

# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

- Tube strikers speak out
- Which way for Solidarnosc?
- Ten years of Thatcher

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# SMASH THE

# ANTI-UNION

# LAWS

MAKE THIS  
HER  
SUMMER  
OF  
DISCONTENT

**A WAVE of strikes and disputes, a threatened "summer of discontent" has spoilt the celebrations of Thatcher's ten years in office. That's brilliant news for every worker in Britain!**

Dockers, engineers, power and water workers, ambulance drivers, firefighters and postal workers are preparing to take on their bosses. Bus, tube and railway workers have launched unofficial action. London grinds to a halt. BBC workers blackout the news. Managers fume about a "faceless group of individuals" whilst Tory backbenchers are claiming the strikes are a "politically co-ordinated campaign".



We are seeing a rebirth of confidence and unofficial organisation. Section after section of workers are being pushed into a fight to maintain real wage levels and resist slave labour working conditions.

If anything is "politically co-ordinating" the disputes it is Tory policy itself. With inflation at 7.9% and rising, the Tories have set an unofficial pay norm of 7%. They are sticking to this rigidly in the public sector.

In the private sector one million engineering workers have been offered 5.4%. Throughout industry the bosses are pushing for "flex-

ible working", "merit promotion" and "performance related pay"—code words for back-breaking and degrading conditions at work.

The strikes are the workers' verdict on Thatcherite pay and conditions. In the growing militancy lies the potential to defeat not just one employer but the whole employing class' strategy.

To do this we have to link up the struggles and smash the anti-union laws.

The laws have been used to take on and defeat the strongest sections of workers over the Thatcher decade. One after the other the miners, printers and seafar-

ers went down to defeat. Fines were imposed, union funds were seized and picket lines were battered by riot police.

But the decisive test of the laws is now, when economic problems have forced the Tories to take on many sections at once over pay.

The docks strike, which should have started the day the Tories announced the scrapping of the scheme, is yet to begin for fear of the law. The port employers have now gone to court to declare the strike ballot unlawful.

The official tube strikes were sabotaged by an employers' court injunction. The

engineers are being balloted on local strikes for fear that a national strike for a national deal will be declared unlawful.

It is not some timeless law or principle that is being used to ban the strikes. It is a battery of anti-union laws that the bosses have at their disposal.

These laws have been put in place during the ten years of Thatcher's rule. Nor are we facing a neutral law, which treats workers and bosses equally. Like all law it is class law designed to protect the bosses' profits. It is there to attack the workers' right to defend them-

selves with effective trade union action. These laws can and must be broken.

In 1972 workers destroyed Ted Heath's anti-union laws. These too banned solidarity action, secondary picketing and blacking. They made ballots compulsory. But a spontaneous rolling general strike, when five dockers were imprisoned made the law a dead letter.

For ten years the union leaders have mouthed off against the anti-union laws but have done nothing. They have held their "days of action", their lunchtime protests to no effect. They have promised to go to jail in

droves, only to crumple in front of the judges.

This time it is in the hands of millions of ordinary workers to defy and smash the laws. These laws stand between us all and a decent living wage.

In every strike or dispute workers should launch whatever action is needed to win, not what is legal. They should demand the unions organise that action. And if the courts touch a penny of any union funds we should demand and organise exactly the kind of action which beat the laws in 1972—a general strike to smash the anti-union laws. ■

# HILLSBOROUGH Police lies

AFTER 95 Liverpool supporters were tragically crushed to death at Hillsborough, the police decided that their best form of defence was attack. If you believe the South Yorkshire police present on 15 April at the Sheffield match, then drunken hordes of Liverpool supporters only stopped urinating on the dead and dying long enough to pick their pockets and throw punches at the police.

These sickening and lying accusations were taken up by the worst purveyor of gutter journalism in Wapping—the *Sun*. Thankfully the paper was boycotted in large parts of Liverpool. The campaign of lies was an attempt to hide from the millions drawn into the media-manufactured national mourning the real facts of why and how this tragic slaughter occurred.

Facts, such as that it was the police that dictated that Liverpool fans be given many less tickets than those from Nottingham, despite the larger support from Anfield, because it was easier to manage the traffic from Liverpool at the Leppings Lane end of the ground are conveniently ignored. It was the police who were aware of the crush building up outside and failed, despite the massive money spent on electronic surveil-

lance, to advise the teams to delay the kick-off time.

It was the police that "advised" the ground on the placing of the "safety" cages and fences that caused the crush. It was the police who opened the gate—against the warnings of the ground's steward. This action led to the massive surge that caused the deaths. It was the police that pushed fans back off the fences as they scrambled to escape the horror and who delayed the opening of the escape doors in the perimeter fencing.

And it was the police who formed a line across the pitch against the non-existent threat of a clash between rival supporters while hundreds of Liverpool supporters tore down hoardings to stretcher the injured and dead away.

Nor can the actions of the police be excused by reference to inadequate numbers or an underestimation of the numbers likely to be present on the day. The real truth was that these supporters died because in Thatcher's Britain every young football supporter is assumed to be a "hooligan" until proven otherwise. Their presence in any numbers in one of our towns or cities is treated as an invasion in which efficient and brutal "crowd control" comes well before provid-



ing a safe and pleasant environment for a day out watching the national game. The miracle is that such a tragedy hasn't happened before now.

Of course there is anti-social behaviour, at and outside football grounds, perpetrated by a minority, and class conscious workers cannot condone it. But the tribalism and violence that mars the game is a product of capitalism and is something that the Tories have done much to stimulate. Irrational fear and hatred of people who are "not one of us" is bred into workers by the whole ideology of nationalism and chauvinism, dark forces that Thatcher found it necessary to stir up in the Falklands

War. This government and its boss-class backers are anti-working class whether workers are at work, rest or play. In the factory or office millions find no creative outlet for their energies, nothing positive to identify with, while Thatcherite managers step up the pressure for productivity. At home they find soaring energy bills and contemplate the impending poll tax burden with all its attendant worries. For leisure many workers find there are few public facilities for sporting activities. Millions—mainly male—fall back for pleasure on a century old culture of attending the "national game".

And when they do what do they find? Pathetically inadequate eat-

ing and toilet facilities; too few entrances which invites excessive crowding outside towards kick-off time. And, invariably, they face police hostility at best, harassment and brutality at worst.

Of the £70 million spent on improvements at grounds over the last decade most has gone on caging the fans in or refurbishing the ground so that the better-off can have their seats and the bosses their executive boxes. They can turn up minutes before the entertainment starts. The rest of us are supposed to take our places in the ground and hang around for ages until kick-off.

The directors who run the clubs are business men and women who either have an eye to profits or at least cutting down the overheads. Crowd comfort and safety for the majority comes way down the list of concerns. They cynically bank on the continued loyalty of the fans, despite the deteriorating conditions at the grounds, while consistently ignoring the views of those fans.

Despite the tearing down of the perimeter fences in some grounds since Hillsborough the police, Tories and directors are all lining up behind further anti-working class solutions to solve football's "crisis". The police will only aim to increase the efficiency (i.e. brutality combined with greater surveillance) of their crowd control outside grounds. The Tories will press ahead, after hearing the interim report from Lord Justice Taylor, with the anti-democratic ID cards scheme.

And the business interests at the head of the clubs will push on with removing the terraces from the grounds and putting in expensive seating which will hit the pockets of the average supporter. More, it will deprive the fans of the passion, humour and comradeship which is the upside of the terrace crowd. It is not for nothing that the voice of the bosses, the *Economist*, has been railing against the "crowd" (read collective) mentality at football grounds.

The only progressive solution is to demand money from the government for a total overhaul of the fabric of many of today's football grounds and to open up the policy making bodies in the clubs to the accountable representatives of the supporters who, after all, provide them with the £140 million a year turnover, a few clubs with handsome profits and a lot of players with super-star lifestyles. But this can only be done by nationalising the football grounds, with local authorities obliged to oversee ground improvement and safety in consultation with the fans' organisations. No compensation should be given to the spongers who have grown fat on the money we hand over every week at the turnstiles. ■

**THE CAMPAIGN** on behalf of the three political prisoners framed for the murder of PC Keith Blakelock during the 1985 Broadwater Farm uprising has received an unprecedented boost from the London School of Economics (LSE) students' union.

Students voted to elect Winston Silcott as the union's honorary president and, at the first meeting where Tories attempted to overturn the election, over three hundred voted to uphold that decision.

They were defying a virulent campaign of racist slanders in

## Free Winston Silcott!

the gutter press, the ravings of rent-a-quote Tory MPs, and open intimidation by the college authorities as well as the inevitable denunciations from Labour MP Jack Straw and a "hopping mad" Neil Kinnock.

One student from the college's Labour Club courageously persisted in defending Silcott and the two other victims of a police frame-up in spite of death threats from the League of St George and a wing of the National Front. Robert Maxwell's

*Sunday People* branded him a "mad mullah" (alongside a large photo of him) for the "crimes" of campaigning for the democratic right to a fair trial and having Iranian parents.

The case of Silcott vividly illustrates the contempt the ruling class have for their supposedly sacred principle of equality before the law whenever their system comes under the slightest threat. The arrest, detention, and eventual trial of the Tottenham 3 made plain the blatantly racist nature of a judicial system that imprisons one in ten Afro-Caribbean males before they are 21.

Silcott and his co-prisoners had the Blakelock murder pinned on them because the police were determined to exact revenge by victimising leading political figures in the community. They achieved this using statements gained through threatening and detaining witnesses. The racist atmosphere whipped up by the gutter press at the time of the trial allowed them to get away with it.

Now the vicious backlash against the LSE shows what treatment awaits those who dare to question the legitimacy of an individual trial.

The Tories and their press have seized the opportunity to launch a campaign against student union autonomy as well as pursuing their racist vendetta. Students must be clear that there is nothing to be gained by backtracking on the issue of Silcott. It is imperative both to hold the line against racism and to defend student democracy and independence.

To her credit, although deserted by other current and former Labour sabbaticals, General Secretary Amanda Hart fought publicly to uphold Silcott's election even as the college administration and the LSE's Court of Governors initiated moves to suspend the union's block grant.

But the LSE executive backtracked and called a secret ballot, bowing to the pressure from the media and the NUS leadership. Such a ballot will mean thousands of students voting without having listened to the arguments and discussed the question collectively.

The spineless leaders of the NUS put their own careers and the sur-



vival of the NUS bureaucracy above the need to fight racism. NUS President Maeve Sherlock, far from leading the defence of the LSE union, publicly attacked the election of Silcott, claiming it was "an inappropriate and insensitive way to highlight concerns about his conviction". This mealy-mouthed position avoids the real questions: does the NUS defend Winston Silcott and is it prepared to defy the racist press and the Tories to do so? Quite clearly the answer is that it won't and it is therefore up to rank and file students to build support for the LSE union and for Silcott.

The LSE union must not be allowed to stand on its own. Already, they have been joined by students at the School of Oriental and African Studies who voted to make Silcott an honorary member. Similar motions will soon be voted on at a number of other London colleges and polytechnics.

*Workers Power* supporters in the colleges are working to rally support behind the Tottenham 3 and the brave stand taken by a substantial minority of LSE students in the cause of basic democratic rights. The need for such a campaign taking the arguments into the labour movement is not altered by Silcott's resignation. Especially in the education sector, trade unionists and Labour Party activists must take up the battle both to defend student union autonomy and to bring forward the day that Silcott, Raghip and Braithwaite are once more free to walk the streets of Tottenham. ■

## Left unity

BY SALADIN MECKLED  
Kings College London  
(in a personal capacity)

TWO HUNDRED and thirty students attended a conference on 22 April. They spent the whole of the day agreeing with each other. This might sound a positive thing to the unsuspecting reader. Be assured, it was not.

They spent the whole day agreeing because, in a bid to form another left caucus for NUS elections, *Socialist Organiser* (SO) made sure that the conference they organised was based around the lowest common denominator on every issue. For example, those in favour of women's liberation, all; those against, none. Of course not!

The conference had been called to organise student left activists to fight the increasing strength of the right at NUS conference. But in an attempt by SO to turn it into their latest front organisation they made two fatal mistakes. The first was to create an organisation with such a vague "political" programme that no one is too sure what it exists for (apart from agreeing with itself).

SO made their second mistake by attempting to exclude Militant supporters (not unaccustomed to excluding people themselves, it must be said) from the conference. The reason for this bureau-

cratism is easily explained. If you are trying to create a front with which to organise on NUS conference floor you don't want the odd "big" organisation coming along to ruin your plans.

Most of the activists present at the conference saw, at least partially, through this particular manoeuvre and put a stop to it. Militant's own bureaucratism is no excuse for copying it in other forums. It must be fought by defending genuine democracy at all times.

With the loans legislation going full steam ahead, with the restructuring of education underway, with the pressure on Baker to dismantle the NUS increasing, and that option more likely for the Tories (viz the Winston Silcott/LSE affair), what students need is a fighting leadership based on the activists' groups in the colleges. They also need a programme of action which can challenge the political garbage presently running NUS.

These sorts of things are not achieved through vague positions on which we all agree but through a strategy for education which involves the mobilisation of the student movement for a national indefinite take over of their institutions, rank and file control of student action and a political perspective which sees the working class as our real allies. ■

# Build a rank and file movement

IN EVERY dispute that is underway or in the pipeline two questions are being asked by workers: can we win and if we can how do we do it? Ten years of Thatcher's government pose these questions sharply before every section of workers.

Thousands have lost their jobs as whole industries have been butchered. Hundreds of leading shop floor militants have been victimised. The networks of shop stewards that were crucial to many of the victories scored by workers in the 1970s were seriously weakened during the early 1980s. And, after the heroic year long struggle of the miners went down to defeat, many militants expressed the view: if the miners couldn't win, how can we.

The current upsurge of struggle holds the potential to reverse the defeats, to avenge them and to turn the tide against the Tories and the bosses. In many of the struggles that are developing new layers of militants are coming to the fore. The determination of these workers means that in reply to the question, can we win, we answer with a decisive yes. The ability to paralyse transport, the docks, the power stations, is more than enough to turn the songs of praise to Thatcher into cries of panic. Her self-serving lie—that the labour movement has been tamed once and for all—will stand exposed.

For this to happen today's militants need to be clear on the difficulties they face in the present round of struggle. As the decade has gone on the union leaderships have used the results of the anti-union laws—especially ballots—to defuse anger and demobilise strikes. The officials have drawn strength from the laws in their ceaseless endeavour to control the rank and file.

To answer the question, "how do we win?", we have to develop the means of defeating these traitors and backsliders in our midst. For many of the new militants one answer has been to build up unofficial organisations and to conduct unofficial actions. Last year both health workers and postal

workers followed this path and important disputes developed. Today a similar development is taking place on the railways and London Underground.

As the bureaucrats stick to the sacred "procedures" the militants have said "enough is enough" and have taken matters into their own hands. The unofficial networks that have been built up have paved the way for action. But, there is a danger in the present situation that must be overcome in the days and weeks ahead.

In all of the struggles of 1988 the unofficial action was out-manoeuvred by the union leaderships and then sold out. The same could happen today. On the Underground many workers have used the "wild-cat" strike tactic to allow the union to escape the dangers of being taken to court for breaches of the anti-union laws. Up to a point the rail union leaders have allowed this to happen. But as soon as a struggle looks like getting out of control they move in and use the provisions of the anti-union laws to re-establish their authority. On the Underground the ballot, and then the capitulation before the courts have helped Knapp regain some of the initiative.

On the docks there is now a degree of confusion thanks to Ron Todd's legal "bodyswerves". The initial militancy—expressed in spontaneous strikes in early April—has been put on hold. The same could happen on the railways.

All of this proves that unofficial organisation and action is a crucial starting point, but on its own will not challenge the power of the bureaucracy. Militants cannot ignore these powerful leaders who will, at decisive points, move in to betray.

With each development in the struggle rank and file activists must demand that the union leaders give their full backing to the action, making it official regardless of the legal consequences. But, in open anticipation of their likely betrayals, militants must also ensure that unofficial strike committees, shop stewards' organisations and caucuses square

## EDITORIAL

up for a fight with this "enemy within" if the current struggles are to be victorious.

The way to do this is to link up the existing struggles through the building of genuine and solidly rooted rank and file organisations within and across the different sections. Workplace and section meetings must regularly take place, elect representatives who are immediately recallable and take control of all action. Across the transport industry workers are facing similar attacks. To co-ordinate a response to this joint committees of transport workers need to be established. As different struggles develop such strike committees need to build the links—with dockers, firefighters, power workers. Those workers won to solidarity with strikers can give the best solidarity if they are delegates to local action committees, representing their members and committed to direct action to defend the strikers when the anti-union laws are used against them.

This level of rank and file co-ordination and organisation will draw fire from the officials. A "defend the unions" committee that draws workers into action against the law and in support of workers involved in "unlawful" strikes runs counter to their miserable respect for the rule of the judges and the millionaires on whose behalf anti-working class judgements are made. The full weight of the union apparatus will be brought to bear against the rank and file in such circumstances.

For this reason the rank and file movement we are calling for cannot rest content at being a temporary, unofficial strike committee. Just as it must set class struggle action, in defiance of the law, as one of its goals, another must be the establishment of a permanent organisation inside the unions dedicated to breaking the power of the bureaucratic misleaders, replacing them with leaders committed to fighting the bosses and the Tories and to transforming the unions into democratic class struggle organisations.

- For a rank and file movement in every union!
- For a national rank and file movement!

See page 9 to find out why the bureaucrats betray

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## POLL TAX

### For a mass campaign of non-registration

POLL TAX registration forms have now arrived on doorsteps throughout England and Wales. Many more will be arriving over the coming weeks.

Thousands of people, already appalled at the massive cut in their living standards that the Poll Tax will cause will doubtless be refusing to register. *Workers Power* calls on all Anti-Poll Tax groups, unions, Labour Parties and tenants' groups to launch an immediate campaign for organised mass non-registration.

The forms give a maximum of 21 days to register, failing which a fine

may be levied. Meetings and rallies should be organised in every town, at which residents should be encouraged to show their refusal to register en masse.

Individuals may be tempted to try and thwart the Poll Tax in a less collective way.

Some may take individual protest action like binning the forms or simply denying that they've been received.

These "frustration" tactics can only serve to delay registration for the individuals involved. They completely fail to develop the sort of

mass collective and organised action that will be needed to defeat the tax.

In Scotland thousands have been registered without consent, without even having completed the registration form. The same can, and quite possibly will, happen in England and Wales.

Building up a mass campaign against registration now should therefore be used as the first step in preparing for the next, crucial stage of the fight. For a mass campaign of non-payment, and for class wide industrial action to smash the tax. ■

## CARDIFF

FOLLOWING A conference of over 100 delegates from the local labour movement and anti-Poll Tax groups, a "Poleaxe the Poll Tax" committee has been set up in Cardiff.

Initially the organisers, mainly members of the two Stalinist parties (CPB and CPGB) prevented any policy decisions being reached. They feared losing the "support" of pro-capitalist organisations such as the Liberals, nationalists and the Church.

Since then the committee has organised a lobby of the city council and a demonstration on 1 April which did raise the campaign's

profile. Subsequently the committee held a further meeting to decide on policy.

*Workers Power* supporters held a caucus with activists from local groups prior to the meeting, but our policy of mass non-registration was not accepted by some at the caucus, who favoured a campaign of simply frustrating registration. However, at the meeting itself the Stalinists were out in force.

Against activists who called for a policy of "Don't collect, Don't pay", they simply called for "a really broad based campaign". Despite having done virtually nothing to

build the campaign, their arguments won the day.

Activists would be mistaken to abandon the committee at this stage given its important links with the local labour movement.

Its policy of workplace leafletting must be used to involve more shop stewards and win non-implementation and strike action against the tax.

The left should continue to fight to win it to non-payment. If these positions cannot be won, however, *Workers Power* will fight for an alternative campaign which is prepared to build for real action by the working class. ■

## Handsworth

"WE'RE NOT going to pay!" That was the message from two well-attended public meetings in Handsworth, Birmingham, at the end of April.

Horrified at the level of the tax (the City Council estimate £335 per year), hundreds of residents backed the call for mass non-payment and scores gave their names as street co-ordinators for the coming campaign.

There are two groups fighting the Poll Tax in Handsworth. One in the Church Vale area is based on a local residents' association and has a firm commitment to non-payment. The other, called Handsworth and Hockley Anti-Poll Tax Union (HHAPTU), began with a small group of activists and has now attracted significant local support.

Both campaigns had over a hundred people at their recent meetings but problems exist with each campaign.

In Church Vale, supporters of *Militant* seem keen to avoid close contact with HHAPTU. They have opposed calls for unity, saying that HHAPTU is not committed to non-payment. But *Workers Power* supporters have won a warm recep-

tion for our call to unite and fight to win all local campaigns to non-payment.

HHAPTU itself is attempting to build broad support in the community. It now needs to adopt a clear policy.

At the public meeting *Workers Power* supporters were again well received when we called for non-payment, non-implementation by council and postal workers and strike action against the Tax.

Jeff Rooker MP, who addressed the meeting and called for residents to pay the tax (and vote Labour at the next election), got a nasty shock. When a *Workers Power* speaker attacked his cowardly stance the meeting erupted into applause.

Both campaigns are now building for a lobby of Birmingham Council on 16 May when, hopefully, hundreds will hand back their uncompleted forms.

A network of organisers needs to be built on every street and links made with workers in the City rates department, who are currently on strike against a pay cut. In this way united action between workers and tenants can be developed. ■

### South London Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration

Sat 3rd June

12.30pm Clapham Common, march through

Brixton to Kennington

## UNDERGROUND

# Link the fight: defy the law

AFTER TWO "wildcat" strikes by train crews stopped the London Underground an NUR ballot secured 88% in favour of strike action on the tube. But the strike was called against new conditions and career structures for platform staff.

The official union leaders had not even registered a dispute over traincrews' pay. Faced with the opportunity to link the fight over pay and conditions for all Underground workers the bureaucrats worked overtime to keep them separate.

Confronted by mounting support for a united strike, London Underground Limited (LUL) went onto

the offensive. It announced a "new employment package" for train crews, then slapped a writ on the NUR, banning the strike.

The "package" is a slaves' charter. It trades off a £30 a week pay increase for drivers for a "flexible working" agreement modelled on MacDonalds. The package offers drivers £16,650 and guards £11,450. But some train staff can earn this already by doing late and night duties.

Worse still it will be paid as a salary. The hours worked will not be reflected in the pay packet. The proposed 74 hours over a ten day fortnight will be a solid slog. Sun-

days will be compulsory and paid at the basic rate. Train crews will be stopped from "banking" rest days. There will be no leeway around the end of turns (shifts) and around grub breaks.

At mass meetings on 4 May train staff angrily rejected the package. But a decision on further unofficial strike action was left in the hands of line co-ordinators.

Witch-hunted in the press as a "faceless group of individuals" the co-ordinators have been forced to remain semi-secret to avoid victimisation. Any employee who even talks to the press can be sacked!

But the lack of an elected strike

committee leaves the drivers and guards out of day to day control of the dispute. While train staff were meeting, Jimmy Knapp called an official NUR rally. Not only has the NUR bureaucracy done nothing to unite the claims, it predictably crumpled in the face of the law.

The courts granted LUL an injunction "on legal grounds" leaving it to the Appeal Court to test the employers' case. Instead of defying the law, instead of even rushing straight to the appeal court to get it overturned, the NUR called off the all-out strike pending legal consultation.

The task for rank and file train and station staff is clear. They should launch a united all-out strike and demand official union support for it. The Workers Power Underground Strike Bulletin summed up what to fight for:

- £6-43 for drivers and £5-50 for guards with no strings
- Minimum £200 a week wage for all LUL workers. A 15% increase for all grades above that
- Scrap Action Station. Scrap the new L&A procedure
- Defend every job on LUL
- Stop moves to introduce casual working
- Make all strikes official
- Link the claims
- Elect a strike committee now

Underground workers have the power to win, especially if bus and rail workers fight alongside them. 12,000 badly paid workers, treated like dirt by management can bring the big business capital of Europe to a stop. The sooner this happens the sooner tube workers can win not just better pay, but decent conditions and an end to vicious disciplinary procedures.■

## GLAMORGAN Whose victory?

WHAT A present for Thatcher's tenth anniversary. The Vale of Glamorgan by-election transformed the Tories majority of over 6,000 into a Labour majority of the same size. It was the biggest swing from Conservative to Labour in a by-election since 1935.

The press have seen this by-election as a test of Labour's credibility. Kinnock and the Labour leadership are saying they have passed the test with "flying colours". Kinnock is hailing the victory as a vindication of his leadership. Dumping any remnants of the left wing policies and embracing "sensible" free market Thatcherism with a pink tinge are new vote winners according to Kinnock. The truth is the 12.4% swing was caused less by their new image and was more a result of the massive unpopularity of the Tories with working class voters.

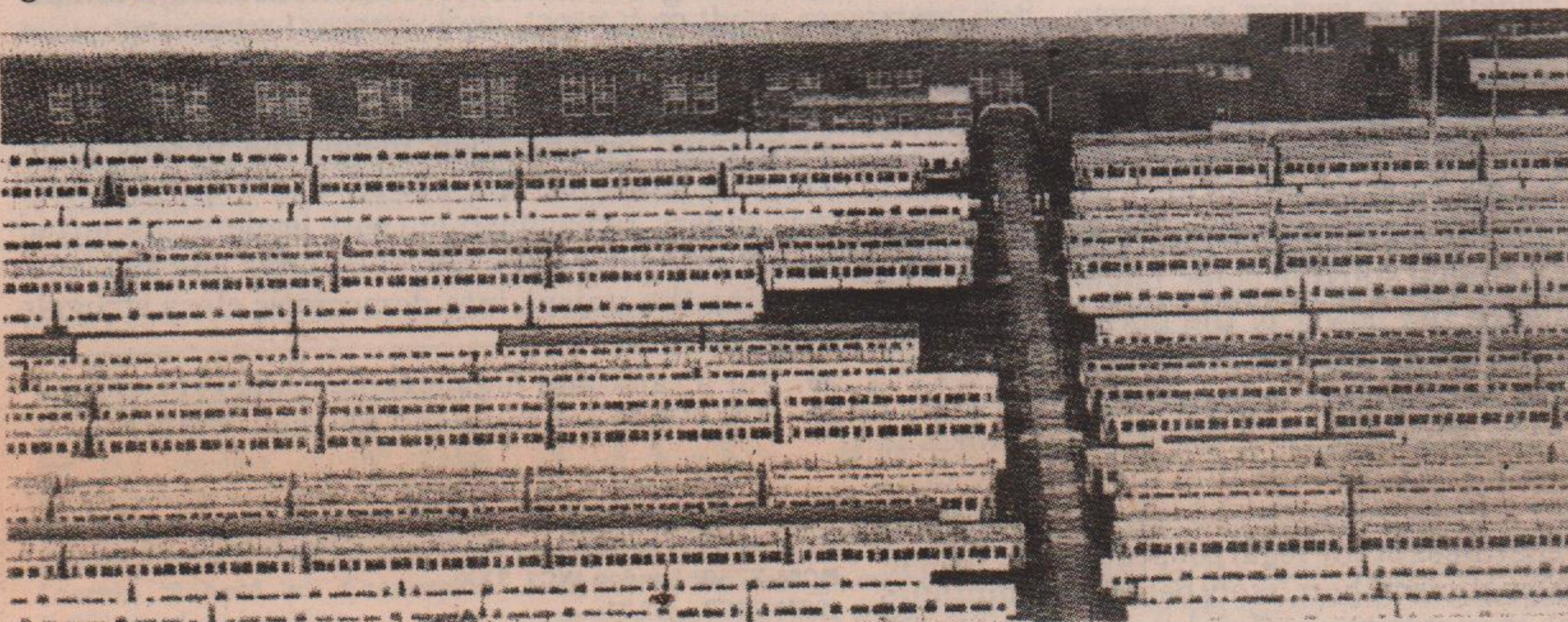
Not only have cuts in the NHS, water privatisation and Poll Tax caused renewed resentment. In the case of the NHS the Tories' attacks have particularly focused on Glamorgan. Two hospitals in the area are threatened with closure. Doctors advised their patients not to vote Tory.

Added to this the Tory campaign was divided. Peter Walker, the Secretary of State for Wales, used the by-election to defend his much hyped "valleys initiative" against free market Thatcherite policies.

The Tory press is now making more favourable noises about the Kinnockite Labour Party. They no longer need to promote the SLD or SDP as a safe pro-capitalist alternative to Thatcher. Labour is becoming precisely that. The bosses and their media no longer fear a two horse race if it is between two types of Thatcherism. Even David Owen is saying that he would have no problems serving under Kinnock in a Labour government. All Kinnock has to do is to concede more and more. Decisively ditch unilateralism and leave intact the anti-union laws and Labour might get elected in 1991. So say the Tory press and failed centre parties alike.

Workers have no interest in supporting Kinnock's strategy in order to pave the way for an anti-working class Labour government. Even on Kinnock's terms he has no guarantee of success. In two years time the bosses may still go for Thatcher or even a softer Toryism led by the likes of Walker and Heseltine.

Thatcher can be beaten at the polls but Kinnock's Labour Party cannot beat Thatcherism. It is already consumed by Thatcher's ideas on the market, the unions and defence. Workers must not be lulled into another "wait for Labour" mood. Get stuck into the Tories now while they are in trouble.■



**Workers Power spoke to Dave, Kevin and Pete about the strikes. All are drivers on the Underground involved in organising the action and asked us to change their names to avoid victimisation.**

**WP: What were the first two strikes about?**

**Pete:** The first two strikes were basically over pay. We want our rate increased from £4.72 to £6.43 an hour and we want the guards' rate increased from £3.12 to about £5.40 or £5.50.

**WP: What's going on now with the NUR? There was an unofficial meeting today, and at the same time an official one. Why was that called?**

**Dave:** All it does is divide up the work force again. And I think you've got to be a bit hard on Jimmy Knapp for calling that because he knew the unofficial meeting was going ahead. Have a look at the way he called that meeting. The station staff who were working early couldn't even get to the meeting.

That's the way the NUR bureaucrats have run it. They knew it was going to coincide so I think there was a bit of dodgy business going on. They're trying to separate it out.

**Kevin:** This job has been messed up completely by there being so many unions on the job. Its about time they had the one.

**Dave:** Yes, definitely one union.

**Kevin:** Its ridiculous you know. I'm ashamed to be an ASLEF member. I would have thought they would have called a strike with the NUR. Its absolutely ridiculous.

**WP: Is the unofficial organisation effective?**

**Dave:** Up to a point. Because its only word of mouth that leads to its own problems. What people were worried about before

was victimisation. Both meetings voted overwhelmingly that they will go all out if anyone is victimised as a result of our action. We have to hold people to their words.

We should elect a strike committee. Not just because we can put pressure on our union, but because we can organise our strike better, get a regular bulletin out to our members to tell them what's going on. To the union officials we can say that we want our unofficial representatives to be able to sit in on the union negotiations.

**Kevin:** But I tell you as soon as it comes to them, and their funds are sequestrated they'll drop you like a ton of hot bricks

**Dave:** The union will but not the blokes.

**WP: What's wrong with what management has put on the table?**

**Kevin:** Everything! There isn't a good point about it. I thought it was bad enough before—and that's just what I heard. But I tell you now. What I heard tonight—I wanted to sit down and cry. I'm not joking. It's just slave labour, and that's putting it in a few words.

**Dave:** There was a quote read out from the *Financial Times* from Dennis Tunncliffe. And the way he basically put it is: you don't have to pay your workers a lot of money to run a service. He said "look at MacDonalds". So that's basically what he's after.

**Dave:** Whoever's face fits with management, i.e. if your a right crawler, then you'll get on.

**Kevin:** Whereas before with the seniority system if a job came up you were at least guaranteed an

interview. Now you're not even guaranteed that. You're not even guaranteed your job.

**WP: So you're talking about indefinite unofficial action?**

**Pete:** For as long as it takes—if it takes one year, two years—we'll carry on.

**Kevin:** I think the majority of the people there at this meeting, and all the people who've got mortgages and that lot, they feel if they lose this fight they're all going to leave. This is serious. They'd rather leave than work in those conditions. The job is bad enough already. They way they want you now you'd have to camp outside your depot.

And there's other things. Before when you qualified as a driver you qualified basically for life. Fair enough we all need refreshers but what they're saying is you get your ticket for three years and they then requalify you. But if they don't like you they could make you go up every week and fail you.

**WP: How do you see yourselves winning the dispute?**

**Kevin:** We've got to make the businessmen feel it were it hurts and they'll put the pressure on. And the only way to do that is with an all-out strike.

**Dave:** And I reckon we need to do everything we can not to let the unions off the hook, so that they do everything they can to actually go for a ballot. And let's remember that on the OPO rates the unions have been discussing this with management since 1984. For five years they've been discussing it and they still haven't "failed to agree".

**Kevin:** If we leave it up to them we'll be working those rosters next year. So I think we've got to get our back and start doing things.

**WP: There has been an injunction put against the ballot today. You've said already you'll go unofficial if necessary. What about the official unions?**

**Kevin:** I see it personally that us the members have got to do it ourselves.

**Dave:** We've got to have some sort of strike fund.

**Kevin:** Because there's enough angry people who want to go out on strike. This is just a hiccup. It seems like the unions love to hide behind bureaucracy themselves. I think in some way they were happy they got an injunction. They don't want a strike. Its not in their interests.

**Pete:** We want the backing of the union but we know what might happen to the union. But the union must remember that we are the people paying their funds. If we say we want this, they must support us.



THE T&GWU leadership is jeopardising the fight to defend the Dock Labour Scheme (DLS). Since April, when the Tories announced their plans to abolish the scheme the T&G Executive have wasted valuable time trying to out-manoeuvre the government and port employers on legal technicalities. But the port employers have not budged an inch.

Meanwhile the weeks of delay have served only to sap the energy and momentum which had been generated amongst rank and file dockers. It will now be more difficult to win the strike, more difficult to bring out the non-registered ports. But it must be done.

The bosses' aims are clear: another 10% of registered dockers' jobs to go, short term contracts, part time working and an extra £20 million a year profit. Dockers' aims should be clear as well: to stop the Tories in their tracks and win the extension of the scheme to every port in Britain. For this to succeed an all out national dock strike is needed now.

From the very start Todd's attempts to negotiate with the port employers in order to avoid "unlawful" political strike action were a recipe for disaster.

The cost of the T&G's attempts to keep the strike legal has been the overturning of union policy by dropping defence of the DLS in favour of a similar "national agreement" in its place. But it had no chance of success. First, because it cuts no ice at all with the port bosses. One of the main reasons they hate the scheme is because it imposes a national agreement.

They want to replace it with local deals. John Sharples of the British Ports Federation said "We don't think there is a need for national minimum conditions". Not when the whole idea is to create a flexible casual workforce at the beck and call of every local employer.

Secondly, trying to avoid the courts by posing the dispute as a "trades dispute" over conditions

## DOCKS

# Strike now to defend the scheme

after the scheme is abolished has not worked. The decision of some port bosses to go to the courts to stop the ballot proves this. If a strike starts such legal attacks will intensify.

If a national strike had been called in the first week of the dispute and spread to the unregistered ports, then the bosses would have been pushed onto the defensive. But the past weeks have seen the employers on the offensive and the mass of the T&G's docks' membership passively waiting for Todd to finish his magical mystery tour through the laws.

British Ports Management have already opened talks with shop stewards about possible local agreements, conditional on the strike being called off. They are sending letters to individual dockers as part of a propaganda campaign to split the workforce.

The only way to stop the bosses further dividing the dockers is to end the delay and call a national dock strike of all ports, registered

and unregistered, to defend and extend the scheme.

Todd's deputy, Bill Morris will have none of this. Instead he has just tried another trick which resulted in a hopeless bellyflop—writing to Norman Fowler and pleading for ACAS to intervene in a last ditch attempt to avoid a strike.

To stop this prevarication the National Port Shop Stewards' Committee (NPSSC) should organise strike action now. Stewards have played it Todd's way long enough and are no better off for it, whilst industry's stockpiles to beat the strike are growing with every ship unloaded.

It is vital that rank and file dockers, through the NPSSC, take control out of the hands of Todd, Morris and Connolly. Even when the ballot result is announced and a strike called the officials have a hundred and one tricks up their sleeve to get it called off. The answer now is to:

- Call mass meetings in every port
- Launch an all out national strike to defend and extend the scheme
- Defy the law; picket any scheme ports that don't come out, organise to bring out unregistered ports for the full extension of the scheme
- Organise solidarity with the strike, including strike action if and when the law is used.

### Read Workers Power Docks Special Issue Out Now!

Articles include

- How to extend the scheme;
  - Labour's record on the docks;
  - How the rank and file can take control;
  - The international offensive against dockers;
  - Interview with Kevin Hussey, shop steward at Tilbury Docks.
- 20p if sold separately.

## ENGINEERS

# Now for a 35 hour week!

THE AEU-EETPU merger is off—and that's official. The engineers' union executive endorsed the national committee decision to pull out of merger talks with Hammond's scab union.

In the end Bill Jordan's threat to go around official union structures and ballot the members on the merger fizzled out. Far too many loyal right wingers in the AEU leadership were unhappy about giving away what was left of union democracy, as the eventual unanimous vote to break off talks demonstrates.

But while Jordan has lost one battle, his crusade to make the AEU a "business union" goes on. The right wing are no doubt laying plans to curtail the power of the NC. Then all it takes is for the EETPU to worm its way back into the TUC and—hey presto! A massive right wing company union is back on the cards.

That is why engineers cannot treat the merger issue in isolation. Fighting the merger has always been more than a question of defending AEU democracy. It has been part of the fight against the strategy and politics of the Jordan-Laird leadership; against single union, no-strike deals and open collaboration with the employers.

Engineers now have the opportunity to carry on that fight with the breakdown of talks over pay and hours. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' (CSEU) negotiations with the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) have broken down.

The EEF are offering only a 5-9%

basic rise and 90 minutes off the week over three years, compensated by more productivity deals and flexible working at local level.

In response the AEU has called a ballot on selective strikes supposedly aimed at breaking the big firms from the EEF stance.

Jordan has neatly side-stepped AEU policy on the 35 hour week—arguing instead for the CSEU position of two hours off the week in two years and a pay rise in line with inflation.

This is totally inadequate. Engineers should be fighting for 35 hours now, with no strings and no loss of pay, and a massive pay rise to meet soaring mortgage, rent, petrol and fuel prices. They should fight for a national minimum wage of £200 a week throughout the industry, not the union claim for £95.

And they should fight for this through all out strike action until the whole EEF meets the claim.

Motions from branches, district committees and shop stewards' quarterlies should flood into the EC calling on them to lead a campaign for all out strike action.

District committees must convene special stewards' quarterly meetings to plan campaigns for the full claim, and get out leaflets and strike bulletins.

Stewards' committees in federated factories must convene mass meetings to put the case for strike action. Appeals must be made for non-federated workplaces to join in the fight. Strike committees should be elected to run the disputes.

Engineers must build a fighting rank and file alternative to Jordan and Laird.

The *Engineering Gazette* leadership around Jimmy Airlie sat on its hands during the merger fight whilst militant AEU members conducted a campaign in the branches. Airlie and co were relying on splits in the right wing to stop the merger. Their arguments revolved purely around the democracy question, not a fight against company unionism.

Eighteen months ago the *Engineering Gazette* let a fine chance slip by when the EEF/CSEU talks broke down. The leadership failed to build on the revitalised local Confeds and the lobbies of two talks. A year and a half on, where is the call for all out action against Jordan's selective action? Where is the call to honour union policy on the 35 hour week? Nowhere. Airlie is tailing behind Jordan on this one!

*Gazette* branches must demand Airlie, Anthony and co, call a democratic national meeting to plan a campaign of mobilising the members. Those in the *Gazette* who actively fought the merger must organise to act independently again.

If engineers show they mean business over hours and pay they can undo the suspicion which exists towards the union, lay the basis for unseating the right, and even attract the EETPU members who want a union that fights. And this in turn will kill all talk of a merger with the scab union. Hammond wouldn't touch a real fighting union with a barge pole. ■



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

# PAY: SMASH THE 7%!

WHAT IS the cause of the mounting anger on the issue of pay? At the time of writing, workers from the railways to the fire service, from engineers to broadcasting staff look set to do battle over derisory pay offers. Why has this situation arisen across industry? And why now?

The main reason is inflation. Currently running at 7.9% and set to rise further still, the increased cost of living puts massive pressure on pay packets. Workers struggling to pay off mortgages have seen interest rates shoot up from 7.5% to 13%, nearly doubling the interest included in their monthly repayments. Steep rises in petrol prices hit equally hard. And a one or two year pay deal can begin to look less and less reasonable as inflation surges upwards month by month. So the bosses themselves hate inflation—they can see how it leads to wage militancy—and they try desperately to check its advance whilst remaining powerless to halt it altogether.

A common lie spread by the bosses is that workers' pay increases cause inflation. In fact the proportion of prices made up by wages (known as unit labour costs) have only increased by 0.2%, well below the overall inflation rate. Much of the extra returns that the bosses realise through price rises simply boost profits, and scarcely a week goes by when the bosses' press doesn't carry figures to show how productivity and profits have gone up. Ford, for example, doubled its profits in 1988 to a record of £673 million. In the same year the average pay of a company director went up by 26%!

### Bosses' priorities

Until recently Thatcher and the bosses have wanted to avoid conflict over pay. The recent boom, with industry working to full capacity and orders flooding in, has led to employers meeting wage claims at a higher rate than they would like simply to avoid disruption whilst the boom lasts. And the steady average rise in living standards for those in work was useful to the Tories—keeping the better paid sections of workers quiet whilst they took on powerful sections of the movement individually, such as the miners, printers and seafarers.

But spiralling inflation has forced the bosses to co-ordinate an offensive over pay. If profits are not to suffer, they have to make the working class pay the price for inflation through cuts in the real value of wages. This is why there is a marked similarity in offers made across the public sector. Workers on British Rail, in the BBC, bus workers and university lecturers have all been offered 7%—just below the rate of inflation. It doesn't take a degree in economics to work out what this represents in real terms—a pay cut.

Aware of the danger of introducing a fully-fledged incomes policy—pay restraint has after all given rise to generalised militancy in the past, most notably in the 1979 struggles against Callaghan's 5%—the Tories are now introducing a 7% limit in all but name.

And where pay settlements cannot be restricted as severely as

the bosses would like as with London Underground train staff and last year's nurses' dispute, they have resorted to other methods. Widespread restructuring of pay and conditions have been undertaken. In the NHS the nurses' regrading introduced arbitrary pay differentials between workers doing essentially the same job. And on the tube the bosses are going for "merit based" promotion, salaried status and flexible working.

But by far the most serious and co-ordinated attack lies in the employers' attempts to do away with national pay bargaining. In the Post Office, management have faced a recruitment crisis. Labour and skills shortages provided them with the opportunity to introduce a Difficult Recruitment Area Supplement (DRAS) in the South east, offering increased wages, over and above the usual weighting arrangements, in these areas. This was a key element in last year's strike, designed as it was to divide workers along regional lines via substantial pay differentials.

Eventually the UCW bureaucrats accepted the principle of DRAS, enabling management to reach local pay settlements. The ending of national pay bargaining by the TV companies in February, which is still being fought by the broadcasting and entertainment union BETA, has led to the imposition of increased flexibility and the quarterly calculation of hours worked in Anglia Television. Yorkshire TV have now introduced performance related pay.

British Rail management have likewise decided to scrap their national negotiating machinery as of November and to introduce pay bargaining on a local basis across five separate groups.

### Workers' answer

Workers should defend national pay bargaining. Does this mean we are opposed to weighting allowances for specific reasons? Obviously workers in London need an additional allowance to cope with their higher housing and living costs. But overall we oppose attempts to divide workers in a given industry along geographical or sectional lines.

The capitalist economy is organised on a national and international basis. To bring the maximum pressure to bear on the bosses, national trade union organisation and a national bargaining stance are the minimum required.

Does this mean we want to leave negotiations in the hands of the union bureaucrats? No. In defending national pay bargaining workers should campaign for rank and file control of negotiations and an end to all secret meetings and deals with the bosses.

And when inflation threatens to undermine every pay rise our class secures, we must demand a 1% rise for every 1% increase in the cost of living. This should be determined, not by the bosses' Treasury, but by committees of workers and housewives themselves. Workers should reject the bosses' attempts to make us pay for their crisis, and should take up the demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours. ■

In Thatcher's ten years as Prime Minister the working class has suffered a series of important defeats. These defeats have had far more to do with the cowardice and treachery of the labour movement's leaders than with Thatcher's supposed invincibility, as Helen Ward explains.

BRITAIN'S FIRST woman Prime Minister came to power with a mission. She promised to rid the bosses of the scourge of the "British disease".

This sickness was part of popular mythology. British workers were unproductive, overpaid layabouts who took strike action at the drop of a hat. The unions were using the threat of such strikes to blackmail Parliament. Len Murray was supposed to be running the country.

The country was also crippled by the massive burden of public ownership, propping up uncompetitive production in steel, cars and the mines through excessive subsidies. The welfare state was a relic of the post-war Labourism which undermined self-reliance.

### Concern

Thatcher's mentor at the time, Keith Joseph, expressed the Tories' central concern in February 1979:

"Unless the present imbalance of union bargaining is redressed it will be impossible to start the huge task of national recovery."

The Tories planned to use the combination of rising unemployment and step by step erosion of trade union legal rights. The Labour Party and TUC, eager to prove their credentials as worthy servants of the bosses, offered their own solution for dealing with the "British disease"—limiting picketing, reducing the closed shop and enforcing secret ballots. Their difference with the Tories in the 1979 election was that they wanted these restrictions to be enforced primarily by the union bureaucrats rather than the law.

Eight years later as Thatcher clocked up her third general election victory the bosses were hailing the Thatcher miracle. She had destroyed the power of the unions, beaten inflation and set British capitalism on a more competitive footing. After ten years the bosses' commentators in the press are less convinced—revived inflation, a balance of payments deficit and threats of a "summer of discontent" have got them questioning just how fundamental Thatcher's revolution has been.

### Retreat

Thatcher has been successful for the bosses on a number of points, most fundamentally in forcing the working class into serious retreat. But even on this, as with her ability to tackle inflation, wages, productivity and public spending, the story is not one of an uninterrupted march forward by the Tories. The ten years have seen advances and retreats on each front. And far from pursuing a consistent ideology Thatcher has swung from confrontation, such as with the steel work-

ers in 1980, to conciliation, with the miners in 1981.

She used deflationary slump economics in the early years, reflationary measures during the boom. She decreased state intervention in sectors such as employment training, aiming to force employers to run it, but increased direct state intervention in schools through the national curriculum and opting out which leaves schools accountable to Whitehall instead of local authorities.

But there are some consistent features in Thatcher's ten year rule. First and foremost she has been conscious in her battle plan with regard to defeating the working class. In *Workers Power* No 6, May 1979 (Election Special), we predicted that if victorious she would keep the big battalions, particularly the miners, out of action until the weaker unions were defeated:

"Divide and rule will be the Tory strategy before they set up a decisive confrontation."

This has continued to be central to their strategy. At every turn the Tories have attempted to avoid issues which would provoke generalised resistance by the working class. They took on sections one at a time, starting with the steel workers, car workers and weaker public sector service workers.

The legal shackles which have been imposed on the whole of the trade union movement were also achieved through a steady, piecemeal method. This avoided provoking the type of generalised mobilisation of the working class which had defeated previous attempts, Tory or Labour, to impose legal restraints on unions.

In this divide and rule approach to tackling the unions, the Tories were amply assisted by the trade union bureaucracy. Like Thatcher herself, the TUC sought to keep every struggle sectional and separate. Time and again in the ten years the potential and necessity of generalised working class resistance has been posed, only to be squandered by the spineless traitors at Congress House.

The first three years of Thatcher's rule were far from miraculous for the bosses. Monetarism was vigorously pursued, forming a bitter pill for the bosses. Thatcher adoped deflationary policies which increased the depth of the 1980-82 recession. The Tories believed that a calculated dose of recession would enable British capital to emerge leaner and fitter. Unprofitable sectors were allowed to go to the wall. Subsidised public sector industries were to be massively scaled down, public spending was slashed and unemployment was allowed to escalate. The recession began to take its toll on the working class.

When the steel strike began in 1980, after the bosses offered a 2% wage rise in conditions of 18-20% inflation, there had already been a loss of 137,000 jobs in the industry since 1970. The Tories wanted another 60,000 jobs to go. In engineering nearly 200,000 jobs were lost in one year, 12,000 in Leyland alone.

Other workers were on short time: at Talbot in Coventry workers were on a one day week. Unemployment escalated to two million (official figures) by October 1980. Gross Domestic Product was down 4% on the previous year, and most workers had suffered a real wage cut of about 10%.

### Overtime

In the many struggles that erupted in this period the TUC worked overtime to keep them separate. They were desperately trying to find a role for themselves in negotiation with the bosses and the government. Thatcher was opposed to the "beer and sandwiches" at Downing Street approach which was one of the supposed features of the unions "run-



The miners' strike—key turning point

ning the country". As she kept slamming the door in the face of Len Murray he kept crawling back for more, offering to police pickets, to negotiate redundancies and guarantee wage restraint. But during the first year of Thatcher's rule the rank and file did not allow the TUC to surrender without a fight.

### Solidarity

In the steel strike hundreds of thousands of workers were mobilised in solidarity. In Wales the TUC was forced to call a one day general strike, and it called days of action against the anti-union laws.

The TUC used such one day actions to try and let off steam from the build up of anger within the working class.

The negotiated sell outs of a number of disputes, the calculated betrayal of victimised Leyland militants (particularly Derek Robinson), combined with massive redundancies and rising unemployment were sufficient to push the class into retreat by the second half of 1980.

By the middle of 1981 the Thatcher government had inflicted

important defeats on the working class, but had already retreated from a confrontation with the miners who had struck against pit closures. The Tories wished to consolidate their gains, be more confident in the ability of the TUC to demobilise struggles, and plan for a decisive defeat of the miners at a future date. However, Thatcher was far from having the unanimous support of the bosses in this period. The CBI threatened a "bare-knuckled fight" with her over interest rates. She had a cabinet stuffed full of men from the Heath government who were getting cold feet at the depth of her slump politics. She stood at 20% in the polls and had become the most unpopular Prime Minister since the war.

Thatcher got out of this impasse and turned her fortunes around by a calculated dose of populism. The opportunity afforded by the war with Argentina was not mere good fortune, but in many ways provoked. Thatcher took a clear risk in escalating a minor conflict into a full scale war. But it was a risk that paid off, to a considerable extent thanks to the craven jingoism of the Labour Party and its leader at the time, Michael Foot.

The victory at the 1983 election was based on the popularity whipped up around the nationalism associated with the war. During the second term Thatcher was able to utilise the more favourable economic conditions to consolidate her victories over the unions.

This was not achieved without difficulties. The great miners' strike of 1984-85 had the biggest potential for a generalised working class offensive to repel Thatcher's assault on the unions. Its tragic defeat proved to be a turning point for the ruling class, paving the way to subdue more sections of workers and "buying off" others in order to maintain the Tories' electoral support.

With lower levels of inflation employed workers were able to maintain their real wage levels. This is a key feature of Thatcher's continued support amongst sections of the working class, particularly those who had seen real wages slashed under the last two Labour governments. Thatcher tried to combine an appeal to the material interest of this layer of workers, plus the middle classes who began to identify their improving living standards with the government, with an ideology which asserted the centrality of the individual and self interest.

Yet ironically Thatcher is no ideologue. Her twists and turns in office reveal a fundamentally pragmatic approach. Her only consistent "philosophy" is that she does not believe that "society" exists. Rather, Thatcher's world is made

up of individuals and their families whose motivating force is self-interest. Public spending, welfare provision and high taxation stifle this self interest and undermine individual choice.

Council house sales, private medicine, lower taxes, benefit cuts, privatisation and share ownership have all involved attacking the working class economically. The justification has been that these attacks promote self-reliance, individualism and choice.

Her electoral successes, won on the basis of such policies, prompted the unions to accept elements of her programme, under the guise of "new realism". Under Kinnock, the Labour Party has started advocating Thatcherism with a "compassionate" face.

### Divide and rule

The divide and rule core of Thatcher's strategy runs right through her years of office. The increasing inequalities, with a growing number of workers living in poverty, continued unemployment, slave labour schemes for young workers, insecure part time work for women, increased harassment and deportation of black workers whilst the bosses have accrued more and more profits, have not been met with generalised resistance. The leaders of the labour movement have played the game by Thatcher's rules.

They have responded to each issue separately and inadequately, and allowed each section coming into struggle to remain isolated and go down to defeat. The youth rioting in the inner cities, the steel workers, the miners in the great strike, the printers, car workers, hospital workers, local government workers and service users, the unemployed, GCHQ trade union members: in each of these and many other battles the TUC, the union leaders and the Labour Party have kept them sectional, even when the issues at stake were of a class wide significance.

For the ruling class "Thatcherism" still remains the preferred option. She has consistently defended the bosses' interests even at the risk of temporary unpopularity either with the working class, international commentators or sometimes sections of the ruling class itself. Yet she remains a populist who uses the divisions she has fostered to appeal to the self interest of a minority against collectivity and working class unity.

Her current mid-term problems show that there can be no final solution for the bosses, however powerful and determined a leader they have at the helm. Capitalism's crises will continue to assert themselves. The only way they can be solved finally is for the working class to overcome the real obstacle to united generalised class action. Its own traitorous leaders.

### Resistance

However, the "celebration" of ten years of Thatcher by the bourgeoisie has already been spoiled by the growing resistance of the working class. Learning the lessons of the missed opportunities, challenging the misleaders of the unions and Labour Party through the building of a revolutionary alternative leadership, is the best way to mark the tenth anniversary of this viciously anti-working class champion of the bosses. ■

THE HOLLYWOOD movie moguls ensured that John Sayles' film *Matewan* has taken two and a half years to reach Britain. A film about the West Virginian coal wars of the early 1920s that explicitly stands with the strikers was not to the liking of the corporate capitalists who exercise a vice-like grip over film distribution.

Even now the film is only on limited release. It has been showing at a handful of London independent cinemas and may yet reach the limited audiences who go to the film clubs and societies outside London. Despite these difficulties every class conscious worker should make an effort to get to see it.

In May 1920 the miners of Matewan went on strike against the Stone Mountain Coal Company. This strike, in Mingo County, West Virginia, was one of many supported by the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA), in a struggle to end the ruthless dictatorship of the coal barons and win union recognition. At the time the strike began, less than half of West Virginia's 92,000 soft-coal miners were in the union.

Taking advantage of this open-shop situation the bosses paid miserable wages, exercised a company monopoly over shops, and therefore prices, in mining towns and deducted money from the wage packets of every miner for their lodging, medical care and even their work equipment. All of these injustices were maintained with the backing of armies of hired gun-thugs and operatives from strike-breaking detective agencies like Baldwin-Felts.

Sayles' film opens with the miners, underground, learning that their pay rates have been slashed. The film's great strength is its partisan support for these miners once they go on strike. With the arrival of a UMWA organiser, Joe Kenehan (an ex-Wobbly), Sayles demonstrates the importance of trade union organisation and workers' unity. Kenehan helps break down the racist prejudices amongst the West Virginians against the blacks and Italians who are brought in to break the strike. In so doing he paves the way for the blacks and Italians to join the strike and paralyse coal production.

In a series of scenes, beautifully shot by Haskell Wexler, the solidarity and collective strength of the workers is counterposed to the meanness and brutality of the company and its hired thugs. Far from caricaturing these "baddies" Sayles tones them down. These thugs existed. They did slit the throats of strikers. Sayles himself revealed that they put kerosene in the Red Cross milk supplies destined for strikers' children. He did not include this fact in the film because he felt people would not believe it.

When the mother of a striker blasts a Baldwin-Felts agent with a shotgun, Sayles has ensured, dramatically, that we are with her all the way. More, he is signalling that women—who play a relatively passive role for much of the film—are capable of taking their place in the front line trenches of the class war.

These strengths—political and cinematic—make the film hugely enjoyable and deeply moving. But there are weaknesses. They reflect the limitations of Sayles' own populist radicalism. Through the character of Joe Kenehan he articulates his own fears about the workers' movement. Joe is a pacifist. His socialism is based on a great vision, separated from the practical problems of the day-to-day class struggle. Joe fears the tendency of the miners—reared in the gun-



# Building the union – US style

**MARK HOSKISSON REVIEWS**  
*Matewan, directed by John Sayles*

feud culture of the Appalachian mountains—to resort to violence.

Kenehan's strength is his determination to win union recognition through spreading action to incorporate all the miners in the area. But beyond conducting a well organised, though passive withdrawal of labour, he has no adequate answer to the provocations of the gun-thugs and their filthy infiltrators into the miners' ranks, or the ever present threat of state intervention into the strike.

To be fair to the director he has said he wanted to use Kenehan to question the role of pacifism as well as the role of violence. But in so doing he uses a cinematic device

that detracts from the mass character of the West Virginia coal wars. He portrays the violence that results in the film's shoot-out climax, in a manner redolent of the great Hollywood westerns like *Shane* and *High Noon*.

Joe Kenehan is rendered powerless by events while the enigmatic police chief, Sid Hatfield, takes centre-stage. Sid, an ex-miner, is the classic western marshal facing up to the Baldwin-Felts gun-toters—apparently alone, except for his two six-shooters. The miners play their role, but the film

ends by directing our emotions towards Sid. In a final voice-over we learn that he was eventually gunned down by Baldwin-Felts assassins for his role. The violence, though perhaps inevitable, was fruitless. This is Sayles' message.

The film's concentration on this event in the strike has obvious cinematic appeal. But class conscious workers should be aware that in the course of that struggle, the role of armed force was not only this heroic battle by essentially unorganised individuals. Later on in the strike the collective force of the workers actually came to the fore.

The Matewan shoot-out took place on 21 August 1920, three months into the strike. The strike itself lasted until October 1922, over two years later! During that strike, violence took on an organised mass character. In August 1921, 4000 miners and women, constituted a "citizens' army" and marched on the nearby scab coalfield in Logan county.

After a union bureaucrat failed to disperse them they engaged in a military conflict with 2100 federal troops of the 19th Infantry. They were defeated militarily as a result of the army's use of aeroplanes and heavy machine guns. They were defeated politically because they were unable to either economically cripple the mine owners through an all out national miners' strike, or to connect their fight with that of other workers across the USA into a generalised offensive against the bosses.

Throughout the course of the strike there were many other battles. The masses and the state played their part. Hundreds of women picketers were rounded up and imprisoned. Over 500 strikers were indicted for either treason or conspiracy. The final defeat of the strike kept the union out of the region until 1933.

None of this would fit into Sayles' political outlook. He is preoccupied with the noble spirit of the downtrodden, not their potential as organised masses. It would not fit in with his use of the western formula, in which Sid Hatfield becomes the personification of the frontier motto—a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

Despite these criticisms the film is excellent. The heroism of the miners, the solid determination of the black workers' leader, "Few-clothes", the breaking down of racism and chauvinism and the transformation of a passive and anxious mother into a fighter will delight and inspire everyone who hates injustice and longs for vengeance against our oppressors. ■

## Permanent Revolution No.8 – Out now!

**THIS YEAR** marks the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. The occasion has been marked by a predictable outburst of super-patriotism from the French state. It will doubtless grow ever stronger as the Bastille Day celebrations approach.

At the same time numerous academic historians have used the anniversary to intensify their onslaught on the only theory which can truly explain the impact and meaning of the great events of 1789—Marxism. Given the inability and unwillingness of "official" academic Marxism to defend the materialist conception of history in the face of this ideological assault, it falls once again to the forces of revolutionary Trotskyism to do so.

**Permanent Revolution**, the theoretical journal of the Workers Power Group, has now published its eighth issue. In a major article, Dave Hughes analyses the events of the French Revolution itself and tackles the arguments of those who seek to disprove the Marxist thesis—that history proceeds as a result of the struggle between contending classes, and that 1789 represents the clearest and most thoroughgoing example that the capitalist class, far from being opposed to

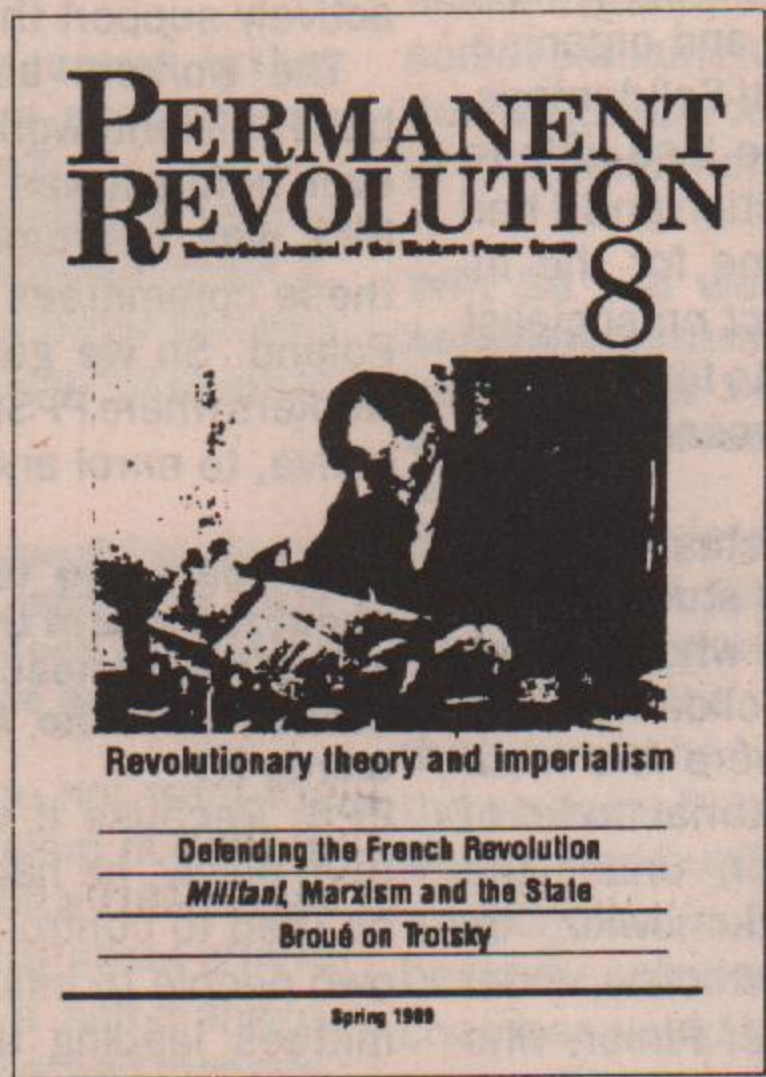
revolutionary violence, itself utilised it to clear the way for its own unfettered political and economic rule.

Another major contribution to *Permanent Revolution No.8* is a detailed analysis of the development of revolutionary theory on the issue of imperialism. Keith Hassell shows that, unlike many other issues of fundamental importance for understanding capitalist society in the twentieth century, there is no clear and "classical" Marxist tradition on this subject.

The article outlines some of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the positions of Hilferding, Bukharin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Lenin himself. As such it is an important step forward in our efforts to re-elaborate the *Transitional Programme*.

Other articles include a review of a major new biography of Trotsky by Pierre Broué, as yet unpublished in English, and an analysis of the anti-Marxist conception of the state held by one of Britain's largest left wing currents—the supporters of *Militant*.

*Permanent Revolution* is the foremost journal of Marxist theory available in Britain today. Buy it, read it, sell it and use it. ■



*Permanent Revolution No.8*  
price £2.50 inc postage,  
available from:  
Workers Power, BCM 7750,  
London WC1N 3XX  
(cheques should be made  
payable to Workers Power)

# WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities of countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The MRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

LECH WALESIA and General Jaruzelski have done a deal. And the Pope, Margaret Thatcher and George Bush are all mighty happy with the outcome.

Jaruzelski has agreed to legalise Solidarnosc once again. It is to be allowed 35% of the seats in parliamentary elections due for next month.

Walesa has agreed to let Jaruzelski have the other 65% of the seats. And he has agreed that he will support an austerity programme to hold down Polish workers' living standards. He will not back strikes against the austerity package.

If you were to believe the official press, in the east or the west, this deal represents a sensible and constructive agreement. Bush and Thatcher are now offering aid packages to Poland in exchange for such "progress". Mikhail Gorbachev is pleased by Jaruzelski's reasonable negotiations with Walesa.

In fact, the deal will mean further attacks on workers' living standards in Poland. These attacks will be policed by the leaders of Solidarnosc. As Jaruzelski knows, this will make them all the more difficult to resist.

However, there are also signs that the sight of Walesa and Jaruzelski embracing one another is accelerating the tendency for a working class opposition to both men to emerge in Poland. One clear sign of this is the activity of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) (PPS-RD) whose militants we interview on these pages.

The deal struck does not mean that Jaruzelski has been converted to defending the rights of independent unions. He has been persuaded that he can use Walesa to help push through the austerity measures he needs.

The deal envisages a significant opening up of the Polish economy to private industry. The initiative here did not come from the Vatican or Washington. Jaruzelski's minister of industry is himself a fan of Margaret Thatcher and "market forces". As he explained to the Polish parliament recently:

"I want to protest against the strangling of the enterprises by the tax office... the weak enterprises should be allowed to die, in fact some of them should be put out of their misery... we have to open up the way for foreign capital... There is no other initiative but private initiative... no entrepreneur can be happy about having strong unions. Me neither."

And this from a "comrade" of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party!

The regime has not recognised "strong unions" in any sense. It has found an ally in the catholic hierarchy and Lech Walesa who are themselves deeply worried about their declining credibility in the eyes of

millions of Poland's workers. The Solidarnosc leadership have clutched at Jaruzelski's hand in the hope of reversing their decline by claiming to have won an historic victory.

In the immediate aftermath of Jaruzelski's coup of December 1981 the organisations of Solidarnosc suffered severe repression. Under the impact of this repression and defeat its base organisations went into a general decline numerically. Its leaders were ever more openly divided about what strategy they should pursue. A period of profound division and re-examination opened up in the Polish workers' movement.

There were those, most importantly Gwiazda, who wished to recreate Solidarnosc as a trade union that was strong enough to bargain with the regime. Against them Walesa, and his charmed inner circle of catholic intellectuals and clerics, wanted to offer the regime a deal of mutual co-operation in the form of an anti-crisis pact.

Ranged against both were those—and the PPS-RD represents a continuity here—who wished to rebuild the base units of Solidarnosc as the units of self-management of the Polish economy.

The decline of Solidarnosc's grass roots organisation, and the evident political disorientation of its leadership, encouraged the rise of a variety of political clubs and newspapers. Some were pro-capitalist and for a rebuilt greater Poland that would incorporate the Ukraine and Czechoslovakia.

Against the passivity of the Solidarnosc leadership "Fighting Solidarnosc" was formed in 1982. This grouping advocates militant tactics as opposed to the negotiations of Walesa. It is for street demonstrations rather than round table talks with Jaruzelski. But its politics are such that it has made a pact with the liberal democratic party, Nie Podolegosc.

It combines militant tactics with support for those who advocate the policies of privatisation and marketisation that the ruling regime and its international admirers favour.

Fighting Solidarnosc prides itself on its militant anti-communism. It definitely has the ear of many young workers who share its rejection of "any compromise with the communist government of Poland within the present political framework."

But its aims openly state that Fighting Solidarnosc is for "an economy based on free market forces and mixed forms of ownership." Put bluntly Fighting Solidarnosc want to restore capitalism as part of their overthrow of the Polish regime.

But it has not been the case that the opposition to Walesa and Jaruzelski has taken on an unal-

loyed reactionary and right wing character. In 1985 the Press Alliance of the Workers' Opposition (PROR) was formed. It included the section of the Polish miners' Solidarnosc that openly supported the British miners against Jaruzelski's scabbing.

As an alliance it was generally characterised by its reluctance to espouse elements of virulent Greater Polish nationalism, by its hostility to any form of anti-crisis pact with Jaruzelski and by its insistence on rebuilding Solidarnosc at a rank and file workplace level. To that extent it also served as a rallying point against the Walesa wing of the Solidarnosc leadership.

Walesa and his immediate coterie have considerable material backing. The official apparatus of Solidarnosc was boosted by funds from the Vatican and Washington. At its highest levels it ceased to operate as a trade union in any meaningful sense. It became a self-perpetuating catholic political party. It was set on reforming the existing regime in its own chosen direction rather than openly confronting it.

For many years Walesa had no real takers for his conciliatory project. The best workers expected nothing from Jaruzelski. In turn Jaruzelski had little need to deal with Walesa as long as the Polish workers remained passive and in retreat. However, things changed dramatically in the spring of 1988. A wave of strikes and occupations engulfed Poland.

Many of these strikes were led by young workers with no Solidarnosc tradition. Often they involved a minority of the workforce, normally

# The evolution of S

Walesa's deal with Jaruzelski marks a new stage in the development of Solidarnosc. John Hunt looks at the background to the pact and at the forces within Solidarnosc opposing it.

the youngest workers, with the passive support of the older workers of the Solidarnosc generation. Jaruzelski was served notice that the militancy of the Polish workers remained alive. Walesa was warned that his conciliation was now being openly opposed in the factories, docks and mines.

International, as well as internal, forces conspired to force Jaruzelski and Walesa to round table talks. Washington and London feared the rebirth of Polish workers' militancy. They also knew that such was the scale of Poland's indebtedness to the world banks that they were in a position to insist on an austerity package and political concessions from the regime.

From behind the Kremlin walls Gorbachev wanted to be free of an obstacle to his honeymoon with the west that the old style Jaruzelski regime constituted. Every major force was propelling Jaruzelski and Walesa to talk to each other as an alternative to another explosion of the class rage of the Polish workers.

The Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was born in 1987 in the midst of this programmatic and strategic crisis in the Polish workers' movement. Its activists were deeply involved in the strikes and occupations of the spring of 1988. However, they come from a variety of political back-

grounds.

Some have previously co-existed with the extreme right wing nationalist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN). Their nationalism allowed them to co-operate with capitalist restorationists despite their avowed socialism.

Others owed their allegiance to the old PPS of Pilsudski. In that spirit they were prepared to defend the oppression of the Jews, Ukrainians and Byelorussians that Pilsudski carried out in his Greater Poland between the two world wars. But the PPS is, potentially, more than this.

It realises that there can be no meaningful agreement with the existing regime that meets working class interests. As our interview shows its leading spokespersons are not unequivocal advocates of "market forces".

Against Walesa's own *nomenklatura* [the Stalinist bureaucracy's network of top managerial jobs which are allocated by the top party leadership itself] they insist on rebuilding Solidarnosc, from below and in the workplaces themselves.

The left, calling themselves the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) split from those around Lipski who wanted to continue the reformist traditions of the old PPS in the new context of the Stalinist regime. That split took place in

**WP:** Could you tell us something about the origins of the PPS?

**PPS(RD):** Under Stalinism, the original Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was totally destroyed. For over 30 years, the system tried all means to eliminate the PPS through a series of repressive measures and liquidation, aiming for the total elimination of the party. During this period, the word "socialism" was equated with Stalinist totalitarianism.

All this changed with the advent of Solidarnosc. It was under Solidarnosc that people of a socialist persuasion found common interests, found a common forum for discussion and united for a common purpose. However, by 1987 there were severe programmatic and organisational difficulties within Solidarnosc.

Solidarnosc became less able to organise any sort of action and it had no political programme for the future. This had an effect on socialist activists who decided to form a political party aiming to represent working class politics.

The new PPS was actually formed through the interest of students and other young workers, who were either members of Solidarnosc or supported it. There were two main groups: firstly, the editorial board of *Robotnik* (*The Worker*) under the leadership of Piotr Ikonowicz; together with a group in Wroclaw, under the leadership of Jozef Pinior, who led the left current in Solidarnosc.

**WP:** When was that?

**PPS:** On 15 November 1987. From the beginning the activists of the PPS believed that Solidarnosc should remain a trade union, because that was the most active way of joining workers together in the fight and they were against the notion that Solidarnosc should become a political party.

The main reason for the position that Solidarnosc should remain a trade union was that the membership was so huge and covered such a vast spectrum of opinion, both social and political. They therefore called for any leftists and socialists

within Solidarnosc to help form a separate socialist political party but still remain as members of the Solidarnosc trade union.

**WP:** What is the PPS's attitude towards the present legalisation of Solidarnosc and the "Round Table" talks? How would you analyse the Communist Party's attitude towards Solidarnosc at the moment and the political situation in the country?

**PPS:** Our attitude was that Solidarnosc should start building committees, strike committees and work committees, within the factories before negotiations about the legalisation of Solidarnosc. And that members of the PPS(RD) should actively support that line.

The workers already wanted to build Solidarity workers' committees, even before it was legalised and the PPS was instrumental in building these committees in many parts of Poland. So we gathered groups of workers where PPS(RD) workers were active, to enrol and get members.

**WP:** Could you tell us something about the role of the Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc during last year's strikes and the PPS attitude towards it?

**PPS:** Because it was a movement from below, he had to accept it, but he tried to control it by sending his own people to influence these committees leading the struggle. And where his influence was strong he moved to stop the strikes. But where there was great criticism of Walesa, especially in those workplaces against his call to stop the strikes, he lost control.

**WP:** What do you think the Walesa leadership has offered Jaruzelski and the leadership of the Communist Party in return for the legalisation of Solidarnosc?

**PPS:** He wants to reassure the CP that Solidarnosc under his leadership will not threaten the position of the Party. That he believes in evolution not revolution.

The regime needs the legitimisation which this sort of agreement will

## Proble social strat

Workers Power recently talk PPS(RD). We print here a short interview.

bring to keep itself in power, to gain credibility in the West and get loans from there.

The price of this compromise is to accept the programme of the regime which includes reprivatisation, closing down of "uneconomic" factories and limiting the right of strikes for the workers as well as limiting the right to form free trade unions. This will in the end allow the establishment of unemployment and will have the effect of lowering the standard of living for a vast majority of workers.

**WP:** What role did the Catholic Church hierarchy play in the Round Table talks and what is their relation to the Walesa leadership?

**PPS:** The church hierarchy wanted agreement around the Round Table, because they hope for an evolution of the communist system in Poland and they fear a revolutionary process. Walesa constantly co-operates with the church hierarchy.

**WP:** Did the position of what became the PPS(RD), of no co-operation with the Round Table talks, of total opposition, contribute to the split in the PPS? Was this division over attitudes to these talks?

**PPS:** In February of last year the PPS was a broad left movement. The older members of the party, who



## SOLIDARITY

The Polish government is refusing a visa for PPS(RD) leader Jozef Pinior to attend a "Gorbachev and the Left" conference due to be held in Oxford on 3/4 June. We urge our readers to take up this issue in the labour movement. Messages of protest should be sent to:

Embassy of the Polish People's Republic  
47 Portland Place  
London W1

## Revolution and Counter Revolution in Poland

Theses agreed by:  
Gruppe Arbeitermacht  
Irish Workers Group  
Workers Power

1982

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# Solidarnosc



February 1988, on the very eve of a new explosion of labour militancy in Poland.

The PPS-RD is committed to what they call a democratic revolution against totalitarianism in Poland. In that they recognise the necessity for revolution, as against reform, we agree with them and stand with them against Lech Walesa. But the problem remains: what

programme will that revolution have? The PPS-RD talk of one of its objectives being vertical and horizontal workers' self-management. Nevertheless it remains posed in the terms of electing an efficient director for a firm rather than accepting a member of Jaruzelski's *nom-enklatura*.

It offers no effective challenge to the idea that making profit, rather

than meeting human needs, should determine who is, or who is not, efficient. To that extent they stand on the same terrain as Thatcher and Jaruzelski.

The Polish workers must struggle for a political revolution that wins for them the power to democratically manage the nationalised economy to meet their own needs.

The PPS-RD is not monolithic or homogeneous. It has a variety of tendencies within it. It could represent an historic gain for the world working class if its left wing can become the nucleus for forging an independent Polish internationalist workers' party.

The job of Trotskyists is to directly participate in its debates so as to ensure that the PPS-RD does not become a pro-capitalist and nationalist party in the tradition of Pilsudski.

Those of its members who have learnt the lessons of Solidarnosc and of the fight with Lipski must be won to a new communist party that can organise to defeat not only the Warsaw regime but also the dictates of Washington, London, the Vatican and Moscow.

At present the PPS-RD are concentrating on two major campaigns. They are campaigning for a boycott of the forthcoming elections arguing that they are a fraud and they are calling for a second Solidarnosc Congress in order to build its base units again.

In both they are running counter to Walesa as well as Jaruzelski. At a time when Walesa is setting off for the June elections with his own hand-picked candidates for the Solidarnosc Civil Committee it is important to recognise that there are workers who see through it all and want to fight.

Our internationalist duty is to seek out every avenue to argue with this layer and win them to the programme of revolutionary communism. ■

Poland. This is the line that PPS(RD) represent within Solidarnosc.

The last two tendencies want a second national meeting of Solidarnosc to democratically elect a new leadership and discuss the question of whether Solidarnosc should remain illegal or become legal.

**WP: So there has been no congress convened, even underground, since the early 1980s?**

**PPS:** No there has only been one democratic congress before the state of emergency. It was not possible under the emergency because of the repression. But today it is possible and it would be quite easy.

**WP: And the Walesa current, is that against convening a second congress of Solidarnosc?**

**PPS:** Walesa talks about the second congress but does nothing about it. In fact he attacks the other factions accusing them of being "ultra-lefts" and "ultra-radicals".

**WP: When you talk about "workers' self-management" what do you mean by that? How does this relate to control of the state and the planning of production?**

**PPS:** The PPS(RD) do not want the restoration of capitalism nor do we want the retention of a totalitarian system. We are talking about a third road which we call a self-management alternative, social self-management. This is one of the central points of our programme.

Self-government at a political level means full decision making by the workforce in all matters pertaining to the factory and the workplace and in decisions about what to produce. We want a say in investment, in social issues and in the workers' standard of living—wages. Up to now the bureaucracy has decided this. The workers could only increase this by striking.

Self-management means workers' control, that the workers control all facets of decision making in the factory, from choosing the director to working directly with other factories,

developing an interchange of ideas and co-operation of work. The criteria for choosing a director would be their ability to do the job and not because they were part of the *nom-enklatura*.

Self-government also means an infrastructure outside of the factory which would also be self-governing, which would facilitate transport and other services to that factory. So therefore there would be a parliament of all these self-governing management bodies which would be the government of the country.

It would also encompass institutions which did not have self-governing bodies, so this would be another house in parliament. This would be a sort of parliament of workers. All productive groups could be represented in that parliament.

**WP: So you would not see these self-management committees developing into soviets or workers' councils represented at a national level?**

**PPS:** No, soviets would not encompass all the groups to be represented. We want to have a power throughout the country. Therefore there would be two houses, one for the workers from the factories and workplaces but the other elected on a regional basis. Organisations would be represented as well. The workers' chamber would take economic decisions while the other chamber would develop various regional policies and have wider powers.

**WP: One last question. Is the PPS(RD) still suffering repression from the Polish authorities and what can the British labour and trade union movement do to help?**

**PPS:** Yes, there is still repression but not so much. What can you do here in Britain? Take protest action against repression. It will have an effect in Poland because the communist authorities there, as with Gorbachev in Russia, does not want bad relations with the left in the west and does not want to be regarded as a force denying human rights.

## IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



### Our enemy within

**MOST OF** them have jobs for life. They get paid whether or not they do any work. They have luxury lifestyles. Many have well-paid second jobs. Who are they? Not the dockers, but the trade union bureaucrats.

While the union leaders don't start many strikes they have enormous power to stop them: to derail, postpone and confuse; to speak on TV for workers they've never met; to withdraw support and instruct union members to "work normally".

At a time when all those skills are on display it is important to repeat the Marxist argument. Individual officials are not the problem. Rank and file workers are up against the whole layer of full-time officials. And this layer is not just lazy or incompetent. It is an important ally for the bosses within the unions.

The general secretaries, presidents, regional officials etc, are a distinct caste within the working class. They live in material conditions very different from the workers they claim to represent.

They have job security. Whole swathes of industry can be closed down, millions of union members thrown out of work without a single full-time official losing their job.

They are significantly better paid than their members. Top union officials in Britain are on between £20,000 and £30,000. They are serviced by an army of research officers, press officers and chauffeurs on between £15,000 and £20,000.

Traditional fringe benefits include cheap mortgages, generous expenses, trips abroad etc. Admittedly there are few British union leaders who could rival US Teamsters' leader Jackie Presser. He amassed millions of dollars and once entered a union conference in a gold chariot drawn by four white horses!

#### Tea boy

But there could be no better example of the caste nature of the bureaucracy than Norman Willis. Entering Congress House as a tea boy aged 16, Norman rose through the ranks to his present position—TUC General Secretary—without once straying into the world of productive work.

Not only do the union officials live better than their members. The bosses and the state encourage all sorts of unofficial contacts. Even in the last century the employers were well versed in getting their way by wining and dining workers' leaders in the restaurants and salons of bourgeois society.

In the twentieth century they developed the ploy of including union leaders on all kinds of government "quangos". While Thatcher has done away with a lot of these "joint committees" we still find trusted bureaucrats like the AEU's Gavin Laird on the board of the Bank of England! His predecessor, John Boyd, recently deceased and unlamented by militants everywhere, was a key figure on the BBC's board of governors.

The union officials don't just stand above the rank and file in terms of living standards. They occupy a position between workers and bosses in the day to day class struggle.

Instead of fighting for the full claims and to solve the grievances of the members, the bureaucracy's aim is always compromise. They are experts at settling disputes and useless at winning them. They are arbitrators, not fighters.

To the bureaucrat, a strike is a disruption, an annoyance. Strike pay is a worrying drain on the union's funds; unofficial action is an irresponsible departure from

procedure. This is why anti-union laws have proved so successful in taming the bureaucracy. Threatened with sequestration of the union's property, the union full-timers will consistently sell their members down the river. Their salaries and comforts count for more than workers' jobs, wages and conditions.

This mediating role in the class struggle reflects the limitations of the trade union struggle itself. It is a fight over the level of profits and wages, not one against the profit system and wage slavery altogether.

#### Betrayed

Many groups of militant workers have taken up the fight against corrupt and cowardly officials only to replace them with "left talkers" who betrayed at the decisive moment. This strategy proved disastrous for the Communist Party (CP) in the mid-1920s.

During the 1926 General Strike it was the left union leaders who were decisive in betraying the strike. They pleaded the need for unity with the right wing officials against the unity of the miners and the entire working class. But the CP had talked them up as trusted allies, and was then helpless in fighting their treachery. In the 1970s it was the CP-backed Broad Left leaders—Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones—who sold Labour's wage-cutting "Social Contract" to the working class.

Workers should combine the struggle to get rid of misleaders with the fight to dismantle the bureaucracy itself. We should not stand aside from struggles within the union bureaucracy. As well as standing militant rank and file candidates workers should give critical support to the union lefts, exposing their mistakes in action, demanding they organise the rank and file, while creating no illusions in their capacity to actually do this.

Nor should we stand aside from placing demands on the whole bureaucracy—to call strikes, to make them official, to defy the laws, to place union resources at the disposal of all workers in struggle. But we should use these tactics to fight for a programme which sets out to destroy the power and privilege of the officials and to transform the unions into fighting, democratic organisations. The regular election and recall of all officials, all officials to be paid the average wage of their members, strikes and negotiations to be controlled by rank and file committees—these are the key demands to fight for against the unaccountable, privileged bureaucrats.

#### Passivity

The union leaders are capitalism's "lieutenants" within the working class. But they are not invincible. Trotsky once wrote that the bureaucracy prospers on capitalism's well being and the workers' passivity.

"When this passivity is broken on the right or on the left the magnificence of the bureaucracy comes to an end. Its intelligence and skill are transformed into stupidity and impotence."

Every news bulletin seems to bring a new example of this process. Jimmy Knapp and Ron Todd floundering amidst a wave of court injunctions; Laird and Jordan flummoxed by the membership's rejection of the EETPU merger.

In a period of struggle these leaders become sitting ducks: we have to organise so that they are beaten from the left, not the right; by the rank and file, not by the law, the bosses and the scabs. ■

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ortened version of that

were not bent on any radicalism, stepped out of the party, and joined the position of Walesa. It is still the PPS and therefore to distinguish ourselves from this current we added PPS(RD), "Democratic Revolution".

**WP: So how would you characterise the various currents now existing within Solidarnosc?**

**PPS:** The first current is Walesa and his advisors who want a compromise with the authorities, hoping for an evolution of the system under the leadership of Gorbachev. Aiming to regenerate the agrarian economy through loans from the west, reprivatisation and through using "market forces". They are prepared to take responsibility for such a reform in the economy.

The second tendency is a classic trade union tendency represented by Workers' Solidarity. One of the leaders is Andziej Gwiazda. They believe that Solidarnosc should just be a trade union and operate as a pressure group actively defending the rights of workers and their standard of living.

The third tendency is the left, which believes that Solidarnosc should be a trade union but is also for workers' control at places of work and for full democracy and full sovereignty for

# THE LONGEST WAR

## BRITISH UNIONS IN IRELAND

AT THIS year's AGM of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) there was a strongly contested debate over the attitude British socialists ought to adopt on the question of British-based trade unions organising in the Six Counties.

The International Socialist Group (ISG), who publish *Socialist Outlook*, argued that we should favour these unions getting out of Ireland. They argued that if British unions got rid of their (predominantly protestant) members in Northern Ireland then these unions would more readily support British withdrawal from Ireland.

At the AGM, *Workers Power* supporters opposed this. What then should be our policy in relation to the unions in Ireland?

It certainly is not an easy task to win over the British based unions to fight British imperialism. It is also true that the presence of members in the Six Counties gives the trade union bureaucracy an excuse for suppressing discussion on Ireland. For example, the TGWU refers all discussion of policy on Ireland to Region 11, that is, to Northern Ireland. It also uses its block vote at LP conference against progressive resolutions on Ireland.

But treating these unions as in some sense synonymous with the British troops—to be driven out as quickly as possible as though they were a simple part of the colonisation project of Britain—is simply untenable.

Today, there are 13 British based unions operating throughout the whole of Ireland. At the end of 1987 they had a membership of 180,976.

On top of this there are a further 18 British unions with 58,246 members in the North alone. This adds up to a situation where 36% of all Irish trade unionists and 75% of trade unionists in the Six Counties are members of unions which have their headquarters in Britain.

The organisational split in Irish trade unionism dates from 1944 when the Congress of Irish Unions (CIU) was formed out of a split in the Irish TUC.

The CIU was in no way a radical break with the politics of British trade unionism. Rather it was a product of inter-bureaucratic rivalry in a situation where several unions, some based in Dublin, some in London, were in competition with each other for members. The CIU was, moreover, conservative in its politics and approach to the class struggle as well as unashamedly catholic in its ideology.

While the CIU grew after 1945, so too did the ITUC, which retained the loyalty of many unions including the teachers and public service workers. In fact, because of the hostility of the Northern Ireland government to the CIU, by 1958 only 8,000 of 194,000 workers organised in the Six Counties were members of unions based in Dublin.

Rising unemployment North and South, together with the weakening effect of rivalry led in 1959 to the re-unification of the CIU and ITUC into the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU).

The main problem with the ICTU is not that it has unions affiliated to it that have most of their members in Britain (e.g. NUPE).

The facts of life are such that NUPE members in the North are facing the same bosses (the British government) as their British brothers and sisters. A fight to defend and extend the NHS, for example, would be weakened if health workers in Belfast were to be organised separately in different unions to those NHS workers in Britain.

The real problem at the level of trade union organisation is the existence of the Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) of the ICTU. Formerly a sub-committee of the ICTU it is in effect an autonomous body which alone deliberates and decides on ICTU policy in relation to the North.

As a result it is an arrangement which recognises and collaborates with partition. But at the same time, in order to maintain the "unity" of nationalist and loyalist trade unionists in the North, the NIC tries to avoid official comment on the politics of partition, on the repression of the British troops and so on and espouses "neutrality".

The NIC has gone on record as opposing discrimination and stands for equality. But these are abstract declarations in the context of the preponderant weight of unionist opinion in the NIC and a refusal to fight against the structures that ensure continued inequality between the rival communities in the North.

Socialists should therefore argue for the abolition of the NIC. There is nothing lost by having some unions affiliated to both the British TUC and the ICTU. This reflects the reality of the combined character of the political and economic situation in the Six Counties. The NIC allows both British and Irish bureaucrats to dodge the responsibility of facing up to and even encouraging a political debate on the nature and future of the Six Counties.

Revolutionaries should fight to see a 32 County trade union federation emerge under the control of the rank and file. But it would be foolish to pretend that a consensus between Protestant and Catholic workers would miraculously triumph over sectarianism just by concentrating on "economic" issues within a 32 County framework, in the absence of the NIC. The Irish Republic trade unions are no less bureaucratic and conciliatory than the British ones. They too collaborate with partition.

Only by fighting for the programme of Trotskyism, combining the struggle against British imperialism with the fight for workers' immediate demands in the trade unions, can these become organs of struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and British imperialism. Political splits within the trade unions may well be unavoidable in the process.

But if and when that happens it will not be a split between "British" unions (i.e. unions with only British members) and Irish unions but between those workers North and South, protestant and catholic, who have been won to an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist programme for the establishment of a 32 County workers' republic and those who continue to support British rule. ■

BY JOHN HUNT

AT THE end of May the top leaders of the capitalist world will descend on Brussels to celebrate 40 years of their North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). They meet at a time when there is mounting evidence of a crisis in their ranks over strategy towards the regimes of the USSR and East Europe, the regimes that NATO was formed to combat.

NATO was founded expressly to contain what capitalist politicians called the threat of global communist expansion. Labour and Tory, Christian and Social Democrat agreed to pool their arsenals and combine their forces in a military bloc against the USSR.

They wanted to ensure that Western Europe, its colonies and clients, were preserved as areas for continuing capitalist exploitation. They did so while reluctantly accepting the USSR's sphere of influence in East Europe. Imperialism had been incapable of challenging the USSR's dominance in these countries at the end of the Second World War.

In the light of events in the USSR and East Europe over the last four years, some capitalist politicians are rethinking the role of their "anti-communist" alliance in the period ahead. As we have explained in these pages several times, Gorbachev has been prepared to make major concessions to NATO. Out came the Soviet army from Afghanistan and plans are afoot to withdraw 500,000 Soviet troops and 50,000 tanks from Eastern Europe. From Indo-China to Southern Africa Stalinism is in a global retreat.

There have been two major responses to this retreat in NATO. The hard right around Thatcher and the Bush administration sense that a historic victory against "communism" is in their sights. They want to keep up the pressure on Gorbachev by tying any loans and any arms deals with the Soviet bureaucracy to further concessions allowing world capitalist penetration in the USSR. Margaret Thatcher, in particular, sees this as a means of wiping what she calls "socialism" off the surface of the planet.

The new Bush administration also sees the time as being ripe for rolling back the USSR's historic post-war sphere of influence. Most importantly it wants to prise Poland and Hungary out of the Eastern Bloc and put them back on the road to capitalism once again. Bush intends to visit Budapest and Warsaw later this year in order to further this project.

For Thatcher and Bush now is the time to be absolutely firm with Gorbachev and the other ruling bureaucracies. They want to negotiate from a position of strength with a Kremlin that is in retreat and desperate for international stability, cutbacks in military spending and increase in economic aid in order to carry out an overhaul of the Soviet economy.

But the Western leaders are not unanimous in this view by any means. The actions of West Germany's Chancellor Kohl and his foreign minister Genscher have alarmed and angered Thatcher and Bush. They are not at all pleased by what they see as Kohl breaking NATO's ranks.

Kohl faces an election next year and knows full well how unpopular increases in nuclear weapons are in the wake of Gorbachev's arms' control diplomacy. He has, however, been under US pressure to modernise West Germany's Lance short range missiles. Earlier this year Kohl announced that he was delaying replacing Lance for three years.

# Thieves fall out



Thatcher and Kohl striding in opposite directions

But what got Thatcher and Bush really hot under the collar was his announcement that as well as shelving replacement plans he was prepared to start immediate negotiations directly with Gorbachev in order to cut back on and limit short range nuclear weapons. In this he had the backing of Italy, Spain, Norway and Denmark. However it is not just Kohl's preparedness to enter into unilateral arms' dealing that is worrying Bush and Thatcher. Thatcher has recently complained about West German imports from East Europe, particularly from East Germany, without sufficient tariff protection. The fear is that NATO could fall apart if West Germany and the USSR enter a period of even greater military and economic detente.

Of the USSR's imports from the EEC, 44% come from West Germany, and of East Europe's EEC

imports 48% are from West Germany. In comparison British goods make up only 8% and 10% respectively. West German capital has been the first off the blocks in exploring joint investment packages for the USSR and, by all accounts, hopes to be announcing major Daimler-Benz and Volkswagen plans for car production in the USSR.

There is not, however, any qualitative difference between the leaders over their plan to roll back the Soviet sphere of influence and reintegrate the East European states, and eventually the USSR or parts of it, back into the world capitalist market. Kohl wants to do exactly this, but he wants it to be German capital that reaps the profits first and foremost. When the leaders pose for pictures in Brussels it will be the case that behind the facade, the thieves are falling out. ■

## Corsican general strike

FOR TEN weeks workers on the French island of Corsica organised a general strike for higher wages. Led by state employees (70% of all workers) the strike mobilised the vast majority of the island's population against the Rocard government's austerity programme and against the CRS riot police.

The strike began at the end of February as workers claimed a 100% pay rise, together with a reduction in taxation, to make up for the incredibly high cost of living in Corsica—twice as high as in Paris! The government replied with tear gas, CRS baton charges and a meagre £35 a year offer.

After ten weeks of struggle, with the airports, docks and post offices closed by the strike, the trade union leaders managed to divert the movement into the dead-end of "round table negotiations" with the government. They celebrated their "victory" with a joint union march on May Day, which mobilised a mere 700 people!

The enormous potential of the Corsican general strike was wasted by the bureaucratic trade union leadership. Although public sector workers throughout France had clearly shown their willingness to fight last autumn, the union officials did everything to limit the wave of strikes to Corsica. No solidarity—financial or backing—was organised. No attempt was made to generalise the struggle to the mainland.

Nevertheless, the conditions did exist for a united fightback. Public sector wages have been cut by 10% in real terms since Mitterrand came to power in 1981. Teachers, nurses and civil servants have all taken strike action over the last month.

As it was, the brave struggle of the Corsican workers was betrayed by the union leadership. For the next round of struggles the Corsican workers need to build a rank and file movement capable of challenging and ousting the timorous and treacherous alike within the union bureaucracy. ■

Day after day, students have filled the streets and squares of Beijing and other cities, demanding democratic reforms. Workers showed their support with delegations, wall posters and messages to the demonstrators. One bus driver in Shanghai shouted to the students "We support you—but if we strike to show it, they'd shoot us!" Peter Main describes the background to the protests and the crisis of direction facing China's bureaucratic rulers.

THE CURRENT wave of student demonstrations, hundreds of thousands strong, testifies to the groundswell of resentment against China's bureaucratic rulers.

The main demands raised by the student demonstrations on 4 May were "For democracy and a free press!" and "Against corruption!". These slogans sum up the starting point for politics in China today. They point straight to the weakness built into the very foundations of the state.

Today's government cannot grant "democracy" or a "free press" because its power is dependent on excluding the masses from all forms of decision-making and denying them accurate information about their own society. It cannot stop corruption because its own rule and policies create and encourage corruption.

China faces rising inflation, falling production and serious regional imbalances. The leadership is divided over how to solve this crisis. But they debate behind closed doors. The students are demanding free speech, open discussion and democracy to open this debate out. Workers are coming to the students' side to protest at rising prices and poverty and at the huge disparity between their living standards and those of the corrupt bureaucrats.

The Western press would have us believe that the students are demanding "Westernisation". It is true that some look enviously at the apparent freedoms and higher living standards in the West. It is true that China's crisis is that of a bureaucratically planned economy, but so far, measures designed to "liberalise" the economy have worsened the everyday lives of the majority.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping initiated an economic reform based on the reintroduction of the market. The effects of Deng's reforms are most evident in the countryside. Under the "Household Responsibility System" families were given control of a parcel of land and were free to farm it as they pleased.

A series of measures allowed some families to boost their own earnings and wealth. These included "rural workshops" where property previously held communally was sold off to the highest bidders, and "specialised households" who are allowed to hold equipment and rent it out.

The state also relaxed its control over production, allowing farmers to grow for the market. This was intended to stimulate agricultural production. At first this increase did occur as farmers sought to "enrich themselves". But the benefits of the policy have been short lived and the resulting problems have put extra burdens on the workers and poorest farmers.

One dilemma facing the bureaucracy was that at the same time as allowing farmers to grow for the market, the state had to be able to guarantee a minimum level of production and therefore had to regulate prices for each agricultural product.

The disparity between the free market and regulated prices is the origin of the widespread corruption. Government officials simply buy cheap and sell dear, an elementary example of primitive capital accumulation.

The effects of these reforms in the countryside itself have been dramatic. By 1982, rural per capita income was up 30% on average, but that average masked a differentiation within the rural population. Areas close to cities saw big benefits for market gardeners who could be earning seven times more than their poorer neighbours. More distant provinces were worse off still.

In addition, the concentration of farm machinery and the consolidation of landholdings have pushed the less fortunate into marginal land and primitive methods of farming.

The last few years have seen production actually falling. The decline of the collective and communal systems means irrigation and maintenance have deteriorated. Rice, wheat and cotton production figures have all fallen.

Privatisation and marketisation were introduced more slowly into the industrial economy. The main thrust was towards enterprise autonomy and "profit-retention" where managers were allowed to individually benefit from increases in profits. This meant that they had an incentive to shed labour and raise productivity.

Some invested their "retained profits" in fixed capital and were allowed to purchase this on the open market, nationally or internationally. This in turn led to the removal of price and production controls within the heavy industry

## CHINA

# Students shake old regime



Peking student argues with cop over right to march

and machine building sectors. As in agriculture, however, the state had to control a substantial part of production to guarantee state-led developments. Two-tier pricing stimulated corruption and rendered planning ever more impracticable.

The uncertainty in the leadership contributed to wild zig-zags in investment patterns. In turn this has fuelled inflationary tendencies.

To attract foreign investment and technology, China's resources have been thrown open to international capital. Contracts with foreign capital take first priority and, consequently, Chinese industry is suffering from shortages of basic requirements such as coal and oil. Only plants producing for the foreign market, or located in the Special Enterprise Zones, can

maintain production. In short, foreign capital has been allowed to create its own 'extra-territorial' enclaves within China. The infamous treaty ports, against which the young Communist Party fought so courageously in the 1920s, have been re-established.

Against this background of burgeoning economic crises, the students' demands cannot be understood as simply support for "Westernisation". Supporters of an oriental Thatcherism do not raise the Red Flag and sing the Internationale. "Democracy" can, of course, mean all things to all people but, in the context of today's China, it is an attack on the bureaucracy's dictatorship. Already, the students see themselves, and are seen by others, as the champions of the huge majority who suffer economic hardship and denial of political

rights.

In the course of its development, today's student movement will have to re-learn many of the fundamental lessons learnt in the 1920s. The most important will be that "democracy" must have a class content if it is to have real meaning. As Chinese society polarises between an impoverished majority and a wealthy minority and as the bureaucracy becomes ever more brutal in its attempts to hold down dissent, the most consistent militants will turn to the working class and fight to build a new, revolutionary communist party. This will lead the fight to destroy the bureaucracy's dictatorship, reverse its concessions to capital and establish a state based on the direct control of the working class and supported by the millions of poor peasants. ■

## Factions of the bureaucracy

EVER SINCE it came to power in 1949, the Communist Party leadership has maintained a very strict secrecy over its internal affairs. Quite apart from the contempt which all Stalinists have for the masses, this obsession with secrecy has resulted from a permanent split within the leadership.

The revolution was made on a programme of collaboration with capitalists to rebuild the national economy. This so-called "New Democracy" was the Chinese version of Stalin's Popular Front strategy. Almost immediately its utopian character was revealed by the Korean War. The capitalists who remained in China continued to support Chiang Kai-shek and posed a danger to the regime. Between 1951 and 1953 they were expropriated by the state.

However, one faction, led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping at least regretted this and, thereafter, consistently opposed further statification. Their opponents, led by Mao Zedong, realised that popular support would be lost without

statification and planning but ensured that it was carried out bureaucratically.

As in the Soviet Union, this economic regime produced some advances but could not maintain a balanced progress. Mao's attempt to overcome this by mass mobilisation in the "Great Leap Forward" led to greater crises which were compounded by the Soviet withdrawal of all economic assistance. This provided the opportunity for Liu and Deng to demote Mao and introduce major concessions to capitalism, especially in the countryside. Such a policy encouraged production but also threatened the role of the central apparatus. Mao's counter attack was unsuccessful until he took the risk of mobilising mass support against Liu and Deng in the "Cultural Revolution".

Although intended only as a stage army, the mass movement soon got out of control and began to act on Mao's calls for revolutionary renewal and the overthrow of the existing regime. Terrified at this prospect all wings of the bureaucracy, including

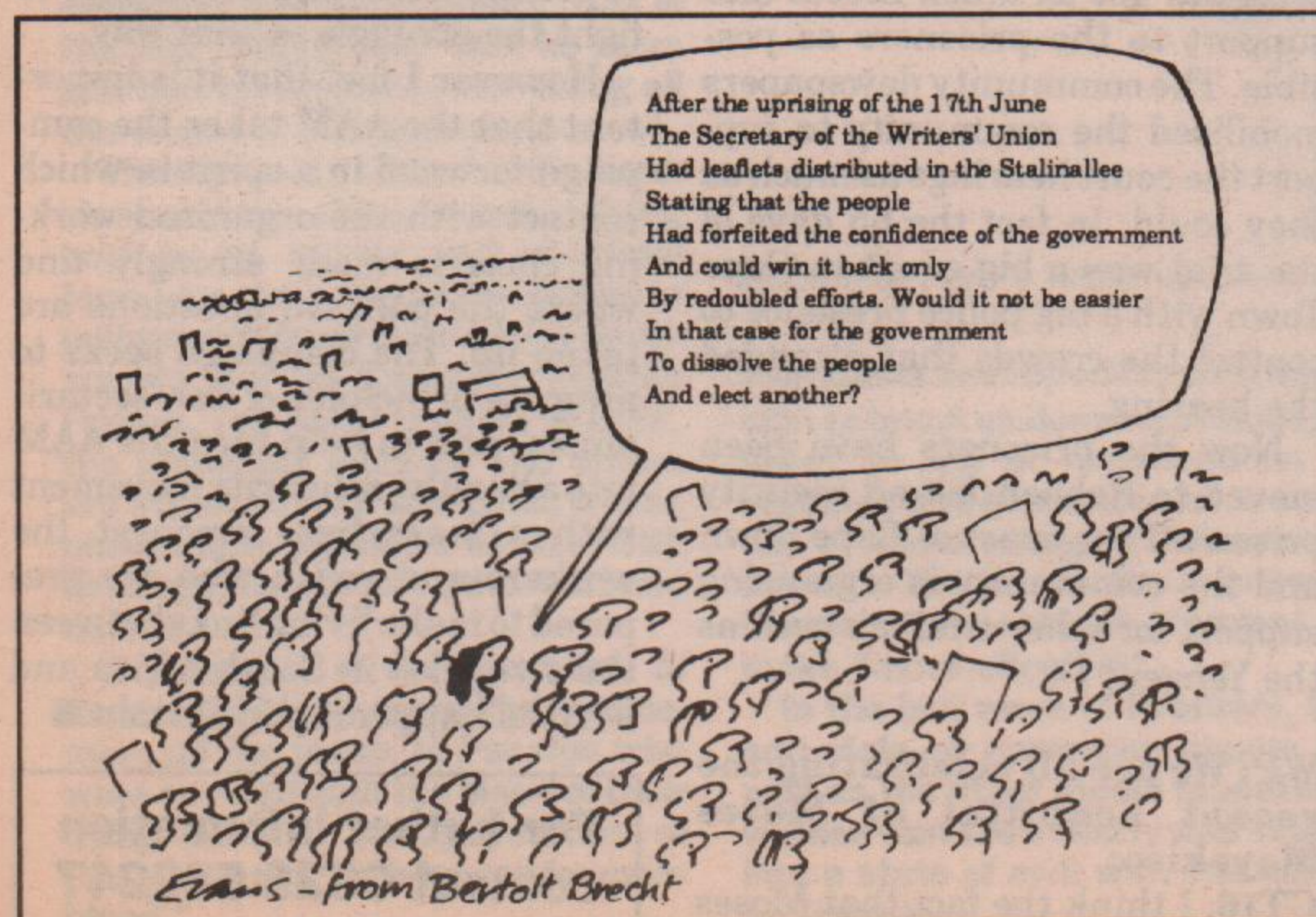
Mao, agreed to suppress the movement militarily.

But divisions remained and surfaced again after the death of Mao. Limited popular mobilisations in 1977 and 1978 were used by Deng and Hu Yaobang to finally consolidate their positions.

The pace of their reforms, however, alarmed the more conservative elements who blamed them for student unrest in 1986-87. To maintain his own position Deng agreed to sacrifice Hu and to suppress the students. It is for this reason that the students chose the death of Hu as the occasion for their return to public political activity.

At the present time a further clash within the bureaucracy is developing over proposals for "political reform". The pro-market group around Deng believe that continued party and state interference in the economy are the root causes of lack of growth. They hope to introduce reforms which will limit party influence, possibly by electoral means.

They are opposed by those who see this as the thin end of a wedge which will separate the party from its control of the state. Although the different factions may well seek to manipulate popular sympathy, this division is so fundamental that we can expect the fiercest repression of any attempts to mobilise the masses independently. ■



After the uprising of the 17th June  
The Secretary of the Writers' Union  
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee  
Stating that the people  
Had forfeited the confidence of the government  
And could win it back only  
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier  
In that case for the government  
To dissolve the people  
And elect another?

Eranus - from Bertolt Brecht



## NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

POUVOIR OUVRIER

### French centrism and 1992

DEPARTING FROM its usual journal format the latest issue of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* has just been produced as an eight page paper. Articles in this issue deal with the recent mass movements in Algeria, the state of the French economy, the Corsican general strike, Europe and 1992, the bicentenary of the French Revolution, together with an account of the Chaffontaux factory strike in Brittany in which our comrades were involved.

Produced in time for the annual *Lutte Ouvrière* fete outside Paris, this issue also surveys the opportunist manoeuvrings by the two main "Trotskyist" organisations in France—*Lutte Ouvrière* (LO) and the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (LCR), the French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

The two organisations had planned a joint list of candidates for the European election, despite the fact that, as the Executive Committee of LO put it: "We rarely agree over how to intervene!" LO argued that: "We can nevertheless express our political positions together as often as possible on the field of political ideas."

As we have always suspected, LO considers that there is no connection between "politics" (abstract calls for the revolution, in LO's case), and their day to day intervention in the working class!

The LCR obviously agrees with this point of view and nothing seems able to stop the two groups from getting together for the elections except money.

In the end, the whole thing came to grief not over the numerous political differences between the two groups (including their attitude to 1992—not without significance in these elections!) but over how much to pay for the campaign.

LO reckoned they needed to spend £500,000, split equally between the two groups. The LCR would only spend £100,000. The result?

The whole opportunist house of cards came tumbling down and LO will present their peculiar brand of "revolutionary socialism" at the election without the LCR.

### GRUPPE ARBEITERSTANDPUNKT

## The left and proletarianisation

IN THIS column in WP 114 we carried a report on the opposition within the SOAL (Austrian section of the USFI). We wrongly argued that despite this opposition's criticism of the USFI they nevertheless echoed the "proletarianisation" policy of the SWP (US). We are informed by our Austrian comrades that this is inaccurate.

Rather our differences with the opposition on this issue revolve around the priority that must be attached to programmatic clarification and re-elaboration at the present time. At present the SOAL minority subordinates this task to the proletarianisation of their comrades.

### GRUPPE ARBEITERMACHT

## Berlin elections

JUST PUBLISHED: *Arbeitermacht* No.11 includes articles on the implication of the Berlin election, the SPD Congress and the economic background to the restructuring of the Federal German postal services. Other articles deal with solidarity with the East German opposition, the thirtieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution and the Angolan-Namibian agreement. Also available from *Workers Power* is a GAM pamphlet polemicising against "Vorán" a group within the SPD based on the politics of *Militant*.

GAM Number 11 £1.00  
Vorán pamphlet 25p

## MRCI FUND

This month's fund has received £77 from Cardiff readers, £5 from Leicester and £50 from readers in London. This takes our running total to £602 over the last three months. Keep it coming.

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

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

# Defend the Cape Town 16!

A campaign in support of the Cape Town 16 is being launched this month. *Workers Power* talked to members of the campaign and Andrina Forbes, mother of one of the prisoners

WP: Could you please tell us who the Cape Town 16 are?

CT16: The Cape Town 16 were young black activists who were all members of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), and they were part of an underground cell operating in the Cape Town area. Ashley Forbes, the commander of the unit was 24 at the time and he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Others were sentenced to varying terms. The one woman member of the unit was Jasmina Pandy who spent one and a half years in detention, six months under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. She spent longest in solitary confinement.

The final activist which the Cape Town 16 defends is the 20 year old Ashley Kriel. He was also a member of the unit but didn't even have the chance to stand trial. He was shot in the back while the security forces were trying to capture him in a house in Cape Town.

WP: Andrina, can you tell us a bit about your experiences as a mother of a political detainee?

Andrina: I'll tell you the story of Ashley, my son. He was first detained under Section 29. Now this is the most horrific, cruel Section that any human being can be under. The prisoner is at the mercy of his torturers. No one is allowed near him, not his family, no surgeon, no clergy, no lawyer. They can do with him as they please. We also don't know where our children are or whether they are alive or dead.

I managed to see Ashley once in hospital, where he was shackled to the bedposts. Eventually I was allowed to see him face to face but not to talk to him. His eyes were dark sunken caverns in his head. He had a message for me which I read and I knew that my son had been tortured. But then I saw the picture in a different way. I saw Ashley standing between these strong burly security policemen. But it is he who dominated the picture for he looked brave, alive, resilient and totally committed.

Many people ask me what did the Cape Town 16 do? A court declared them guilty of involvement in guerrilla ANC activities, including a hand grenade attack on a police station and an explosion near the official residence of the state President, PW Botha. Ashley and his Commissar underwent military training outside the country, they studied the appointed target meticulously and carefully before placing the bomb. The main rule being never to harm a man nor kill anybody. Nobody was maimed, harmed or killed.

Those in captivity are ordinary people who grew up seeing unemployment, poverty hunger and death, the pass laws and the oppression of people. They decided to challenge the state and do something about it. They joined an organisation striving for peace, justice and equality, basic human rights, the right of a child to have a plate of food, the right of a child to have a proper education. They joined the peoples' army to counter

the unfairness and violence of the state.

For this they are imprisoned and called terrorists. They are not terrorists but freedom fighters. We will not forget them but rather see the message of their stand. We will not retreat but continue where they have left off. We will not give up hope but rather draw strength from the glory of their quest.

WP: Is there further evidence of torture?

CT16: The prisoners' statements have a common strand running through them. They cite incidents of electric shock treatment. They cite examples of suffocation where a wet canvas bag was placed over their heads until they tell whatever information is forced out of them. Also the hearing of the detainees has been impaired. The methods leave no external scars and the injuries are internal.

There are also long periods of solitary confinement where they lose sense of space and time. The security branch have a system of creating a "birthday", that's the first day that you arrive in prison for your first spate of interrogation. Every month on that date they promise you an extra dose of torture/interrogation that is far worse than what occurs on the normal days of the month.

This psychological build-up of fear and anticipation of what is going to happen psychologically torments the prisoner. Prisoners have been known to take poison to avoid breaking on such days. But what comes through in the biography is the resilience and courage with which they withstand the methods of the security police and the many techniques for resistance they develop.

WP: What kind of campaigning activity has taken place in South Africa itself for the Cape Town 16?

CT16: During the trial a lot of community support was given to the families of the 16. The youth organisations to which the prisoners belonged politicised the community and put out leaflets on the situation. There were co-ordinated visits to the court. But the Parents' Detainees Support Committee was one of the 18 groups banned at the time of the State of Emergency.

However the mothers of the 16 found ways of organising themselves to get as much access and support to the prisoners as possible. The community newspapers mobilised the community to support the court hearings as much as they could. In fact the 65 days of the trial was a big event in Cape Town with a big police presence to control the crowds that attended the hearing.

Now the prisoners have been moved to Robben Island security prison off the coast of Cape Town and the community is organising support for other trialists such as the Yengeni 14.

WP: We are all celebrating the recent acquittal of Moses Mayekiso;

CT16: I think the fact that Moses

has been released is a victory that should be claimed by the workers and youth in South Africa and internationally who persistently fought to take the struggle forward, and forced the concession from the South African state. But the Botha regime is not changing its spots. Other trade unionists face long sentences or even death. We have seen detainees on hunger strikes and great restrictions placed on released prisoners.

WP: Can you tell us something about the campaign in Britain?

CT16: The priority of the campaign is to give unconditional support and defence to the Cape Town 16. The demands we make are the unconditional release of the Cape Town and all other South African political prisoners who have been jailed, those on trial, those in detention and those on death row; the unconditional freedom of those who received suspended sentences and the lifting of the severe restrictions placed upon them; an independent enquiry into the death of the fallen hero, Ashley Kriel and for his killers to be brought to trial.

We also call for drastic improvements to the inhuman conditions under which South African political prisoners are kept and for prisoner of war status to be awarded for the 16 and all other South African freedom fighters who are in fact fighting a civil war with the regime.

However we also feel that the issues raised through the campaign have a special meaning and message for the struggle in Britain at this point in time, especially for black youth in Britain, who face similar conditions and who are fighting a similar struggle to the 16. The fight against racism, the fight against police brutality and the fight against capitalist exploitation. We see the 16 linking directly into the struggles here of youth and workers and the Irish struggle in particular.

At the moment we are organising a national speaking tour for Andrina. We have issued a lot of our material to black organisations, we have attempted to make contact with these organisations countrywide, with the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and with trade unions and councils. We want more organisations to assist, to invite speakers from the campaign, to host a meeting in their areas and to join us on the campaign committee and at our regular meetings.

WP: What support have you got from the Anti-Apartheid Movement so far?

CT16: The AAM has agreed to accept the campaign under the broad struggle for prisoner of war status. Andrina has been involved in the launch of that campaign and has spoken as the mother of a guerrilla that took up arms, and for political activists to be awarded to political activists who choose to fight the struggle in that way.

However I feel that it is important that the AAM takes the campaign forward in a spirit in which contact with the organised working class is made strongly, and where the political questions are taken up. The campaign seeks to promote principles of non-sectarianism, and to help turn the AAM into a healthy solidarity movement with a mass base amongst the workers and youth who are prepared to make living links between the struggles in South Africa and what is happening in Britain. ■

For further information contact 0625 582247

## PERU

Our comrades of Poder Obrero in Peru have sent us this account of the turmoil in their country

## Crisis sharpens

THE CRISIS of Alan Garcia's presidency continues despite the recent changes he made in his cabinet in order to "direct everything into the struggle against subversion." The new cabinet was "celebrated" with fusillades of buckshot against striking workers—an almost daily event. Promoted to full minister in the cabinet was Augustin Mantilla the godfather of the Comando Rodrigo Franco, an APRA death squad widely suspected of murdering the leader of the miners' union Saul Cantoral in mid-February and of organising many other "disappearances".

### Real danger

Only a fool could believe that the target of the new cabinet is primarily the guerrilla groups (Sendero Luminoso/Shining Path and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru/MRTA). The real danger of "subversion" comes from the resistance of the workers and peasants to the savage attacks on their living standards that several government austerity packages and a deep recession in Peru's economy have brought.

Since September when the IMF demanded a "super shock" for the economy there have been a series of "packages" of economic measures. Price controls have been weakened on essential goods (milk, sugar, oil, chicken, fish) and prices raised by over 100%. The general level of inflation continues to be extremely high. In January a rate of 47.3% pushed the annual inflation rate to 2,280.7%!

Between a quarter and half a million workers have lost their jobs since September 1988. Industrial production has fallen by 25% over the last year. On the other hand—as a result of the cuts—the state reserves have risen, accumulating \$(US)100 million a month. With the election coming in 1990 Garcia will need to use them if APRA is to stand a chance and he may therefore return to the "heterodox" economic policies of the first two years of his presidency—i.e. reflation of the economy, price controls and subsidies. For this reason all the bourgeois economists and experts are setting up a hue and cry about Garcia's "disastrous policies" and calling for his resignation. They are predicting hyper-inflation as the result of the governments' policies.

### Resistance

On the other side Garcia faces the resistance of section after section of workers, peasants, the unemployed and the students. This is the real "subversion" that he fears and that his regime is mobilising all the forces at its disposal to meet.

The repression aimed at the Peruvian working class is intensifying both in its official and unofficial form—i.e. from the state forces in uniform and from the shadowy death squads like the Comando Rodrigo Franco. The brave strikers at CITE, the municipal workers and others are attacked with shotguns, whose pellets have blinded a striker, whose beatings, bombs and other barbaric means.

A journalist of the magazine *Si* expressed his horror at the "police-men, off the leash, in Pucalpa who were covered with the blood of their dying victims. The population of Pucalpa report their baying for more blood."

It has become routine to beat up

# Mass struggles betrayed

TO CARRY through his anti-working class measures Garcia needs more than repression. He needs the co-operation of the agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers' movement—the reformist leaders. This is the role of the new "Social Accord".

Under the pretext of fighting "terrorism" and preserving economic and social stability the Accord is in fact an instrument for dividing and splitting the working class. Its purpose is to compromise the unions and the workers' parties by giving their leaders the job of rescuing backward semi-colonial capitalism from its crisis.

In Argentina in the early 80s the Peronist regime encouraged and organised the death squads with one hand and signed national accords with the reformists and centrists with the other. The reformists justified colluding with the regime's austerity measures by the need to "defend democracy". The result was military dictatorship and the dirty war that cost thousands of worker militants their lives. A similar danger threatens the Peruvian proletariat today. To escape it the working class must solve the acute crisis of leadership that afflicts every mass organisation.

To repulse both the economic attacks and the repression the masses need fighting units. As recent events in Venezuela showed

(see WP 116) a vigorous mass response can put even a newly elected government into retreat. Garcia's government is discredited by four years in office. Yet when the hungry masses of Peru violently protested in the streets at Garcia's packages the wretched reformist leaders of the Izquierda Unida (IU/United Left) condemned them for "acts of vandalism".

### Demoralisation

Neither the IU nor the National Popular Assembly (ANP) organised a campaign of nationwide resistance. Instead of summoning the masses to action the IU, ANP and CGTP (the main trade union federation) leaders demobilised them. They waited for five weeks after the September 1988 austerity package was announced, allowing the workers' anger to be dissipated and demoralisation to set in. Then and only then they called a limited and passive action, and on a Sunday at that!

Faced with the second package in November they again slammed on the brakes. They postponed the plenary session of the ANP which was due and which actually had

the issue of the general strike on its agenda. The CGTP leaders postponed any action. Then suddenly at a small meeting of top union officials they decreed a national stoppage which they knew would be badly prepared and organised and therefore suicidal. By these means they ensured that the miners and textile workers who were already on strike remained isolated.

The reformists' paralysis has been total. Yet if instead of this sabotage an active, united and indefinite strike were to be campaigned for then the anger of the working class could be unleashed. A massive popular response could shake the bosses' government to its foundations.

### Reason

The reason for the reformist leaders' inaction is straightforward. Far from seeking to overthrow the bourgeoisie, or even to force it to make decisive concessions, they are humbly asking permission to be allowed to govern the bourgeois state after the elections of 1990.

They have the utopian project of seeking to defend workers within capitalist society whilst protecting the bourgeois state on all decisive matters. The rapid radicalisation of the working class threatens to undermine this whole schema. But nothing stands still. The reformists' demobilisation has actually strengthened the forces of the right.

How can this policy of sabotage be halted? How can the frittering away of the strength of the workers' movement be stopped?

The answer is by setting out now to campaign for mass mobilisations and rallies throughout the country against the government measures and against the repression.

We must put forward the slogan of building in every workplace and every shanty-town district self-defence militias and committees to organise the general strike. We must fight in all the mass organisations for a united front of struggle, for an end to demobilisation. Put the ANP on a war footing! Transform it into a real leading focus for the masses, into an alternative power to that of the bourgeois state.

### Paralysis

When the ANP was founded in November 1987 it looked as though it had the potential for creating a parallel power, an embryo of a national soviet that could be the axis of the proletariat offensive. It was the reformist programme that was approved by it and the popular frontist leadership elected that has caused the paralysis of this organisation and led it to wither. It has progressively degenerated into a committee of the top leaders subject to the whims of the CGTP bureaucracy. It has neither summoned regional nor district assemblies, nor has it even been convoked in a single national plenary meeting. The first national plenum was postponed from November to February and then again to March.

Then they talked of calling it at the end of April!

The ANP is becoming an impotent and shackled official creature of the bureaucracy. To reverse this tendency it is necessary to call for the creation of popular assemblies in every district, area province and region. The ANP should be summoned to be in "permanent session", or at least to meet on a monthly basis. Its delegates should be elected and recallable by assemblies of the rank and file. It must be accountable to the rank and file. It should launch an offensive to seek self-defence groups, workers' control committees and committees for price control and food supply.

Since the recent events Alfonso Barrantes, the leader of the right wing of the United Left, has given a breathing space to this government of starvation and massacres—to approach them with the offer of a Social Pact. The Secretary of the CGTP has said that "a national stoppage would be prejudicial for the workers" and that "the CGTP is not in agreement with calling a national stoppage at this time when the means of production are going through a period of recession which has led factories to reduce the hours of work and to lay off personnel." (quoted in *La Opinion* 8.2.89)

### Demobilisation

But if the bourgeoisie is going on the offensive and the workers are becoming demoralised it is precisely because of the brutal demobilisation that the trade union bureaucracy has carried out.

As long as the bureaucracy continues isolating and sabotaging sectional struggles (CITE, council workers, miners, textile workers, workers in the naval and military installations etc), compromising with the ruling class in restoring its system, the right will continue to increase in power. The growth of petit bourgeois guerrillism is another product of this reformism.

Parliamentary cretinism, by stifling the energy of the proletariat and creating mounting frustration, drives desperate individuals and sectors of the most pauperised masses towards militarist lunacies.

Parliamentary cretinism proposes the maintenance of the existing capitalist state but pleads that it should act in a different direction. The reformists offer themselves as the champions of the exploited national bourgeoisie—including the armed forces and the police!

Military cretinism proposes a series of violent acts which are neither of, nor express the interests of, the proletariat and which rebound against it.

The only alternative to parliamentary and guerrillaist cretinism, which both lead to defeat, demoralisation and military dictatorship is consciously to direct the mass struggles of the workers and peasants towards not only the defeat of the austerity packages and repression but towards the proletarian revolution itself. ■



Victims of Peru's financial crisis

journalists and reporters with impunity, to break up demonstrations, to shoot to kill at mobilisations of students and peasants and to carry out a whole string of "disappearances". These are the measures Garcia's new cabinet promises to make "more effective".

In the last week of February, the editorials of numerous papers as well as the other media repeatedly warned that the country was sliding into a state of civil war. The editor of *Si* wrote:

"Just like the Spanish in 1935,

like the Lebanese in 1974 the Peruvians of 1989 are heading towards confrontation. We are marching towards civil war."

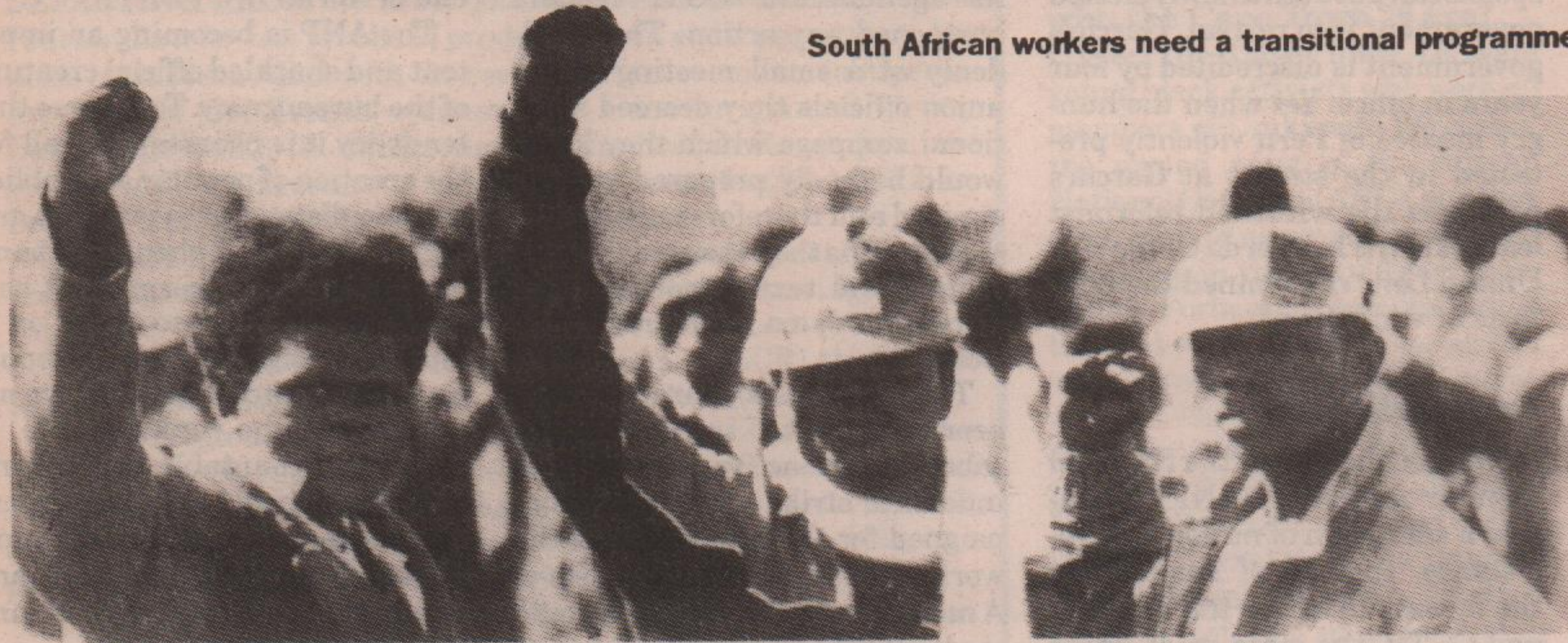
Rospigliosi of *La République* argued that:

"If the death squads are not dealt with and disbanded the moment they are born then thereafter it will be difficult if not impossible to stop them. Their existence and development in Peru is dragging the country towards civil war. In fact the most probable outcome is that Peru will become another Lebanon." ■

INQABA YA BASEBENZI

# Should Trotskyists defend the Freedom Charter?

South African workers need a transitional programme



As the African National Congress (ANC) shifts to the right, voices of opposition to its strategy are getting more of a hearing. Amongst the most serious critics is the Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT) which publishes the journal *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*. The MWT, which sees itself as a tendency within the ANC, is politically aligned to *Militant* in Britain. Its politics are fatally flawed, argues **Lesley Day**

The MWT argues against the idea of limiting the South African revolution to a democratic "stage". It argues that the burning democratic questions that face the masses in South Africa—winning one person one vote, removing apartheid's racist restrictions and meeting land hunger—cannot be answered without workers' revolution. It has denounced the ANC's discussions with big business and the policy of negotiating an end to apartheid, currently being peddled by Moscow and those under its influence in the South African Communist Party (SACP).

So far so good. MWT militants have shown themselves courageous both in the fight against the reactionary gangs under the sway of Buthelezi in Natal, and in their willingness to stand up against the Stalinists in the mass movement.

But the MWT's strategy is fatally flawed. It calls for the "building of a mass ANC on a socialist programme". It defends the ANC's *Freedom Charter*. Its political method is centrist and based on the same worship of the objective process as the politics of its British co-thinkers.

The ANC is a petit bourgeois nationalist movement whose aims are the ending of apartheid and the achievement of bourgeois democracy. The SACP has provided the theoretical underpinnings of the ANC's position with the Stalinist "stages theory" of revolution. This means postponing the task of overthrowing capitalism and building socialism. First, apartheid must be removed. This in turn means that the workers' movement must fall in behind a cross-class alliance with the middle class and with "progressive" capitalists.

The MWT correctly argues that such a democratic "stage" would bring no guarantees either of economic improvement or indeed of lasting democratic gains. Yet it persists with its strategy of transforming the ANC.

This is justified firstly by the argument that the mass of workers and youth will turn to the ANC as the trusted leadership of the mass movement, especially in times of revolutionary upsurge. There is no time, they argue, to build an independent revolutionary workers' party.

History is littered with examples of

the disasters that befall the workers' movement if it cedes leadership of the struggle to the petit bourgeois nationalists. In the 1920s, Trotsky analysed the experience of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which had entered the Kuomintang (KMT) and failed to maintain its independence. The CCP was unable to mount effective opposition to the bourgeois nationalists when they turned on and slaughtered the workers' movement.

Some may object that the ANC is a petit bourgeois, rather than a bourgeois, nationalist movement. But in its popular frontist strategy it keeps a place at table for the bourgeoisie. In its goal of achieving bourgeois democracy, it paves the way for capitalism to continue. This was the project of Mugabe in Zimbabwe, and both workers and peasants have suffered the consequences.

Revolutionaries must participate in whatever arenas a mass popular front movement allows, seeking to develop the independence of the workers' organisations and to forge a real united front of action for various democratic tasks, challenging the middle class leadership. We pursue these tactics not with the aim of transforming the popular front, but to lay the basis for its break up along class lines.

But the MWT's strategy towards the ANC goes much further. It rules out building an independent party and relies on the simple transformation of the ANC into a mass movement to ensure its socialist character. In Britain *Militant* argues that the inevitable flooding of masses of workers into the Labour Party will transform it, too, in a revolutionary direction. The fatal flaws are the same in both cases. It is not the numbers of workers, nor their involvement in mass struggle which is decisive, but their consciousness.

The second underpinning for the MWT's strategic position on the ANC is their belief that the masses develop a socialist consciousness spontaneously in the process of revolution. They see this reflected in splits within the SACP and ANC. The bureaucratic leadership has found

itself "lifted from below by a torrent of working class energy seeking an outlet in socialist revolution". (I23) This leads to a:

"genuinely communist proletariat spontaneously organising itself into 'party' groupings . . . Out of the inevitable conflict of the genuinely communist workers and youth with the Stalinist apparatus will come decisive forces for the Marxist tendency itself—for the socialist transformation of the ANC and the victory of the South African revolution."

The denial of democratic rights and state repression certainly lead the masses to revolutionary democratic consciousness, especially in periods of upsurge. But being convinced of the need for revolutionary measures against the apartheid state does not necessarily prepare the class for the overthrow of capitalism itself. As Lenin made clear in *What is to be Done*, trade union struggle does not automatically lead to revolutionary communist consciousness.

## inqaba YA BASEBENZI

The masses in COSATU, the ANC and SACP will not automatically reach consistent Marxist conclusions. The contradictions of both reformist and revolutionary democratic consciousness will of course be exposed in the course of struggle. But to prevent the working class going into retreat when that happens, Marxists must have an independent voice, a programme for building an alternative leadership.

However the MWT fails to argue for such a programme. On the one hand it calls for a socialist programme. On the other hand it campaigns for "No retreat from the *Freedom Charter*". As against some other tendencies within the South African workers' movement the MWT rejects the need for a workers' programme.

The third argument used by the MWT is that the nature of the South African revolution itself means that compromise or coalition between the ANC and the bourgeoisie is ruled out in advance. This is a widely held view on the South African and international left. It starts from the fact that monopoly capitalism in South Africa

has grown on the basis of the super exploitation of the black masses under apartheid and the repression of the workers' movement. If we overthrow apartheid, the argument goes, then capitalism must inevitably fall too.

But there is nothing predetermined about this outcome. The capitalist class has shown its willingness to concede reforms, partially and temporarily, in order to stave off revolution—later to launch counter-revolution and drown the workers' movement in blood. The MWT argues that "a negotiated settlement with the regime and the capitalist class is a foolish illusion". Of course permanent class peace is an illusion. But the dangers of the ANC leadership making their peace with capital is real enough.

Despite *Inqaba's* propaganda against the idea of talks, the MWT fails to issue a real warning against this possibility:

"There would be a much increased danger of splits opening up in the movement if any significant part of the Congress leadership were to recoil from its revolutionary responsibility and pursue a compromise with the ruling class" (I27)

We can say confidently that sections of the Congress leadership, if not its majority, will pursue such a compromise. The very programme of the ANC leads in that direction.

The *Freedom Charter*, the programme of the ANC and Congress movement since 1955, is a series of democratic demands relating to government, education and the land, together with vague formulas about peoples ownership of wealth and the monopolies.

Its dangers lie in its ambiguities. It plots no course for achieving democracy. The vagueness of its position on the class nature of a liberated South Africa leaves it open to many interpretations.

Even liberal capitalists are happy with it for the most part, but their objections to what they refer to as the "nationalisation" clause, and the ambiguities about the form of government have led the rightward moving ANC to produce new constitutional guidelines. These propose a two chamber parliament and acknowledge the need for a "mixed economy".

### Socialism

This has led the MWT to defend the original document. But the *Charter* is at best inadequate and at worst the potential noose with which capitalism will strangle the South African revolution. Revolutionary Marxists should be fighting to replace the *Freedom Charter* in the hearts and minds of the masses with a workers' transitional programme.

But just as the British *Militant* defends Labour's "Clause 4" in the mistaken belief that it represents a commitment to socialism, *Inqaba* defends the *Charter's* ambiguities against the SACP's attempt to give them concrete form as a purely capitalist democratic programme.

*Inqaba* argues that the *Freedom Charter's* aims can only be achieved through socialist revolution. The document must therefore "be clearly linked to the task of the revolutionary conquest of power by the working class and the socialist transformation of society". (1.20.21)

But this does not overcome the dangers of propagating the *Freedom Charter* as the programme for the South African revolution. It is vital that revolutionaries take up the struggle for democratic demands and show how they cannot be permanently or fully met in a capitalist society. But the document as it stands cannot be "clearly linked" to the struggle for socialism, unless we want to confuse socialism with state capitalist nationalisation common in

many imperialist and semi-colonial countries. Unfortunately the record of *Inqaba's* international co-thinkers is to do just that, in particular in the case of Syria and Burma which they characterise as workers' states. This is what allows *Inqaba* to link defence of the *Freedom Charter* to the fight for "socialism".

It is entirely possible that a movement with a petit bourgeois leadership fighting against apartheid could, under the pressure of crisis and revolution, come to power, compromising with bourgeois forces and still claiming to have won the demands of the *Freedom Charter* through establishing voting rights, carrying out state capitalist nationalisation etc.

This perspective is not ruled out and indeed is sought by sections of the Congress leadership and the liberals. It is simply misleading for *Inqaba* to argue that "even the most basic of the *Freedom Charter's* demands therefore involves a social revolution" (I26).

### Stalinist

The history of Stalinist led national movements shows that any attempt by the masses to impose their socialist will on the revolution is met not just with sabotage, but with bloody repression. The task of revolutionaries is to prepare the masses for this moment.

That is why the working class in South Africa needs its own revolutionary transitional programme which combines democratic demands with a plan of action to conquer power and begin the transition to socialism.

*Inqaba* refers to the decisions of COSATU and the youth congress, SAYCO, to adopt the *Freedom Charter* as further justification for their particular tactic. But in reality the adoption of the *Charter* by these two bodies represented a gain for the Stalinists, not for an independent revolutionary workers' perspective.

Congress leaders have used these decisions to shore up their insistence that the struggle in the current period should be for national liberation and not for socialism.

When the leaders of the metal workers' union NUMSA, agreed to support both the *Freedom Charter* and the idea of a workers' charter, they were mistakenly compromising for the sake of unity.

At the same time many registered their belief that the *Freedom Charter* does not represent workers' interests—a position most sharply posed by Moses Mayekiso when he referred to the *Charter* as a "capitalist document".

Underpinning *Inqaba's* whole approach to revolutionary strategy in South Africa is its faith in the objective process. Workers will inevitably flock to the ANC. Their consciousness will inevitably be anti-capitalist. The destruction of apartheid inevitably leads to the destruction of capitalism. With the inevitability of all this Marxists are reduced to the role of assisting the process.

Programmatic tasks are reduced to the defence of a confused democratic programme on the basis of a reading of it which its authors would reject categorically.

### Centrist

These errors are rooted in the mistakes of the post-war Fourth International which saw in the Stalinist social overturns exactly such an inevitable process at work. To correct them requires a struggle not just against the tactic of "Defend the *Freedom Charter*" and "Transform the ANC" but the method of *Inqaba's* politics. MWT and *Militant* supporters who wish to carry out such a struggle will find a consistent alternative to centrism only in the ranks of the MRCI. ■

# No platform for fascists

Dear comrades

On Saturday 22 April, the fascist British National Party held a public election meeting in Leicester for their candidate in the local elections, amidst a rising tide of racist attacks in the city.

Limited mobilisation against this meeting was largely done by a small core of anti-fascists on the periphery of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) who had the relevant information, missing out completely the labour movement and the black communities.

The failure to mobilise effectively and the failure to argue during the mobilisation for the physical no-platforming of fascists resulted

in a poor turnout of anti-fascists at the meeting, with only a small number of people prepared to physically confront the fascists.

The meeting went ahead uninterrupted with about 100 fascists from Leicester, London and Leeds coming away from it feeling confident and unopposed.

The night before a meeting of over 50 fascists was held in a Leicester pub to commemorate Hitler's birthday.

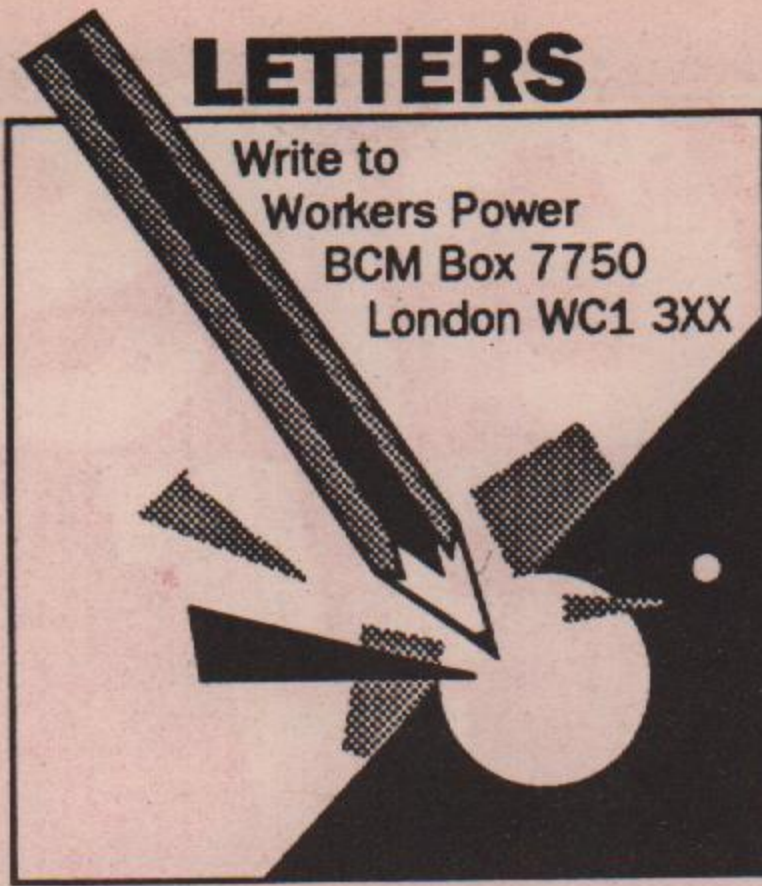
Again there was no mobilisation, with only a handful of individuals with prior knowledge of the meeting turning up to monitor it. That same night person(s) unknown burned down the flat of Leicester BNP boss and election candidate John Peacock.

Fascism is a lethal enemy of the working class. It must be

smashed. This cannot be achieved by small groups of anti-fascists working alone, nor by individual guerrillaist tactics.

Fascism can only effectively be smashed through the mass mobilisation of workers against it.

Through the strategy of the workers' united front we must mobilise now in the labour movement and the black communities



to build defence organisations, not only to combat the fascist thugs, but to go on the offensive against the capitalist system that gives rise to fascism.

Communist greetings,  
An anti-fascist,  
Leicester

## South Wales miners need a leadership that fights!

Dear Comrades,

The defeat of the miners four years ago has taken a heavy toll in Britain's coalfields. Nowhere is the devastation greater than in South Wales, now reduced to nine pits. Of these nine few are safe.

Merthyr Vale has been given three weeks to meet its new targets—or close. Trelewis is due to close in August. As if to give the miners streaming out of the industry a further nudge, the South Wales Area NUM Conference has now voted to negotiate on redundancies.

Meanwhile, privatisation is creeping through the coalfield. Mountain Ash workshop has been sold, while Ryan's contractors are seen at many pits and are rumoured to be interested in buying the deep pits such as

Aberpergwm and Marine. Privatisation can only mean more of the speedups and lowering of safety standards—British Coal's (BC) hallmark since the strike.

While the BC management are busy attacking miners, the NUM National Executive is more interested in negotiating a possible merger with the TGWU than defending its members.

Of course rank and file miners have not been asked whether they want to see Arthur Scargill demoted to a secondary role in their own union!

Despite the gloom, recent strikes at Penallta and Blaenant show that miners are still prepared to fight to defend their conditions. Action like this must be built on.

The current election for the South

## Long live May Day!

Dear Workers Power,

The other day I was reading how socialists should junk the old slogan "All out on May Day". Where else but in *Marxism Today*. CPGB pundit John Gorman quipped that workers would "demonstrate their power by the mass purchase of consumer goods" at DIY hypermarkets.

Fortunately I was reading this on 2 May, and a glance at the papers showed workers the world over have yet to cotton on to Gorman's "post-Fordist" idea of May Day.

Thousands of Turkish and Kurdish workers marched in Istanbul and Ankara. One died, 32 were injured and 440 arrested when troops fired on them. Palestinian workers in the West Bank faced the

habitual repression by Israeli forces as they marched for May Day. Riot police broke up mass rallies in the Philippines as workers demanded higher pay and an end to US bases.

In Prague young workers joined the official CP demonstration, unfurling banners denouncing the ruling bureaucracy and in favour of *glasnost*. The riot police waded in arresting over 100 and beating up the leaders.

In Changwon, South Korea, thousands of workers fought running battles with the riot police, matching teargas with stones and petrol bombs. In Spain massive demos united Socialist and Communist Party union federations in a show of strength against Felipe Gonzales' austerity drive.

All-in-all a busy day for riot police everywhere and a bad day for Thatcher-Communists like Gorman.

Long live May Day; forward to its hundredth anniversary in 1990  
D Finlayson,  
Loughborough

Wales Area's remaining place on the National Executive Committee provides an opportunity for miners to show their determination to fight. New realist and proven sell-out merchant, the South Wales Area Secretary, George Rees, is opposed by Tyrone O'Sullivan.

Tyrone is one of the coalfield's best known militants and was a leading figure in last year's "Re-elect Scargill" campaign.

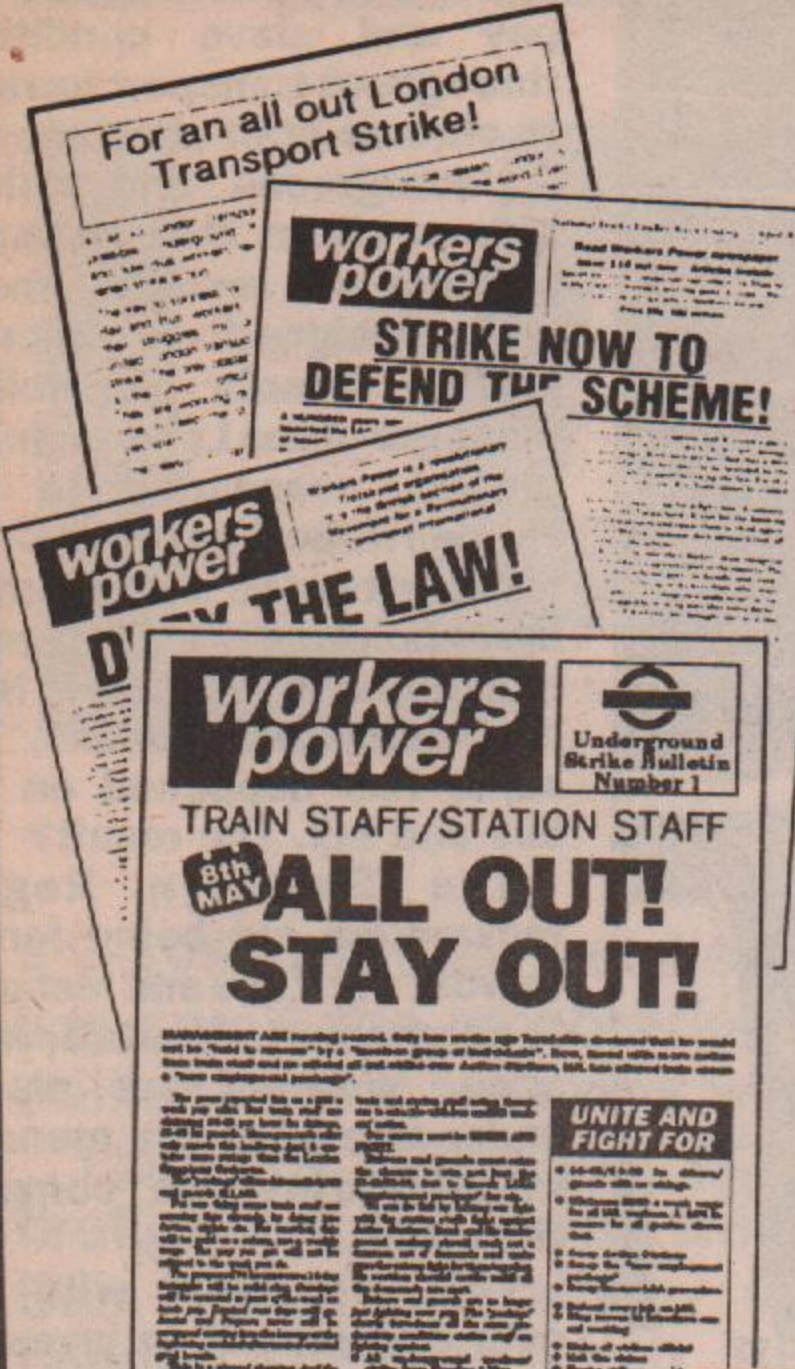
Unlike Rees, Tyrone is standing on a militant fighting platform. He opposes six day working and the ten hour day. He is for unity between the area and national organisation within

the NUM. He is for ending the retreat of recent years and for starting to rebuild a fighting union.

Like the presidential election, this campaign provides an opportunity for the network of militants thrown up by the Great Strike to be re-established. With this, South Wales miners can begin to subdue the defeatists like George Rees, and organise rank and file miners across the coalfield to generalise and spread actions like those at Penallta and Blaenant.

In comradeship  
Red Miner readers  
South Wales

## workers power



OVER THE last month *Workers Power* supporters have been to the fore in the struggles erupting against Thatcher and the bosses.

Despite Todd's delaying tactics in the docks' dispute we have been around numerous ports with both a leaflet and an eight page special issue of the paper on the docks.

The special was well received, not only at the scheme ports like Tilbury, Liverpool, Bristol etc, but also at Felixstowe where ten were sold to unregistered dockers in one morning. In London three dockers' stewards addressed a *Workers Power* public

meeting and a lively discussion followed. The meeting raised £100 for the National Port Shop Stewards' Committee.

We have been equally active around the transport strikes. On the tubes we distributed the first issue of a *Workers Power* underground workers' bulletin. As well as leafletting drivers at work we distributed the bulletin to two big mass meetings in the first week of May.

Our London supporters also distributed leaflets to bus depots calling for the struggles to be linked up in an all out London transport strike.

Throughout the country we

have been fighting inside the labour movement for solidarity with workers in struggle, laying the basis for the building of links to unite the fight against the enemy.

While many on the left are bemoaning the difficulties of fighting for socialism or passively observing the rightward march of Labour under Kinnock, *Workers Power*, the only genuine Trotskyist organisation in Britain, has been in the front line of the struggle.

If you want to help take the struggle for socialism forward in deeds and not just words, join us!

### LONDON PUBLIC MEETING

### The Tories can be beaten

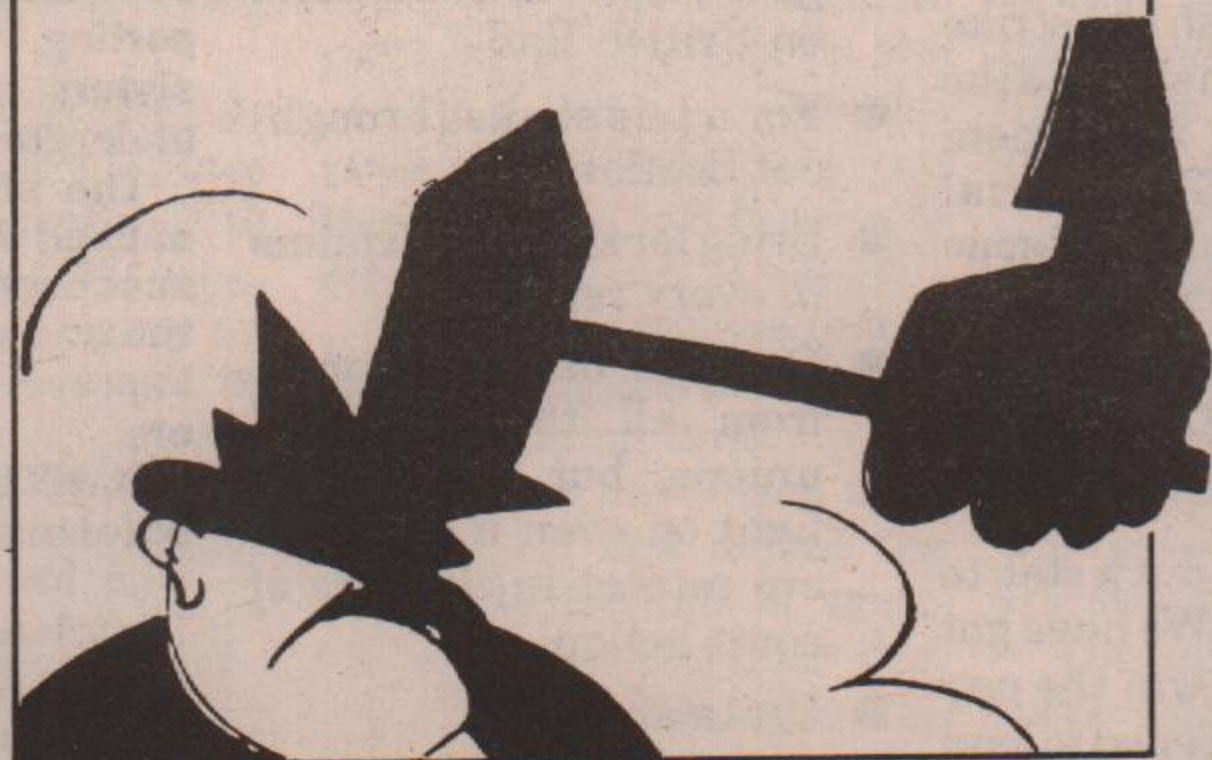
Speakers:  
London underground driver  
Tilbury docks shop steward

7-30 Friday 19 May  
Durning Hall, Earlam  
Grove, Forest Gate,  
London E7

Cardiff:  
Public Meeting  
The dockers must win!  
Tuesday 30 May 8-00  
Bristol Hotel

## Fighting Fund

### £3,008 WE HIT THE TARGET!



THIS month we hit our £3,000 target. Thanks to readers in Manchester (£100), Reading (£18) and Leicester (£45). These donations took our total to £3,008, and mean that we can bash the capitalist over the head. Thanks to everyone over the last six months who sent in money.

With it we have been able to purchase an A4 offset litho, a new word processor, software for our existing computers and stopped our printers' bills building up. But, to take full advantage of all our new equipment and prepare for the publication of a more frequent *Workers Power* we now need new premises for our office.

In London office prices are high. So, we are setting an ambitious target over the next period and are calling on all readers to make extra special efforts to help us. This month we are launching a £70,000 fund drive to enable us to get the new premises we urgently need. So start sending in the money right away.

## SUBSCRIBE!

Make sure you get your copy of *Workers Power* each month. Take out a subscription now. Other English language publications of the MRCI are available on subscription too.

I would like to subscribe to	
<b>Workers Power</b>	£5 for 12 issues
<b>Class Struggle</b>	£8 for 10 issues
<b>Permanent Revolution</b>	£6 for 3 issues
<b>Trotskyist International</b>	£3 for 3 issues

I would like to know more about the *Workers Power* Group and the MRCI

Make cheques payable to *Workers Power* and send to:  
*Workers Power*, BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX  
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Name: .....

Address: .....

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.....

..... Trade union .....

# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

## TUBE, RAIL, BUSES

# Unite the transport fight!

**THE FIGHT** is on throughout the transport industry to end low pay and inhuman working conditions.

In London the busworkers are fighting for a 14% pay rise. On British Rail a ballot is underway against the Board's destruction of national pay bargaining and refusal to improve its 7-25% pay offer. On the underground there is continuing action over pay and a strike is pending over conditions and London Underground Limited's (LUL) "Action Stations" proposals.

The growing fightback is not confined to London. In British Rail's Southern and Anglia Regions workers have banned overtime and rest day working in protest against staff shortages that are making life hell for drivers and guards. In Newcastle Metro workers have fought for a decent pay rise and for a cut in hours.

On the buses in East Kilbride, following a two month strike against new work rotas, a strike is underway by 800 workers protesting against the victimisation of four of their shop stewards. Other disputes, over safety on buses, have flared up all over the country, while British Rail cleaners in Liverpool are fighting privatisation.

The Tories have deliberately unleashed an attack on transport workers everywhere as part of their bid to destroy what is left of a public transport system.

What they hadn't bargained for was the determination of transport workers to fight back. There is no

doubt that the unofficial actions by underground workers were a spur to the London bus workers to go for fortnightly strikes and the Southern and Anglia railworkers to ban overtime. And this mood of defiance can be spread.

The fight is on for an all out transport strike in London, a national rail strike and a series of regional transport strikes around local grievances.

Such co-ordinated action can hit the bosses hard. They need transport to keep the wheels of industry, commerce and finance turning. By grinding those wheels to a halt we can force them to meet every claim in full, to provide the investment necessary for a safe transport system, to destroy the shift patterns, rotas and rosters that are making every day a nightmare for transport workers.

To build such action rank and file transport workers need to organise. The NUR, ASLEF, TSSA and TGWU are stuffed full of time serv-



Stephano Cagnoni/Report

ers who have been running away from a fight since the present round of disputes began.

Knapp of the NUR has already called off an indefinite underground strike because of a court injunction. He will do the same on the rail if BRB decides to use the anti-union laws. After all, he and his cohorts in ASLEF have already delayed the ballot on action for fear of a link up between BR strikers and the London Transport workers.

On the buses the TGWU leaders are trying to dampen down the mood that was building up for an indefinite strike by going for fortnightly one day actions. The danger here is that the bosses will be

able to ride out such sporadic actions and the militancy will ebb.

In Scotland those old anti-union laws came to the TGWU's aid once again. The East Kilbride strikers had begun to picket out depots in other regions. A big push for a national Scottish bus strike was underway. In stepped the courts with an injunction. Down stepped TGWU official Archie Wilson. Taking his cue from Ron Todd's manoeuvres against the dockers he sabotaged the action that could have got four of his members reinstated.

We have got to put a stop to these betrayals. We have got to take action to win the pay and conditions needed to lead decent lives. This means we

have got to build links across transport—co-ordinate the fightback through joint committees of underground/Metro, rail and bus workers. We have got to stop the demoralising delays:

- All out now on the underground, London buses and on British Rail
- For a bus strike throughout Scotland
- Bring forward local claims in every region
- Demand official support from all the transport unions, but organise to fight on even if the leaders retreat in the face of court action
- Unite and fight
- Defy the anti-union laws

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## Transport chaos: who's to blame?

THE PAPERS, radio stations and TV news all heaved a collective sigh of relief on Monday 8 May. "So far, so good" was the headline in London's *Evening Standard*. The capital city wasn't—not yet at least—paralysed by the industrial action that London's transport workers have begun to take over pay and conditions.

The hypocrisy of the bosses' media is sickening. They are spewing out daily, and even hourly, lies to the effect that the workers are to blame for the city's, and indeed the whole country's, "transport chaos".

They are cheerfully ignoring reality in order to whip up the users of the transport system into a frenzy against the workers. The fact that London's underground, rail and bus system has been plunged into chaos by the Tories is ignored.

The fact that deregulation, privatisation and barbaric working conditions have cut the numbers of buses, turned the rail network into a potential death trap (as the Clapham disaster showed) and resulted in a reduced and unsafe service in the underground, is ignored.

The "transport chaos" is the rotten fruit of the Tories' policy of letting market forces rip through the economy. The workers are taking action over pay and conditions. The lousy pay and slave conditions throughout transport have led to chronic staff shortages.

Underground and railway bosses claim that transport workers are resisting measures designed to improve safety. Dennis Tunnicliffe, manager of the London Underground, responded to the Fennell Report on Kings Cross which savaged management by appointing . . . ten more managers to "run their lines like small businesses". The same has happened on the bus and rail. The result?

The Southern Region railworkers are being forced to work overtime and rest days to compensate for staff shortages. Workers are placed under stress, as the management try to improve "competitiveness".

This, combined with the cuts and refusal to invest in real improvements to old transport systems and stock, is the real reason why travelling in Thatcher's Britain has become a high risk activity.

As the bosses charter coaches and block book hotels to beat a transport strike, as the police lay on special car parks to keep London working, workers everywhere have a direct interest in supporting their brothers and sisters on the rail, bus and underground.

The short lived disruption caused by an effective and successful strike will make the transport system safe and improve it for ordinary workers.

It will be a major blow to the butchers of public transport who have been installed by Thatcher in order to destroy a service for the many and create a business that benefits the few. ■