

INSIDE

- Soviet workers on the move
- Rising tide of racism
- South Africa: will the ANC negotiate?

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Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

Get the bosses on the run**Beware sell-outs!**

ALL OUT STRIKES TO WIN!

THE SUMMER of discontent is getting hotter for the bosses every week.

They thought they had the workers beaten. They had convinced themselves that strikes were a thing of the past. They thought that ten years of Thatcherism had knocked the confidence out of rank and file workers.

Yet thousands upon thousands of workers have shown the bosses just how wrong they are. From the railways to the docks, from council offices to the BBC, workers have fought back. They have said "no" to insulting wage deals below inflation and attempts by one employer after another to impose tough new productivity deals.

It wasn't only the bosses who got a fright. The new mood of militancy has terrified the union leaderships too. The last thing they want is a showdown with the Tories. The gospel according to Norman Willis teaches that the workers can't win, they have to give in to every Tory attack and wait for a Labour government in 1992.

So the union leaders have been using every trick in the book to blunt the effectiveness of their members' action.

They have been hiding behind the Tory anti-union laws to stop action taking place and to ensure it is meek and mild action when it does happen. Ron Todd bowed and scraped in front of the judges for three whole months before he gave the go ahead for an official docks strike.

In NALGO, the TGWU and on the railways they have balloted and balloted again to keep the lid on the action. TGWU leaders

We can put the whole bloated employing class and its Tory government into headlong retreat!

have resisted calls for picketing scab ports because this would constitute secondary action, illegal under the anti-union laws.

They have tried to divert workers anger into selective action instead of a decisive showdown with the bosses. There was a magnificent response from NALGO workers to the first stages of the action. Conference policy commits the union to all out action. But the NALGO leaders are trying to damp it down with another round of selective action.

The leaders have been working overtime to keep the disputes as separate from each other as possible. Instead of linking the claims of rail, bus and underground workers ASLEF, NUR and TGWU have done their best to keep them separate. ASLEF and the TSSA even broke ranks with the NUR on the British Rail offer. Obviously no strategy to unite workers with com-

mon grievances can be expected from these leaders. They would sooner be sunning themselves at seaside union conferences than heading a summer of discontent.

But whatever the union leaders may have done to sabotage the strikes hundreds of thousands of workers are learning clear lessons from the actions.

First, that strike action can force the bosses to retreat.

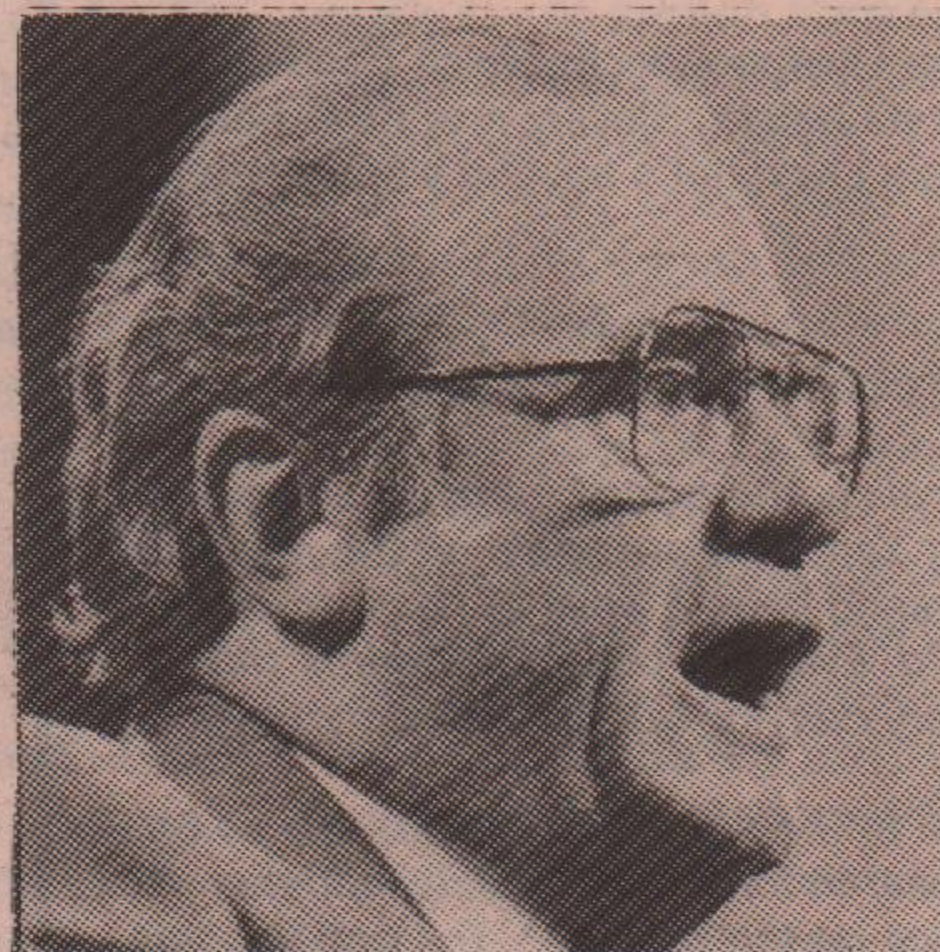
Second, that the Tories' unofficial 7% pay limit is shot through already. No worker should be prepared to accept less than 10%.

In the autumn engineering workers, Ford workers, council manual workers are poised to enter the pay battle. Already their leaders have unveiled plans for a selective, legal fight carefully controlled by the bureaucracy and the courts.

Workers have already got individual bosses on the run. But our strength could be squandered if we leave control in the hands of the union officials. Workers in every industry, in every union should fight to take control of their action. And with that control they should organise:

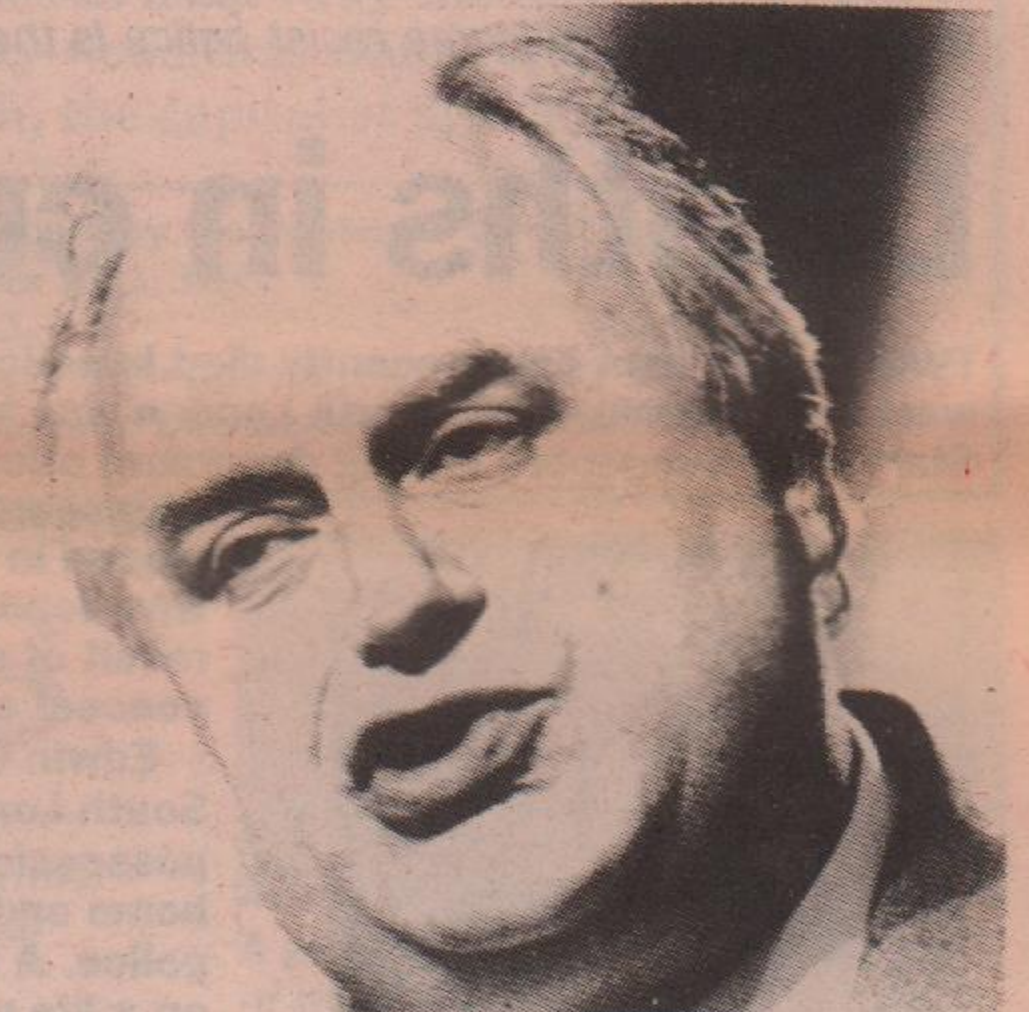
- To defy the anti union-laws when they stop effective action.
- For all out, indefinite strikes to win: for occupations against management lock-outs.
- To link together every front of the working class fight.

That way we can put the whole bloated employing class and its Tory government into headlong retreat!



Todd kept strikes at bay for months. He let the bosses' courts dictate the tactics.

Willis has pioneered the TUC's new realism. Now new realism threatens effective action



Knapp wanted a deal with British Rail. The NUR executive wouldn't buy it.

Kinnock: support the NUR? You must be joking! "There's no more money available".



Racism on the rise . . .

Liverpool

A MAJOR new report has described the situation of Liverpool's black community as "uniquely horrific". Lord Gifford's report "Loosening the Shackles" explains that:

- Seven out of ten young black people in the city are out of work—the highest jobless figure in the country.
- Black children are concentrated in the worst equipped schools
- 8% of Liverpoolians are black. But the city council workforce contains only 1.6% blacks despite the years under Militant's "bold socialist programme".
- Black families rehoused outside inner city Toxteth are subjected to "racial terrorism". Many are forced to move back within six months. "Black people live just a mile from the city centre, yet there are very few of them in the city centre stores. Even the jobs that nobody usually wants to do are not given to blacks" explains Wally Brown, one of the report's authors.

Toxteth is just minutes from the Liverpool docks which handled up 95% of the world's slave trade at its height. Slavery may have been abolished, but black people remain Liverpool's second class citizens.

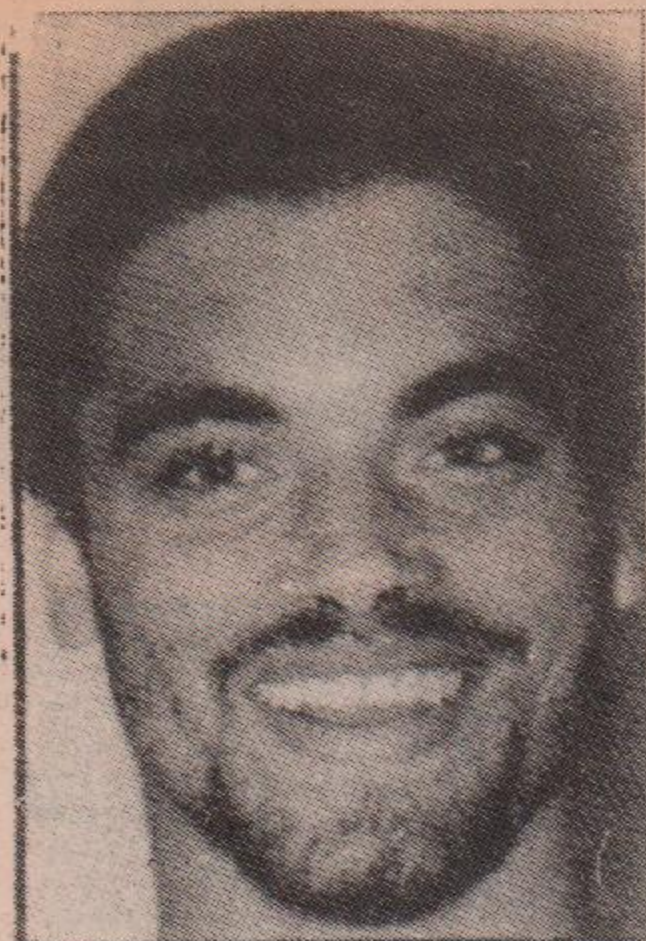
Bradford

After last month's clashes with police and fascist gangs in Dewsbury and Bradford black youth in West Yorkshire are again on the receiving end of racist violence. Every weekend sees a wave of racist attacks in the West Bowling area of Bradford. Even the police now admit that organised gangs of white youth are carrying out hit and run attacks on the Asian community of the area.

But only when black youth took to the streets to prepare the community's defence did the police appear in force. Community leaders appealed for youth to let the police do the policing". The anti-Rushdie campaign whipped up by Mosque and community leaders is designed to divert black youth from the struggle against racism. "Kill Rushdie" . . . but welcome racist police is their message.

Deaths in custody

TWO BLACK men have recently died in police custody. Jamie Stewart from Stamford Hill, North London was taken to Holloway Police Station for suspected driving document offences. Police say that he was searched, handcuffed and placed in a cell. An hour later he was dead. They say he died as a result of swallowing cocaine to conceal evidence.



Jamie Stewart

Edwin Carr of Camberwell, South London was arrested for possession of cannabis at his home and went peacefully with police. A few hours later he was on a life support machine. This was switched off when Edwin was diagnosed brain dead. The police claim that he died of "pneumonia".

The families of the men are calling for an independent enquiry. These two tragedies are just the latest in a catalogue of more than fifteen deaths of black people in custody in the last ten years.

Brick Lane

ISMOTH ALI was murdered in his home near London's Brick Lane after his family fought against white attackers. The murderers are still free, but 57 black protesters were arrested a week later when they demonstrated outside Bethnal Green police station. They were demanding police protection from racist attacks and an end to police complacency which denies any racial motive for the killing of Mr. Ali. Scores were injured as police waded into the sit-down protest. 14 year old Tipu Miah was beaten so badly inside the station that he spent four days in hospital.

Speaking about the murder of Ismoth Ali, a police spokesman told reporters "The problem was that the attackers didn't expect the resistance they got". Don't fight back and you'll stay alive is the clear implication.

But resistance is the only answer to racist attacks. That resistance must be organised now.

SUPPORT BLACK SELF-DEFENCE!

Every worker should support black people's right to self-defence. The trade union and labour movement should be organising the physical defence of black communities against racist and fascist attacks. The organised workers' movement ignores this task at its own peril. Only last month fascists broke up a Labour Party organised protest meeting against their new bookshop in Woolwich, South East London.■



London demonstration against massacre in Tiananmen square

4 JUNE MASSACRE

Workers and students will not forget!

THE CROCODILE tears from the British bosses and media after the massacre in Tiananmen Square have soon dried up. They cannot wait to resume business as usual with the Deng regime. The intrusion of the masses into the process of opening China to capitalist investment was something they had never called for and can do without. Likewise the demand of the Hong Kong people for democracy. This was something Geoffrey Howe had ruled out of order in his 1984 agreement with Deng.

But British workers and students will not forget what happened in Tiananmen square. They are the only true allies of the democracy movement in China. That is why a working class campaign for solidarity with the Chinese workers and students is vital.

The Chinese Solidarity Campaign Founding Conference on 29 July should be the launch pad for such a campaign. It has already received delegations from over forty trade union and students' union bodies. It should be built into a mass, active, working class based campaign.

The aims of trade union solidarity with China should be:

- Break all links with the official Chinese Unions with a clear public explanation to the Chinese workers in them as to why
- Make links and send financial help to the underground opposition movements, the Autonomous Workers Organisations etc
- Adopt workers and students imprisoned by the Deng regime and campaign for their lives and their release
- Organise a workers' boycott of trade links with the regime as long as the repression lasts.

In arguing for a workers' boycott we need to be clear about the differences with imperialist calls for sanctions. A workers' boycott is an immediate response aimed not at "isolating the Chinese regime" from world imperialism but at showing Chinese workers and students that the working class of the imperialist countries are their true allies. The immediate target of a boycott should be the Group of 48 trade fair with China in October. Plessey workers for example should demand an end to the supply of electronic surveillance equipment to the regime. This was used to plan the massacre and smear the stu-

dent organisers afterwards.

British students have a vital role to play. They must organise in the NUS and in every college to ensure that all Chinese students in Britain are able to stay here, complete their courses, receive state benefits and obtain the right of asylum if requested.

The campaign should be organised on the basis of affiliations from trade unions, student unions and other working class and community organisations. The argument that we need a campaign of individual activists, the "individual activism is the highest form of democracy" is wrong.

First of all there is nothing to stop an unelected clique taking all the decisions whilst the activists are busy being active.

Second, this form of organisation is often a cover for building a cross-class campaign. If the working class and student organisations are not officially affiliated then the way is open to make alliances with the Tories and Liberals.

These reactionaries will not lift a finger against Deng in case it jeopardises their future profits and holdings in China.

Chinese students worldwide are organising themselves. The exiled leaders of the Democracy Movement are calling for a single worldwide organisation of Chinese students. Whatever organisation is created it must not detract from the task of building solidarity amongst British workers and students.■

KURDISH REFUGEES

Asylum Now!

AFTER THE Kurdish Refugees Support Group demonstration on 29 July the need for labour movement support is more pressing than ever. Labour councils are beginning to show their true colours as the pressure is stepped up for them to find housing and social services for the refugees and their families.

Currently Haringey is housing 100 families, Islington 40 and Hackney less than 100—but only in bed and breakfast. Some estimates put the figure for families still homeless as being in the hundreds. Evictions are now on the cards as some boroughs find that homeless families are having to resort to squatting to put a roof over their heads.

Hackney council has refused to allow the demonstration to meet at the town hall for a rally. The reason? An earlier demonstration organised by Turkish and Kurdish workers had the temerity to chant slogans demanding homes from the council.

Haringey council has tried to move the Support Group from its current offices, in the heart of the Kurdish community, to a smaller room in the town hall, well away from the people it is helping to organise.

References to the racist police and immigration laws in the Support Groups leaflets have been sufficient to deter many of the church activists who had originally been involved in its work. This is hardly surprising and it was absolutely correct to raise these points.

But the campaign will become increasingly marginalised as its fairweather friends drop out unless a concerted effort is made to draw in the local labour movement around a solid "No deportations, smash all immigration controls!" platform.

Crucially for this and other similar campaigns, we need an national campaign against deportations.■

Contact Kurdish Refugee Support Group
01 - 249 8680/249 6930

● Many Kurds are still imprisoned in detention centres up and down the country—13 at Gloucester Prison are currently facing imminent deportation and the Home Office is now trying to pressure lawyers into allowing detainees to be interviewed about their claims in groups of ten or more—a tactic to ensure that individual cases are more likely to fail.

The Labour Party and the strikes

EDITORIAL

"THERE IS no more money there. They are not going to be offered any more." How many times do you hear the bosses say that when you slap in a wage claim? It's like a chorus from a well known pay bargaining song!

Except this time it was Neil Kinnock speaking. He was attacking the NUR for refusing to accept the pay offer from British Rail. The leader of a party whose bills are paid for by the subscriptions of NUR members and other trade unionists has intervened in the rail dispute—on behalf of the bosses!

Kinnock's intervention highlights the importance of something we said in this paper last month: workers in struggle "don't wait for Labour".

We said this partly because it is vital for every worker to defend their living standards now. To allow the bosses to trample on us until an election is called would be disastrous.

Another reason we said this is because we do not believe a Labour government, should one get elected, will actually defend the working class, let alone press on to introduce socialism.

Neil Kinnock has proved us right. Labour, even though it relies on workers' money and workers' votes, is a party that defends the bosses. And Kinnock is a bosses' man.

Earlier in the week, before he made his attack on the NUR, Kinnock had been savaged by Thatcher. She accused him of "backing the NUR" and said of Labour "They are, as they always were, in hock to the trade unions". Every newspaper took up this theme with a vengeance. Kinnock was asked point blank by the boss class—which side are you on? By scabbing on the NUR, he gave them the answer they wanted.

Kinnock's whole strategy for the Labour Party is to prove its worth to the bosses. He can do this in three ways. First, he can ditch every progressive policy won by the left of the party that he knows the bosses won't tolerate. The Policy Review was his way of achieving this. It makes clear Labour's commitment to privatisation, the anti-union laws

and to capitalism itself—dressed up as the "social market".

Secondly, he can prove that Labour is not "in hock" to the unions. Despite Thatcher's rhetoric the bosses have taken heed of the fact that he has proved this on a number of occasions. Remember that during the miner's strike he denounced the NUM's violence and excused the police thugs by describing them as "the meat in the sandwich", caught in the middle. The fact that they, not the miners, were the perpetrators of systematic violence throughout the strike counted for nothing in his view.

More recently he conspired with Ron Todd to prevent an immediate all out strike against the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme. The result of his and Todd's sabotage is being felt by the dockers who are now being systematically sacked by the port bosses. It is being felt by the striking dockers who face an uphill struggle to win their strike.

Now he has joined in the bosses onslaught on the NUR. He has the gall to tell a rail worker on less than £100 a week that "no more money will be put on the table" by a company that has just made £304 million in profits. The only reason no more money is being offered is because Thatcher and Channon have ordered BR to stick to 8%. Kinnock is echoing this order to show that he can play the tough guy with the unions too.

The third element of his strategy for revitalising Labour's electoral fortunes has also been shown up by the present round of struggles. He wants to prove to the bosses that Labour is better than the Tories in settling industrial conflicts. The party can use its influence with the unions to head off the militants and orchestrate a conciliation process between the two sides. Labour can keep the wheels turning by being the mediator in disputes.

Prior to Kinnock's attacks on the NUR, this "mediator" policy had dominated Labour's approach to all of the current struggles. Instead of clearly supporting the strikes the Labour front bench pre-

ferred to criticise the government's non-intervention in the various disputes. They promoted their own role as conciliators between the two sides. In particular, John Prescott, Labour's transport spokesperson, has been busy behind the scenes (and on TV screens) urging all sides in the rail and underground disputes to go to ACAS, the arbitration body.

In doing this Prescott is ably representing one aspect of Labour's tradition. In or out of power, Labour has a history of intervening into disputes in order to facilitate conciliation, or to call it by its real name, a stitch up behind the backs of the members that invariably results in settling for less than the full claim. Indeed, Labour introduced ACAS, the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, in 1975 to formalise the process.

Of course, if conciliation fails, Labour will willingly try to smash strikes. They did it to the seafarers in 1966, the firefighters in 1977 and the public sector unions in 1979. If Kinnock gets into Number 10, he will take over where Harold Wilson and James Callaghan left off.

All of this explains why we refuse to get excited at Labour's current popularity in the polls. It explains why we say, and will say it again and again, don't wait for Labour.

When an election comes, we may well have to put the Labour Party to the test of office. But the way to test them, the way to prevent them carrying through their pro-capitalist, anti-working class programme—even when it is dressed up as conciliation—is to fight to win in the here and now. And in such fights, our objective is not to boost Labour's electoral chances. It is to score victories and build working class confidence so as to rally the forces for a revolutionary party—one that wants to annihilate, not conciliate with, the capitalist system. ■

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Restrictive practices

RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES are a bad thing, so the Tories tell us. They are bad for trade and competition. They must be abolished.

They mean of course practices like the closed shop and the Dock Labour Scheme. The "restrictions" that the bosses particularly hate here are on their ability to extract as much profit from the workforce as possible. And as we are seeing in the dock strike, the Tories are determined to sweep away restrictions they don't like.

But two recent examples show just how hypocritical and class based the Tories' opposition to restrictive practices really is.

First is the attempt by the Lord Chancellor, Mackay, to reform that bastion of privilege and outdated ritual, the legal profession. At present only a barrister is allowed to be heard in the more important courts wearing a ridiculous gown and wig, charging outrageous fees and totally cut off from the people they are supposed to be representing.

The barristers' monopoly enables many of these parasites to earn £1000 a week and in some cases far more. So when Mackay proposed that the monopoly should be ended he met with a storm of protest ... from barristers. In the Lords, the Commons and within the Tory party itself, these "learned friends" co-ordinated a campaign to defeat the proposals.

No injunctions were slapped on the head of the Bar Council. No snap legislation abolished their privileges overnight. Faced with a revolt of their kith and kin, the Tories compromised. The Bar will be protected. Although solicitors will now in theory be able to

address the higher courts, each will need the approval of the senior judges, all ex-barristers of course!

Further double standards can be seen in the recent conflict between the government and the breweries. A recent report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission called for no brewery to own more than 2,000 pubs. The big six breweries would have had to sell 22,000 tied houses.

When Lord Young, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said he would seriously consider the proposal, the brewers hit back with a predictable campaign to save "our locals". The Tories caved in. Only 11,000 pubs must become free houses. They need not be sold and brewers will be able to force landlords to take their products.

Doubtless this has nothing to do with the breweries' donation of £249,325 to Tory Party funds in the last election year. ■

Flat batteries

THE 5 July *Labour Briefing* announces that it has postponed its AGM to an as yet unspecified date. In doing so it confesses to the political exhaustion of its supporters:

"We think we're probably the only left paper which would dare to postpone its AGM on the grounds that everyone's tired out and it's hot."

It also announces that the next issue of the "fortnightly" *Briefing* will appear in ten weeks time. And for why? Its production team are going on holiday and need to recharge their batteries! They throw in another excuse that trades councils, trade unions and Labour Party branches do not meet in August. This is patently untrue in countless industrial towns.

It's a good job that dockers, rail workers, tube workers and NALGO members did not take their cue

from this bankrupt crew. Whatever the schedules of Labour Party branches and trades councils have been, whatever the weather, these workers have stepped up the battle against the Tories. *Labour Briefing* has wilted on the sidelines.

In the light of the industrial struggle *Briefing* confesses that "It may seem of that this is to be your last *Briefing* until 12 September".

That this tendency can decide to withdraw from struggle for the summer days says how seriously they take the class struggle, and how seriously they take the value of their own ideas.

Perhaps some are at last waking up to a recognition that those ideas are worthless and will recharge their batteries by breaking with this politically exhausted outfit. That's what they ought to do. ■

OIL RIGS

A year on from the terrible tragedy of the Piper Alpha oil rig explosion, oil rig workers are still fighting for decent health and safety regulations.

When Piper Alpha blew up 167 men died. It became clear that the bosses had ignored all the basic health and safety measures that could have saved those lives. The workers were killed for profit.

Now trade unionists on the various North Sea platforms are organising. They have established the unofficial Offshore Industry Liaison Committee and are publishing *Blow Out*, a paper for offshore workers.

Over the last four months the committee has organised a whole series of strikes against the big contractors and oil companies, like Mobil and Shell, who build and own the platforms.

Late last month the strikes resumed. They have been remarkably solid despite the fact that the unions aren't officially recognised. The demands of the strikers are for the extension of health and safety regulations to offshore platforms, union recognition and the right to negotiate pay rises. Currently rates are just imposed by the bosses.

The oil companies showed their respect for the dead of Piper Alpha by refusing to negotiate with the oil rig workers. We should show our respect by supporting the oil workers in their fight to force people who put profit before human lives to make the platforms safe. ■

For more information contact:
Blowout
1 Blaeloch Terrace, G45 Glasgow

Parity with the bosses!

THE BOSSES are determined to hold down wages. Many pay offers are 7% or less. They argue that increases in wages will cause inflation. Yet the bosses are not showing the same "restraint" on their own part that they are demanding of workers.

The salaries of Britain's top directors have shown a massive increase. Here are just a few of the biggest:

David Scholey (Warburg Securities) 328%
Lord King (British Airways) 190%

Jeffrey Sterling (P&O) 138%

Even the average pay rise for directors of Britain's biggest 100 companies is 28%.

Not only are the bosses' wages going up, they are also making more out of the share dividends they receive on company profits. Since the 1988 budget the richest 1% have seen their total unearned income rise by a staggering 89%. The bosses claim that it is workers' higher wages that have pushed up prices—this is clearly not the case. As *The Economist*

15.7.89, notes:

"Higher wages need not spill over into prices if companies squeeze their fat profit margins rather than pass costs on."

There is no sign of this happening. Many British firms are announcing huge pre-tax profits. In order to continue to do so, even as demand has started to fall, bosses have responded by putting prices up to keep profits high and by offering "pay rises" which are in effect pay cuts with inflation at its present high level. ■

THE NATIONAL dock strike is in danger. Transport union officials are talking about the need for a "re-think".

The bosses' press are claiming that 1,200 dockers are scabbing. They are exaggerating. But scabbing, and more importantly, voluntary redundancies, have reduced the numbers on strike.

The blame for this state of affairs rests squarely with the TGWU leadership. The formerly registered dockers are paying with their jobs for the three months wasted by Todd and Connolly kow-towing to the Tories' anti-union laws. Even now in the midst of an official strike Ron Todd and the TGWU leadership are doing nothing to win the strike. They have not even attempted to stop the massive strike-breaking operation which TGWU members in ports such as Felixstowe and Dover and in the road haulage industry have carried out for the bosses.

As a direct result of this cowardly strategy Associated British Ports and numerous smaller port employers have been emboldened to break the strike and conduct a massacre of jobs.

The bosses' actions have made a mockery of Ron Todd's pleadings for negotiations about a new national agreement.

Many men who voted to strike are afraid that their only alternatives are to take the redundancy money now or face the sack without a penny in compensation. From Aberdeen to Cardiff the port bosses have used the cynical ploy of liqui-

dating their operations in order to minimise their share of redundancy payments. At Grimsby and Immingham 330 dockers who did go back to work were sacked straight away.

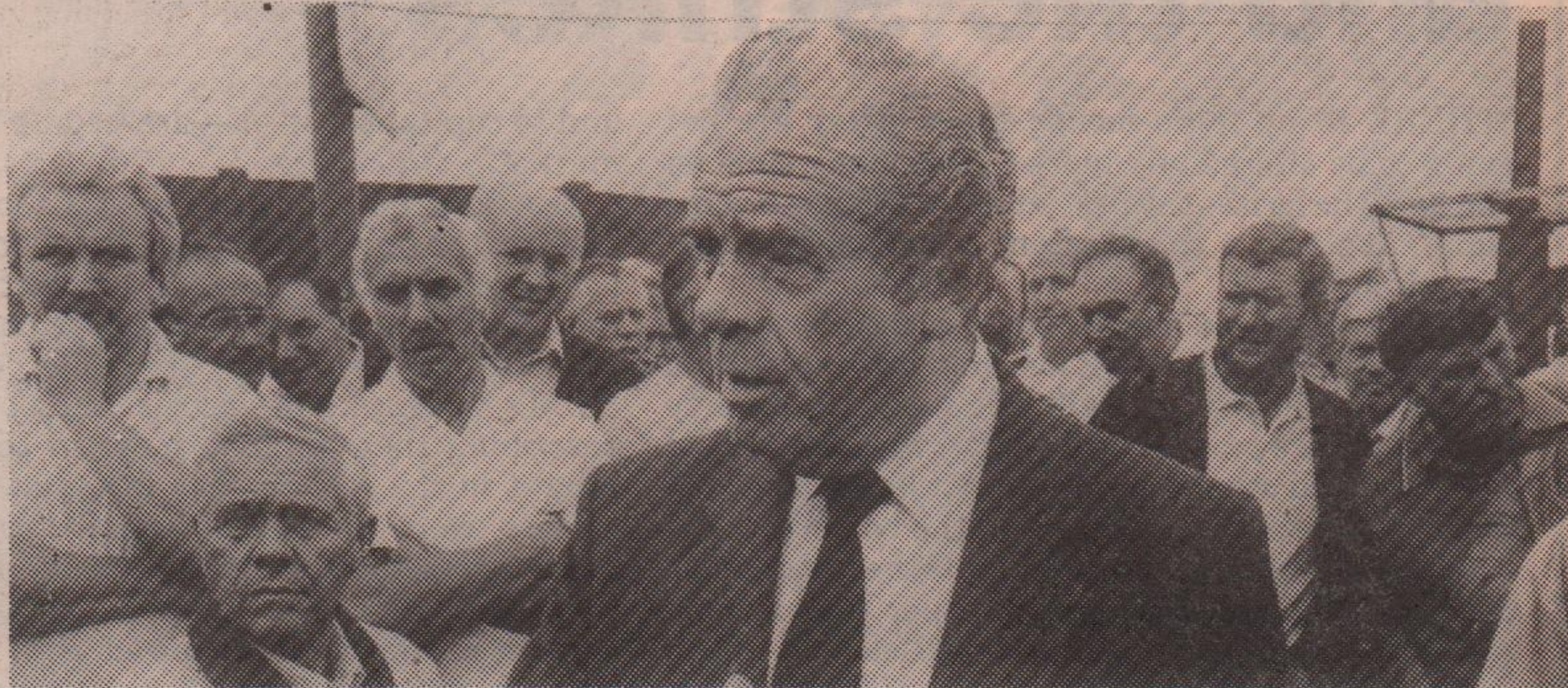
The employers have already made clear the terms and conditions under which dockers are to be exploited in the post-Scheme world. The mere act of testifying against the employer in an accident case will warrant instant dismissal. Any docker bold enough to challenge such a "slaves' charter" would face victimisation for "insubordination".

At Tilbury, Britain's biggest port and a bastion of the strike to date, the Port of London Authority has told men in the grain terminal that they must return to work under new terms and conditions or else forfeit their jobs without severance pay.

Militants cannot afford to give in to demoralisation at this crucial moment. They must organise to force Todd to call a *real* national docks strike embracing the whole TGWU membership in the ports never covered by the abolished Scheme backed up by solidarity action throughout the TGWU. The leadership will not make this call, which would mean immediate conflict with the anti-union laws, unless it is subjected to massive pressure from below.

The only way forward now is to regenerate the strike with mass meetings in every strikebound port. The forces for what port boss Finney calls "the crunch" need to

Dockers must win!



John Harris/IFL

be rallied. There is no room for passive strikers when so much needs to be built in so short a time.

Mass pickets must be organised to hit every working port. Dockers should not hesitate to call on the rest of the labour movement for physical support for such pickets as well as financial support for the strike.

The need for the stewards' committees to broaden themselves out into accountable strike committees, elected from the mass meetings, has also become apparent in the course of the strike so far.

The most active stewards have been literally overwhelmed with requests to attend trade union and Labour Party meetings, while at

the same time picketing and seeking to win solidarity from dockers in continental ports. More and more active strikers need to be drawn into organising the strike.

The rapid development of support groups with active trade union members and the countless invitations to address other strikers and shop stewards across a number of industries suggest an enormous potential for solidarity. Likewise, the enthusiastic response of rank-and-file dockers in Belgium, France, Holland and West Germany to visiting stewards show that the port bosses can still be beaten.

Strikers have nothing to lose. They must fight as never before to

win the reinstatement of every sacked docker and to win a national agreement which extends to every single port.

The agreement must leave no doubt. It must incorporate all aspects of the Scheme which safeguarded jobs, wages and conditions and checked the bosses' desire to hire and fire at will. It must ensure safety and training provisions under dockers' control. It must check the bosses' disciplinary codes with a dockers' veto.

And by setting such an agreement as their goal striking dockers will have a far better chance of winning those currently working to the struggle. This the way to win. ■

ENGINEERS

Don't leave Jordan in command

BY A MEMBER OF THE AEU

The impending engineering strikes are in pursuit of a national claim for a 35 hour week without strings and increases in the minimum time rate for engineers. And the bosses can afford this claim.

Since the 39 hour week was won in 1979 productivity in engineering is up 43%, output 119% and profitability up 172%. Jordan's strategy for winning the claim means that engineering workers might not get what they deserve.

Since 1979 the right wing leadership of the AEU, now fronted by Jordan, has colluded with the bosses to make engineers pay dearly—in massive job losses and vicious productivity deals—for the profits of the big firms. There is every possibility that, even if the 35 hour week is won a new round of "flexible working" deals will be accepted by Jordan. He has tried to stitch up such deals in the past. He will try again.

His "militant" posture will put him in a stronger position to do this. A few gains won now will, he hopes, provide him with something to show for his presidency. He will stand a better chance of getting re-elected and he will strengthen himself against the National Committee which has turned him over on flexible working and the EETPU fusion.

At the same time, by limiting the strikes to a handful of big, high profit making firms like British Aerospace and GKN, Jordan aims to keep a firm bureaucratic grip on the action. It will keep the AEU and the CSEU within

the anti-union laws and avoid the need to picket or organise blacking and solidarity action. It will limit the number of workers involved and restrict thousands of engineers to simply contributing financial support to those on strike. It is a recipe for a passive strike.

Not only does such a strategy risk demoralising those on strike and demobilising those with grievances, it also risks opening the way to purely local deals. The big firms who break with the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) and settle will win a reprieve from Jordan. This will weaken the strike and sow the seeds of disunity inside the CSEU unions. It will lead to key sections being isolated and picked off and some sections being bought off and taken out of the struggle.

The alternative to this is to mount an all-out engineering strike to win the full claim without strings. All engineers in federated firms must be brought out. Engineering workers in non-federated firms like Fords, where the forthcoming claim includes a demand for the 35 hour week, need to be brought out alongside workers in the ECF companies. There must be no return to work by any workers until every firm involved meets the claim.

Of course we must fight for full support for the limited action called by the CSEU executive. But this must be used as the launch pad for a massive campaign. The message that must be hammered home is that an all out strike can deliver the goods more quickly and effectively

THE DISPUTE on London Underground Limited (LUL) has been overshadowed by the national rail strikes. LUL workers are worried that their fight over pay and conditions will be conveniently "lost" if the national dispute is settled.

The discontent is not surprising. We are being ignored by our own union bureaucracies. Both the NUR and ASLEF leaderships are giving very little information to their members on LUL. Union members were not even consulted about Wednesday's strike, the thirteenth for Underground workers including unofficial actions. This was despite the feeling amongst NUR and ASLEF members on the Underground that the one day strikes would be much more effective if they were called at short notice and on different days each week.

At present all the NUR is offering is an all grades mass meeting with Jimmy Knapp. No date has yet been set, however, because it has to be fitted in somewhere in Knapp's busy diary!

The ASLEF leadership probably have more reason not to keep their members informed. ASLEF bureaucrats are concentrating not on winning the LUL dispute but on using it purely for a recruitment drive amongst drivers and guards. They hope to achieve sole rights of representation for all train crews. As part of their divisive, sectionalist strategy they have withdrawn all their representatives from the joint union sectional councils.

Fullick, the ASLEF leader, has also been signalling a willingness to negotiate with LUL over the third draft of the productivity deal—the slaves' charter. He might even be

than drawn out selective actions. We must fight to take the control of the strike and the negotiations out of the hands of the executive and place it in the hands of a national strike committee.

The left in the AEU, around the *Engineering Gazette*, are, as in every other conflict with Jordan, sitting on their hands. They prefer to keep all conflicts limited to votes at the National Committee. Led by Stalinists, like Jimmy Airie, they prefer deals with the right to an open fight with them.

TUBES

Elect a strike committee

BY A LONDON UNDERGROUND WORKER

prepared to consider a no strike deal. In return for this he would expect exclusive rights for ASLEF to union representation of train crews.

In the face of such complacency and the real danger of a sell out, many militants now recognise that it is time to step up the action on the Underground. At least one NUR branch is discussing an all out indefinite strike funded by strike pay from the union. With NUR funds standing at over £8 million, a one month strike with strike pay set at £80 a week would cost the union £4 million. These proposals must be built on, and a fight launched throughout the branches to force the NUR Executive to call this action. And it's better that we use our funds for action now than see them swiped by the courts one day.

To take the strike forward we need strong rank and file organisation. We need a strike committee. The group of line coordinators who organised the unofficial strikes

claimed their role was to "keep an eye on the bureaucrats". They have failed in this role. Since the action has become official they have allowed the bureaucrats to take control over the dispute.

Worse, a small group actually called on members to scab on the second NUR official strike. Because the coordinators were never elected the rank and file has had no control over them. They cannot be "re-called" (as an SWP leaflet argued) precisely because they were never "called" by the rank and file in the first place. The only way to ensure that the bureaucracy does not sell out or sabotage the dispute, the only way to ensure that the rank and file is truly represented is to elect recallable delegates to a strike committee. A mass meeting of all grades must be called immediately to elect such a committee.

- All out for the full pay claim and the scrapping of the slaves' charter and Action Stations!
- For an indefinite strike with strike pay!
- For an elected strike committee!

NATFHE 1989 Pay Claim Action Conference

Called by the Socialist
Lecturers' Alliance

7 October, Birmingham

Details from Bary Lovejoy,
25 Phillip Victor Road,
Handsworth, Birmingham B20
2QB

In this situation it is vital that, while demanding that *Gazette* supporters launch a campaign along the lines we have argued, rank and file militants—especially those like the *Birmingham Gazette* who organised the campaign against the merger—must take the lead.

The lessons of the 1979 dispute are clear enough. Then the right winger Duffy was able to push through a compromise thanks to the lack of rank and file control and the limited nature of the action. We don't want Jordan to do the same. ■

RAILWORKERS**8.8% is not enough**

"THE UNIONS are weak. Now is the time to push this through." These were the words of British Rail (BR) boss, Sir Robert Reid, last November. He thought he could "push through" the scrapping of national bargaining.

A few months later he said of BR's below inflation pay offer: "Why should we pay for something we can get for nothing?" Like a lot of the bosses he believed Thatcher's own propaganda, that she had tamed the unions and that the bosses could now do what they wanted.

Judging from his rare television appearances during the rail dispute Reid is now in a state of shock. Thousands of rail workers have proven they are not prepared to be treated like dirt. The rail strikes have forced the management to increase their pay offer (now 8.8%) and, to a limited extent, climb down on their national bargaining proposals.

The anger of the railworkers is understandable. Like many other workers they have seen their industry butchered by the Tories.

They are amongst the lowest paid workers in the country. And they are angry about the well publicised plans to privatise their industry—a move that will further threaten their jobs and wages.

In the face of the bosses' climb down two of the rail unions—ASLEF and the white collar TSSA—decided they should climb down as well. They have accepted the 8.8% deal and, in ASLEF's case, called off their action.

By doing this they have left the NUR isolated in its fight with BR. They have handed a weapon not only to the bosses but to the right wing in the labour movement, to denounce the NUR's intransigence in rejecting the deal. They could well have helped the bosses to scramble back from the brink of a humiliating defeat.

No worker should believe the torrent of lies that is now being unleashed against the NUR. ASLEF and the TSSA were wrong to settle.

First, the deal is barely in line with current official inflation rates. It is actually below the real cost of

living rises workers face through mortgage and rent increases and basic foodstuff price rises.

Secondly, for most rail workers the 8.8% rise will do nothing to lift them out of the low pay bracket. For a railworker on the lowest grade it will boost their earnings to a miserable £105.30 for a 39 hour week, before tax. For the highest paid signalmen it will mean £180.65 a week—hardly a princely sum. This at a time when BR's profits stand at a record £304 million. This as a reward for the 8% increase in productivity of railworkers last year. If you wanted a lesson in just how unjust capitalism is then this pay offer is it.

Thirdly, the new offer does not remove the threat to national pay bargaining. It leaves the bosses with a number of loopholes which they will use to attack the unions' negotiating rights as soon as the dispute is over.

For all these reasons we say the NUR executive was right to reject the deal. ASLEF and the TSSA have acted in a narrow, sectional way and their rank and file members need to organise to give solid support to any actions called by the NUR.

But the NUR leadership itself is riddled with backtrackers, Jimmy Knapp—who wanted to accept the deal—foremost amongst them.

In the face of this the rank and file must organise to rally the members for an indefinite strike until a massive increase across the board is won and the lowest grades are brought up to a minimum of £200 take home a week. ■

NALGO**ALL OUT ACTION NOW!**

SINCE 4 JULY NALGO members have struck for a total of six days to secure a pay increase of 12% or £1200 for low paid members. Low pay remains a major problem for thousands of workers on the bottom grades. Women and black workers are often the worst paid, many being on rates below the TUC minimum of £6,954 a year.

Members are also fighting to defeat the employers' attempts to bring in radical changes to working practices and sweep away the national bargaining machinery. What is being proposed as part of the pay deal is the removal of national negotiating rights and for local authorities to impose changes in grades without negotiations.

In addition the introduction of a flexible working week will mean a significant loss of pay for certain groups of NALGO members. It paves the way for Saturday working, currently under consideration for departments like housing and neighbourhood offices.

The magnificent response of local government workers to this attack on pay and conditions caught the employers and Tories by surprise. The Tories' first response has been to threaten the right of public sector employees to strike. Thatcher is trying to blame strikers for the drastic deterioration in local services that her government's attacks have caused. So solid has been the action that the employers have been forced to push for further talks. Some individual councils have broken ranks with the national grouping and are offering above 7% increases or the dropping of the strings or both. Canterbury and Stafford mention 10%.

Many such as Oldham, Monklands Harrow and Sheffield actually support the whole claim.

The NALGO leadership are using this as an excuse to back track on the promise to campaign for all out action as agreed by the annual conference. They are calling a ballot on all out action for only 5% of the union and one on selective strikes

for the rest of us.

Far from backing off, now is the time to step up the action and press home the advantage. All out action at this stage is the best way to secure a swift victory. All out action by 5% has all the danger of handing the initiative to the bosses and sapping the militancy that is currently widespread inside the union.

To avoid these pitfalls we should fight tooth and nail for all out action now to force the employers to cough up, and build on this to launch action against the cuts, the Poll Tax, and the attacks on all services. ■

Rank and file must organise

ONE HUNDRED NALGO activists met in Manchester on 22 July to discuss their strike. The meeting was a special conference of the NALGO Broad Left. It was clear that sections of the Broad Left, in particular those around *Socialist Organiser*, are running away from a fight now for all out action. They were arguing for a campaign on this to be put on ice until September. Militant supporters went along with this disastrous proposal.

Against this nonsense Workers Power supported the proposals from the Socialist Workers Party for yes votes to action in all ballots, but a commitment to a fight for all out action as the way to win.

What we argued, in addition was for the need for the rank and file to control such action from the beginning through democratic and accountable strike committees locally, (established by branch meetings), and

nationally, to ensure that the members controlled negotiations.

And we argued that this was the best means for building a rank and file movement of all local government workers, across the unions.

Of course many of the activists in this supposedly "rank and file" body think that such a call is abstract. The case of NUPE national chair, Ian Driver, of Southwark, showed that is is an urgent practical necessity.

After arguing that his members should not cross NALGO picket lines a special meeting of the NUPE NEC has been called for September to remove him from his position because of his action.

This is a clear example of why, instead of a bureaucratic merger, we need a rank and file movement to fight for a democratic, class struggle union of all local government workers. ■

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY****An American in Poland**

THE EAST European economies are wracked with crisis. Poland faces rampant inflation, economic stagnation and shortages of basic provisions. Hungary is facing little better.

Of all the eastern European countries it is these two that are being targeted for direct economic intervention. Bush has just toured Poland and Hungary to discuss an economic aid package. Last month's Paris Summit of the major capitalist powers placed intervention in the two economies high on its agenda.

It is commonplace for commentators, east and west, to blame the crisis on the inherent failures of planning and communism. Sections of the ruling bureaucracies and leaders of world imperialism are at one in looking towards the marketisation of the east European economies as the solution.

Marketeers in the bureaucracies see this as a way of getting round the glaring inadequacies of the planning system they preside over. This is a confession of their own bankruptcy, of their own inability to plan their economies to meet human need. The imperialists see marketisation as a means of expanding their own markets, exploiting east European workers and of reintroducing capitalism in a part of the world where it has been abolished for forty years. And they want to take advantage of the crisis in Poland and Hungary to step up the pressure. They are turning the screws on the ruling bureaucracies.

The political and economic crisis in Poland has forced the ruling bureaucracy to accept International Monetary Fund (IMF) terms to re-schedule their debt which now stands at \$39 billion. They have also been desperate to secure US food aid, investment, economic advice and the reduction of US tariff barriers on imports from Poland. Hungary is after similar offers.

In turn the USA is insisting on what it calls "political reform". They insist that any initial aid is in response to "freer" elections. More aid will follow on condition of further reforms.

No worker should be taken in by American imperialism posing as the guardian of world democracy. A passing inspection of the vicious dictatorships that the USA gives financial and military aid to, such as El Salvador and Pinochet's Chile, shows that it is profit that is on the top of their agenda, not human rights.

So discredited are the ruling bureaucracies and their communist parties that imperialism sees the pressure for "freer" elections as a means of further weakening those bureaucracies. And as a result it can force those bureaucracies to accept its economic terms, or directly and indirectly promote political forces that will.

The offers of financial assistance in Hungary and Poland are directly related to imperialism's project to accelerate and complete the process of capitalist restoration in these two bureaucratically degenerate workers' states. Where capitalism itself is under threat, however, support for the most ruthless dictatorships will continue.

That the restoration of capitalism is the object of economic aid to east Europe is obvious from the

very conditions being laid down by the IMF. In exchange for rescheduling Poland's debts they are insisting on such things as a sale of shares in state industry, a policy more popularly known as privatisation. They include the establishment of a stock market, as well as the outright sale of smaller state run enterprises to smaller owners. Alongside this they are demanding a package of austerity measures which will undoubtedly worsen the already dire conditions of the Polish working class.

The package also threatens the Polish workers with mass unemployment. US officials have repeatedly stated that they have no intention of repeating what they consider to be the mistakes of the 1970s. At the time the USA offered long term loans to the regimes of eastern Europe themselves. This was of insufficient economic benefit to the western capitalists and served to prop up the east European regimes.

Bush and the entire economic summit, Thatcher in particular, are determined now that the west shall make economic aid conditional on major economic and political gains for the imperialists. The aid will be earmarked for the existing private sector or for the creation of a private sector economy. There will be no aid for the state owned mines, heavy industries and transport system on which the core of the Hungarian and Polish working class depend for their livelihood.

For the vast majority of east European workers the aid on offer in the short term will mean very little. The package unveiled by Bush and the Paris Summit was miserable in the extreme. It was a mighty disappointment to those in east Europe who were looking for big handouts from Washington.

Bush has offered \$5 per head to the masses of Poland and Hungary at a time when the Polish debt to the west stands at £1600 per head. The Paris Summit bumped this up with offers of food parcel aid. The only beneficiaries will be those who want to establish small businesses and shops.

The current offer of aid is aimed at the step by step reintroduction of imperialist exploitation. Hence the pressure to render the east European currencies convertible and therefore batter down all limits on speculation and the search for profits in the area.

The imperialists are aware that the restoration of capitalism, the ending of subsidies and job security will provoke massive working class resistance. Recent events in China were a vivid reminder of the political crises that marketisation unleashes. Imperialism wants to walk the narrow tightrope between marketisation and the political crisis it provokes. Hence its current step by step approach.

Marxists must make it clear to those who oppose planning as such that it is the market mechanism that is responsible for millions of tons of food being dumped a year in order to keep profits up while millions die of starvation. Only rational planning can feed, clothe and house all humanity. And the parasitic bureaucracies who rule in east Europe cannot do that.

Such planning can only take place effectively if it is in the hands of the real experts on how to produce things and on what needs producing—the working class itself. ■

"THE BIGGER, the better" has become the motto of the new realist general secretaries of Britain's major trade unions. Nearly all of them are involved in merger talks and plans are underway to create a small number of very big "super unions".

On the face of it there does not appear to be a problem with this trend. After all the trade union slogan "unity is strength" seems to be being put into practice. The mergers are uniting different unions into bigger organisations. But, the true picture is very different and militant trade unionists need to organise against the "merger mania" that is gripping their leaders.

The unions that are being created by the mergers are, increasingly, general unions. These are unions covering lots of different industries that simply reflect inside their ranks the existing sectional divisions in the working class. They are organised on the basis of trade groups which often have little in common. They face different bosses, different problems at work and, generally, have totally different wage rates in each sector.

The giant TGWU illustrates the weakness of such general unionism. Far from providing strength through unity, its organisation into trade groups undermines its ability to defend its members. The current docks dispute shows this all too clearly.

The TGWU organises both registered and unregistered dockers. But the unregistered dockers are being kept out of the strike. Their separate identity inside the TGWU means that cargo that is breaking the strike by registered dockers is coming into the country with the union's blessing!

The same problem is highlighted by the lorry drivers. They are in the TGWU. They are "not in dispute" at the moment. They are transporting scab cargo. And the union is not lifting a finger to stop this.

What is worse is that the general nature of the TGWU, its organisation into separate sections, means that its members can turn round and say that their action (or rather inaction) is within the union's rules. And they would be right. The rules of the union flow from its inbuilt sectionalism, not from the needs of the class struggle.

This pattern of actual disunity has been reproduced in all of the general unions—the GMB, the MSF, NUPE etc. And the results are all bad.

Yet the union leaders are rushing ahead with more and more merger plans. The 1988 report from the certification officer, charged with overseeing such developments, notes "a steady increase in the workload connected with the supervision of union mergers". This functionary also reports that a total of eleven union mergers took place during the year involving nearly 675,000 union members, the second highest total since official rec-

Effective organisation and the remains of union democracy have been the chief victims of the current round of the union mergers.

G R McColl explains the dangers of general unionism and the need for industrial unions.

One industry — one union

ords were introduced.

Already the TUC's four largest unions (the TGWU, GMB, AEU and NALGO) comprise 41% of affiliated membership. If the proposed merger of NALGO with NUPE, now likely to embrace COHSE as well, goes ahead then 55% of workers inside the TUC will be in the big four. The TUC itself is becoming the clearing house for such mergers and a bargaining

(GMB) and Ken Gill (MSF).

The first phase of recent mergers involved dwindling organisations of textile workers, asphalt workers, one time GLC staff and white collar unionists in what had been APEX all being swallowed up by larger unions. For the likes of John Edmonds and Ron Todd these liquidations/mergers compensated for the very limited success of recruitment drives and the continu-

desperate moves to save face. The proposed solution is a transfer of engagements (effectively liquidation) into the TGWU with the implicit proviso being Scargill's own departure from the scene.

Inside the CPSA this year's conference rejected overtures for a merger with the GMB. Subsequently, however, John Ellis and others on the CPSA executive have opened discussions with the AEU,

John Harris/IFL



Union top brass gripped by merger mania

forum for the big unions in their sometimes competing quests for new members.

There are two reasons why the union leaders are keen on the mergers and the creation of a handful of big general unions. First, it is their only answer to the loss of members—and the threat to their own salaries and privileges posed by the loss—and loss of political influence that they have endured during the years of Thatcher's offensive.

Second, they see it as the best means of countering the threat of a rival, hard right, general union in the shape of a merged AEU and EETPU (the scab electricians' union). Even though the AEU National Committee scuppered the Jordan/Laird leadership plans to push through this merger last April, the potential of such a lash-up concentrated the minds of Ron Todd (TGWU), John Edmonds

ing loss of jobs in organised workplaces. In spite of the real drop in joblessness in the preceding two years the decline in TUC affiliated union membership continued in 1988 with an estimated 1.3% fall (excluding the loss of more than 350,000 members of Hammond's EETPU).

To really shore up their organisations bigger deals are needed by the union leaders. Like City businessmen they are buzzing around trying to engineer takeover bids, set up monopolies in particular sectors and force smaller unions into liquidation. The TUC has become the trade union movement's own version of the bosses' Monopolies and Mergers Commission!

The league leader in the quest for partners remains MSF, itself the product of a bureaucratic marriage conceived by former ASTMS general secretary, Clive Jenkins, and *Morning Star* stalwart, Ken Gill, then president of the draughtsmen's union TASS. In its first year of existence the MSF grew by just over 20,000. This white collar giant of general unionism has already shown far greater ambitions, having launched exploratory talks with the TGWU, at the same time as its leadership is considering the possibility of amalgamation with the largest union in British Telecom, the NCU.

In the NUM, still financially crippled and in numerical decline, Arthur Scargill, trapped between his own militant rhetoric and his refusal to break from the rules of the bureaucratic club, has made

even though discussions with the other civil service union, NUCPS, are at an advanced stage. A logical structure for unions is clearly not the motive for the bureaucrats' wheeler-dealing.

We need to be clear, we are not against amalgamations in principle. There are times when fusions are a necessary response to changes in the structure of industry itself. More importantly a democratically implemented merger, consciously involving the mass of members, could overcome the legacy of sectionalism and craft-based elitism which has time and again blocked united fights against the bosses.

The current rail strike proves this all too conclusively. Instead of one union confronting one management around a united demand we have three unions (ASLEF, NUR, TSSA) staging strikes at different times and blaming each other for everything that goes wrong.

Likewise in the local government dispute separate claims by workers in NALGO and NUPE has meant some NUPE members have crossed NALGO picket lines.

The lesson from this is that the mergers we need are not the bureaucratic deals to create general unions, but democratic fusions of all unions within an industry. We need industrial unions—for car workers, rail workers, transport workers, health workers, miners, printers and so on.

A century ago during the Great Dock Strike and the historic battles for the right to organise by the

Beckton gas stokers and the Bryant and May match "girls", general unionism played a progressive role. It stood for the organisation of semi and unskilled workers who had been ignored or excluded by the labour aristocrats of the "new model" unions.

Now this spirit of general unionism, defiant at its birth, has been shelved by successive generations of union chiefs.

Today the fight for industrial unionism means a fight against general unionism. A single union for health workers, or for local government workers, would be a great step forward. It would break down the petty sectionalism that has hampered united struggles and united workplace organisation in both sectors. But instead of this the leadership of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE are on the brink of establishing a rotten structure which would force badly paid health and local government workers into the same body as managers making more than £25,000 a year.

In the place of the patchwork quilt of trade groups and arbitrary regions which marks today's TGWU with a conference of a mere 900 delegates which meets only once every two years, members need to build their own industrial unions from the bus garages to the car plants.

From the 1988 Ford's strike to the ongoing battle against London Underground management, the need for industrial unionism has been dramatically illustrated. Organisations capable of forging a fighting unity between workers in an industry regardless of their race, gender or skill are the real alternative to the mergers and the divisive inter-union rivalries which bureaucrats have long played on to enhance their own power and privilege

Accountability

One union for one industry is vital, but on its own not enough to defeat the bosses. The industrial organisations must, as well, be class struggle unions. An absolute commitment to turning the unions outward from the day-to-day battles of the particular factory floor or office to a class wide offensive against capitalism at home and internationally will be needed to prevent them from falling under the sway of a new crop of bureaucrats. The struggle for industrial unionism cannot be divorced from an implacable fight for class struggle policies, internal union democracy and the thoroughgoing accountability of all officials.

In the here and now class conscious militants need to ensure that the shroud of secrecy is removed from merger proposals. They must campaign for rank and file scrutiny over every step of an amalgamation process.

Where the real motive for a merger is a drive to bolster the hand of the union's top brass, activists must expose this cynical abuse of the union's time and resources. The would-be empire builders of the labour movement seeking to ride roughshod over union rule books and maintain control through pitting different sections against one another can and must be stopped.

Through consistent arguments in workplaces and branch meetings and the building of national campaigns around the vital issues of mergers, new realism and general unionism, militants can raise the banner of class struggle industrial unionism and lay the basis for a real challenge to the bureaucrats' ideological and organisational stranglehold on our movement. ■

AEU: Amalgamated Engineering Union
 APEX: Association of Professional and Executive Staffs
 ASLEF: Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
 ASTMS: Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs
 COHSE: Confederation of Health Service Employees
 CPSA: Civil and Public Servants Association
 EETPU: Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union
 GMB: General Municipal and Boilermakers
 MSF: Manufacturing Science Finance
 NALGO: National Association of Local Government Officers
 NCU: National Communications Union
 NUCPS: National Union of Civil and Public Servants
 NUM: National Union of Mineworkers
 NUPE: National Union of Public Employees
 NUR: National Union of Railwaymen
 TASS: Technical and Scientific Staffs
 TGWU: Transport and General Workers Union
 TSSA: Transport and Salaried Staffs Association

Paul Foot on the Irish war

Breda Concannon reviews
Ireland: Why Britain Must Get Out
by Paul Foot
Chatto and Windus
Counterblast Series £2.99

COMMISSIONED ALONG with a number of Labour-left authors to write pamphlets "challenging the dominant values of our time" Paul Foot has supposedly produced a "popular explanation of the case for British withdrawal".

Foot is a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party. But despite the SWP's formal commitment to the slogans, the book fails to address the arguments for Troops Out Now/ Self Determination for the Whole Irish People. It fails to challenge the view of the IRA as terrorists. It fails to argue why British workers should distinguish between the violence of the oppressed and the oppressor, why they should support the IRA unconditionally against the British Army.

Instead the pamphlet is, from beginning to end, yet another solution to the Irish conflict which relies on the self interest of the British imperialist ruling class.

It offers yet another "British solution" to the problems of Northern Ireland, essentially no different from the one offered by Labour lefts in their various contributions

"Britain should set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal and at once convene a constitutional conference at international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished"
Paul Foot SWP

"The ruling class in Britain and Ireland cannot simply dismantle the Northern State"
Chris Bambery SWP



Irish people can't wait for Foot's constitutional conference

Derek Speirs/Report

to the debate on Ireland.

The book's central argument is summed up in Foot's proposal that:

"The British government should declare that it intends to withdraw its troops from Ireland forever; and that it will no longer sustain a separate state in the North of Ireland. It should set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal and at once convene a constitutional conference at international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished and what contribution Britain should make to a new united Ireland." (p56)

In short it is a call for a Zimbabwe-style withdrawal which ensures a smooth transition from colonial to semi-colonial rule, overseen if not by British imperialism itself, then by an "international conference".

Revolutionaries in Britain argue for Troops Out Now because the British troops and the British

state cannot play a progressive role. It is not for Britain to call any type of conference on the future of Northern Ireland because it has no right to be there in the first place. It is for the whole Irish people to determine their future, and them alone.

All this would be crystal clear to an SWP member who had read Chris Bambery's *Ireland's Permanent Revolution*. For all its faults it states clearly that

"The ruling class in Britain and Ireland cannot simply dismantle the Northern State". (p81).

But Foot, like so many of the Labour left he professes to scorn, persists in arguing that British imperialism could be persuaded to abandon its specific short term military and political interests in favour of its long term economic interests.

Within Ireland real revolutionaries fight for working class mobilisation to force Britain out of Ire-

land. We fight to prevent a peaceful transition from a divided capitalist Ireland to a united capitalist Republic for the world multinationals to suck dry. As in Zimbabwe revolutionaries would find themselves fighting against an imperialist convened "constitutional conference" and its supporters in the working class.

Foot claims to be echoing a "growing and consistent majority" of the British people in calling for withdrawal. The problem is that this majority is founded not on solidarity with the Irish people, nor even support for their democratic rights. It vanishes into thin air the moment the Irish anti-unionists take up arms against their oppressors. It runs head on into the popular understanding of the IRA as mindless and murderous "terrorists".

Instead of challenging this "dominant value of our time" Foot ignores it. He fails to challenge the idea that the IRA are "terrorists". He fails to mention the role of the IRA in defending, however inadequately, the Northern anti-unionist community. His response to the Tory claims to be containing terrorism is that "terrorism has increased".

In explaining why the IRA cannot win he finds no space to mention the role of the Irish working class in the struggle to get British troops out of Ireland. Instead they are to be the passive beneficiaries of the withdrawal process:

"There is a chance, after the withdrawal, that Irish labour, so long truncated by religious feuds between workers, might come together to demand the new Ireland of which Connolly dreamed." (Foot p.65)

And there is a certainty that if the Irish working class came to the head of the anti-imperialist struggle that socialist Republic could be placed on the immediate order of the day. But in Foot's vision of the future "Labour Must Wait" . . . until after the "constitutional conference"!

There have been two common responses from SWP members to this abandonment of the Party line on Ireland by a leading comrade. One is to deny it has happened. The second is to say openly that Foot is wrong. But the latter response failed to find an echo in July's issue of *Socialist Worker Review* which reviewed the book. Ann Rogers acclaimed Foot's pamphlet as "by far the best" of the Chatto and Windus series. There is not a word of criticism of Foot's argument in the whole review. ■

The Right Thing?

Colin Lloyd reviews
Do the Right Thing
a film by Spike Lee

IT IS the hottest day of summer. In New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant district racial tensions between blacks, Hispanics, Korean shopkeepers, Italian Americans and white police boil over. After the police murder a black youth the neighbourhood turns on Sal's Pizzeria burning to the ground the nearest symbol of white racism.

After showing the devastation of the morning after the film ends with a long quote from Martin Luther King about the futility of violent struggle. As liberals in the audience breathe a sigh of relief another quote appears, from black nationalist Malcolm X; "I don't call it violence, I just call it intelligence".

The film is intended to stir up debate about racism. New York's police are renowned as racist thugs. In 1987 a black youth was killed fleeing a racist attack by Italian-American youths in New York's Howard Beach. The city's beleaguered mayor, Ed Koch, is currently playing the racist card in an attempt to scare white voters into supporting him again. Predictably the film has stirred up much more than debate. A furious backlash from the far right has followed its screening in the USA.

But ultimately the film has no answers to racism. It shows both the need for resistance and the futile consequences of inter-communal violence at the bottom of the scrapheap of US capitalism. Its ambiguity towards both strategies on offer—King's pacifist reformism and Malcolm's revolutionary nationalism—is mirrored in the actions of

latter day black nationalists see all whites as the enemy, and in particular the white immigrant communities who have made a success at cross-class community politics—the Italians and the Jews. Sal and the Jewish policeman who typifies police racism are symbols of this in the film.

Like all Lee's films *Do the Right*

A SPIKE LEE JOINT DO THE RIGHT THING

the central character.

Mookie, played by director Spike Lee, works for Sal's Pizzeria. His girlfriend is Hispanic. He cultivates an uneasy friendship with Italian-American Sal and one of his sons. He resists the black nationalist youth who "boycott Sal's" over the absence of black heroes pictured on the wall. But in the end it is Mookie himself who starts the riot.

Lee's film provides no answers because neither reformism or black nationalism can provide a strategy to end the oppression of black people. King's pacifism leaves them defenceless against state racism. Unlike Malcolm X

Thing celebrates black working class life. But the film's attempt to present a "positive image" occasionally misfires. In the riot not a gun or a knife is pulled; instead it develops into a Keystone Cops waterfight with the city's firefighters.

Nor do we see any evidence of the drug culture and the attendant violence which plagues America's black communities. Reality in New York is different. Spike Lee had to hire a black muslim security firm to "clean up" the streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant before he could present this picture of life in the inner city.

Public Enemy's Fight the Powers That Be pumps away on the soundtrack throughout the film. Unfortunately it is not the "powers that be" who suffer from the black community's act of physical resistance but black people themselves. This happens not because it is mistaken to fight back, but because the resistance has to be organised, has to be directed at the real oppressors, and has to win the support of black and white workers who have the power to defeat the racists.

Physical resistance is the "right thing" of the film's title which black communities all over the world have to do. But when Mookie starts it off he does so more with sorrow than conviction because he can't see a way from resistance to victory.

The film is a living confirmation of revolutionary Marxism's case against both nationalism and reformism as strategies for black liberation. The way to this goal lies through revolution. The workers' revolution will necessarily be armed and violent. But it will encompass all the exploited and oppressed.

It will be aimed against the exploiters and oppressors regardless of colour. And it will create in reality the life free from hunger, drug addiction and random violence that Lee can only create on screen. ■

THE ROOT of Ireland's troubles is British occupation. Far from keeping the peace the British troops have overseen twenty years of repression against the nationalist community in the North. It is a repression which has reached into the Irish communities in Britain itself. It has also given the British state a proving ground for repressive techniques to use against strikes and inner city uprisings in Britain.

The first mass revolt of the catholic minority took place in the late 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement was formed around the modest democratic demands of "one man one vote; one family one house". Yet these threatened the system of privilege and patronage which existed between loyalist bosses and loyalist workers. As such any demands for equality represented a direct threat to the existence of the six county state itself. State forces, including the notorious B-Specials, responded to the campaign's marches with murderous brutality. The B-Specials were an armed police reserve almost entirely made up of protestants. They collaborated with loyalist mobs to smash up Civil Rights demos and attack nationalist areas.

However, during August 1969 the heroic resistance of nationalist workers managed to prevent the state forces from smashing their way into the catholic communities. It was during the "Battle of the Bogside" that the Wilson Labour government sent troops on to the streets of Derry and Belfast.

"The government of Northern Ireland has informed the United Kingdom government that as a result of the severe and prolonged rioting in Londonderry it has no alternative but to ask for the assistance of troops at present stationed in Northern Ireland to prevent a breakdown of law and order" announced Labour Home Secretary Jim Callaghan on 15 August 1969.

In other words the British army moved in to Northern Ireland to protect the sectarian state from the threat of democracy.

Between 1969 and 1971 this meant British governments, Labour then Tory, trying to buy the catholics' loyalty through meagre reforms. The B-Specials were abolished—only to be replaced by the equally vicious Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). The UDR is the only regiment in the British army whose soldiers live at home and keep their weapons there. Like the B-Specials the UDR constitutes a massive legally armed force within the loyalist community itself. It remains 98% protestant. The British pressured the unionist government to soften its bigoted policies. Yet each time a moderate emerged within the unionist camp uttering placatory noises he was replaced by another traditional unionist bigot within months.

The nationalist workers were not fooled by the British government's window dressing of the sectarian statelet. The barricades erected by the anti-unionist population in Belfast and Derry during the uprisings of 1969 stayed up.

In 1970 the British army replaced smooth talking with naked repression. In 1971 the whole of the Lower Falls area of Belfast was put under a 48 hour curfew. CS gas and rubber bullets were used against the inhabitants. Yet this was not enough for the Unionist government. They demanded tougher action. British Army commander Freeland threatened that the Army would shoot petrol bombers within the nationalist crowds.

In August 1971 Britain introduced internment without trial. This allowed the British army to jail anyone suspected of republican sympathies for an indefinite period. In the first dawn swoop 342 people were arrested and put inside concentration camps; wooden huts surrounded by barbed

wire fences. The "impartial peacekeepers" arrested only two protestants.

During the next four years a total of 2,158 people were interned. The indiscriminate nature of internment was admitted by the Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees. In 1975 he told the British parliament that some £300,000 in compensation had been paid for false arrest and for assault and battery in the cases of 473 internees. Eleven of those interned were chosen as guinea pigs for sensory deprivation torture at the notorious Castlereagh interrogation centre.

The response of the catholic population to internment was swift and militant. Massive walkouts from work, demonstrations and rallies were held in support of the internees. A rent and rate strike was started in the Belfast ghettos. At its peak in December 1971 23,190 households were involved: one quarter of all catholic households in the Six Counties!

Britain's answer was to step up repression. On 30 January 1972 British paratroops opened fire on a

TWENTY YEARS ago this month British soldiers arrived on the streets of Northern Ireland. Two decades later the troops are still there. The media tell us that the aim of the military presence is to keep the peace between the protestant and catholic communities and that the "troubles" are just a result of sectarian religious antagonisms. This is a lie that turns the real reason for the conflict in Northern Ireland upside down. Julian Schofield catalogues the techniques of repression developed over twenty years of occupation.

peaceful demonstration in Derry. 14 catholics were killed and 28 were wounded. Even the Derry City Coroner said at the inquest "It was sheer, unadulterated murder."

After what became known and commemorated as Bloody Sunday the anti-unionist population's resolve stiffened. Hundreds volunteered for the Provisional IRA, thousands became active in the republican movement.

So great was the pressure of the mass revolt that William Whitelaw

gave in to the demands of republican hunger strikers who were demanding prisoner of war status—the right to wear one's own clothing, free association and access to literature. Special Category status as it was called was won by a mass campaign in support of the hunger strikers.

British army chiefs admitted that they were at war with the IRA. British ministers, including William Whitelaw, actually held secret negotiations with the Provos. But this was their last attempt to deal with the political

demands of the nationalists by negotiation. From July 1972 they embarked on creating an ever more sophisticated repressive apparatus to meet the military campaign of the Provos.

Operation Motorman smashed open the barricades protecting Free Derry allowing the army and the RUC to re-establish military control of the nationalist ghettos.

In 1973 the no-jury "Diplock Courts" were introduced to try republican suspects. These gave an overwhelmingly loyalist Northern Ireland judiciary the right to put away nationalists on whatever flimsy evidence of a verbal confession reported by the police. The Diplock courts have maintained a conviction rate of over 90%!

In 1974 the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was passed. It gave police the right to exclude suspected republicans from "mainland Britain" and detain suspects for 48 hours without charge, extended to seven days on the say-so of a judge. Only 1% of those held under the PTA have ever been charged with offences relating to the armed struggle. The Act itself is a weapon of terror held

Northern Ireland 1969

Twenty years of re

EVERY ATTEMPT to reform the Northern Ireland state has ended in failure. The Civil Rights Movement was met with loyalist repression. The Sunningdale power sharing agreement was brought down within a year by the loyalist general strike. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has not improved the lives of nationalist workers. Instead it has involved the Southern Irish state more closely in the repression of the nationalist struggle.

The Northern state cannot be reformed. It was founded as a sectarian state and will remain that way until it is smashed whatever superficial concessions to the nationalist community Britain offers. The struggle to smash the Northern state is part of the legitimate struggle to free Ireland from imperialist exploitation and national oppression.

But who can smash it? The Irish capitalists? They made their peace with partition and imperialist super-exploitation a long time ago. Today the Irish Republic is a haven for multinational profiteers and a nightmare for workers, especially women and youth. In contrast to the 26 Counties' constitutional claim to a united Ireland the Southern ruling class works in close collaboration with the British security forces to ensure that the sectarian order in Northern Ireland is maintained.

The IRA? While their military campaign has proved effective in tying down up to 30,000 security troops they have failed to drive the troops out of Northern Ireland. Between 1969 and 1972 the IRA was the main beneficiary of a mass nationalist uprising it neither predicted or promoted. Since then the IRA strategy of guerrilla warfare by a few hundred volunteers has reduced the mass of the anti-unionist population to sympathetic bystanders, occasionally called upon to confer legitimacy upon the struggle.

Despite their support amongst the working class of the nationalist ghettos the IRA and Sinn Fein are petit bourgeois nationalist organisations. Their economic programme paints a picture of a capitalism free of large multinationals. Their political strategy, stretching right back to the 1918 general election is summed up in the slogan "Labour must wait". First Ireland must be freed from imperialist occupation, leading to a united, co-operative

Irish capitalism. Then the workers' struggle for socialism can begin.

Yet it is only "Labour" (i.e. the working class) which has the power to bring down imperialist rule in the North. The working class which produces all the wealth and forms the overwhelming majority of the population has the power to paralyse the most powerful army and the most repressive state.

But the Northern Irish working class is divided. Working class loyalists, who form a majority, have been the most opposed to reforms and concessions to the nationalist minority. Their 1974 general strike against sharing power with the catholics showed both the enormous power possessed by workers everywhere and the tragic consequences of their loyalty to the Northern Ireland bosses.

The result of this division has left Northern Ireland the poorest area of the UK. Its high unemployment, bad housing, poor health and social provision affects both communities. Nevertheless it is the nationalists who suffer most. Unemployment, for example, is twice as high amongst catholics as amongst protestants. However marginal the privileges enjoyed by protestant workers it is the possible loss of these privileges which binds them to their own exploiters.

So what is the answer? Is there any way out of this stalemate?

The answer lies in winning the working class, North and South, to a strategy of permanent revolution; a strategy which links the fight against British occupation to the fight against capitalist exploitation and the social oppression of women and youth. The working class must be brought to the head of the national struggle. Working class revolutionary methods of fighting must gain primacy over the guerrilla strategy.

It is not the Northern nationalists alone who are oppressed by imperialism. The Southern working class is cruelly exploited by imperialism within the semi-colonial economy of the Republic. The present recovery in the South masks fundamental problems. Over 30,000 emigrate each year; taxation to pay off interest on Ireland's huge debts is amongst the highest in Europe. The whole of state spending in the South is financed from workers' tax contributions, so little does it demand from the multinationals.

There is every possibility that the

Despite the heroism of the republican fighters the guerrilla strategy cannot win. To destroy the Orange state the working class must come to the head of the Irish national struggle under the banner of permanent revolution argues Colin Lloyd



Southern working class will begin to break from their exploiters, entering the road of revolutionary struggle. Yet the Southern working class has remained largely passive in the face of repression in the North. It is tied politically to the Southern capitalists through the three "Green Tory" parties who have governed since partition.

As such there is no guarantee that such a struggle will spontaneously embrace the demands of the nationalist majority in the North. In 1972 in response to Bloody Sunday and in the 1981 hunger strikes Southern workers did take militant direct action in support of the nationalist cause. But this is not an everyday phenomenon.

That it is so rare is in part due to the fact that Sinn Fein rejects this strategy. It rejected independent workers' action in the South in support of the hunger strikes, in favour of an all class alliance with the church and Fianna Fail. When it stands in the Southern elections Sinn Fein campaigns on a pro-

gramme of economic reforms totally separated from the goal of a united Ireland. It offers no perspective for the Southern working class to enter the national struggle as an independent mass force.

The foundations of the loyalist monolith in the North are already being undermined. Thatcher has sanctioned privatisation and job cuts in the key sectors of the economy where loyalist privilege is founded: Shorts', the electricity industry and shipbuilders Harland and Wolff.

To turn this into a situation where unionist workers will break from their own bosses and at least neutralise their potential to sabotage the struggle for a united Ireland requires that Southern workers themselves break from their bosses and the religious state. The protestant workers will not voluntarily exchange their marginal privileges in the North for the poverty, deprivation and religious bigotry of the Southern state. Yet this is all a capitalist united Ireland could offer them. That is why the combination

over the heads of Irish people both in Britain and the North.

After 1972 the British army began its "low intensity operations" against the Republican movement. The undercover "Military Reconnaissance Force" (in fact the SAS) began a policy of selective assassination of suspected IRA leaders.

The Northern Ireland Parliament, Stormont, had collapsed in 1972. From 1972 to 1974 Britain attempted to replace it with a "power sharing" executive. This was meant to incorporate "moderate" nationalists from the SDLP in the running of the sectarian state, isolating the Provos and undercutting their mass support. But power sharing was smashed by a reactionary strike of loyalist workers in the Ulster Workers' Council. Despite all the repressive apparatus targeted against the nationalists; the army, the Diplock courts etc, the security forces simply stood aside for the loyalist strikers. Since 1974 Northern Ireland has been ruled direct from Westminster.

Alongside direct rule Britain has adopted a policy of "Ulsterising" the conflict. Labour's Merlyn Rees and

Roy Mason initiated the strategy of "Ulsterisation"; the RUC was reorganised as an effective military force whilst the army was redeployed to protect the RUC.

This went hand in hand with attempts to criminalise the republican movement and the IRA—treating the war as a police rather than a political matter. Prisoner of war status was withdrawn from republican prisoners.

A "conveyor belt" system of justice was set up whereby police were able to target suspects, interrogate them, convict them and imprison them with minimum interference from the legal process itself. Complaints about beatings in detention doubled in 1976.

"There have been instances of prisoners wounding themselves with eating utensils, a nail, a tin of lemonade or by butting their heads against the wall or smashing a window" explained RUC chief Kenneth Newman.

In 1972 there had been 555 prison officers in Northern Ireland. By 1978 there were 2,339.

Republican prisoners in British jails

are subject not just to the routine brutality of the prison system but to systematic strip searching. Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer were strip searched hundreds of times a week in Brixton jail. Prisoners are kept in British jails and moved around the top security prisons deliberately to frustrate and harass relatives and supporters.

In 1977 plastic bullets replaced "rubber bullets" as the RUC's crowd control weapon. Over 50,000 plastic bullets have been fired since their introduction. 17 unarmed civilians have been killed by them, including seven children.

Throughout the 14 years of Ulsterisation and criminalisation the security forces have been unable to break the military stalemate with the Provisionals or significantly undermine its mass support. In fact that support was demonstrated during the hunger strikes of 1980-81.

In 1981 Bobby Sands went on hunger strike in the H-block prisons and was followed by other republican prisoners. They demanded the right to political status in the prisons. The resolve of the anti-unionist population was shown when Sands was elected as a Sinn Fein MP while still on hunger strike. After his death on 5 May 1981, 70,000 people attended the funeral; over 10% of the anti-unionist population.

In the 1980s the security forces again resorted to undercover assassinations in the "shoot to kill" policy against unarmed IRA suspects. They stepped up their judicial terror with the use of uncorroborated evidence from "supergrasses" to put away republicans ten and twenty at a time.

In 1985 the British government signed the Anglo-Irish Accord with the Southern state government, the main aim of which was, with assistance of the Southern government, the rounding up of IRA and republican activists on both side of the border and the boosting of support for the SDLP.

Britain has taken drastic measures to cover up its repressive role in Ireland. It has censored TV programmes in any way critical of the army and RUC. It has created a climate of self-censorship. Last year it issued a ban on broadcasts of Sinn Fein members and sympathisers.

Twenty years on, the Northern Ireland state is as discriminatory on jobs, housing and conditions for the catholic population as it was in 1969. The British army's role has been to defend that state in order to keep Ireland divided, thus weakening the fighting strength of the Irish working class as a whole.

Every repressive strategy and technique has either found its way into the British class struggle or stands ready to be used if needed.

Riot squads have been used against pickets and black youth for the last ten years. CS gas was used against the Toxteth uprising of 1981. All the major police forces of Britain now possess plastic bullets and are trained to use them. The stop, search and detention powers of the PTA were largely incorporated into the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1985.

Kenneth Newman moved straight from his job as RUC boss into Chief of the Metropolitan Police, just in time to oversee the crushing of the Brixton uprising. And during the miners' strike the "exclusion" provision of the PTA was copied by police who stopped car loads of pickets on the county borders.

Little wonder many miners and their families compared their pit villages to Ireland when police squads occupied them during the year long strike.

The repression in Ireland goes on in the name of British workers. Both Labour and Tory parties' hands are stained with blood. It will only stop when the British occupation of Ireland is ended forever.■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Thatcher, 1789 and all that . . .

MARGARET THATCHER was booed at the celebrations of the French Revolution's two hundredth anniversary. Not surprisingly. In an outburst that revealed both the depth of her ignorance, and the narrowness of her prejudices, she claimed Britain was the pioneer of democratic rights. Speaking against revolutions in general, and the French Revolution in particular, she claimed also that the British had done things "much more quietly" and successfully.

She will doubtless insist on inserting this series of right wing nationalist prejudices into the core curriculum for history in schools. She talked of the Magna Carta as the forerunner of democratic rights. This is simply nonsense. It gave political consultative rights to "all free men", but this was in fact only a minute proportion of society. The vast majority of society, as landworking serfs, were by very definition, "unfree men".

Equally laughable was Thatcher's claim that somehow British history has been managed "much more quietly". Along with all right wing historians she tries to bury the English Civil War of mid-seventeenth century. It was that civil war that saw the destruction of the attempt to create

aristocracy. The Eiffel Tower symbolised the triumph of capitalist industry. Historians agreed theirs had been a necessary bourgeois revolution against feudal tyranny and economic decay.

Things were rather different this time round. The Russian army marched under snow in the streets of Paris. Aply in keeping with the official response to Thatcher, the British army marched under a rain cloud. And a summit of the top capitalist powers was convened in Paris to discuss and order their common affairs. This was no celebration of revolution or the struggle for liberty and against tyranny. Historians from social democracy through to the far right have united in seeing in the act of revolution itself the seeds of modern dictatorships. Le Pen said it for them all when he declared the revolution to be the "mother of totalitarianism and terror".

Why should the employers and bankers of today systematically conceal their own revolutionary origins. Why should Thatcher shudder at the thought even of this year's celebrations of 1789? The reasons are simple. Take the French bourgeoisie for example. One hundred years ago it was confident of its future, proud of the revolution that it saw as its own.

But as capitalism has developed so it has given birth to revolutionary forces that challenge its rule. The mantle of revolution has been taken up by the working class with the object of overthrowing capitalism itself. The Russian Revolution of 1917 showed this to be possible, and its leaders consciously appropriated to themselves possibly the best of the traditions of the French Revolution. The proletarian class struggle has superceded the bourgeois one leaving the capitalists at best timid and reluctant fighters for democracy.

Hence the need for the bourgeoisie to deny a revolutionary heritage that legitimises struggle against them, to deny that revolution is the locomotive of history. And likewise the need for their ideologists to either hide their revolutionary past, as in Britain, and to portray revolutions in general as unnecessary and destructive.

Against Thatcher and Mitterrand the Marxist tradition has always seen the revolutionary class struggle as the driving force of history. At key moments the existing system of class relations, and the political system that guarantees them, become an obstacle to human progress. They become a fetter on the development of the productive forces in order to meet human need. Such was the case in England in the mid-seventeenth century. Such was the case in France in the 1780s.

In both cases an historically necessary social revolution broke the log jam by overthrowing the old ruling class and breaking their political power. And in both cases the road was now opened to the development of the productive forces in a new system of production—capitalism.

But what Marx called the "old mole" of revolution continued to work away. Not only did capitalism, as it grew, create an ever larger potentially revolutionary proletariat.

Its search for profits consigns ever greater numbers of the world's population to starvation and misery at the expense of the prosperous few. Thatcher's system is itself ripe for revolutionary overthrow. That's why she considers revolution, any revolution, a dirty word.■



an absolute monarch and the execution of the king in the process. It was a time of revolutions that broke the power of the most entrenched aristocratic supporters of absolutism. And it saw the birth of a mass, popular radical republican movement.

This is the revolution that broke the monopoly of political power of the landowning aristocracy and opened the way to commercial, bourgeois development. But it is one that conservatives have tried to bury for the last 300 years.

Instead Mrs Thatcher hailed what she called "our calm revolution of 1688". This was held up as the alternative to the bloodshed and mass upheavals of revolutionary France. But in fact what has gone down in English history books as the "Glorious Revolution" saw a Bill of Rights that gave the vote to less than 10% of the most prosperous and was reactionary against the radical politics of the real English Revolution. A monarchy was re-established with no serious constitutional limits on its political powers.

It was the popular radical tradition in Britain, itself deeply inspired by the great French Revolution that took up the battle for democratic rights in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Those who stood in opposition to the French Revolution, as Thatcher does today, were virulently opposed to democratic rights. Edmund Burke, for example, talked of the popular masses as the "swinish multitude".

But Thatcher was not the only one to be attempting to use the celebrations to bury the French Revolution. Back in 1889 the centenary was celebrated by the French bourgeoisie as their victory over feudalism and the landed

1989-1989

Repression



of the social and national struggles is not optional but essential for the victory of either.

Not only this; for the protestant workers to find allies in the anti-unionist working class they must be deprived of their allies in the British working class.

There are no British solutions to the Irish war. But British workers have a vital part to play. For twenty years the British workers' movement has been at best passive, at worst actively supporting the occupation and repression.

This must change now. We need to build a movement in the trade unions and the working class communities which openly embraces the cause of Irish freedom. Its goal must be political strike action to force the immediate withdrawal of the British troops.

To solve the impasse of the Irish national struggle a revolutionary party is needed. Only revolutionary Marxism can build a party which offers every section of the Irish working class an answer to its burn-

ing problems. In Ireland the forces which are committed to building that party are small. They are grouped in the MRCI's Irish section, the Irish Workers Group. That party will be built, not by abstract calls for workers unity in the North, nor by dodging the issue of the troops and concentrating on the economic struggle. Nor will it be built by tailing the left republicanism of Sinn Fein.

It will be forged out of those militants with a shared commitment to common action with revolutionary nationalists against extradition and for the defeat of the British army of occupation but who will also fight to pit the working class of the South against their own exploiters here and now, not fearful of disrupting a pan-National alliance against imperialism. In brief, it will be built by those who fight for transitional demands and for permanent revolution.■

In June and July a wave of strike action among transport workers in Colombo rocked the Sri Lanka government plans for a low wage economy. Badly in need of a diversion President Premadasa sought to generate anti-Indian feeling by calling on the Indian troops to get out. Mark Abram explains the background to the latest events.

SRI LANKA: REJECT SINHALA CHAUVINISM

Kick out the Indian troops

THE BUS workers strike in the capital city Colombo is only one of the problems confronting Sri Lanka's President Premadasa. The economy is deteriorating fast. Tea production costs are now higher than world market prices. The IMF are imposing more stringent conditions on loans, cutting the government's room for manoeuvre over welfare handouts and public sector pay increases—both of which formed part of Premadasa's pre-election manifesto.

But it is the latest twists and turns in the national struggle of the Tamils, and the chauvinist response of the Sinhala JVP, that has given rise to the worst confrontations.

After 1984 the struggle of the

Tamils for their own state in the North of the island erupted into armed conflict with the Sinhala state. This entirely legitimate struggle of an oppressed people resulted in large areas of the North and east being effectively controlled by the Tamil Tigers, the major guerrilla group.

But with the signing of the Indian-Sri Lanka accord in 1987 the struggle of the Tamils was set back. The misnamed Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) was drafted in by the UNP government and up to 60,000 troops went on a prolonged search and destroy mission against the Tamils. Alongside this went an attempt at a political settlement. This stopped short of an independent state for the Tamils. But it did

introduce a form of devolution based on Provincial Councils. It aimed to preserve a unitary state, draw in the more moderate factions of the Tamils and isolate the Tigers.

In this India hoped to consolidate its influence in the country. In particular the Congress Party of Gandhi sought to build support in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Up to this spring the project seemed to be working. The Tigers were being driven back and elections held for the Provincial Councils. Despite the growing opposition to the government and the IPKF from the JVP in the south the situation seemed stable enough by January this year for Premadasa to lift the State of Emergency that had existed since July 1987.

But now the situation has turned again. In May the Tigers were weakened enough to be forced to the negotiating table in Colombo. In June the JVP stepped up its military campaign of resistance.

Already since the turn of the year a further 1,700 have been killed, most of them members of political groups considered by the



Striking Motor-rickshaw driver harassed by soldiers

JVP to be traitors.

Given the weakness of the Tigers and the growing threat from the chauvinist JVP, Premadasa on 1 June demanded that the IPKF leave by 29 July. After all, it has done its job in taming the Tigers and such a demand undercut the JVP's support.

Gandhi has reacted furiously, refusing to comply. He claims that the powers devolved to the Provincial Councils are not yet sufficient to justify Indian departure. In reality Gandhi does not want to relinquish an important part of India's regional domination. Already military conflicts have been reported between the Sri Lankan army and the IPKF.

As the July deadline passes further conflict is possible. In that case despite the murderous activity of the Sri Lankan army against the Tamils, revolutionaries would be obliged to defend the right of the Sri Lankan army to kick out the

IPKF. At the same time revolutionaries should aim to extend the struggle against the army itself, and continue the fight for genuine national self-determination of the Tamil people, free from military occupation and imposed political structures.

In the south the working class is not a pawn of the JVP, even if it is prey to its chauvinism. The strikes in Colombo are not occurring simply because of intimidation by the JVP but because the break up of the Sri Lankan economy is forcing the Sinhalese working class to fight the government.

It is through the experience of this fight that revolutionaries can forge an independent class response, recognising that the struggle of the Tamils for national liberation and that of workers against exploitation both face the same enemy; namely, imperialism and their slavish followers in the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie. ■

GREECE

Stalinists bail out right wing

"IT LOOKS bizarre, and it is bizarre". This is how the *Economist* (8.12.89) sees the lash up between the right wing New Democracy Party and the parties of the Left Alliance to form a temporary government in Greece. They are particularly surprised since the Left Alliance includes both sections of the Greek Stalinists—the Moscow loyal KKE and the Eurocommunists.

Anyone familiar with the record of the post-war Stalinists will recognise that the events in Greece are not "bizarre" but yet another example of their betrayal of the working class.

The Stalinists are supporting the new Prime Minister, Tzannis Tzane-takis, of the conservative New Democracy Party which holds the largest number of parliamentary seats, 145, after the 18 June elections. No party managed to gain an overall majority and some kind of coalition seemed likely. The Stalinist dominated Left Alliance held the balance of power with 28 seats. They rejected a coalition with the former PM Andreas Papandreu's "socialist" Pasok party and chose instead to support a right wing government. In return for which they have been given two key ministries, Justice and the Interior.

Pasok claims to be socialist and aligns itself with other social democratic governments such as Mitterrand's in France. However despite Pasok's rhetoric about social justice it was, and is essentially, a bourgeois nationalist party—a party whose politics fully support its native capitalism and is not based on working class organisation.

The Stalinists are claiming their action is justified by the need to investigate a number of financial scandals in which former Pasok ministers, including Papandreu himself, are suspected of being involved. The government aims to use parliament to prosecute the ex-ministers who cannot be indicted though

the courts.

Certainly there appears to be evidence that Pasok are involved in five major scandals. These include using money embezzled by banker George Koskotas from the Bank of Crete, taking "kick-backs" from arms deals and attempting to avoid paying duty on 9,000 tons of Yugoslav maize sold to the European Community by claiming it was of Greek origin.

Financial scandals, as we have seen in Britain and more recently in Japan, are an inherent part of capitalism. Capitalist parties use links with big business to finance their political activities. These scandals tend to come to light when the ruling class are looking for a change of government.

The real reason for the Greek Stalinists support for the right wing is their hope of more electoral gains. The three month period set aside for the investigation is unlikely to be sufficient time to fully deal with such widespread corruption.

The conservatives and Stalinists, however, also intend to use their time in government to remove Pasok control from the media and other key state industries. Both groups believe Pasok used the media as a propaganda tool to ensure electoral success.

The Greek Stalinists also recognise that a coalition with Pasok would not have been a good vote winner. The demand for a clean up has been very strong and the Stalinists want to harness this to aid their electoral project of forming a "democratic and progressive" coalition government.

Instead of exposing the inherent rottenness and corruption of capitalism themselves, they are setting out to clean up the image of capitalism. Instead of mobilising the Greek working class in order to dig up the root of the corruption—capitalism itself, the Stalinists make pacts with the ruling class to ensure the continuance of capitalism. ■

THE PEOPLE of Chile go to the polls again at the end of July in a second plebiscite on Pinochet's constitution. This constitution leaves Chilean society dominated by the army. The resounding "No vote" last October made clear to the Pinochet wing of the ruling class that, whatever candidate it chose, it had little chance of winning the planned elections in December.

Instead of building on this massive rejection of Pinochet through mobilising mass struggles against the new fraudulent constitution and the regime itself, the "Command for the No vote", led by the Christian Democrats, immediately entered into negotiations with the regime. The result has been that the government has proposed a number of "reforms" to the constitution, reducing the power of the Presidency for example, but which leave its fundamental undemocratic structure intact. It is these changes that are being put forward in the 30 July plebiscite.

To fight the December elections and to support these constitutional changes a new popular front electoral block has been formed in Chile, "La Concertacion de Partidos Politicos por la Democracia" (the Co-ordination of Political Parties for Democracy). This has brought 17 political parties together including, most importantly, the Christian Democrats and the two major factions of the Socialist Party of Chile; the right, led by Ricardo Lagos and the "left", led by Clodomiro Almeyda.

The Socialist Party has already adopted Patricio Alwyn, the leader of the Christian Democrats, as its Presidential candidate! This is an utter betrayal by the Socialist Party. They are attempting to tie the working class to the major party of the Chilean bourgeoisie. It should be remembered that Alwyn and the Christian Democrats were major instigators of Pinochet's coup against Allende!

The real purpose of this popular front is clear from statements made by its leaders. Edgardo Boeninger, a leader of the Christian Democrats,

Down with Pinochet's constitution!

made the following statement after the adoption of Alwyn:

"It is not a matter of finding a candidate who can win the election, because the truth of the matter is that any opposition candidate will win. What matters is developing a collective agreement among all the opposition parties. We need a very solid front to face the three basic items: constitutional reforms, the explosion of social demands, and the problem of human rights rooted in the relationship between the military and civilians."

The Christian Democrats recognise very well the necessity to draw in the Socialist and Communist parties, who will be able to use their base among the workers to control the inevitable "explosion of social demands" i.e. demands on wages, conditions, trade union rights etc, which will come to the fore once the Pinochet dictatorship has been removed.

They also recognise the need to control the demands for just retribution against the murderers and torturers in the army command. In any such situation a government hemmed in by constitutional restrictions from the army would provide a fine excuse for the new popular front to avoid action, a fact that explains their willingness to vote for Pinochet's "reformed" constitution.

But it is not just the Socialist party who are colluding in this betrayal. The Communist Party of Chile (CPC), which is formally outside the Concertacion, was nevertheless quick to endorse Alwyn's candidature. The leaders of the Christian Democrats have already, in return, agreed a deal whereby the CPC will

stand separately from the 17 party alliance but be guaranteed a certain number of seats in the next Parliament. The Chilean Stalinists will support the popular front from the outside.

The CPC has already made clear that it believes the priority for the next government is the task of "democratic recovery", the "subordinating of the state to popular sovereignty". The reformist politics of the CPC and its slavish parliamentary cretinism mean that despite all the lessons of the 1973 coup it will continue to peddle the idea that the army can be democratised.

Such is the rightward drift of both the CPC and the Socialist party that both want to distance themselves completely from the last Popular Unity Government. Their line within and without the new government will be "the workers' demands will have to wait, our task is to restore popular sovereignty and reform the army".

Whatever the outcome of the plebiscite, the key task for the workers of Chile is to mobilise to prevent the imposition of a restricted constitution and to break up the Popular Front alliance.

- Down with Pinochet's fraudulent constitution!
- Down with the military regime!
- For the immediate convening of an unrestricted constituent assembly!
- Socialist and Communist Parties, break with the popular front!
- Break with the Christian Democrats!
- For a workers' government in Chile!

Thousands of bible-bashing bigots in the USA will be celebrating a recent Supreme Court decision which restricts rights to abortion. Millions of women who need abortions will face even greater obstacles than before writes

Clare Heath

KEY ELEMENTS of US abortion law were overturned in early July. Since the Supreme Court case of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 the right to an abortion in the first three months (or trimester) of a pregnancy was guaranteed by the US constitution. In the second trimester the various states could restrict abortion, but not on grounds of the so-called rights of the foetus. Only in the third trimester, after 24 weeks, could a state really limit the right

Abortion rights under attack

of a woman to make a private decision over her pregnancy.

Most importantly, this constitutional right was upheld by the Federal State. States could not overturn this locally. But they could, and often did, restrict access to abortion. They could deny public funding and insist that women under 18 get their parents' consent for the abortion. But they could not prosecute women or the doctors who performed the abortions. In many states the 1973 ruling has been the only obstacle to a total ban on abortions by reactionary "right-to-lifers". Five states already have statutes declaring their intention to outlaw abortion as soon as they are legally entitled to do so.

The case of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* was a recent attempt to get the Supreme Court to accept one state's very restrictive laws. In Missouri life is defined as beginning at conception. The foetus' "right to life" would override the mother's right to an abortion, except where the mother's life was threatened. But this law could not be enacted without reversing *Roe v. Wade*.

The Supreme Court did not uphold Missouri law in total: but the right wing Justices did uphold the right for public funding for abortion facilities to be restricted, and for states to require a test at 20 weeks on the "viability" of the foetus, i.e. its "ability to live".

These two issues may seem minor, since in many states there is virtually no funding for abortions anyway, and nationally less

vent private abortions being carried out on public property. In Missouri, where this is already effectively the law, of 17,382 abortions last year only 90 were carried out in public facilities.

Some states have interpreted the law to prohibit counselling on abortion in public funded clinics. So women will not be allowed to get information about abortion and how to get one. The poorest women

for abortions (up to \$2000 in some cases), and will delay them. And it will not only affect the small number of women seeking late abortions. The ruling also opens the door to further challenges that the state should uphold the right to "potential" life.

The Chief Justice in the ruling, William Rehnquist, said the state has a "compelling interest in potential life", and ruled that "... we do not see why the state's interest in protecting human life should come into existence only at the point of [foetal] viability". Backed as he is by a reactionary majority in the Supreme Court, hand-picked by Reagan, this man looks set to make further inroads into abortion (and other democratic) rights when three more cases are heard this autumn.

Whilst these battles go on in the courts and the state legislatures, skirmishes continue outside the abortion clinics. The terrorists of Operation Rescue have been picketing and firebombing clinics, intimidating women going for abortions, and threatening pro-choice activists and doctors. They have organised attacks, to pressurise the politicians, but also to win "mass" support, not least from vulnerable and guilt-stricken women who have had abortions and are now "repentant".

The pro-choice lobby, led by the Democratic supporters of the National Organisation of Women (NOW), have allowed the growth of this movement without mounting an effective opposition. But militant fighters for women's rights have correctly physically confronted the "lifers" outside the clinics, whilst NOW have been lobbying the Democrats. Only after the massive demonstration in Washington (believed to be about 600,000 strong) has mass support for these counter mobilisations grown.

What is needed is to build links between this pro-choice movement and working class organisations, as has begun through links with Eastern Airlines strikers in some areas. The campaign should also try to build mass support amongst those women who will be most affected by the decisions—black and Hispanic women, the young and the inner city poor.

The reverberations of the Supreme Court decision will not be confined to the United States. Already in Europe we can see the confidence this has instilled in anti-abortionists trying to restrict relatively liberal laws. In Britain the likely effect will be to motivate SPUC and Life into more direct action, to back another private member's bill. We already face a possible reduction in time limits from 28 to 24 weeks by a government-backed amendment to the Infant Life Preservation Act. Civil servants are currently drafting legislation on the issues from the Warnock Report—which will deal with viability, the rights of the foetus and the legal definition of life. With anti-abortionists in confident mood, moves to restrict abortion may find more resonance in Westminster than in previous years. ■

In Britain the likely effect will be to motivate SPUC and Life into more direct action

than 1% of abortions are done after 20 weeks. However, they will hit working class and young women particularly hard.

Already in 37 states Medicaid (which pays for health care when people are on benefits or not covered by private insurance) will not pay for abortions. This means that working class women have to find at least \$250 if they need an abortion. With the new ruling, states will be able to restrict public money for abortion further and even pre-

will have neither the information, the access nor the money to get abortions.

By insisting on testing foetal viability at 20 weeks the Supreme Court has introduced doubts about previous legal definitions of viability. The division of pregnancy into three trimesters is no longer the guideline, and from 20 weeks doctors will have to prove that a foetus is not viable through complex, and in many cases dangerous, tests. This will mean massive extra costs

US MINERS

Strike spreads

BY ARTHUR MERTON

WHILE GEORGE Bush, the US president, was heaping praise on the Solidarity trade union in Poland, his government was busy trying to smash a trade union back home. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) still faces massive fines, violence from state troopers and prison sentences for its officials.

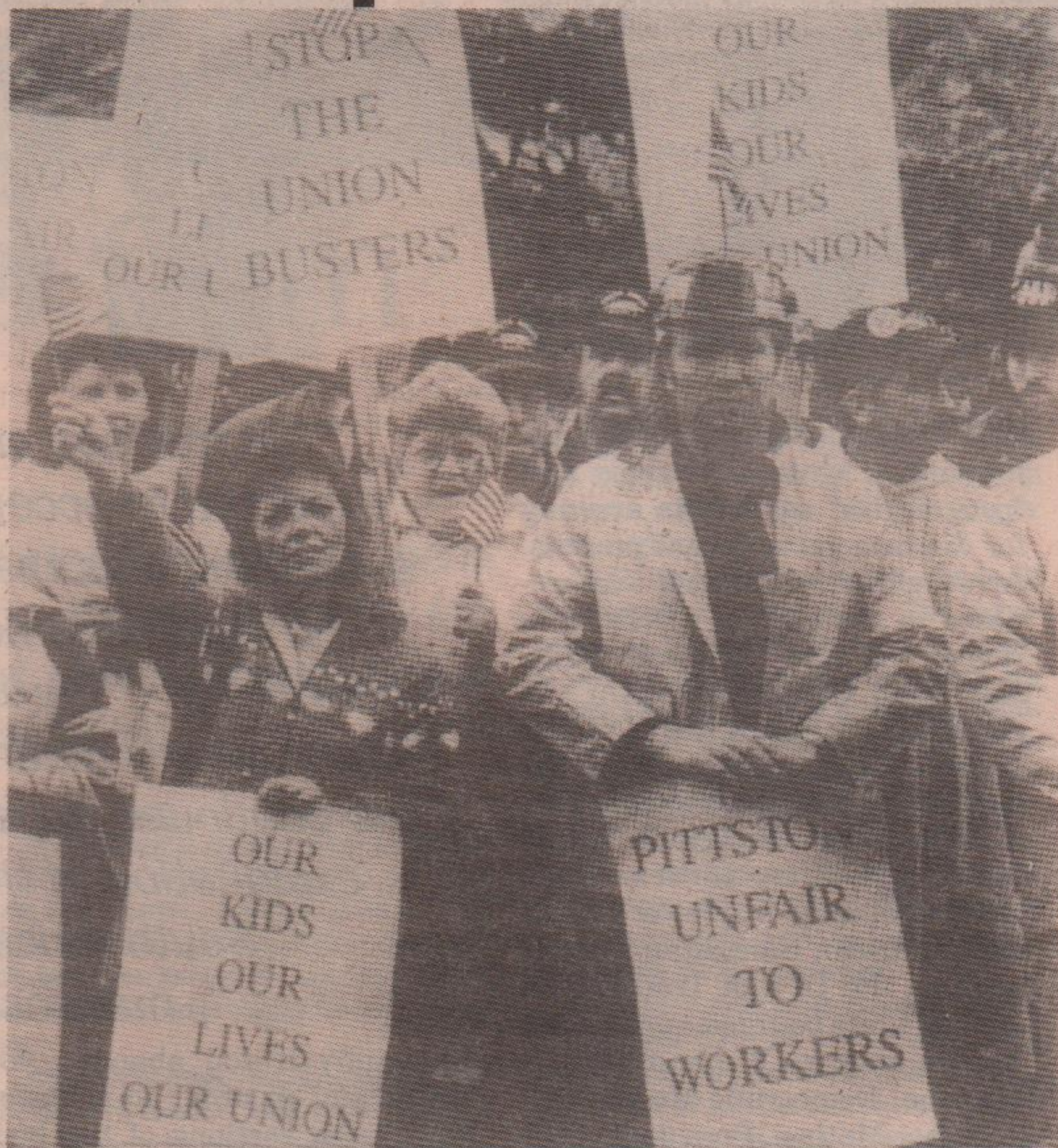
The UMWA is, as we reported last month, locked in battle with the Pittston Coal Company in the south of West Virginia. The company is refusing to honour a union contract and is set on introducing new shift systems which will mean Sunday working, low wages, reduced safety cover, reduced health and pension contributions, and harsh working conditions. To win, it knows it has to smash the union.

The Pittston bosses are nothing if not blunt about this. They are one of the biggest exporters of metallurgical coal. To compete on the world market they need to slash their labour costs. One of their bosses explained what this meant:

"When you are out trying to sell a lump of coal abroad, the first thing the customer asks you is: Is it union or non-union? If it's union, well it's clear they think that's not a reliable source."

So, Pittston aims to make its mine non-union and "reliable". If it wins other companies will follow suit.

Miners throughout the USA realise that the UMWA's very existence is becoming the key issue. This is why the strike has spread. At various times in as many as ten states 40,000 miners—two thirds of the entire union—have taken



militant (unofficial) strike action in support of the 1,700 Pittston strikers. In Pennsylvania, strikers have appealed to non-union miners to back the strike and join the UMWA.

They have taken all this action against the advice and wishes of the UMWA leader, Richard Trumka, who fears that the action in unionised pits will jeopardise his contracts and negotiations with the other coal companies. Instead of solidarity strikes, he has called for a three day holiday. This cowardly bureaucrat—a lawyer not a miner—

refuses to acknowledge the fact that if the Pittston strikers are defeated the other companies will immediately begin tearing up every contract he has negotiated.

The rank and file miners have shown plenty of resourcefulness in waging their fight. In the face of violence from the state and the Vance Security Asset Protection Team—which describes its open thug operations as "Fast. Efficient. Professional."—the miners have organised themselves into effective picket squads with camouflage

uniforms. In the face of legal blocks on their right to picket they have staged slow moving car convoys to prevent the movement of scab coal along the narrow mountain roads. Solidarity camps have been established throughout the Appalachian mountains—the heart of the strike.

In a move reminiscent of the way the women of the British mining communities organised in 1984/5, the women of the Appalachian pit villages have created a movement called the "Daughters of Mother Jones". In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Mother Jones was an active organiser for the UMWA in some of its most bitter struggles. She was a regular on every picket line, right up to her old age. And in her time she put a good few gun thugs and scabs to flight. She was a tireless and militant fighter for the working class cause.

The Appalachian women are identifying with a proud and militant tradition. They are not just servicing the strikers, they are at the forefront of the strike. The majority of the 2,500 people arrested so far have been women. They have toured the country, organised raids on shareholders' meetings and played a leading role in much of the picketing.

The determination of the strikers and their families is clear. Their creative energy in fighting this strike is magnificent. To win, these qualities will need to be built on. Trumka and the backtracking UMWA leadership need to be confronted and defeated. The wildcat actions need to be transformed into a national all-out UMWA strike. The survival of the union is at stake: the union as a whole must fight. Victory to the US miners! ■

SOUTH AFRICA

No to "Partial Victory"!

HERE IS an initiative underway in the two major imperialist countries concerned with South Africa, Britain and the USA. This initiative has also been joined by the USSR. In the words of Yuri Yukalov, head of the CPSU's African department, the USSR "would prefer a political settlement" to continued armed confrontation.

This unholy alliance aims to "solve" the South African question in a way which avoids the revolutionary destruction of apartheid and preserves both capitalism and the imperialist status quo in Southern Africa.

The combined pressure of two major imperialist powers and the Soviet Union is having important repercussions on the liberation movement in South Africa.

The major forces in the struggle against apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) have reaped the results of their inability to lead the revolutionary upsurge of 1984-86 to a successful conclusion. The suppression of that movement, the illegalisation of the UDF, the crushing of the township organisations, and the restrictions on trade union struggles, have resulted in a move towards talk of "negotiations", "compromise" and "partial victories".

It was indicative that in Mandela's most recent statements after his meeting with Botha, Mandela presented the ANC as the brokers who can end the armed actions and control the mass struggles in return for talks and recognition:

"Dialogue with the mass democratic movement and in particular the African National Congress is the only way of ending the violence and bringing peace to our country."

Twin track

In one sense there is nothing new about this. The ANC has long pursued the "twin track" strategy relying on diplomacy and international sanctions on the one hand, and armed struggle designed to force the regime to the negotiating table on the other. Under the pressure of the mass movement the left face of this strategy was most apparent at the time of the township uprisings. Now a countervailing pressure is at work.

Working class militants are right to be concerned about the drive for negotiations at the moment. A significant minority of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) voted against a resolution on negotiations even though it laid down a series of conditions that would have to be met by the government. It is clear that any negotiations at present would be on the apartheid state's terms, backed by the full weight of imperialism. It would be the equivalent of a Lancaster House or Namibian settlement where the working class is tied hand and foot by agreements made over its head by its nationalist "leaders".

Concern over the new line on negotiations can even be discerned within the ranks of the ANC/SACP itself in a series of contradictory statements and concealed polemics within the ANC/SACP press. Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) commander Joe Modise, reflecting the old line, has publicly ruled out a Namibia type settlement:

"Those who say it is time for a settlement with the regime are misreading the situation. Only the armed struggle will bring the Boers to the negotiations."

The majority line, however, is reflected in statements such as those of the ANC "theoretician"

Events in South Africa and abroad have led to a rising tide of speculation that the South African government is about to take a major initiative towards the African National Congress. Joan Mayer looks at the repercussions of imperialist and Soviet pressure on the ANC and the South African trade unions.

alliances should be sought by the trade unions.

The two largest unions, the mineworkers' unions (NUM) and NUMSA, have been key protagonists in the debates. NUM has for several years followed a more Congressite policy. NUMSA has in the past been associated with calls for a more independent working class policy.

The resolutions adopted at the NUM congress reflect the ANC's attempts to construct a real popular front prior to the hoped for negotiations. They hope to draw in significant sections of the South African capitalists around such a project.

The NUM congress called for an "anti-apartheid coalition" to be formed and implied that this should include "all the parties which have been to Lusaka", the

condition for any united front is that it should not subordinate the workers' movement and its demands to the politics and programme of the bourgeoisie or the petit bourgeoisie. But this is precisely the method of the ANC alliance strategy as Motlasi makes clear.

Asked about the problem of bringing together an alliance containing supporters of the "free enterprise system" Motlasi responds that it is the workers' demands which will be sacrificed:

"If those differences are debated at the [AAC] conference it will not achieve anything. It will divide the people completely... I believe in a planned economy, a socialist economy. But I don't believe that it should be imposed on people. It is a long process. It is not as easy as some people think." Certainly not.



Mashinini writing in *Sechaba* of August last year.

Mashinini spells out the so-called programme of the "Partial Victory":

"It would impose some limitations on our programme of social emancipation. In practical terms this means that the concept of partial victory implies *de jure* abolition of apartheid and says less about *de facto* abolition."

In plain language, this means that the masses are expected to accept something less than the destruction of apartheid. Mashinini also makes clear here that the first thing to go in any negotiated settlement will be the (already inadequate) ANC programme of social emancipation. "Partial victory" clearly means the continued super-exploitation of the South African masses.

The move to negotiations has been reflected in the debates in the trade unions in the lead up to the Second Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) Congress in July. The ANC has effectively set the agenda by asking for discussion around the question of negotiations and its new constitutional guide-lines. This question is linked to the issue of what sort of

ANC headquarters which has seen numerous white academics and "progressive" capitalists arriving for discussions in recent months. An even broader alliance was proposed in the call for COSATU to revive the ANC inspired "Anti-Apartheid Conference" (AAC), a conference called by the COSATU special congress last May but banned by the government. This conference was to include "homeland" opposition parties which work within the framework of the South African Bantustan system, such as the DPP of Transkei, as well as white bourgeois opposition parties such as Wynand Malan's National Democratic Movement.

James Motlasi, President of the NUM, expands on the meaning of this strategy in a recent interview with *South African Labour Reports*. Asked about the role of such an alliance he declares that the "Mass Democratic Movement":

"... has to seek common ground with other anti-apartheid forces, even to go inside the ranks of apartheid to grab some of the people to our ranks... to get forces even from within parliament."

While "broad alliances" are of course necessary in the struggle against apartheid, the paramount

"The masses are expected to accept something less than the destruction of apartheid... 'Partial Victory' clearly means the continued super-exploitation of the South African masses."

Especially if you abandon your "socialism" in order to achieve a block with sections of the bourgeoisie.

NUMSA is much more wary about the idea of a "broad alliance" which includes bourgeois forces. It argues that the "Mass Democratic Movement" should be a united front of all democratic working class organisations. It could form alliances with other forces, but not big capital or collaborators. The purpose is to put real flesh round the idea of workers' leadership of the struggle and place the movement under the control of the masses rather than under the control of

self-appointed leaders.

The Political Policy resolution specifically rejects "any alliance, whether tactical or strategic with representatives of big capital, homeland opposition parties and tri-cameral and local government structures until and unless they have shown in action that they support the principles, policy, and strategy of the Mass Democratic Movement". This last point leaves an opening to the perspective of the ANC. NUMSA militants should be clear, united fronts on specific limited actions with such forces; yes! Long term blocks which subordinate the workers to maintaining such alliances; never!

NUMSA has retained the idea of developing a working class political programme. This is not the same as the idea of a workers' charter of minimum democratic rights, to be attached to a new constitution, as proposed in the ANC's constitutional guide-lines. Moses Mayekiso, NUMSA's General Secretary, argues its purpose is to answer the question "What is the future society?" (SALB June 1989). In this sense Mayekiso is holding to the idea of class independence and the struggle for a socialist society that NUMSA is committed to. But the way in which Mayekiso argues this and the tactics and strategy he proposes in no way challenges the stages conception of the ANC/SACP, indeed it plays into its hands.

This is because he accepts the idea of a split between the minimum and maximum programme. The minimum programme becomes the *Freedom Charter*, or some version of it, while the Workers' Political Programme becomes something for the distant future, a maximum demand. In explaining how the workers should be able to amend the ANC's constitutional guide-lines for instance, Moses argues:

"We may feel this amendment is for today and this one is for tomorrow, for maximums. There will be minimums—now lets concentrate on the minimums and then tomorrow we want this. That's why we talk of a programme—not a programme to be implemented immediately." (SALB *ibid*)

Postponing

Mayekiso paves the way for the ANC strategy of uniting a popular front around the "minimum programme", postponing the maximum to a future post-apartheid society.

NUMSA is right that the working class movement must rebuild itself on a new and sounder basis. But it must do so around a transitional programme that links the minimum demands for democracy and the workers' economic aims, to the goal of socialism. It must advance the need for workers' control and workers' methods of struggle—occupations, the general strike, armed defence, which lead directly to the creation of workers' power through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalists.

Only that outcome can guarantee that the democratic gains of the struggle are made permanent and the starting point for the construction of socialism. It is not sufficient to say as Mayekiso does:

"The working class has got an organisation in South Africa, but we have not seen what programme the working class has to follow to make the socialist dream a reality."

A workers' political programme can only be developed, can only be fought for, by forging a revolutionary workers' party, a Trotskyist party in South Africa. This is the burning task facing working class militants today. ■

USSR

Soviet workers discover their strength

THE USSR is approaching crisis. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* have lifted the lid off the corruption and inefficiency of the bureaucracy, but have not been able to reform the system enough to save it. Ethnic unrest has continued to spread. And now industrial unrest has broken out on a scale which both threatens the whole bureaucratic edifice and demonstrates the power that can replace it.

Over the year working class self-organisation and confidence has been growing. Workers' unions and workers' clubs have mushroomed in the major industrial centres. In early July representatives of seventy of them met in Moscow to establish an information centre to co-ordinate these new organisations.

Side by side with this development has been an accelerating unofficial strike wave, particularly in the coal mines. It is the generalisation of the strike across pits, towns and all the major coalfields that marks this as a new stage in the development of the Soviet working class.

The strike wave was sparked by a sit-down strike in the Shevyakov pit in the Siberian Kuzbass coalfield. It rapidly spread throughout the entire coalfield and was soon joined by miners in the Ukrainian Donbass thousands of miles away, by miners in Vorkuta in the far north and by miners in the Karaganda mines of Khazakhstan.

The initial demands of the strikers focused on their appalling living and working conditions. Miners have traditionally been amongst the best paid of Soviet industrial workers. On an average of 450 roubles (approximately £450) a month unskilled Soviet miners earn twice the average industrial wage. Skilled miners do even better, and miners in the far north can earn 1,000 roubles a month.

However, conditions in the mines are appalling. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* has reported 10,000 deaths in Soviet pits in the last nine years! As it pointed out, this is probably more than the fatalities suffered by the Soviet army in Afghanistan. 152 lives were lost in the Kuzbass alone during the last year.

Anger

Living conditions are also the cause of tremendous anger. While a privileged few have access to special provisions, food and medical supplies for the mass of miners are woefully inadequate. The housing stock of the state mining ministry is so poor that thousands of miners in the Kuzbass live with their families in barracks originally designed for single men.

This is a direct result of a neglect of investment in the industry over the last thirty years while the bureaucracy's energy policy has prioritised the nuclear and oil industries.

In a massive show of strength the Soviet working class has once again shown itself to be a force to be reckoned with. As John Hunt explains, the country-wide strikes have sent shock waves through the ruling bureaucracy; with good reason.

No wonder then that the miners throughout the USSR have called for an end to special privileges and for the slackening of the grip of the inept and underfunded central ministerial bureaucracy on their pits.

They are also demanding new elections to the local soviets that administer their neglected communities and for new elections to the official trade unions that have connived with the management and local officials all along.

For the first time in over sixty years Soviet workers have tasted their own democracy and the power of their own self-organisation. Towns were ground to a halt with mass meetings and debates. While trade union officials in Siberia gave support to the strikers, the miners decided to elect their own workers' committee to do the negotiating. The coal minister and a Politburo commission shuttled from one angry mass meeting to another, only to have their pleas for a return to work rebuffed.

As workers complained of the record of their official union leaders, so the call has gone out for an

all-USSR meeting of miners' representatives "without the higher echelons". Such a meeting could lay the basis for a miners' union free of the bureaucracy. Likewise, links forged with other industrial and service workers in the coalfield towns could once again lay the basis for cross-industry workers' councils.

The response of the ruling bureaucracy was one of panic, concession and the threat of repression. The press was generally favourable to the miners and Gorbachev claimed sympathy for the grievances of the strikers.

Promises were made of the swift despatch of food and medical supplies to the strike-bound areas. The right of individual pits to sell, as their own, coal produced in excess of the planned quota was also quickly conceded in principle.

But when miners' meetings demanded immediate results, not bureaucratic promises, Gorbachev and co turned more threatening. Particularly when faced with the threat of a rail strike from 1 August he warned:

"The country could find itself at a point where it would be necessary to consider what means should be used to prevent the situation running out of control."

And this barely veiled threat was accompanied by a demagogic appeal to support him against those who were resisting change and clinging to the old managerial ways.

That the strike sent shudders through the bureaucratic leadership was made evident at a special session of the party Central Committee. The strikers had particularly vented their anger against local party officials, generally refusing to talk to them or accept their promises. Kuzbass miners raised the call for a new Soviet constitution by November 1990 that would "control the power of the party".

Discredited

Calls for local elections signalled the strikers' intent to use them to boot out their most hated functionaries. Hence Prime Minister Ryzhkov's fear that the party was so discredited that, after the local elections, the leadership could find itself confronted with "soviets without communists." Hence even the conservative Ligachev's frank confession that:

"Our old work, bureaucracy and the alienation from the people is a much greater danger than anti-social elements."

right. One of the demands of the Donbass miners was for the closure and prohibition of "co-operatives", widely recognised as thinly disguised private enterprise

units profiteering from the ever present shortages.

Pro-capitalist speakers from the Democratic Union were booed down when they tried to address a mass miners' meeting at Kemerovo in the Kuzbass. But so too were local party officials. The miners only wanted to hear those who spoke for them.

The miners have demonstrated their own strength. They will have awakened the expectations of other workers. Already letters from other groups of workers are appearing in the Soviet press complaining that their lot is even worse than that of the miners.

The bureaucracy's economic crisis is so deep that it is hard to fathom where it will find the supplies to placate the miners for even a short period. It simply cannot find the wherewithall to generalise its concessions to ever greater numbers of Soviet workers.

Parallels

The parallels with the birth of the independent Polish trade union Solidarity are striking. And the dangers for the bureaucracy of the development of a unified, independent, anti-bureaucratic working class movement in the USSR itself are incalculable for world Stalinism.

Of course, the situation is by no means an exact replica of Poland in 1980. There are not yet independent trade unions in the Soviet Union. Nor have the miners' stoppages yet generated massive sympathy strikes as did the walkouts in the Gdansk shipyards. Nevertheless the potential exists within the rising class consciousness and confidence of the Soviet workers for such explosive developments.

Yet the miners showed that they still have great illusions in Gorbachev. And particularly in the most productive pits, they have illusions that they can improve their material conditions through the *perestroika*'s search for enterprise autonomy which would allow them to share profits with their management.

This is a recipe for dividing a workforce that has just proved that its collective organisation is what makes it potentially strong and which is planning to formalise that unity with its meeting of miners' representatives.

Rather than supporting one wing of the ailing bureaucracy against another it is this reborn tradition of independent working class organisation that must be built upon. It is the road of workers' political revolution against the bureaucracy, it is the road to the rebirth of workers' power in the land of the Soviets. ■

POLAND

The road from Gdansk

With its leadership hustling for power and its membership hog tied by a ban on strikes, Solidarity the trade union is in danger of disintegrating. Simon MacIntosh looks at the prospects.

HAVING WON the Presidency by just one vote, Jaruzelski is desperate to form a stable government. He must do so in order to minimise the political repercussions that the forthcoming austerity programme will inevitably create. Furthermore he knows that the erstwhile allies of the communist party (PUWP) are no longer solidly dependable. Indeed he cannot now even be sure of all the nominally communist deputies in parliament.

Jaruzelski's solution is to invite Solidarity to participate in "co-governing and co-responsibility". Not unnaturally Solidarity have fought shy of this proposal to carry the can with the PUWP.

Professor Geremek, the Solidarity spokesperson widely tipped to be the next prime minister, responded by declaring that a Solidarity government would create "a situation of national unity" but that was "a completely different proposal and a completely different

government".

If Solidarity were going to share the blame, they wanted to be calling the shots—and to be in a position to claim the credit for, and help dictate the terms of, any increased western aid that might be forthcoming.

Adam Michnik, another prominent Solidarity leader, has signalled his willingness to work with the apparently born again Jaruzelski:

"We have always tried to bear in mind that even Saint Paul began by persecuting Christians."

He forgot to add that the church St Paul helped to found has been persecuting non-Christians virtually ever since!

Jacek Kuron, an ally of Michnik within the Solidarity leadership, has given Polish workers a hint of what such a PUWP/Catholic government would do, whoever held the majority of cabinet posts. In his maiden speech to the Sejm, the lower chamber of parliament, he attacked the

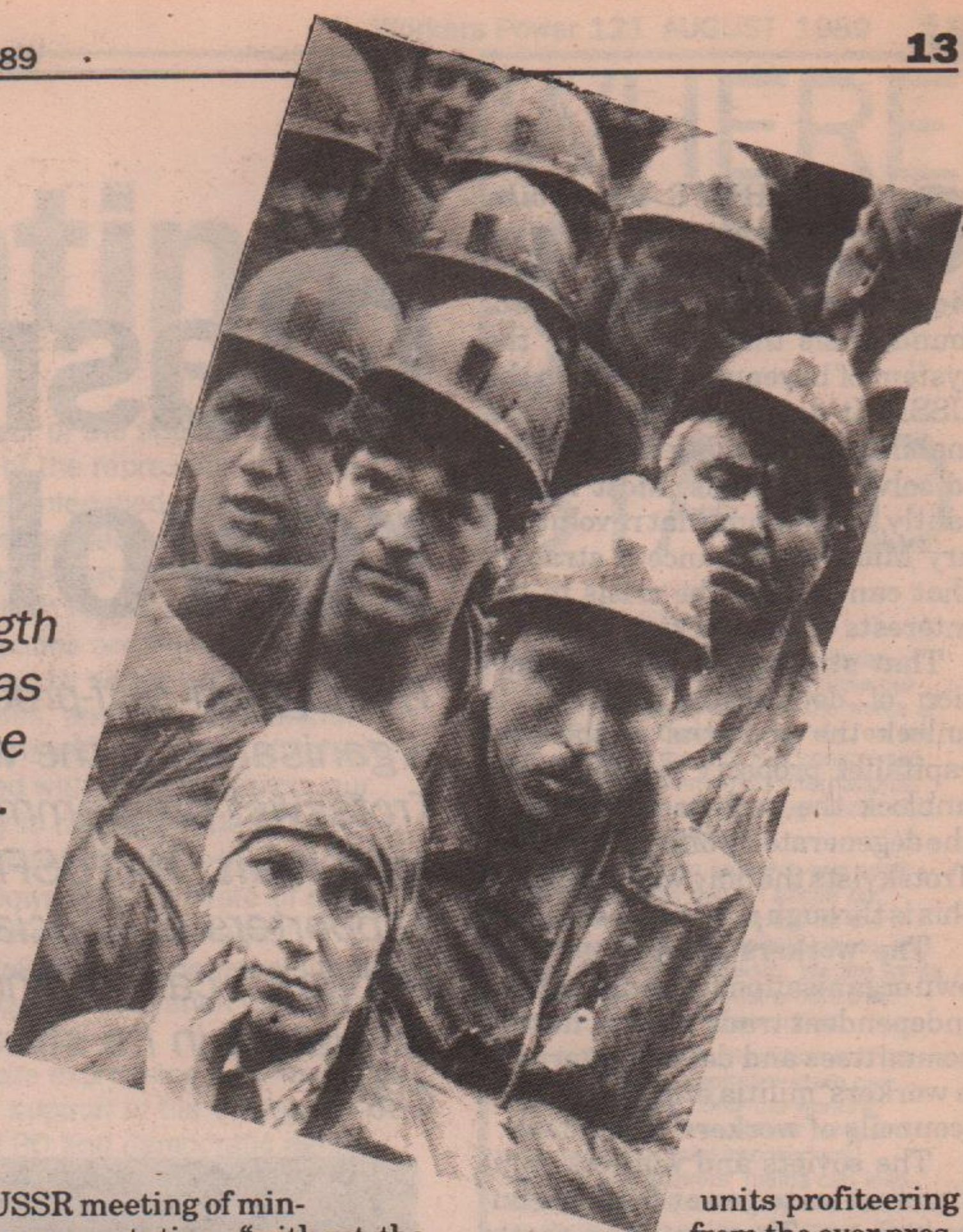
freezing of prices and wages for causing food shortages. For him market forces must be allowed to decide (i.e. increase) prices.

In fact he is likely to be proven wrong even before the unemployment his market reforms would produce is let rip through the Polish working class. The recent rise in meat prices has led to an enormous decrease in livestock as peasants slaughtered their animals to cash in. Come the winter all that will remain will be the old shortages plus higher prices!

All of these manoeuvres bode ill for the Polish workers. The base units of Solidarity have not flourished as well as predicted since its re-legalisation. They are being challenged by the virulently anti-communist Fighting Solidarity and by the official trade union federation, OPZZ. If the self-imposed ban on strikes continues in the face of mounting discontent the former could certainly, and the latter probably, grow at its expense.

But the Polish workers don't need these two sets of misleaders, any more than they need Michnik, Kuron, Geremek or Jaruzelski. Its independent interests cannot be realised by either capitalist restoration or Stalinist stooge unions.

The most immediate task is to organise in the factories, the shipyards and the mines against cuts in workers' living standards—whether by price rises or redundancies. But, as the history of Solidarity shows, the fight cannot be left at the level of defensive economic struggles. The defence of Polish workers' immediate interests leads inexorably to the demand to overthrow the Stalinists and replace their system with real workers' power—to political revolution. ■



GORBACHEV'S *perestroika* poses a sharp test for revolutionary Marxists. It provides ample evidence of the profound crisis that is gripping the system of bureaucratic rule in the USSR. It demonstrates daily the inability of the ruling bureaucracy to solve that crisis. Most importantly, it demands that revolutionary Marxists advance a strategy that can resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class.

That strategy is the introduction of democratic planning to unlock the potential of the post capitalist property relations and unblock the path to socialism in the degenerated workers' state. For Trotskyists the only way to achieve this is through *political revolution*.

The workers must forge their own organisations of struggle; from independent trade unions, factory committees and defence guards to a workers' militia and new soviets (councils of workers' delegates).

The soviets and workers' militia must seize power from the bureaucracy. They must recreate workers' democracy in the USSR and oversee the participation of the mass of workers in planning and control of production.

Strategy

This was Trotsky's strategy, summed up in *The Revolution Betrayed* and countless other writings on Stalinist rule. But it is totally absent from the resolutions and writings of the "Trotskyist" United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

In December 1988 the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the USFI passed a resolution on Gorbachev's reforms. The IEC resolution contains only one reference to political revolution. After discussing the divisions in the bureaucracy the resolution warns that this

"does not in any way mean fostering illusions in the reformability of the system—the establishment of a socialist democracy would mean a revolution." (*International Viewpoint (IV)* No 159 March 1989)

In all the remaining thousands of words in the IEC resolution there is not a single attempt to explain how that revolution can be brought about; what immediate or strategic demands the workers should fight for to transform their day to day struggles into a struggle for power.

This is hardly surprising once we find out that the leaders of the USFI struggled tooth and nail to keep any mention of political revolution out of the resolution. They explained to the IEC that they were "searching for a better term" to sum up the Trotskyist programme. Those within the USFI who think the term's final inclusion is a victory should look at what their leaders means by "socialist democracy" and "political revolution".

Scenario

Many of the resolution's basic arguments are taken from Ernest Mandel's book *Beyond Perestroika*. Mandel is the ideological leader of the USFI. His book holds out an optimum scenario of mass discontent and the formation of a new political leadership leading to a situation in which

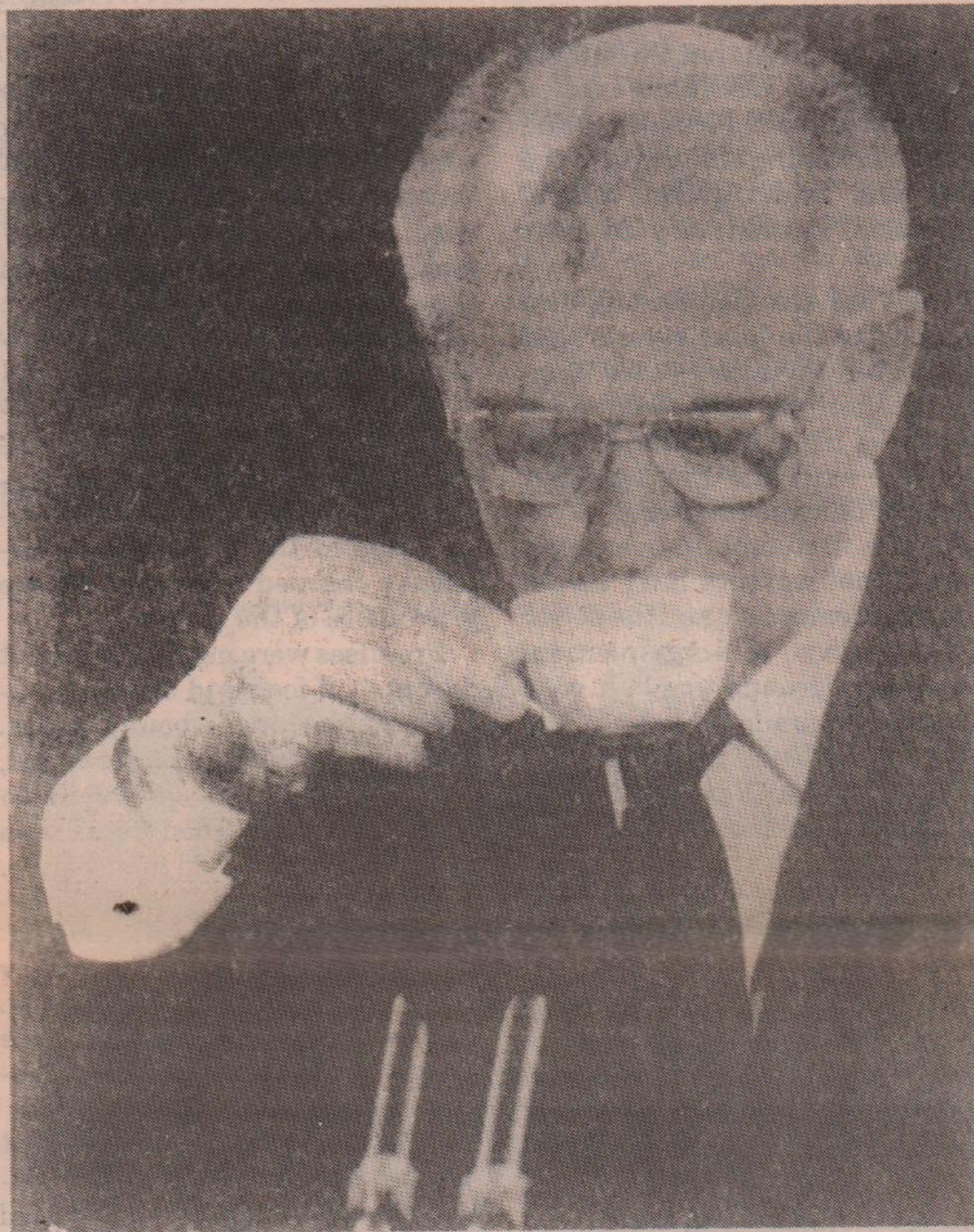
"the political revolution, in the classic Marxist sense of the term, will triumph".

But for Mandel political revolution turns out to be something very different from the "classic Marxist" strategy advocated by Leon Trotsky.

In *Beyond Perestroika* Mandel counterposes to the existing *perestroika* an "alternative model

USFI Glasnost or political revolution?

The biggest self-proclaimed Trotskyist organisation in the world has abandoned the Trotskyist programme for the USSR, argues John Hunt. The USFI, represented in Britain by supporters of "Socialist Action" and "Socialist Outlook", cannot find room for political revolution in its strategy for the Soviet working class.



of development" which is "unachievable without workers' management, workers' power and an institutionalised pluralistic socialist democracy".

What does this institutionalised socialist democracy mean? It means, for Mandel, the democratisation of the institutions of the Soviet state. For Mandel the key is the development of a plurality of political parties in the existing so-called soviets of the USSR. As Mandel puts it quite plainly:

"Real socialist democracy, real exercise of political power by the working masses, genuine soviet power are incompatible with the single party regime. The soviets will become sovereign and real organs of 'popular power' only when they are freely elected, only when they are free to decide on political strategy and political alternatives." (p82)

Mandel chooses to ignore the fact that the existing soviets have nothing in common with the soviets required to make a political revolution in the "classic Marxist sense of the term". They are mock parliamentary bodies not organs directly responsible to the workers in the factories, offices and collective farms.

Such organs will have to be built anew out of struggle against the bureaucracy, not through the democratisation of the existing institutions of the bureaucratic state.

Mandel makes a clear attempt

to dress up "political revolution" as a deeper and more thoroughgoing form of *glasnost*. He notes that Gorbachev has seen the need for a revolution of a special type. For Mandel Gorbachev's claims are "precisely the reference point for Trotsky in distinguishing the political revolution necessary in the Soviet Union".

Mandel's book includes the demand for key democratic rights. It includes "generalised workers' control over all economic activities" (p191), more creches, more holiday homes and the rapid transition to the 35 hour week. But nowhere do we see the call for a workers' militia and for genuine soviet power.

Concrete

In an article in the USFI's French publication *Inprecor* (No 23 March 1989) Mandel attacked the various opposition platforms appearing in the Soviet Union for not including the right to strike, the right to form elected workers' organisations at every level, the sliding scale of wages and for workers' control of production. But exactly the same could be said of the IEC resolution. The concrete demands of the Trotskyist programme for political revolution are entirely absent.

Whilst Mandel is prepared to include such demands in his book as a way of forcing the bureaucracy to "deepen *glasnost*" they find

no place in the actual programmatic statements of the USFI. From the resolution it appears as if the USFI were the passive observer of events developing in the USSR, not an organisation committed to intervening in those events. As we shall see this is very close to the truth.

At one point Mandel's book talks of encouraging the development:

"... of all forms of self-organisation of the masses—from the most embryonic forms such as strike committees to the most developed forms such as workers' councils organised on a national basis." (p185)

But they are posed as vehicles for propelling radical reform from below, not as embryonic organs of political revolution against the bureaucracy itself.

In truth the term Mandel much prefers—"socialist democracy"—has nothing to do with political revolution in the Trotskyist sense. In a passing and uncharacteristic use of the term Mandel shows that all he means by political revolution is mass mobilisation to democratise the USSR:

"There can be no socialist democracy without mass mobilisation, without political revolution." (p193)

Involvement

In other words the political revolution is simply a name given to mass involvement in reform, not to the seizure of power by the workers. It's a name that Mandel studiously avoids wherever he can.

It is a term which makes its way into the IEC resolution only in this ambiguous context; "socialist democracy would mean a revolution". To read this sentence to mean that democratic reform is political revolution may not have been the intention of those who fought for its inclusion. But it is a reading entirely justified by the whole of Mandel's book.

Both Mandel's book and the IEC resolution fail to grapple with the economic implications of *perestroika*. Mandel may think that Zaslavskaya and Aganbegyan are: "very prudent—and very vague—about practical proposals, which stands in contrast to the clarity of the diagnosis." (Mandel p22)

And he may argue that it is "unlikely" that the USSR will become an economy "where market regulation is dominant". (p56)

Infatuation

But in his infatuation with political democratisation he chooses to ignore that his "prudent" Gorbachevites are precisely committed to an economy "where market relations are dominant". Hence the even greater need to struggle for a political revolution

The demand for "political pluralism" contained in both Mandel's book and the IEC resolution contains two major departures from Trotskyism. For the USFI democratisation of the existing structures "necessarily poses the question of plurality of choice" (*IV* No 159). The Leninist norm on party legality was for freedom to form parties committed to the defence of the Russian Revolution and the suppression of parties committed to its overthrow.

Mandel and the USFI abandon

this, placing no conditions on the freedom to form new parties. But Mandel and the USFI never explain what unique contribution to the political revolutionary process open restorationist and neo-fascist parties could make. Of course it is not the bureaucracy but workers' tribunals which should decide on the legality of opposition parties.

This departure from Lenin and Trotsky is bad enough. But what illustrates the utter bankruptcy of the USFI's strategy is the absence of any call for a new revolutionary Trotskyist party.

Debating

This is no accident. The USFI has been debating whether or not it needs a section in the USSR ever since the Gorbachev reforms began. Why the opening of potentially revolutionary possibilities in the USSR should lead "Trotskyists" to abandon the project of a revolutionary party in the USSR is understandable once we look at the history of the USFI.

When Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 the Fourth International declared that the Yugoslav CP was no longer Stalinist. It could "project a revolutionary orientation" and no independent Trotskyist party was needed. The same is true for Cuba.

The USFI rejects building an independent party in Nicaragua. There is even a Vietnamese organisation loyal to the USFI which is prevented from declaring itself because the USFI leaders continue to claim that the Vietnamese CP is an adequate vehicle for revolution.

The whole political method of the USFI is based on finding unconscious revolutionaries. Stalinist or petit bourgeois nationalist parties which become the instruments of an historic process, alleviating the need for the conscious intervention of a revolutionary Trotskyist party.

Failure

Despite its warnings about siding with any wing of the bureaucracy at present, the USFI's failure to call for a new revolutionary party signals its willingness to exclude itself from the "political plurality" when the time is right. Every one of Mandel's attempts to conflate political revolution with bureaucratic reform prepares the USFI for this moment.

The USFI has already failed the test of applying Trotsky's strategy to the new situation in the USSR. There are undoubtedly elements within the USFI fighting against Mandel's strategy and for what they perceive as political revolution.

But the USFI is an organisation which has proved to be able to contain such vital disagreements as "reform or revolution in the USSR?" in endless factional debate. To the militants of the USFI who really want to fight for political revolution we say; join an organisation which is committed to building a Trotskyist party in the USSR and in every country. Join an organisation which, despite its small size, has already proved capable of outlining a programme for political revolution in the Soviet Union. Join the MRCI. ■

DOCKERS' ANNIVERSARY

Dear Comrades,
I am writing to remind readers that August marks the centenary of the Great Docks Strike of 1889, a key moment in the development of British working class.

Over the course of five weeks thousands of London dockers rose up as one against starvation wages and a system of casual labour so brutal that dockers were literally employed not by the day but by the hour. The apparent explosion came, however, after years of tireless campaigning for union organisation on London's many quaysides in the face of press vilification and the port bosses' hired thugs.

Beginning on 19 August thousands of dockers began regular marches into the City of London, winning public sympathy and the desperately needed financial support of other workers to sustain the strike. There were, after all, no union funds for the judges to sequester. Other port workers including sailors and ship repairers brought forward their own grievances and joined the strike.

Despite this show of determined strength the bosses would not budge and by the end of August the strike appeared in grave danger as men were on the brink of being starved back to work. Suddenly, contributions began to flow in from dockers' organisations in Brisbane and elsewhere in Australia. In all the, then staggering, sum of £30,000 was to come from Australia, enabling the strikers to concentrate on picketing the St Katharine's dock.

The strike ended in mid-September with the Mansion House Agreement which marked a huge climbdown by the port bosses. While the strike was by no means an unqualified success, having failed to achieve a single industrial union for all port workers, regardless of occupational skill, it

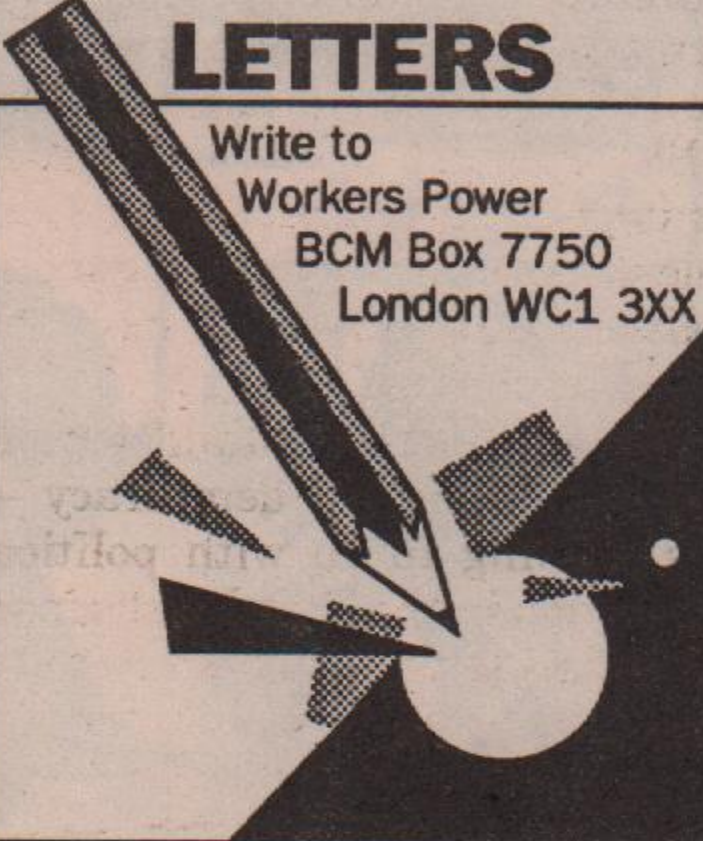
must remain as an important source of inspiration and guidance to today's militant strikers battling to defend the gains of the last forty years and union organisation itself in the docks.

Predictably, the TGWU's leadership has planned a token celebration of the anniversary on 12 August, but the only fitting commemoration of this major class struggle will be a similar victory for the docks strike of 1989.

Yours in Comradeship,
GR McColl, North London

LETTERS

Write to
Workers Power
BCM Box 7750
London WC1 3XX



Argentina

To Workers Power comrades:

We are writing to you expressing our thanks for the support and solidarity that you have been showing in the recent campaign for the release of our members and for the re-opening of our offices. This support and solidarity prevented the banning of Partido Obrero (PO) and made possible the release of our comrades.

Nevertheless, the struggle is still on. The order of preventive imprisonment and the prosecution of our comrades by the judiciary shows that the attack against PO continues, and has deepened in character. The Federal Judge of Morón has been asking the Judge of Lomas de Zamora to link the case to that of nine other comrades of PO that previously were declared innocent in a similar case.

PO is in a situation of "freedom under vigilance" and under a special state of siege, in the sense that we are facing a clear political attack that is trying to illegalise our revolutionary socialist organisation and is looking for the imprisonment of our National Committee under criminal law.

The reactionary campaign against our party is obviously an

aspect of the specific characteristics of the repression that has been unleashed against the exploited people, the political organisation and its membership, of which the most relevant manifestations are the state of siege, agreed by all the parties of the bosses, and the indiscriminate imprisonment of dozens of fighters. Faced with this repression, our party is raising the demands:

- Down with the repression!
- Down with the state of siege!
- Release all detainees!
- Freedom for the people to fight against starvation and degradation!

We are expressing our thanks for your support in the struggle to defend PO and democratic rights against capitalist reaction and the state. Once again we reaffirm the most firm decision by PO to fight for the political unity of the exploited against imperialist and capitalist exploitation, for a workers' government and the international victory of socialism.

National Committee of
Poder Obrero
Buenos Aires, June 1989

Non-registration

Dear comrades,

Your back page article on the Poll Tax in *Workers Power* 120 has a major flaw. It fails to mention what workers should do about registration. At present, class conscious workers in England and Wales are facing the problem of what to do with their Poll Tax registration forms. Communists must be prepared to give a clear lead on this question.

Isolated workers must be warned that refusing to register as individuals will lead to them

being picked off and fined as individuals. Where workers are organised, they must decide whether or not their organisation has sufficient strength for them to refuse to register collectively. For communists to avoid mentioning such an issue is to duck the fight for the leadership of the working class.

The extent to which registration has so far been carried out is difficult to gauge. The question of registration may not be decisively over. The Tories have not regis-

tered everyone by any means and there may still be pockets of resistance where large numbers haven't filled in their forms.

Should the Poll Tax be successfully implemented, registration will be an ongoing issue. The register will have to be continually updated. The snoopers will have to be kept on permanently.

You are right in pointing out that the way to defeat the Poll Tax is to avoid dwelling on registration and to concentrate on building a campaign for illegal action around collection and payment. But the issue of what to do with our registration forms should have been addressed.

Yours in comradeship,
Mike Burton, Streatham

workers power

PUBLIC MEETINGS

IRELAND: *the longest war*

Birmingham:

Wednesday 9 August 7.30
New Imperial Hotel, Penarth Rd

Cardiff:

Tuesday 8 August 7.30
Bristol Hotel, Penarth Rd

Coventry:

Thursday 3 August 7.30
West Indian Club, Spon St

Central London:

Wednesday 9 August 7.30
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
nr Holborn tube

Leicester:

Thursday 10 August 7.30
Unemployed Workers' Centre,
Charles St

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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.

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- Permanent Revolution** £6 for 3 issues
- Trotskyist International** £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:
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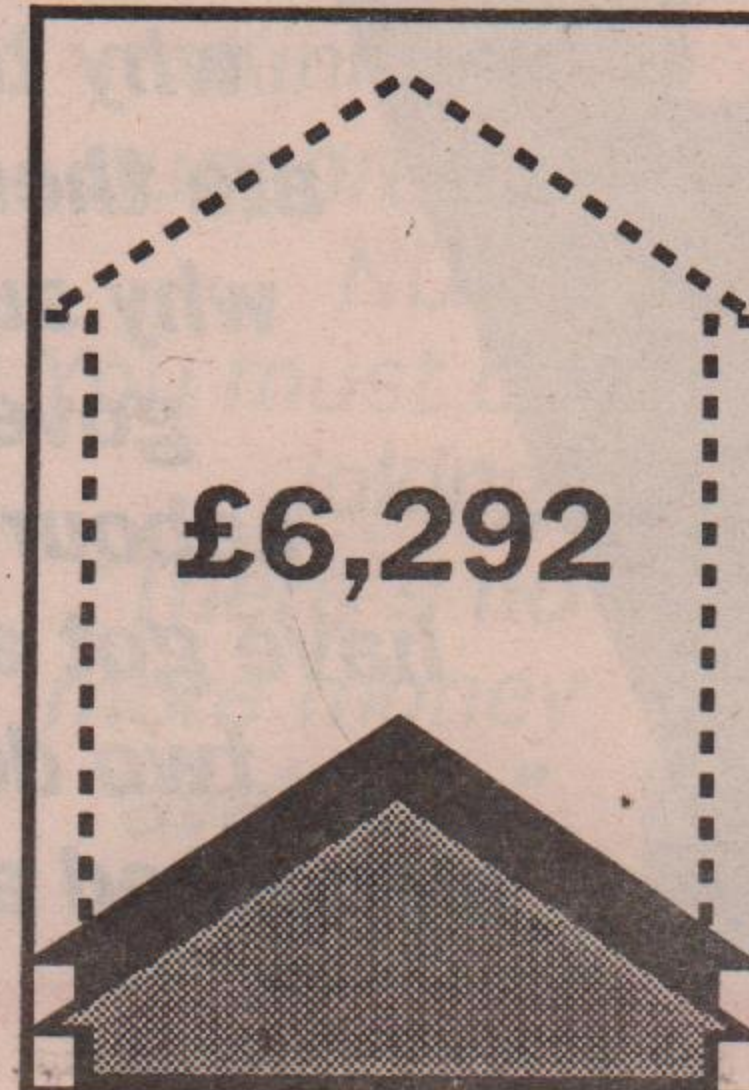
.....Trade union

Fighting Fund

OUR PREMISES fund made a big leap forward last month. We received £1,200 from supporters in Birmingham including an individual donation of £1,000. We received a magnificent donation of £4,000 from a reader in central London. South London comrades sent in £40 and readers in Reading sent £20 taking donations this month to £5,080

The MRCI fund received this month £33 from Birmingham supporters; £75 from East London; £200 from central London.

We appeal to all our members and supporters to keep the cash flowing in. Workers Power urgently needs new premises. The MRCI is spending all the money it receives on vital international work in conditions where every pound received is valuable.■



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 masses 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 or 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!

Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

DEMONSTRATE

Saturday 12 August 11am

Whittington Park
Holloway Road
Archway Tube
London

Join the Anti-imperialist contingent

IRELAND TWENTY YEARS OF REPRESSION



Eamonn O'Dwyer/IFL

Get the troops out now!

THE BIG LIE

It is twenty years since British troops were sent into Northern Ireland. And right from the word go, working class people in Britain have been told a tissue of lies as to why the troops are there. That's why successive governments, Labour and Tory, have got away with two decades of bloodshed and terror.

● **LIE No 1: The "troubles" are just a pointless conflict between two religious tribes.** Wrong. The conflict is rooted in the very nature of the Northern Irish state itself. Ireland was divided in 1921 by the British. The Northern Irish state was a completely artificial creation: only six of the nine counties of Ulster were included. Boundaries were drawn simply to ensure a majority for the Protestant population. Their support for continued British rule had been bought through granting them privileges over and above the nationalist population who had fought for independence. A minority of nationalists are trapped within the Northern state and savage discrimination against them in jobs, housing and the provision of services continues to this day. The truth is that the war in Ireland is a conflict between the British state and Irish people fighting for their democratic rights. Britain is the cause of the problem.

● **LIE No 2: The IRA are mindless terrorists with no real support.** Wrong again. The Provisional IRA emerged as a response to British repression. Its military campaign against the occupation of the Six Coun-

ties is supported by tens of thousands of Catholic workers. This has been shown again and again. Their success in getting Bobby Sands and then Gerry Adams elected to parliament and the presence of Sinn Fein supporters on councils across the North is proof of it. So is the recent banning of Sinn Fein from the TV and radio. If they had no support, the British ruling class would not need to gag them. The IRA resort to force, and are supported by the anti-unionist workers, because every peaceful attempt to reform the Northern Ireland state has been met with violence. The Northern state cannot be reformed.

● **LIE No 3: The British troops are in Ireland to keep the peace, to keep the two sides apart.** In 1969 many people thought the troops were peacekeepers. But nationalists who expected defence against the loyalists' pogroms were quickly disillusioned. The British Army has consistently sided with the loyalists to preserve the status quo. They work alongside the sectarian loyalist Royal Ulster Constabulary and collaborate secretly with Protestant paramilitary groups in their campaign against re-

publicans and the nationalist community. Cold blooded murder, such as the killing of fourteen unarmed demonstrators on Bloody Sunday in 1972 and the shooting of Aidan McAneaspie in February last year go unpunished by the courts. The British bosses are committed to the use of force to ensure the survival of the sectarian statelet. The truth is clear: the troops help keep Ireland divided and the Irish people unfree. Britain has no right to determine the future of Ireland. British governments have no progressive role to play in any solution. The much vaunted Anglo-Irish Agreement has proved little more than a way of co-ordinating repression of the republican movement. The imperialist rulers of Britain divided and occupied Ireland. They will have to be forced to withdraw the troops. After twenty years of repression British workers must waste no more time. We must build a fighting campaign throughout the labour and trade union movement around the demands:

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

■ Now turn to pages 8 & 9