and Jordan think alike on so many issues. Both are hostile to militant class struggle policies. Both see the future of the unions as being tied in with making the bosses' enterprises profitable, and will sell the hard won gains of the members to achieve it. Both have a track record of treachery that would do Judas proud.

Where Hammond's

EETPU signs the no-strike deals at Orion and Christian Salvesen the AEU leadership has pursued similar single union—no strike deals at Nissan.

Hammond wants his union to join the CBI. Jordan's brother-in-treachery in the AEU, Gavin Laird, is a director of the Bank of England and personal friend of Margaret Thatcher. He was the first trade union leader to actually address the bosses' TUC!

For Jordan and Laird, a merger on thoroughly undemocratic grounds, would be a heaven sent opportunity to break the left in the AEU. At the moment they are trying to push through a deal with the employers on a 37 hour week. The deal accepts a whole series of attacks on working practices that the left in the AEU committed the union to opposing. Unity with Hammond's scabs would greatly assist them in making this latest sell-out stick and cre-



Stefano Cagnoni

ating the basis for future ones.

A merger would have distinct advantages for the scabherd general Eric Hammond. His goal is, and has been for a long time, the creation of a yellow union federation in Britain. In the Isle of Grain laggards dispute, the miners' strike, Wapping and a host of smaller disputes, he has

used the EETPU as a recruitment agency for bosses in search of strikebreakers. He has held unity talks with the bootlicking Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the "never-ever-strike" merchants in the Royal College of Nursing and Professional Teachers' Association. He has merged his union with outfits like the managers' association at

Rolls Royce.

Hammond knows, however, that the AEU are crucial to his plans. That union could provide the ballast a scab federation would need if it is to survive. The EETPU's expulsion from the TUC last year—for breaking the rules of the bureaucratic club but not for scabbing—did set back Hammond's plan to woo the AEU.

Jordan and Laird are not yet ready to break away from the TUC. A merger, therefore, would get Hammond back into the TUC through the back door.

Back inside the TUC Hammond would be in a stronger position to push the AEU further along the right wing road. In any conflicts with the centre-right forces of the GMB, TGWU and public sector unions in the TUC, his preparedness to split would massively up the stakes.

For all of these reasons the merger plans must be thwarted. The tasks of the day for militants are straightforward. The AEU leadership must be opposed, not only on the merger issue, but on hours and flexible working. Jordan and Laird need to be ousted and the AEU won to fighting policies.

### Disgraceful

The EETPU must be smashed. Its disgraceful anti-working class role means that it has no place inside the trade union movement. It must be stopped from getting into the TUC. Its members, most of whom are not conscious scabs, must be broken from its ranks.

Victory in this struggle will mean that we will have stopped the bosses securing an instrument with which they can make scabbing the norm in every strike. It is a victory every class conscious worker must fight for. ■

THE LEFT in the AEU is led by the forces around the *Engineering Gazette*. This "broad left" is dominated by an alliance of Stalinist officials like Jimmy Airlie and left Labour elements. Most militants in the AEU look to it as the only organisation that can oppose Jordan and Laird.

Its record in fighting the merger, however, is atrocious. Airlie and co, in classic broad left fashion, have dedicated all of their efforts to carrying through a series of bureaucratic manoeuvres designed to get a few extra votes on the National Committee (the next meeting of which is on 17 April).

No efforts to get propaganda into the factories against either the merger or the proposed new hours/flexible working deal, have been made. No special bulletins or leaflets have been produced. The *Engineering Gazette* has failed to explain to militants the real nature of Hammond's scab outfit. No meetings to keep the membership informed or to mobilise them in opposition to Jordan have been organised.

The whole approach of Airlie and the *Gazette* has been one of softly-softly, wait and see. They are hop-

## How to fight the merger

ing that differences within the right wing will ensure that Hammond and Jordan are outflanked. They have even pinned hopes on Gavin Laird to preserve the AEU rulebook against any undemocratic encroachments by the EETPU. The *Gazette's* campaign consists of vague calls for the maximum pressure to be put on National Committee delegates to continue to support a democratic union.

Of course it is vital that resolutions calling on the Executive to

break off talks with EETPU must continue to pour in from the branches, the districts and the shop stewards' quarterlies. But above all the membership must be mobilised for an active fight—not left as passive observers of Brother Airlie's machinations.

This mobilisation can be achieved. The battle is far from over. A democratic *Engineering Gazette* conference must be called to plan a campaign of action against the merger. Thousands of leaflets must

be produced explaining the case against the EETPU. Speakers must be dispatched to every branch and workplace.

The footdragging of the *Gazette* leadership, however, must not become an excuse for inaction. The Birmingham *Engineering Gazette* supporters have taken the initiative in building an anti-merger campaign and their efforts must be supported. After the national *Gazette* leadership stitched up a rally at Bilston and then ensured no democratic

discussion took place, the Birmingham group organised a meeting in January to try and co-ordinate rank and file resistance to the right. There is little doubt that the anti-merger activists will face all the bureaucratic hooliganism—withholding of information, suspension from the national *Gazette* organisation and so on—that Airlie is well practised in. But this must not deter militants from supporting the new campaign.

A lobby of this year's National Committee on 17 April has been called as a focus for building the campaign. The call must be taken up and supported throughout the areas. Those like the Manchester *Engineering Gazette* group, who have expressed support for the campaign but are still waiting to see if Airlie will deliver, must come off the fence.

A well organised lobby can be the catalyst for taking an anti-merger campaign to wider layers of the membership.

No time must be lost. Jordan's scheming must be stopped in its tracks. The AEU left wing must go into battle under the slogan:

● Stop the merger!

Now turn to page 4

### STOP THE MERGER NOW!

Support the Eastbourne lobby of the AEU national committee

MONDAY 17 APRIL 1989

8-30 am ONWARDS

Outside the Winter Gardens, Eastbourne

A national anti-merger leaflet has been produced. Copies and information on the anti-merger campaign can be obtained from: Norman Goodwin, Secretary, Birmingham *Engineering Gazette* Group, 28 Bowling Green Close, Birmingham B23 5QU