

Marxism and World War Two: *inside*

workers power

pages 7-10

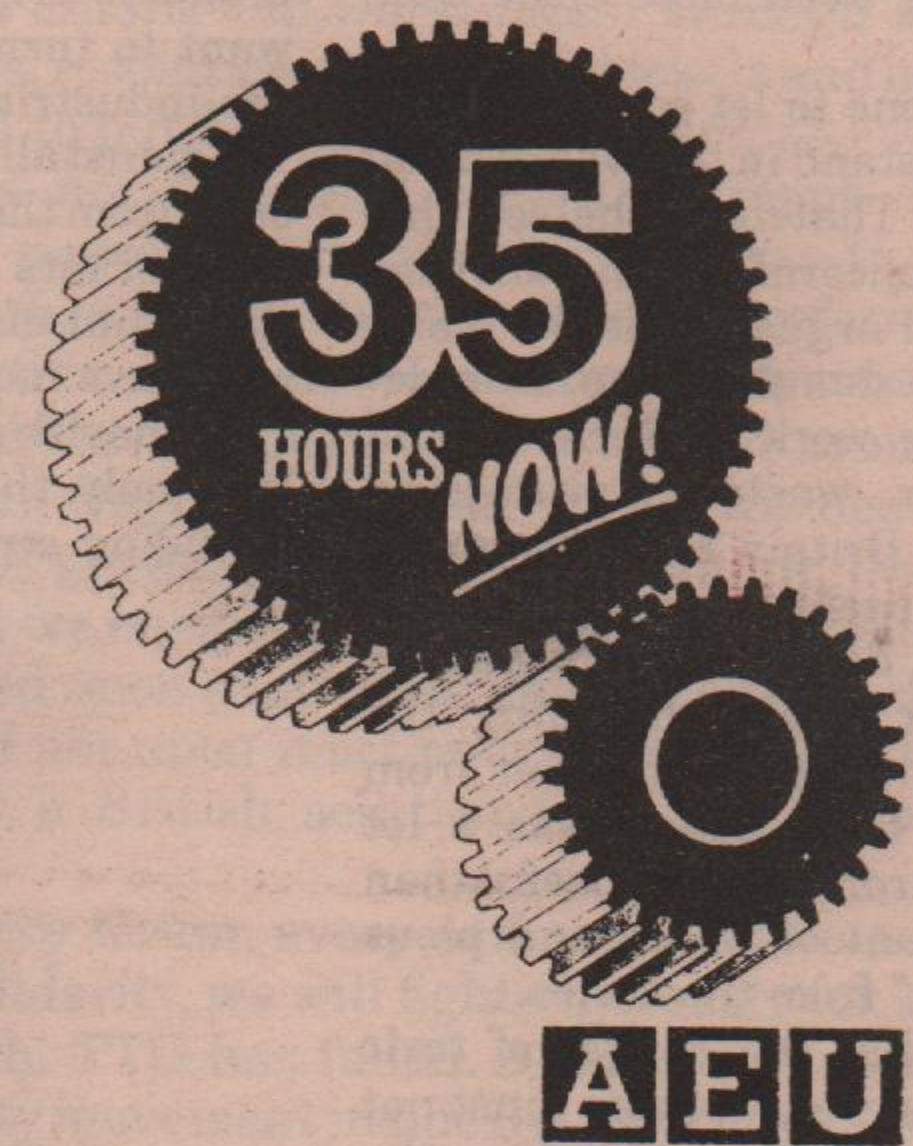


British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

AS ENGINEERS VOTE FOR ACTION

35 HOUR WEEK FOR ALL!



Mass meeting of British Aerospace workers

"DRIVE FOR thirty five" has become the rallying cry of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU).

Across British industry the bosses are gearing up for an offensive on working conditions. Despite the economic boom they are worried that Britain's industry is still not competitive enough. Their answer is to try and make every worker produce more at a faster rate.

The bosses are trying to tie pay deals to drastic changes in working practices. In Fords they want to introduce new shift systems to allow for 24 hour production, seven days a week. In the Post Office they are pushing for Sunday working. In the mines the future of the remaining pits is becoming conditional on miners accepting weekend working.

Unsociable hours, flexible working, de-skilling and an end to demarcation have become the open aims of the bosses. Not satisfied with their already fat profits—£15.6 billion in 1988 for the top 125 firms in Britain—they want us to work harder for the same or less pay under ever worsen-

ing conditions.

Our answer to this offensive must be the 35 hour week for all with no loss of pay.

We must fight for massive pay rises, protected from inflation by guaranteed 1% increases for every 1% rise of the cost of living, as calculated by working class price watch committees. And we must beat the attack on conditions by fighting for workers' control not only of the hours worked, but also over the speed and conditions of work.

British workers suffer an average working week of 42.4 hours. In Europe, including overtime, only Irish and Portuguese workers work longer hours.

Unemployment, despite the recent fall to below two million, is still a scourge for countless workers. Cutting the hours instead of the jobs and defending and extending wages is the working class answer to low pay and unemployment.

Faced with the CSEU campaign, the bosses have

been quick to issue dire warnings. Business Strategies, a city consultancy firm to the engineering employers, has warned that a 35 hour week would mean the loss of 315,000 jobs, a 3.5% rise in inflation and a collapse in productivity and profits. They would say that, wouldn't they.

Of course, the bosses will use any concession they are forced to make on hours as an excuse to sack workers and make those left work harder. It happened in engineering after the 39 hour week was won in 1979.

We can only stop a repeat performance if we link the

fight for a 35 hour week to outright opposition to the bosses productivity offensive. With workers' control of hiring and firing, the 35 hour week as a maximum working week could create thousands of new jobs.

Within this framework we can ensure that, when redundancies or lay-offs are threatened, work available is shared by the work force and the working week is shortened further with no loss of pay.

The signs are that Jordan and Laird, the right wing leaders of the AEU, have a different approach. They are limiting the struggle to se-

lective action at selected firms instead of waging the necessary all out indefinite strike for the full claim. This approach will lead to a trade off—shorter hours in return for worse working conditions and rates of pay.

These leaders are committed to maintaining the profit system. Our fight for the 35 hour week and for workers' control is aimed at the heart of capitalism.

Thatcher's economic "miracle" has begun to evaporate. The fight for the 35 hour week for all will ensure that the bosses, not the workers, pay for the coming crisis. ■

INSIDE

- ★ **After Time To Go!**
.....Page 3
- ★ **Summer of discontent**
.....Page 6
- ★ **Poland**
.....Page 11
- ★ **Nicaragua**
.....Page 14

“BRITAIN IS the dustbin of the world”, claimed Labour's environmental spokesperson recently. The recent attempt to dump toxic waste, in particular PCB's (Polychlorinated biphenyls), proves that there is some truth in Labour's claim.

The vessels recently stopped by dockers at Tilbury and Liverpool were coming to Britain because lax safety standards make the cost of waste disposal here one of the lowest in Europe. And PCB's are known to be amongst the most dangerous substances around—causing various cancers and nervous illnesses.

While their production is now banned in many countries, including Britain, they are long lasting. They are found in many industrial products which need to be decontaminated and the waste reprocessed. Reprocessing in turn produces by-products like dioxins, which are even more toxic than PCB's.

Never one to let considerations of health stand in the way of profit making, Thatcher shelved her recent “concern” for the environment and argued that the waste should be dumped here. She declared the work of Rechem, and the other waste re-processing plants in Britain to be “environmentally useful”.

Rightly, dockers did not want to risk their health handling the deadly cargoes coming over from Canada. Their action was a lot more environmentally useful than any amount of words and pious “greenery” from the Tories.

To combat the danger of toxic waste however, workers must not fall in behind Labour's call on the government to ban all imports of toxic and hazardous waste. This does not confront the Tories' commitment to companies like Rechem and the other waste disposal companies or provide an answer to workers in these companies.

It also plays into the hands of those who say we “should send it back to where it comes from”,

TOXIC WASTE

For a workers' enquiry

whether or not it can be disposed of safely elsewhere. The most likely outcome of this would be increased dumping in the Third World countries.

Nor does Greenpeace's campaign to end dumping—based on publicity stunts rather than effective action—take account of the need to develop safe methods of dealing with all sorts of dangerous by-products of industry. They simply want to turn the clock back to a pre-industrial age.

Against all of this socialists must start from the recognition that it is the workers involved in the handling and disposal of toxic waste who have most to gain from adequate health and safety standards. It is only through their actions, including strike action, boycotts,

demos etc, that such standards can be achieved. Already we've seen Liverpool dockers refusing to handle toxic waste cargoes from Canada with dockers at other ports pledging to do likewise. The TGWU has called on all dockers to refuse to handle toxic waste “until assurances are given on safety and handling”.

This immediately raises the question of who to accept these “assurances” from. It certainly shouldn't be from the port bosses who have consistently lied about the amount of toxic waste coming through the ports and who of course have just tried to smash dockers' organisation in the strike.

Dockers, seafarers and other transport workers involved in handling the toxic waste must fight

through their trade unions for a workers inquiry into health and safety.

This should involve the workers who handle the waste at every stage and call on independent experts and scientists to help determine acceptable safety standards. Until the findings of the enquiry are known workers must fight for a boycott of all related work. It is also vital for the workers' enquiry to make links with workers involved overseas.

Toxic waste is a global problem and its safe disposal will need co-ordination at an international level by the workers' movement. This means setting international safeguards under workers' control and enforcement.

The communities affected by

toxic waste disposal/reprocessing should be drawn in to such a class based means of combatting the hazards. People in Pontypool, South Wales, where the Rechem plant is, and where the PCBs were to go, have been involved in often militant campaigns on the issue for a long time. There is a clear connection between dioxins from the plant and a high incidence of respiratory diseases locally.

The campaign for a workers' enquiry must try to make links with the workers at Rechem itself and the other disposal/reprocessing plants. Their health will be affected too. They need a workers' enquiry as a means of ascertaining whether or not their jobs can be made safe.

And if they cannot and a shut-down of hazardous plants is needed, then a workers' enquiry can pave the way for a fight for alternative employment without loss of pay.

A campaign along these lines will prove a thousand times more effective than Labour's pleadings or Greenpeace's individualistic and consumer based approach.

Only a mass campaign, based on workers' action and the fight for workers' control can begin to make the world a safer place to live and work in. ■



Workers' action stopped this deadly cargo from being unloaded—only a workers' enquiry can determine acceptable safety standards worldwide

Fighting racism in Dewsbury

BY BRIDGET THOMPSON

IN THE weeks since the mass arrests of Asian youth and anti-fascists on 24 June protesting against a BNP rally in Dewsbury town centre, the police have been busy. Twenty three more people have been arrested on photographic and video evidence, many having their homes searched and receiving draconian bail conditions, for example 8-00 pm to 8-00 am curfews, a ban on attending meetings and the removal of passports.

The cases have been adjourned until the 22 and 29 September but not before the police changed some charges making them more serious. It is clear the police (all 700 of them, with horses, vans and riot gear) came to Dewsbury to protect the fascists' provocation and smash any resistance from the black community.

While the police attacked the black protesters, driving them into Savile Town, they allowed several hundred racist white youth loose on the town. In one incident, a Pakistani market trader's stall was turned over and twenty pairs of jeans stolen. This was reminiscent of incidents in 1984 when two hundred sieg heiling white youth gathered in a town car park before charging through town beating up Asian shoppers and market stall holders.

Dewsbury's long history of racist attacks, going back over twenty

years, is goes alongside the organised racist activity of fascist groups. The National Front in the 1970s, and more recently the BNP have been the source of continual harassment of the black community.

The fascists have used the white parents campaign against the multi-racial Headfield School and more recently the anti-Rushdie campaign, to fuel racism and encourage white youth to attack black youth.

Asian youth in Dewsbury have led the resistance. They joined anti-National Front demonstrations in the 1970s and organised marches and self defence against racial attacks in 1983. Again it is the young people of the community who are fighting back. Most of the 82 arrested are black youth.

A protest rally held in July in support of the defendants heard denunciations of the police and the racist local media who had dubbed the rally “Asian race riot meeting”. Calls were made for a national demonstration and this was supported by the local trades council representative.

The rally received a message of support from Paul Boateng MP but this was in sharp contrast to the disgraceful silence from many of the local Labour politicians. Some are hiding behind the excuse of neutrality—they say they should

“not support either black or white hooligans”.

This attitude totally fails to distinguish between racist violence and the necessary self defence of the black youth.

The Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign is now actively seeking sponsorship for a demonstration to be held in late October/early November. Funds and support are urgently needed. The increasing attacks are a daily threat to the black community who are afraid to travel into town on their own and

face racists with bricks and iron bars driving through their community.

The campaign should be a focus for a concerted attempt in the labour movement to confront and defeat the rising tide of racism. This means winning support for black self-defence, campaigning for the dropping of all charges against the Dewsbury 82 as well as challenging racist ideas. Such a campaign should also challenge the cowardice of local and national Labour politicians. ■

For information and model resolutions write to

Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign
c/o Kirklees Community
Relations Caucus
24 Westgate
Huddersfield
West Yorks

Picket
Dewsbury Magistrates Court
9-45 am, 22 and 29 Sep
Bring banners

Crisis in schools

TEACHERS ARE returning to face another school year of intensified pressure and increased demands. The national curriculum, pupil testing, local management of schools, teacher assessment and the introduction of poorly trained “licensed teachers”—these changes have all been imposed by the Tories. At the same time cuts in education spending and continued low pay make the job seem less and less worthwhile. No wonder city areas are now facing teacher shortages. And every unfilled vacancy means more pressure on the teachers remaining.

London schools face the most acute crisis. The abolition of ILEA and transfer of education provision to the boroughs goes through in April 1990. In poorer boroughs like Hackney this will result in an estimated 40% cut in spending over the next few years. The money for special packages and incentives will soon run out. This prospect added to all the other pressures has led to London's teachers leaving in droves. Teachers in Hackney return to short-

ages of about 100 primary posts unfilled.

Teachers must respond to such crises with immediate “no cover” action. The pressure is always on to keep the schools going by covering for absent colleagues. But this is disastrous in the long run. It lets the LEAs and the government get away with running education on the cheap and for teachers it leads to more strain, illness and resignations.

Hackney primary teachers are committed to carrying out “one-day no cover”. This action should be spread to other London boroughs and made into a total cover ban in all sectors. No cover should be used to force the LEAs to provide supply teachers.

Teachers must link up with parents and local trade union and community organisations to campaign for increased resources for schools and win support for a campaign for higher pay. Parents—especially mothers—face huge problems when primary classes are sent home. Teachers must explain

where the real responsibility for this lies and get other workers to support their action.

The leadership of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the other teacher unions, has steadfastly refused to lead any fight on pay or conditions. Indeed the NUT executive has consciously undermined militant action in London in the past. But the potential for action is there. Last Easter's NUT conference voted for strike action on pay and although it subsequently overturned that decision after much manoeuvring, it showed the depth of anger felt in schools. Socialist teachers have to go on the offensive in the new term to organise a fight back against the appalling pay, conditions and shortages. Besides spreading no cover action and demanding official support from the union leadership, this also means starting to campaign now for the all out strike action that is needed to win the much needed pay increase and to halt the Tories continuing onslaught on state education. ■

After Time To Go!

TIME TO GO! (TTG) was heralded by its supporters as the campaign that would break the mould of Irish solidarity work. Set up by Labour MP Clare Short it aimed to use a "year of action" leading up to the twentieth anniversary of British troops going into Northern Ireland as the means of putting British withdrawal at the top of the political agenda.

The 12 August Time To Go! demonstration got between five to six thousand people on the streets. It was not significantly bigger than the march in 1979 which marked the tenth anniversary of the troops' arrival on the streets of Derry and Belfast.

Despite the many fringe meetings TTG had held at union conferences and resolutions of support for its campaign by the Bakers Union and NALGO at their annual conferences, trade union representation on the demo was threadbare. The Bakers' banner was nowhere to be seen and NALGO was represented by a handful of London branches.

Clearly the mould had not been broken. And while Clare Short had declared that TTG would take Irish solidarity "out of the sectarian ghetto" of the far left, the far left actually made up the vast majority of the marchers.

All the attempts by TTG to make the Irish issue more "popular" had failed, as they were bound to fail. TTG tried to make the question of troop withdrawal popular by ditching the only consistent anti-imperialist demands—Troops Out Now, Self-Determination for all the Irish People—in favour of vague calls for a gradual pull-out and a British political solution to the Irish war.

TTG had a populist approach to building a campaign: organising carnivals, enlisting the paper support of celebrities, and wooing Liberals and Tories. It never attempted to undertake the necessary work to build a labour movement campaign.

Only such a campaign could, through working class solidarity action, deliver real blows against the British ruling class and real material support to the justified struggle of the nationalist communities and the IRA against the British imperialist military occupation.

By choosing the populist path, TTG has actually stood in the way of building an effective solidarity movement. That it failed only underlines the fact that there is no short-cut to building such a movement. Only by winning labour movement activists in the union branches and workplaces to a clear anti-imperialist position on the Irish war will we be able to take steps towards breaking the masses from their slavish support for the murderous politics of the British state.

If those on the left, particularly the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), had addressed themselves to those tasks with the same energy and enthusiasm that they supported Clare Short's campaign for a solution to the Irish war on British terms, then genuine solidarity work might have taken a real step forward. That the SWP and the majority of the Labour Committee on Ireland chose to become Short's footsoldiers makes our job harder, but not impossible.

An anti-imperialist contingent—organised by Workers Power, the Workers International League and the Revolutionary Internationalist League—was built, and made its presence felt. Other forces, such as the Leninist's Hands Off Ireland campaign, also took an anti-imperialist stance on the march. The task we now face is building on the modest momentum developed in building the anti-imperialist contingent.

We must sink roots into the working class through the building of rank and file union caucuses committed to Troops Out Now and Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole, and committed to campaigning at every level of the unions to win over wider support for these demands.

Clearly we face a major obstacle in building such caucuses—the trade union bureaucracy itself. In the recent round of union conferences they, together with sections of the Northern Ireland trade unions, worked hard to stifle discussion on Ireland.

At the Trades Councils' Conference, a resolution from the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, calling for a "British declaration of intent

to withdraw from Ireland" was simply ruled out of order by the TUC on the basis that "it was contrary to Congress policy which supports the line adopted by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)".

The ICTU's campaign for "Peace, Work and Progress" accepts Britain's role in Ireland. The trade union leaders use support for it to prevent debate and to tie British workers to a pro-imperialist policy. The bureaucrats consistently sabotage any attempts to adopt policies that address the central problem. This is Britain's military occupation of the Six Counties and its role in propping up the Orange sectarian statelet that blocks the way to peace, an end to discrimination at work and real progress.

The job of caucuses—formed from activists won to anti-imperialist solidarity—will be to take the arguments on why Britain's presence is the problem into the unions and workplaces. Through leaflets, bulletins, resolutions, meetings, pickets and marches we need to put all the arguments across—why the IRA are not terrorists, why the troops are not neutral peacekeepers, why Britain has to occupy the North, why the Orange state is irreformable.

Only this way can we destroy the tissue of lies that Labour and Tory have wrapped around the Irish war. Only this way can we win the hearts and minds of growing numbers of workers. Only this way can we ensure that sentiments for withdrawal are based upon support for the nationalist community and not upon reactionary and chauvinist support for a British solution that will benefit our rulers.

In every forum, every campaign connected with Irish solidarity, we will fight vigorously for such an approach. TTG has failed. A real effort to build a solidarity movement inside the working class is now a burning necessity. ■

Published every month by the Workers Power Group:
BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX
ISSN 0263-1121
Printed by Presslink International (UK) Ltd (TU):
Castle Industrial Estate, Elephant Rd, London SE 17

The frame-up of Mark Curtis

MARK CURTIS worked in the meat packing industry in Des Moines, Iowa, USA. Over the past decade, in common with many industries, the meat-packing bosses have been imposing speed-ups, forced over time and low wages on workers labouring in already dangerous conditions.

As a Spanish speaking trade unionist and a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP-US) Curtis was a key militant in the fight to free the Swift 17. These were 17 Mexican workers arrested as "illegal immigrants" in the Swift meat-packing plant in which Curtis worked.

On the night of 4 March 1988, Curtis was arrested on a phoney rape charge, having been lured to the home of the Morris family by an unidentified woman who had requested a lift from Curtis to escape from "a man who was chasing her". Despite witnesses to the fact that he was with friends at the time of the alleged offence, Mark Curtis was found guilty of rape and burglary and given a 25 year sentence.

Surveillance

In the course of the trial, the judge refused to instruct the jury on the importance of Curtis's unchallenged alibi, and refused testimony proving FBI surveillance of Curtis. Not a scrap of forensic evidence connecting Curtis to the alleged rape has ever been produced by the prosecution.

Political frame-ups are nothing

new for the American state. The anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti were framed on murder and robbery charges and executed in 1927. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg went to the chair in 1953 fitted-up on spying charges.

With the Birmingham 6, Guildford 4 and Winchester 3 all rotting in British jails, and the suspension of the entire West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad it is obvious

**Defend
class war
prisoners**

Yengeni trial

THE YENGENI Defendants' Support Group has asked for urgent action to protect Bongani Jonas, a state witness who has courageously refused to testify against the Yengeni Defendants on trial in South Africa.

Bongani's action is another blow for the state prosecutors who aimed to make the Yengeni case a major show trial of activists sympathetic to the ANC.

Bongani was forced by the security police to be a state witness. He was held in detention for twenty months before being brought to court. The Yengeni Defendants' Support

such practices come easy to the British ruling class as well.

Taking the Mark Curtis case into the labour movement here can help in the building of a campaign of militant labour defence for all class war prisoners. Curtis said of the Swift 17 case: "It's not just an issue for the workers arrested, it is an attack on everybody". The same applies to Curtis's own case. A militant, genuinely non-partisan defence organisation is a crying need today. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Motions and messages of support, financial donations should be sent to:

Mark Curtis Defense
Committee,
Box 1048
Des Moines
Iowa 50311

Further information from:
Pathfinder Books
47 The Cut
London
SE1 8LL

Group now fear that the security police will continue to hold him and that his health or even life is at risk as the state exacts its revenge.

The Support Group intends to gather a large statement of international solidarity. Copies of a letter for use by individuals, or better, by trade union branches and community organisations can be obtained from:

Yengeni Defendants' Support
Group UK
PO Box 53
Brentford
Middlesex
TW8 8RY

1066 and all that

THATCHERITE INTERFERENCE in education knows no bounds. The Tories' latest wheeze is to return history teaching to the bad old days of reciting facts, and to text books that boost patriotic fervour.

They are trying to use the new National Curriculum to achieve their ends. A new report from a Department of Education and Science (DES) working party on the history syllabus gives an idea of what children will be expected to study in their history lessons.

The report states that all children should assimilate a "core of knowledge", which would be mainly based on British history. This view of education—acquiring facts—is made necessary by the Tories' plans for compulsory testing at set ages.

Think

Testing is much easier if it is based on an agreed list of facts. It is much more difficult to test the ability to think critically and independently or to respond creatively.

The Tories need testing to allow for the re-introduction of streaming. Streaming—grouping together students of the same ability—requires less resources than mixed ability grouping. There is little room for individual development and working class children can be slotted into lower streams. At 16 the system then lets a tiny minority go on to higher education and the rest will be clearly labelled for the convenience of their future employers.

Of course socialists are in favour of children acquiring knowledge—facts—about history. But unlike the Tories we want children to learn about how society works, how it has developed, the truth about exploitation, the contribution of different continents and cultures to development.

We also want children to acquire the skills to analyse and under-

stand the world around them and to have the confidence to challenge received ideas. The so-called "new" history teaching of recent years, while flawed in many respects, allows teachers to help students develop some of those skills. That is why the Tories detest it.

The existing report does not go far enough for some leading Tories, including Thatcher herself. This should give cause for concern to any student who has heard Thatcher's recent analysis of the French Revolution!

New Education Secretary John MacGregor wants the working party to specify the dates, events and people which the syllabus should cover. As far as he is concerned there is only one view of history and that is his own, the view of his own class.

MacGregor also wants an even greater emphasis on British history. And we can be sure that this will be a one-sided picture which ignores the truth about Britain's role as a colonial power. It will give the official British ruling class version of how wars developed. It will be a racist curriculum which downplays the history of other cultures and nations and celebrates the conquests and "triumphs" of British imperialism.

Subvert

The temptation for teachers is to let the new curriculum be introduced and hope to quietly subvert it. But letting the Tories get away with their plans will just encourage them to go further.

Socialist teachers must begin now to build opposition and to seize the initiative back from the Tories. They must link with parents and students, and the labour movement to fight against these reactionary moves and for the right to study history from the standpoint of our class not theirs. ■

AEU



John Harris JFL



THE CAMPAIGN for the 35 hour week is now under way. Thousands of engineers are attending rallies and meetings up and down the country, at which Jordan and Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) leaders are explaining their strategy for achieving a reduction in hours. If the response to the campaign's inaugural rally at Preston and the thousands of Rolls Royce workers who attended the Bristol meeting are anything to go by, engineers are enthused by the idea of a 35 hour or four and a half day week. A large number are ready to back the actions as well as contribute financially.

Militant

Jordan has recovered some of his poise since negotiations with the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) broke up for a second time in April. His more militant stance is a result of his presidency having little to show for itself. Failure to agree with the EEF on hours and wages, and defeat on the AEU National Committee over amalgamation with EETPU doesn't make for a presidential second term!

Jordan has been forced into a more confrontational stance. The EEF want any reduction in hours to be paid for by more productivity on a plant by plant basis. Specifically they want more flexible working time, including the introduction of new shift patterns and unsociable working.

The CSEU leaderships have presided over a huge increase in productivity since the 39 hour week was won in 1979. They have not led a concerted fight over wages or a fightback against closures and the thousands of jobs that disappeared in the 1980s.

In engineering, radical flexibility deals are being negotiated—yes, for a shorter working week, but to boost productivity and profits.

No wonder British engineering and manufacturing is enjoying unprecedented success—as the crop of glossy AEU literature points out. Recent treasury figures show the growth per person in manufac-

BY A MIDLANDS AEU MEMBER

turing was 5.2% in 1988, which exceeds the growth rate for 1960-80 and is the highest of all the advanced countries. No wonder the chairmen of EEF companies can give themselves huge pay increases!

Jordan and co point to the shorter working week, more holidays, less overtime and higher pay enjoyed by the European worker and the need for comparable conditions here.

The AEU's chosen strategy is rolling selective strikes. The idea is that firms will break EEF discipline and sign separate agreements. They will then be taken out of the firing line. Eventually enough major companies will settle

and make the EEF see sense.

But this strategy ignores the fact that the employers will certainly make their plans as well. The bosses will try to isolate the strikes. If the selective action doesn't bite, demoralisation can set in. Militancy can be dissipated if workers are not called on to take action.

On another tack what happens if the settlements are on a domestic basis and agreements begin to vary from company to company? All domestic claims are to include "elements" of the national claim. This allows for settlements of less than the full claim.

Underpinning the CSEU strategy is a desire to stay within the law at all costs. That is why the actions are selective and they will be tightly policed from above. The

CIVIL SERVICE

Rank and file must organise

BY WORKERS POWER MEMBERS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

THE AUGUST civil servant's victory at a Cardiff Unemployment Benefit Office gave a glimpse of what workers can achieve through all out action. The demand for three permanent staff was met in full after a few days.

But the strikers refused to return until threats to sack two casuals and to victimise unnamed strikers were lifted. During the 11 day strike almost all the twenty CPSA strikers were active on pickets, at regular strike meetings and in negotiations.

This action stands in sharp contrast to the antics of the leadership. The CPSA executive (NEC) and General Secretary John Ellis have failed to lead any fightback against the recent attacks. On pay they have put in a claim that represent a pay cut in real terms (6%). The Department of Social Security (DSS) Section Executive have argued against opposition to the *Moodie Report*, which will mean compulsory transfers out of London and job cuts, and they have positively welcomed the introduction of Agencies. This along with privatisation as at Livingston DSS centre,

stands to break up not only the civil service but the civil service unions as well. Livingston is now in the hands of union-busters EDS.

In particular, the power of the CPSA to negotiate—and to fight—nationally to defend and improve pay and conditions is under threat. Ellis foolishly argues that somehow the "semi-autonomous" Agencies are better than privatisation, and by making Agencies (read members) "work" we can avoid privatisation. True, Agencies will keep the subs coming in for a while, but like privatised workforces we'll be "free to endure the rigours of the market". We need to fight Agencies, privatisations and all the cuts—together.

The time has come for a fightback—against the bosses and the bureaucratic mis-leaders. In December every branch in the CPSA must come together to draw up battle plans. Merthyr Tydfil DSS branch has invited every CPSA branch to attend an unofficial branch delegate conference to launch a campaign of resistance to Agencies.

While many branches have pledged their support, they and Merthyr face obstacles. firstly, the NEC and Ellis have predictably launched a witch-hunt against the officers of the Merthyr branch. If Merthyr officers are disciplined a campaign of mass meetings and leaflets for the immediate re-instatement must be launched throughout the union, alongside strike action against the cuts.

Secondly, the Broad Left dominated West Midlands CPSA Co-ordinating Committee have countered the initiative by calling a "workshop" on Agencies. The *Militant* led Broad Left flatly refuses to merge the two initiatives or support the unofficial conference. They fear being witch-hunted and thus unable to represent their members. But what use are workshops (talking shops in fact) that dodge action for fear of being barred from office? And what use are "left" officers who prefer to play Ellis' tedious games while the Tories are ripping the heart out of our union in the London local offices?

What we do need is a rank and file organisation in the civil service. An organisation that is completely independent of the bureaucrats and our employers, the state. Only an indefinite national strike can force the Tories to retreat. Ellis will declare it "unconstitutional" and the Tories' judges will declare it illegal. But the December conference must declare such action its intention.

Between now and December two urgent tasks face militants in all the civil service unions—CPSA, NUCPS, etc. firstly the defence of Merthyr Tydfil against the witch-hunt. Secondly the winning of as many branch delegates and observers as possible to the unofficial conference. The Socialist Caucus in the CPSA is building for the conference—its members initiated it! Workers Power members and supporters in the civil service will also be fighting for it to take a clear position for an indefinite strike against the attacks—with the officials when possible, without them when necessary.

In that struggle, we want to build a rank and file organisation from the militants in the Socialist Caucus, the Broad Lefts and elsewhere. Join us in that struggle. ■

Strike for a 35 hour week!

last thing the CSEU wants is for the strikes to spread. They want to keep the majority of the membership passive—contributing only in a financial sense with an hour's wages to the strike fund. This is a criminal waste of the membership's real power.

Action

Already with the domestic pay claim season underway, engineers are showing that they are prepared to fight. A recent example of this militancy was shown at Dowty Boulton Paul in Wolverhampton, whose strike was recently settled for 9.2%. But Dowty is one of the targeted firms in the 35 hour campaign. This action should have been used as a launching pad for rolling strikes—not kept separate from planned national action. The chance is to build a national strike for the 35 hour week—not just in federated plants but across the board, including Ford, Vauxhall and Leyland DAF whose claims are all due shortly.

This means that a campaign must begin anew in the CSEU and AEU District Committees in the stewards quarterlies and in every mass meeting to get the widest possible strike action. Rank and file engineers must assert their control over the action from the outset. This means in every strike-bound plant committees, accountable to mass meetings, must be elected to run the dispute. A national strike committee must be organised and empowered to carry on the fight when the CSEU executive moves to sell-out.

The mood of the industry shows that we can win the full claim. Nothing less will do. ■

THE UNION of Communication Workers has rightly rejected Post Office proposals to reintroduce Sunday collections from October. A substantial majority of stewards voted against the proposals at a Special Delegate Conference on 20 August. The Post Office management are well aware of how dissatisfied the public are getting with the inefficient and shoddy service they provide. So they are planning to win quick support for plans to start Sunday collections in Newcastle, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Darlington and Northern Ireland—and hope to bring in the scheme on a national basis.

The UCW conference has demanded that the £20 million earmarked for this scheme be spent improving the existing service. Most importantly though, postal workers must demand the money be used to take on new full-time staff. Casuals and part-time staff must be taken on as full-time

POST Stop Sunday plans

workers. This way we can stop the bosses running an inefficient service on the cheap and using the casuals and part-timers to undermine rates of pay and working conditions. The money must also be put towards a reduction in hours and increasing basic rates of pay.

UCW leader Alan Tuffin negotiated the current proposals on Sunday collections. He has responded to the conference decision by making a statement that he was "hopeful" that strike action could be avoided by reaching an agreement.

After last year's sell-out of the

national strike, rank and file postal workers should not put any trust in Tuffin to defend their interests. National strike action against the scheme must be built for now. It must be linked to the issue of pay.

Management's 7% pay offers has been referred to ACAS. But Tuffin has said he will agree to a rise in line with inflation, which would mean no overall improvement in real earnings. The rank and file in the Post Office need to get organised both to build united action on conditions and pay and to stop Tuffin's inevitable sell-outs. ■

INTERVIEW

After rail sell outs

THE NATIONAL Rail Activists' Meeting on 26 August resulted in the call for a Conference in December to set up a National Railworkers' Rank and File Movement. Workers Power talked to Danny and Pete about the initiative and the sell outs on BR and the London Underground (LUL) which prompted it. Pete is a London Underground worker and Danny a BR worker in the Midlands. Their names have been changed to avoid victimisation.

Workers Power: Who called the national activists meeting and why?

Danny: The Manchester Action Committee called it. That is a BR rank and file group which played an important role in organising the action on the five days BR were out on strike. It contains both ASLEF and NUR members.

WP: They called a meeting against the BR sell out?

Danny: The call came before the sell out. But the sell out gave greater impetus. They feel the need to broaden it out to take in all rail workers across the unions.

WP: What did the activists see as the immediate tasks on BR?

Danny: We see the key thing being the attack on the national bargaining machinery. They see the present as a lull before the next attack starts up. We are in possession of a BR document which outlines some of the things the BR board have got in the pipeline. It includes local rates of pay and part-time working. Management will be able to "vary the pay of individuals within given limits", i.e. performance related pay!

WP: How many people came to the conference and where were they from?

Pete: There were about 35 there. They were mainly from the north and all BR except me. There were representatives from Blackpool, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Doncaster, Glasgow, Gillingham and London. There was no one from TSSA.

WP: Was there any representation from the Broad Lefts?

Pete: At least two from the steering committee of the NUR Broad Left were there, although some of its leading lights sympathetic to *Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Action* ignored the meeting. There isn't an ASLEF Broad Left, but there are militants who want to form one.

Danny: The biggest argument raised against organising a rank and file movement was that we didn't really have the forces to do

it, and that instead, we should go back and organise locally. We argued that yes, tomorrow we should go back and build locally but we've still got to build nationally. That's why we've called the Conference for December. Everybody expected both BR and the Underground to be in a fight by then over the management's conditions.

WP: What impressions do you get of the Broad Left's activity during the strike?

Pete: People were claiming it's strong in London. But as far as the London Underground is concerned it's been non-existent, they weren't there. If they are supposed to be strong in London and not elsewhere then the Broad Left must be pretty dead at the moment.

WP: On the underground, Eady, the NUR rep who negotiated the deal, has been forced to resign and there are moves to unseat Harris, his counterpart in ASLEF.

Pete: He'll go. We think there are enough branches prepared to vote for a motion of no confidence.

WP: Do you think that's enough?

Pete: It's not the answer. In ASLEF there's an old style "Broad Left"—an unofficial club of aspiring bureaucrats who meet around conferences and election time. At the meeting someone pointed out that Jimmy Knapp himself was the product of this kind of Broad Left. Knapp was elected without building any kind of independent organisation amongst the members. So when he started to sell out there was no way of holding him to account. The rank and file movement will be different. It will have to fight for democracy and accountability and use elections as part of a campaign to democratise the union.

Danny: The Broad Left were posing the rank and file movement as a counterposition to the Broad Left.

Pete: In a way it is. The Rank and File Movement can organise across the unions on a workplace level. It can build for one union on

the rail from the ground up, without having to rely on the bureaucracy of the NUR or ASLEF.

Danny: The Communist Party were behind the mark one Broad Left. It was secretly organised and militants didn't know about it. Militant supporters were behind a mark two Broad Left which also folded. What we have now is a Broad Left based on Socialist Action supporters who are very hostile to the idea of rank and file organisation. But their leading people weren't at the meeting.

WP: What do you see as the advantage of a rank and file movement?

Pete: Briefly, it can overcome the divisions between train staff and platform staff and build solidarity. When London Underground was at its strongest on 15 May, we had the buses and BR out too. It would have to challenge rather than bypass the bureaucracy. Our principle must be: with the bureaucracy where possible and against it where necessary. It would bring all rail workers together to safeguard us from being sold out.

WP: How is the December conference going to be built?

Danny: A steering committee was organised. There will be a leaflet reporting the conference to BR and LUL workers. And we'll be going ahead with a national conference for December. We want branches and districts to support it officially as well as individuals. It's vital that the NUR Broad Left agrees to support it. The conference had a good feeling that rail workers want to fight and that the best organised militants were there. Every railworker—on BR, on LUL or on the other metropolitan railways—who is aggrieved at the sell outs should be organising for this conference now. ■

As we go to press the final details of the conference have yet to be announced. Further information is available from:

Workers Power, BCM 7750, London, WC1 3XX

Stop pit closures

BRITISH COAL'S relentless closure drive moved into a new gear at the end of August with further closures in South Wales and the announcement that Betteshanger in Kent was to shut.

The Betteshanger closure means the end of a pit with one of the finest records of trade union organisation and working class consciousness. Kent miners were the first to support their Yorkshire comrades at the start of the Great Strike.

At a national level, BC plans another 20 closures, with 30,000 jobs to be axed. In South Wales the closure of Merthyr Vale and Oakdale collieries, together with the long planned closure of Trelewis Drift, means that 1,600 jobs have been lost in a week.

The future of the whole coalfield hangs in the balance. No pit is safe as BC continues its drive to privatisation.

Merthyr Vale pit is in the village of

Aberfan, a community that, more than any other, has paid the price of coal. With the latest redundancy deadline only 48 hours away, the miners at both Oakdale and Merthyr Vale voted at emotional meetings to accept closure. BC managers cynically closed the pits the very next day!

The South Wales NUM leadership haven't even tried to lead a fight. Duffield, Rees, Thomas and co have staked everything on being "reasonable" and not encouraging industrial action.

Strikes that have occurred in the last few years have been left isolated, with no attempt to spread the action. Their headlong retreat, not just on closures but also on wages and conditions, has served to encourage BC to make further attacks. With no lead given at Area level, individual pits have been easily picked off.

The time servers at NUM head-

quarters in Pontypridd are already getting out. Terry Thomas has resigned as Vice President to pursue a parliamentary career. Kim Howells, the former research officer, is already there and it's rumoured that Des Duffield may quit as President.

Rank and file miners have no such options. They must organise themselves against pit closures, linking with those prepared to fight in other coalfields. This autumn also offers the opportunity to fight for a substantial wage increase which would put miners back up the wage league and take the initiative away from the UDM.

While the South Wales area leadership have been complicit in the destruction of the coalfield the national NUM has been quiet. Scargill seems to have run short of even his usual fighting rhetoric—and has never called for or organised the national action needed to save pits and fight for decent pay and conditions. The need for a national rank and file movement to organise the action necessary to achieve these aims has never been greater. ■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Hyper-inflation stalks third world

THE OFFICIAL inflation rate in Britain is nearly 9%. Hundreds of thousands of workers have taken industrial action this summer to get wage rises that offset its effect on their living standards. A rate that is still in single figures a year has been enough to prompt a round of wage militancy not witnessed in this country for years.

But imagine the effect on the working class when inflation is not 9% a week, or even a day! Impossible?

Europe has seldom seen prices rocketing up at this rate. But Germany in 1923 did experience this level of inflation with the result that workers were taking their wages home in wheelbarrows.

In South America, where some of the weakest capitalist economies of the world are found, hyper-inflation is not a distant memory but a recurring nightmare. At this very moment prices are rising in Peru at about 50% a month. But in Bolivia during the crisis years of 1984-85 inflation reached a staggering 25,000% a year, an all time high. Brazil and Argentina have also experienced very high levels in the last decade.

Semi-colonies like these countries are prone to bouts of hyper-inflation for a number of reasons. Like all capitalist economies general price increases are possible because paper money and credit can expand faster than output. The volume of money in circulation—whether it is bank notes or figures on a credit card bill—only ever measures the value of this output. The more money is printed or lent, the more the value of money falls.

The spur to a bout of inflation actually occurs for several reasons: businesses may push prices up to increase their profits at a time of a sharp increase in demand for their products; credit may expand rapidly in order to provide finance for companies when profits are falling.

In weak economies like South America's a recession in a country with few resources can leave its bourgeoisie in dire straits. Foreign exchange from its few exports can dry up. Pressured by a strongly unionised working class the ruling class can resort to printing money to finance its expenditure.

A recent example of this occurred in Peru when the central banks refuse to honour the cheques issued to the teachers by the government. The government's response was simply to set the printing presses rolling to pay them in increasingly worthless paper currency!

What can the working class do when faced with hyper-inflation? Up to a certain point the response revolutionary communists should give is the same as when British workers are faced with single figure inflation here; namely, they should demand that for every 1% increase in prices workers should demand a 1% increase in wages to compensate.

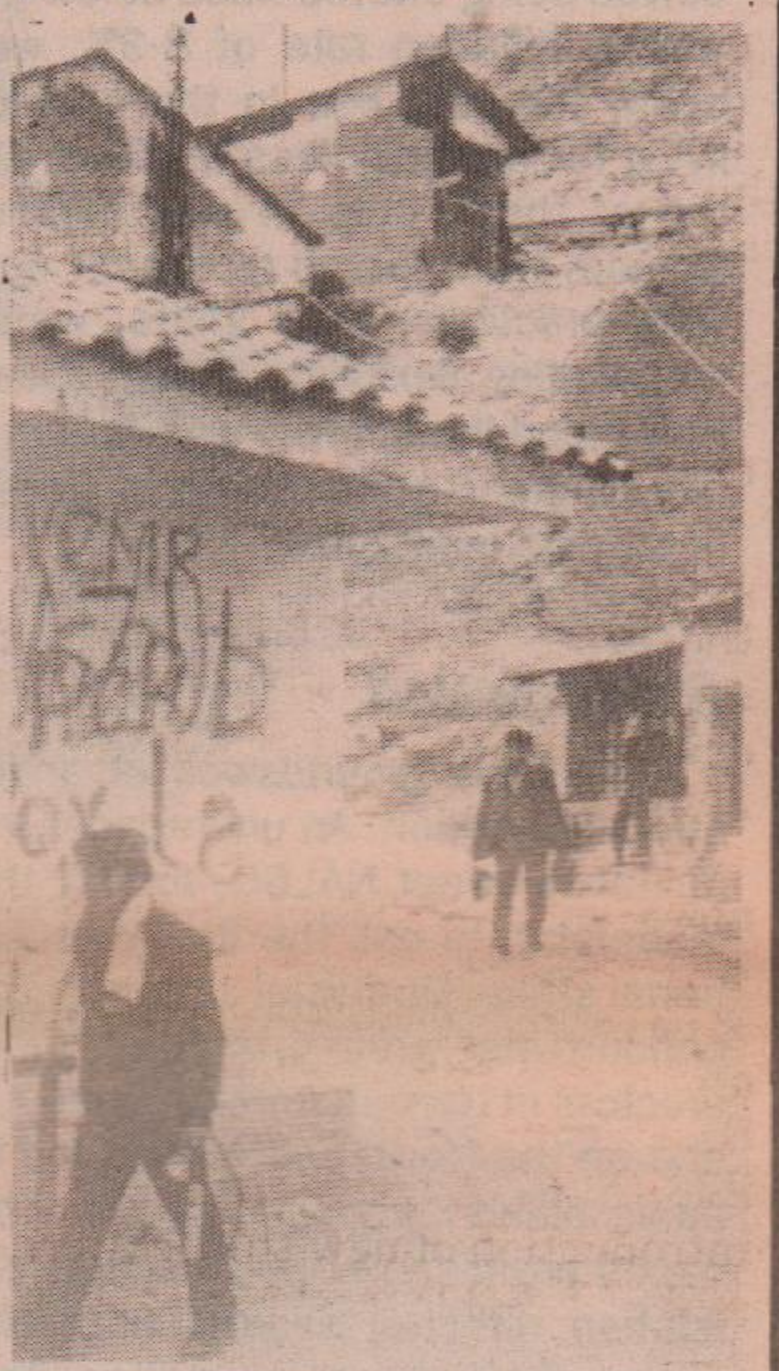
Only this demand expresses the fact that the working class is not responsible for inflation and will not be its victim.

But to rely upon an annual catch-up wage claim is not good enough. Even if it succeeds in fixing wages at the level of current prices it simply cannot make good the cumulative losses suffered month

by month over the previous year.

Moreover, the government's official price index is either deliberately fixed low or it fails to include prices of commodities most used by workers. So it is essential that price watch committees are established by the workers and those working in the home, who shop for provisions and can most keenly observe the daily and weekly changes and formulate the necessary wage demand. German housewives first set them up in 1922.

But what when inflation is raging at 10% a week or worse? Is it practicable to demand wages increases this often? At present in Latin America the response of unions to hyper-inflation is to launch periodic bitter and prolonged national strikes to recoup some of the massive cuts in the purchasing power of their wages.



Tin mine: Bolivia

But revolutionaries fight to set up and maintain a system of daily workers' control even under conditions of hyper-inflation. Modern technology allows trade unionists today to keep abreast of escalating prices. After all, the bosses can. For example, in Argentina in the early summer of this year, the big storeowners used computers to mark up their prices daily!

Workers can use this method too. When the situation is particularly bad workers should demand before the start of the week or day's work that the boss agrees to the new wage rates or no work is undertaken.

But hyper-inflation and the workers' response to it only underline that capitalist society is undergoing an acute social crisis. Workers can only compensate themselves for this inflation but they cannot get rid of it through a sliding scale of wages.

In the collective organisation of price watch committees, which embrace the homeworkers and those in the factories and offices, a system of workers' control can begin to undermine the right of the bosses and their government to offset their crisis at our expense.

Through the experience gained in these organisations the working class would soon realise that the only way to deal with hyper-inflation is to take hold of the banks, the finance houses and the government's printing presses and expropriate the very source of the problem. ■

The summer of discontent

Mark Hoskisson draws a balance sheet of the strikes and sell-outs.

"WARNINGS THAT the hot summer of 1989 marks a resurgence of union strength in Britain seem to be premature." With these words the *Financial Times* heaved a sigh of relief on behalf of all bosses.

The bosses had the jitters over the summer period. Previously confident that Thatcher had tamed the unions and that strikes were a thing of the past, they were shaken when one million workers took strike action. The "spectre" of union power had put in a reappearance. Now they think it has vanished once again.

The real balance sheet of the last few months is not as favourable for the bosses as the *Financial Times* thinks. Nevertheless real weaknesses within the trade union movement were revealed in the course of the strike wave.

In most cases the strikes over the last few months have been about pay and working practices. Early in the year the Tories, anxious about high pay settlements, decided to try and hold the line for this year at or below 7%. Then, as the wage claims came up for negotiation, inflation began to rocket.

In the BBC, on the railways, on the buses, on London Underground and in local government, workers—many already on very low pay—found themselves being offered rises below the official inflation rate of 8.3%: well below the real rise in the cost of living for working class families. On top of these cuts in real income workers were forced to accept new work practices—new shifts, weekend working, flexibility. In many cases they faced the scrapping of national pay bargaining structures in favour of divisive local ones.

Groundswell

A massive groundswell of anger burst into action. An unprecedented militancy swept NALGO, forcing the leadership to call the first ever national strike. Unofficial action on the London Underground, amongst steel erectors in the construction industry and on the North Sea oil rigs led to panic about "wildcat" strikes. The Tories promised new anti-union legislation directed against unofficial action. Six national rail strikes, general transport strikes in London and bus strikes in Scotland and the East Midlands led to the sporadic paralysis of the country throughout the summer. Engineers in Gloucester, Wolverhampton and Lancashire jumped the gun on the scheduled 35 hour week campaign by the AEU and struck against pay offers below inflation.

The pay struggles, unlike the dock strike, did not end in defeat. To some this will serve as an argument against our insistence that a new revolutionary leadership is necessary for the working class to successfully take on the bosses. On BR, in local government and the BBC and on the London Underground, the bosses were forced to make concessions. The government's unofficial pay norm of 7% was breached and a new going rate of 8.8% was set. The pay deals were not tied to the changes in national pay bargaining structures and working practices that the bosses had wanted.

There is no doubt that these gains represented partial victories for workers. This is important. It shows that strike action—far from being a thing of the past—is an effective way of changing the bosses' minds. Also the partial victories mean that, unlike 1985 after the miners' defeat, workers whose claims are coming up in the autumn (Fords, General Motors, ambulance drivers, local government manual workers, NCU, Post Office Counters etc) will feel more confident. The engineers struggle for the 35 hour week could easily become the launch pad for an autumn of discontent.

While these gains are important no militant should ignore the weaknesses that were revealed in the course of the struggles that won them. In the first place each strike was sold short by the bureaucracy. The 8.8% deal in the BBC was a repackaging of the original deal over a greater time span. In NALGO, BR and on London Underground the pay increases have done little to eradicate low pay for the great majority of the workforce.

In each case the final settlement was well below what could have been won given the determination of the workers to fight. The 8.8% going rate will rapidly be hit by further rises in inflation. And the bosses have simply put their plans for changes in work practices and bargaining struc-

tures on the table. Nowhere have they been withdrawn. Indeed on the rails the unions agreed to local bargaining over hours. This will open the way to a new attack on national pay bargaining.

The chance to turn the tide on the bosses has been squandered in return for pay deals that will soon be eroded by inflation. How has this happened?

A key player in the summer drama was the trade union bureaucracy. In each case it placed itself at the head of the anger and militancy of its members in order to control and contain it and win back for itself a negotiating role that had been undermined in the early years of Thatcher's reign. And in each case once it had won a recognition from the bosses of

its importance it caved in. Generally this took the form of appealing to the independent arbitration body, ACAS.

So, when the NALGO executive should, according to a democratic conference decision, have been calling a ballot on a national indefinite strike, ACAS was called in. When the British Rail bosses were on the ropes ASLEF and the TSSA accepted an ACAS compromise, followed later by the NUR. Outright victory was there for the taking. The bureaucrats threw it away.

Most scandalously, the TGWU bureaucracy—and Todd in particular—sabotaged the calling of a dock strike in April, offered to do a deal at ACAS that "falls short of the National Dock Labour Scheme" (Todd), and then steered the dockers to a devas-

tating defeat.

Two factors enabled the bureaucracy to get away with this. They had control of many of the disputes, ironically, through the Tories' anti-union laws. They were able to channel the anger of their members into ballots for action on their terms—namely one day or selective strikes not all out strikes.

All out strikes require a level of rank and file mobilisation and organisation that the bureaucracy fear like the plague. They fear it because it challenges not only their control of the action, but their control of the unions too. At best selective and one day actions proved capable of securing, in boom conditions, partial victories. At worst they have paved the way for workforces to be demobilised just at the point where the bosses will begin to push ahead, probably in a piecemeal fashion, with their productivity drive. All out strikes could have laid the basis for all out victories and the complete withdrawal of the bosses' plans to exploit us all more intensely than ever.

The second factor in the bureaucracy's favour was the limited nature of the unofficial organisations that did spring up during the summer. On the oil rigs, the building sites, the London Underground and the docks unofficial organisations existed. In each case these organisations were either outflanked by, or incorporated into, the bureaucracy. None were equipped with a political programme of rank and file independence.

On the Underground some of the co-ordinators were rapidly incorporated by Derek Fullick's ASLEF executive, copying his sectionalism by calling on one occasion for members to scab on an NUR-called strike.

Refused

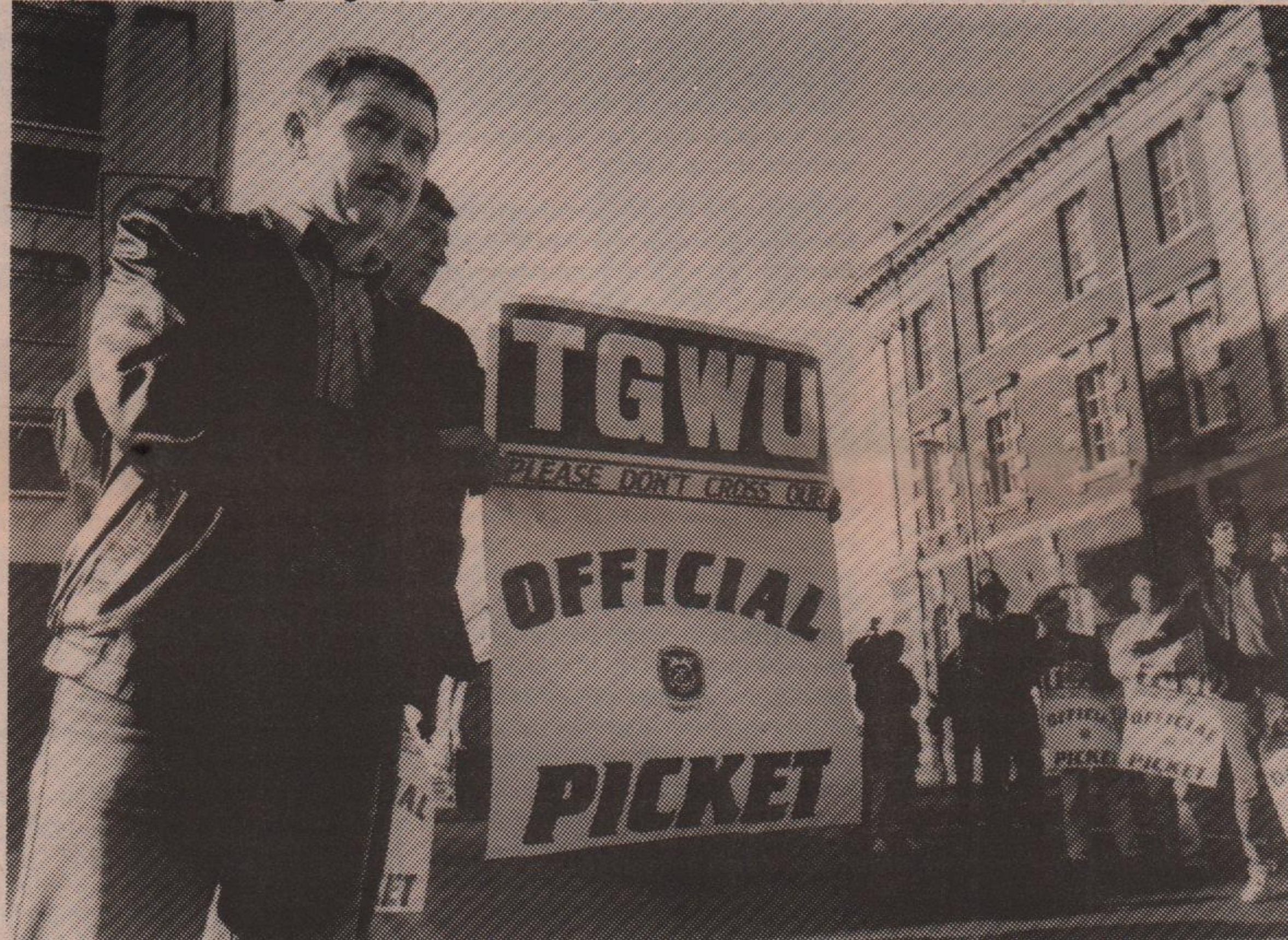
On the sites the steel erectors' stewards' committee steadfastly refused to link their fight with that of other construction workers. On the rigs the Offshore Workers' Liaison Committee was patronised by the bureaucracy of a number of unions because there had been no official recognition of the union on the rigs. And in the ports the NPSSC could not bring itself to break with Todd in time.

Being unofficial is not an end in itself. Unofficial organisation has to develop political independence from the bureaucracy if it is to develop into a real challenge to the likes of Knapp, Fullick and Todd.

The struggles of the summer have radicalised whole new layers of young militants, just as those of the winter of 1988 in the health and car industry did, just as the Post Office strike of September that same year did. But if those militants are serious about winning future struggles then the lessons of this summer need to be learnt.

The strength of the new realist bureaucracy remains intact. Its ability to limit action to one day strikes has been revealed, its ability to sell out was shown on the docks. In every dispute we have to fight for rank and file control through strike committees. The value of all out strikes needs to be demonstrated in practice. We should fight for our needs, our full claims and their protection against inflation through a sliding scale of wages. Against the bosses' productivity drive we must fight for workers' control of work practices and hours worked.

To get such results, to be able to respond to any future class wide attacks the bosses launch, we need more than just strike committees. We need a means of linking up militants across industries committed to a fight against the bureaucracy and for militant policies. We need an organisation of all militants in all industries: a rank and file movement. ■



Liverpool dockers picket Southampton

John Harris/IFL

The Dock strike—the one all out, national, indefinite strike of the summer of discontent—did not stem from anger over pay. It was a direct result of the government's strategic battle plan against the working class.

This battle plan is designed to defeat and demoralise key sections of the working class and smash their "union power" in order to restructure whole industries through massive job cuts. In the dock strike, as in the previous battles, the issue at stake was the gains in terms of pay, conditions and union rights won by traditionally well organised sections of workers. The attack on the Dock Labour Scheme was, in this sense, political. It posed the question of trade union rights, not just for the dockers, but for whole sections of workers. The strike, unlike the pay strikes, had a clear class-wide dimension.

The anti-union laws were invoked. Though they did not lead to the banning of the strike and fines for the union, they did play a useful role in buying time for the bosses and undermining the original impetus for strike action that existed when the abolition of the Scheme was announced back in April. The end result was that when the strike finally got underway many dockers, fearful that the TGWU would let them down, were bribed or intimidated into taking redundancy money or scabbing. The strike was rapidly, and it has to be said, relatively easily, beaten.

The dockers were the best organised and most militant section to engage in action in the summer of discontent. It is their defeat that has reassured the bosses that "union power" had not made a decisive comeback. Faced with a political attack by the bosses the rank and file dockers tried to fight back within the framework of militant, but non-political, trade unionism. This took two forms.

First they abided by the decisions of the TGWU bureaucracy to stall the strike at the beginning and go through the long period of legal wrangling that necessitated a second strike ballot. Discipline is essential for effective action. But militants all too often mix this up with the discipline of the bureaucracy.

The discipline needed was unity around the original decision to strike. Instead it ended up, until well into the dispute, as unity around Ron Todd's rejection of action in the ports in favour of action in the courts. This had disastrous consequences, including the victimisation of many of the best militants who had bravely but belatedly launched a fight for unofficial action.

Secondly the dockers fought their struggle on a sectional basis. From the beginning they argued that they could win the struggle by bringing out registered dockers only. While it was necessary to begin the struggle with the registered dockers it was vital to the success of any strike to stop all cargo coming and going in every port. It was necessary to appeal for strike action from non-registered dockers and blacking from other sectors of workers such as the TGWU road haulage section. The belief that the registered dockers could go it alone—in the face of a political attack—set back the chances of victory.

The defeat highlighted the fact that on its own militant trade unionism is inadequate for the task of successfully resisting the bosses' offensive on the post-war gains of the working class, let alone for the task of destroying capitalism altogether. It cannot generate a real political independence from the bureaucracy or overcome the crippling limitations of sectionalism.



Marxism and the Second World War

FIFTY MILLION people died in World War Two. But you would hardly think so from the orgy of trivia and jolly patriotism the media has churned out to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of war.

From the Fleet Street supplements and the BBC you can find out what fashions were like, what homes cost and who the stars were in "Those Dancing Years" (*Daily Mail*).

The biggest carnage in human history exudes a golden glow in the memory of the British bosses for one good reason. They duped the workers into fighting a bosses' war and came out of that war with their profit system intact.

They did this by convincing the workers and soldiers that it was a war to defend democracy, a war against fascism, a "people's war".

It was a lie then and it is a lie now.

The Second World War was fought, like the first, over the redivision of the world between the colonial empires of a few imperialist countries. Democracy was not an issue between the bosses of the warring states.

In the colonies and semi-colonies that it went to war to "save", Britain had never offered a shred of democracy to the millions of workers and peasants. They were ruled from Whitehall and their subjection justified by a racism every bit as virulent as Nazi Germany's anti-semitism.

Poland, which Britain went to war to "save", had never been a democracy. At the time of the Stalin-Hitler pact it was one of the most repressive dictatorships in the world.

Neither was Britain choosy about its allies. They included the South African apartheid state, Stalin's totalitarian dictatorship and by the end of the war Salazar's fascist Portugal. In the run up to the war Britain courted the military dictatorships of both Greece and Turkey. Throughout the 1930s it bolstered Nazi Germany as a bulwark against the USSR. And it played Hitler off against French imperialism.

At home, once war broke out,

democracy went out of the window. Strikes were banned, strikers jailed, censorship imposed, identity cards introduced and the right to change jobs removed for those in essential industries. You could vote, but only for the Party which held the seat already. The coalition government suspended elections and signed a mutual non-aggression pact for by-elections.

British imperialism was so concerned to reconquer its North African semi-colonies that it allowed the USSR to fight fascism alone in Europe until 1943. Needless to say its victories did not bring democracy to Egypt, Libya etc. They brought renewed dictatorial puppet governments.

At the end of the war Britain and the USA feared workers' revolution so much in Germany and Japan that they immediately installed Hirohito as emperor and scores of top Nazis as post-war administrators of the West German state.

Against the Greek workers and peasants, who had liberated themselves from fascism Britain imposed the rule of the pro-fascist generals.

The real Second World War, stripped of the myths generated by Tory, Labour and so-called Communist Parties, bears no resemblance to a war for democracy.

After crushing the workers struggles which erupted after World War Two Stalinism and imperialism hand in hand have presided over an imperialist "peace" which has seen a further thirty million killed in regional wars.

As the media regales us with details of "utility clothing" and Glenn Miller's greatest hits, Marxists mourn and remember the workers whose lives and futures were squandered by the British bosses.

As the world order erected on the bones of millions begins to crumble it presents the opportunity to avenge them. The generation the bosses have earmarked to fight World War Three can and must make the 1990s a decade of workers' revolution instead.



Dunkirk, 1940

Roots of the conflict

HITLER'S MEGALOMANIA, Chamberlain's weakness, the rise of dictators and political extremism, the clash of national characteristics and the unfair settlement of World War One. These are the popular explanations of World War Two being churned out by every commemorative TV programme, book or exhibition.

Every one of them avoids the question of class, of the basic economic interests which drove the world to war in 1939. Only Marxism dares to explain the causes of the Second World War scientifically. That is because only Marxism proceeds from the fundamental economic and class questions which underlay the political and military actions of millions of individuals in 1939-45.

The nineteenth century general, Clausewitz, came nearer to the truth than most of today's pundits when he explained that "war is the continuation of politics by other means". The Second World War was a continuation of the inter-imperialist rivalry which has wracked the twen-

tieth century from its outset.

Germany, Japan and the USA were the latest and economically strongest imperialist countries. Britain and France had ruled the roost both before 1914 and, due to their military supremacy, installed themselves as leading political powers after the end of the First World War.

All the imperialist ruling classes had gone to war in 1914 because after the 1890s the whole world had been divided into colonial or semi-colonial spheres of influence. After this new colonial conquests were impossible without the forcible re-division of the world.

Capitalism had created an international economy which constantly strained against the fetters imposed by national boundaries. As long as the working class does not resolve this contradiction by tearing down the borders through international revolution the capitalists will seek to resolve it through wars of conquest and expansion.

The 1914-18 war not only failed to solve this contradiction, but intensified it. The result was two

decades of stagnation for capitalism; the contraction of the world economy and its fragmentation into trading blocs protected by the major imperialist powers (the British and French empires, Latin America for the USA).

The growing modern imperialisms were compelled to seek a violent way out of this stagnation. This set the terms of the alliances which fought the Second World War. Whereas Germany and Japan opted to carve out large land empires and protected trading blocs of their own, the US economy's appetite for markets and raw materials could not be satisfied in this way.

The interests of US imperialism dictated that it put an end to the world of protected trading blocs and economic regionalisation and create an open world market in which the USA could predominate. This necessitated in the first place a war to prevent Germany and Japan from carving out their new empires. In the second place it meant destroying the old colonial empires of Britain and France.

German imperialism was compelled to begin its re-division of the world in Europe. Denied access to Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa it struck out at the nearest sources of raw materials and cheap labour. The lack of a vast colonial empire, in particular the lack of access to the vital raw materials of modern industrial production, dictated the military tactics of the German High Command.

The war was a "world" war not just in the geographical sense. The development of technology meant that modern warfare had become total warfare, involving the militarisation of society. In the Second World War brilliant military tactics counted less than the ability to pour large volumes of machinery and ammunition from the factory to the front line. It was German imperialism's inability to do this in sufficient quantities which convinced Hitler to abandon his plans for the invasion of Britain in September 1940.

He turned instead to preparations for a war with the Soviet Union. The whole *blitzkrieg* war of conquest in Eastern and Western Europe in 1939-40 had been possible because of the Stalin-Hitler non aggression pact which agreed the partition of Poland and the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states.

After five years of selling out the interests of the working class to maintain the friendship of the "democratic" imperialisms, years which involved the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, Stalinism gambled on a pact with Hitler.

Despite all later protestations that this was a tactic to buy time there is no evidence that this was the reason. The pact flowed logically from the fundamental tenet of Stalinism; socialism in one country and peaceful co-existence with imperialism. The utopian and reactionary essence of this strategy was crystallised in the Stalin-Hitler pact and demonstrated as Hitler now began to assemble the strategic positions and raw material sources for the assault on the USSR.

September 1940 saw the pact between Germany, Italy and Japan. Early in 1941 Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece, then North Africa. Then in June 1941 the Wehrmacht invaded the USSR.

Hitler's invasion of the USSR was not simply the act of a madman or a megalomaniac but flowed from a clear view of the interests of German imperialism. He pronounced:

"The struggle for hegemony in the world will be decided for Europe by possession of the Russian space . . . If we are masters of Europe, then we shall have the dominant position in the world. If the [British] Empire were to collapse today through our arms we would not be its heirs, since Russia would take India, Japan East Asia and America Canada."

Hitler's calculations rested on the following, profoundly class based, perceptions of intentions of his enemies.

- That British imperialism was dominated by a wing of the bosses which had compromised from a position of weakness in the 1930s, and colluded in putting the Nazis in power in the first place
- That British and US imperialism had no interest in allying with the world's only workers' state against brother capitalists like Krupp and Thyssen
- That Stalinist Russia was a crumbling hierarchy which only had to be given a good kick for the whole edifice to come tumbling down. As history shows, he had only partially grasped the truth.

German imperialism's military victories in Europe led to a change in US strategy. Up until 1941 the USA adopted a neutral stance, but operated a "cash and carry" policy for Britain. This allowed Britain to buy

US goods and weapons as long as it paid in cash and used its own ships for transport. By 1941 Britain had liquidated all its available assets to pay for US goods. US industry meanwhile was booming, with unemployment plummeting from its 1930s high to less than 1%. Now US imperialism had the economic strength to take on both Germany and Japan and ensure the total economic subordination of Britain.

From February 1942 it began the "Lend Lease" of military equipment and supplies to Britain in return for "the elimination of all forms of tariffs and other trade barriers". In addition Britain had to Lend Lease raw materials from the colonies to the US economy under the same terms.

The Fourth International predicted in 1940 that a US intervention "even if directed against Germany, would be a struggle for the heritage of Great Britain". This was coming true before the USA had fired a single shot.

Whilst it was Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 which brought the USA formally into the war, by then it had become clear that the USA had to intervene in Europe to prevent Germany successfully closing off the whole European economy to US goods.

Repeatedly the Allies postponed their promised intervention into Western Europe. The USSR was left to take on the might of the German armies while Britain and the USA applied themselves to theatres of war dictated by their own colonial appetites.

Hitler's reliance on the defeatist wing of the British bourgeoisie was thwarted in May 1940 when an inner-party coup replaced Chamberlain with Churchill. A ruthless fighter for the survival of British imperialism during the working class offensives of 1910-13 and 1926, Churchill was a confirmed anti-communist. Yet his allegiance to Britain's imperialist interests gave him every reason to ally with the USSR against Germany.

Under Churchill British imperialism opted to become the dominant political power in Europe, subordinate to the USA rather than to become the subordinate ally of a German empire stretching from the Channel to the Volga. And that, subject to the fortunes of war, is what it eventually got.

Nothing proves the primacy of class interest over ideology more than Churchill's embrace of Stalin in 1941.

What of Hitler's third pre-conception; the social, political and military weakness of the USSR? By 1942 German troops were in the outskirts of Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad and in command of a 1,200 mile front. But despite having crumpled militarily at first, the USSR retained a decisive advantage which allowed it to turn the tide against Germany. This was not the legendary Russian winter but the planned economy.

Despite the Stalinist dictatorship the USSR remained a workers' state. The bureaucratic planning mechanisms, supplemented by the ingenuity of the Soviet workers and lower-ranking officers committed to defending them, assured the USSR supremacy in any prolonged "total war".

Whole industries were uprooted and relocated behind the Ural Mountains. All resources were directed to create the equipment needed to

overcome the production and supply problems involved in a total war.

The Soviet masses threw themselves heroically into the defence of the degenerate workers' state. Twenty million died in the USSR compared to 700,000 in Britain and the USA. The German offensive of June 1941 was calculated on the basis of being able to wipe out 150 of the Red Army's 200 divisions in the first two months of the war. 150 divisions were duly annihilated but by the end of 1941 the Red Army had raised its fighting strength to 300 divisions (4.7 million soldiers).

For exactly the same reasons as the Soviet masses, though without their illusions in Stalin and the bureaucracy, Trotskyists fought for the defence of the USSR in the Second World War. Whilst we opposed the war aims of all the imperialists, "democratic" and fascist alike, we took the side of the USSR against German imperialism and its semi-colonial allies in order to defend the gains of the October Revolution.

On the basis of the planned economy and mass mobilisation the Red Army was able to turn the tide in 1943. A combination of massive tank battles and painstaking street fighting put the Wehrmacht into retreat.

Added to support for the workers state against imperialism, revolutionaries also supported the struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples for national unity and independence from imperialism. China had been fighting to free itself from Japanese colonialism since the occupation of Manchuria in 1931. Japan's full scale invasion in 1937 marks the real outbreak of the Second World War. Once it had temporarily knocked out US naval strength in the Pacific in December 1941 Japanese imperialism was able to sweep through South East Asia towards India where a national revolt against British imperialism was fermenting.

Anyone who thinks George Orwell based his idea of "doublethink"—conscious self-deception—on Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany alone should consider the example of British imperialism in India and South East Asia. Ostensibly fighting a war to defend democracy against fascism, it ruthlessly subjugated the peoples of its colonies through administrations which were as racist as Hitler's was anti-semitic.

Nehru described the effect of the arrival of refugees from defeated Burma, Malaysia and Singapore:

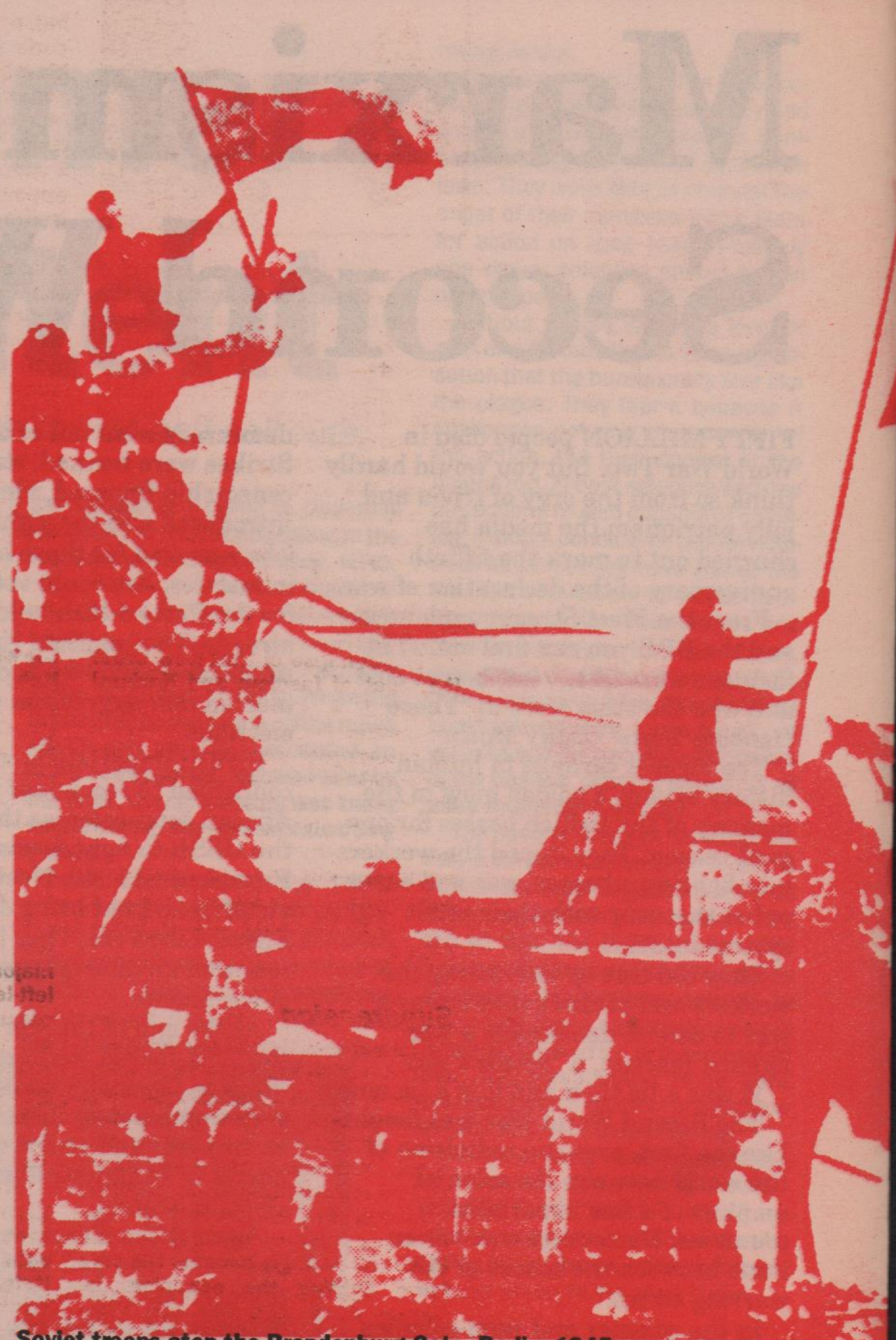
"The story of how they had been deserted by civil and other authorities and left to shift for themselves spread throughout India . . . Horrible stories of racial discrimination and suffering reached us."

Not surprisingly Britain's colonial administrations crumbled in front of the Japanese advance, as thousands of colonial soldiers and civil servants refused to lay down their lives for the continued enslavement of their country.

By 1943 three types of war were being fought in the world arena: the inter-imperialist war for the right to exploit the peoples of Eastern Europe and the third world; the war to defend the USSR against capitalist restoration; the wars and struggles for national liberation fought by the semi-colonial and colonial peoples of China, India, South East Asia and South East Europe.

The last two types were just wars from the standpoint of the world working class because they are part of, and facilitate, the working class struggle to overthrow capitalism. But as the conflicts threatened to produce precisely this outcome—proletarian revolution—both imperialism and Stalinism moved in to prevent it.

Initially the Anglo-US alliance had followed future president Harry Truman's advice to let Germany and Russia "kill as many of each other as



Soviet troops atop the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 1945

War and counter-revolution

possible". They concentrated on recovering their colonial possessions and semi-colonial spheres of interest in North Africa and the Far East. The USA in particular poured men and resources into the Pacific war with Japan.

Ever since the German invasion of the USSR the Soviet leadership had been pressing Churchill and Roosevelt to open a "second front" in Europe. That the war was overwhelmingly an inter-imperialist war is shown by the USA and Britain's refusal to do so until the Soviet Union was poised to destroy Nazi Germany.

Repeatedly the Western Allies postponed their promised intervention into Western Europe. For most of the war the USSR was left to take on the might of the German armies in Europe, while Britain and the USA applied themselves to theatres of war dictated by their own colonial appetites.

While the Soviets held the Germans down in Europe, British troops were directed to reappropriate the British Empire in Libya and Egypt. Churchill could boast in 1943 that the British army was playing about

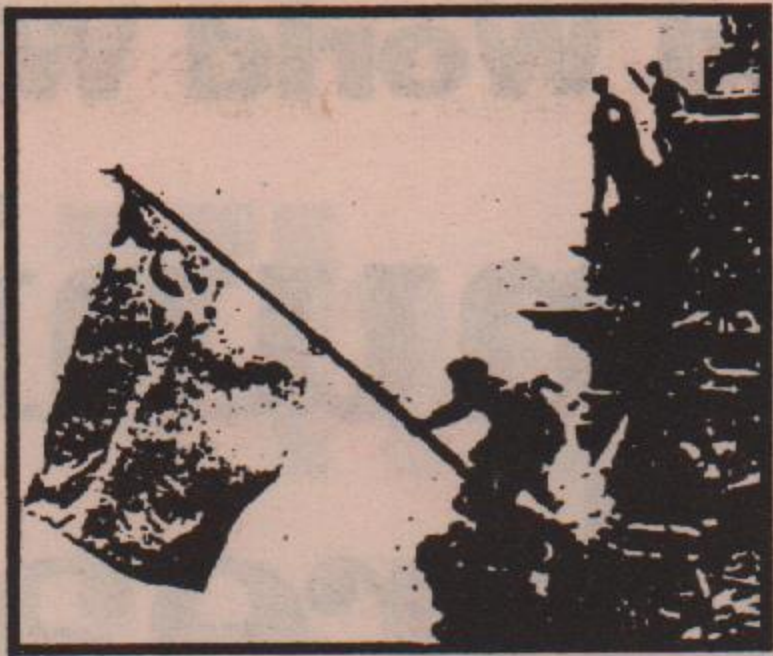
with six German divisions while the Soviets were taking on 185.

Even when the west eventually invaded France in June 1944—when Germany was already broken by the Soviet army—they faced only 27 German divisions compared with over 250 German and satellite divisions facing the USSR at the time.

It was only the advance of the Red Army that alerted Britain and France to the need to intervene militarily in Europe, both to secure it strategically as a sphere of interest against the USSR and to prevent revolutionary upsurges in the wake of German and Italian defeats.

Whilst Stalinists in Europe and the USA clamoured for a second front in Europe the Trotskyists argued that "a capitalist second front means counter-revolution in Europe".

The events which followed the allied landings in Italy (1943), France (1944) and Greece (1945) confirm this prediction. Not only this. Stalinism too was to prove its worth to imperialism by stifling the revolutionary situations which occurred in Southern and Eastern Europe as the war neared its close. ■



American troops had been preceded by the seizure of the majority of the country by popularly based liberation committees and patriot militias that established themselves as the organs of power. In Italy, in the north of the country, the Communist Party led Committee for National Liberation took up arms against the Germans after the British and American armies invaded the south of Italy in 1943.

At stake was the potential of social revolution against capitalism itself. As the *Economist* put it at the time:

"The collapse of that New Order [i.e. that of fascism and Nazism] imported a great revolutionary momentum to Europe. It stimulated all the vague and confused but nevertheless radical and socialist impulses of the masses."

For precisely this reason, the inter-imperialist war became ever more predominantly and immediately a war against the socialist aspirations of the working masses themselves.

Suppression

The suppression of the left took its most visibly brutal form in Greece. Ever mindful of its strategic interests the British Government had been anxious to hold on to the Greek monarchy as a bastion against radical republicanism. Its problem was that the monarchist government was based in Egypt, while ELAS increasingly became the only force fighting the occupiers in Greece itself. And this was compounded by the fact that the Greek army and navy in Cairo mutinied in April 1944 in favour of a republican government.

The British army was sent in against the mutineers. As Churchill put it to the British Ambassador to Cairo:

"Do not worry too much about external effects. Simply keep them rounded up by artillery and superior force and let hunger play its part."

Over 20,000 Greek troops were kept in prisoner of war cages despite the fact they were supposedly Britain's allies.

In October 1944 the German army evacuated Greece. ELAS faced little internal opposition in asserting itself as the only operative power in the country. Its committees established forms of local government. Its militias possessed armed power.

Churchill decided to occupy Greece militarily in order to put an end to such an outcome to the war. The British army was sent into Athens in late 1944 with definite orders to act as an occupying army. As Churchill put it to General Scobie:

"Do not, however, hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion was in progress."

The British army invaded and conquered Greece in the name of the war for democracy. Athens was strafed by the RAF.

Events proceeded differently in Italy. When the British and American armies invaded Sicily in the summer of 1943 they provoked a deep crisis in the ranks of Italian fascism. The fascist Grand Council, supported by the King, deposed Mussolini in favour of Marshall Badoglio—the conqueror of Ethiopia. The policy of the "democratic" imperialists was one of peace with the fascist Badoglio in order to wage war on the left wing resistance movement. As Churchill explained it in a private letter to Roosevelt:

"There is nothing between the King, with the patriots who have rallied round him . . . and rampant Bolshevism."

In the aftermath of the recognition of the Badoglio government in the south, the imperialist powers had to confront the organised power of the Italian working class. In 1943 workers' councils were created in

Milan. A strike wave followed in Turin in the autumn of 1943. In March of 1944 there was a mass general strike throughout the German occupied areas of the north of Italy. The Communist Party-led Committee for National Liberation appointed councils of management in the major factories.

Faced with this proletarian offensive against capitalism itself, British imperialism turned to German imperialism. In November 1944 General Alexander radioed to the Italian resistance to restrict its activities and avoid large scale activities for the duration of the winter.

Heedful of the message the German operational command, knowing that they were under no immediate threat, systematically slaughtered the leaders of the Northern Italian resistance movement that winter. During the Italian General Strike, the allies actually bombed the working class cities of Northern Italy.

In France the USA and Britain had ignored a Soviet request for an invasion as long as possible. The French resistance movement itself was divided between the overwhelming majority who were led by the Communist Party and a minority of rightists owing their allegiance to the reactionary de Gaulle.

Despite the eventual invasion by the British and US armies, the great majority of France was liberated by left-led liberation committees and paramilitaries. As had been the case in Italy and Greece, the "liberating" armies found themselves confronted by the armed power of the masses, and those armed masses had no immediate allegiance to de Gaulle and the pro-capitalist right.

The western allies did not immediately resort to armed terror, as they had in Greece, or to complicity with Nazi Germany, as they had in Italy. Above all they relied on the counter-revolutionary role of the USSR and its influence on the Communist Party.

Greece and Italy had already shown them how reliable this instrument could be. The Greek Communist Party had ordered ELAS to accept Britain's terms for disarmament and Stalin had actively supported Britain's crushing of Athens in 1944. In Italy the Communist Party had joined the Badoglio government of the fascists and argued for the resistance to limit its objectives to those of national liberation as opposed to social revolution.

Leadership

The leadership of the French Communist Party had long been under orders from Moscow to accept de Gaulle's leadership. As early as 1942 the Soviet leadership was calling on all French people, as well as all peoples of the French colonies, to unite behind De Gaulle. When he moved against the armed resistance with US and British backing, the Communist Party proved the most reliable of allies.

He dissolved the patriot militias with no murmur of protest from the Communist Party members who had been taken into his government. When miners struck in the summer of 1945 party chief Thorez denounced them as "Hitler-Trotskyites". Thorez became the most fervent advocate of social peace between the working class and the capitalists. As de Gaulle recalled in his personal diary:

"His constant call is for the maximum of work and production at any price. I shall not try to understand him. I am satisfied if France is served."

The Second World War was not only a war between imperialists struggling over their colonies. It was also a war of imperialists against those who took up arms against capitalism and oppression.

Thousands of workers in Greece, Italy and France were the victims of that war. And the bosses in Britain and the USA, who claim to this day that the war was a war for "democracy", have the blood of those workers on their hands. So too does the Soviet bureaucracy that made the slaughter possible. ■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



What is revolutionary defeatism?

DURING THE First World War the German revolutionary, Karl Liebknecht declared "the main enemy is at home". Lenin, elaborated the policy of revolutionary defeatism. By this he meant that the defeat of an imperialist power at war was preferable to a victory won at the cost of the class truce at home.

These policies were in direct contradiction to the patriotism and nationalism being whipped up by the bosses of Europe and the USA. They were also in contradiction to the policies of the reformist traitors of the Socialist International. They called on the working class to give up the class struggle and murder each other on the battlefields in order to defend their respective fatherlands—fatherlands owned and ruled by the bosses.

To this day revolutionary defeatism remains the only consistent and internationalist policy for workers in the event of wars between imperialist states. And it applied in the Second World War, just as much as the first.

Marxism's attitude to war has nothing to do with pacifism. War is an ever present feature of class society. In the imperialist epoch, when class antagonisms have reached their highest level, war has engulfed the whole world twice.

To get rid of war we will have to destroy capitalism itself. Its overthrow will necessarily involve armed insurrection. This is why the working class cannot renounce violence.

Every country at war claims the other side started it, that the other side has carried out atrocities, that it is fighting to liberate a small country and so on. Against this we have to approach every war from the standpoint of class. We have to ask what class forces are involved? What is the class nature of the warring states? Will the workers' international struggle be advanced or set back by the victory of one side or another?

Strengthen

In answering these questions Lenin showed how victory for any imperialist power would strengthen not only its area of exploitation, its internal and external prestige, but also reactionary nationalist sentiments within the working class. And, if class peace was maintained to help the war effort, the real interests of the working class would suffer enormously. Working class organisations would be tied to the state, living standards would be sacrificed to the war effort and democratic rights would be suppressed.

Instead of voting for the bosses' war budget in parliament, rallying workers to the army and sacrificing pay and conditions to the "war effort" the workers' organisations should carry on fighting their own exploiters.

None of this means that Marxists favour the victory of one rival imperialism over another. Revolutionary defeatism is defeatism on all sides. So we do not advocate workers helping the enemy bosses by sabotaging production, spying for the enemy etc. The class struggle would carry on even

if the defeat of "our own" bosses becomes a reality.

There are "just" wars which Marxists do support. These include not just the workers' armed insurrection and the defence of a healthy workers' state. Marxists support semi-colonial countries in their wars of national liberation and unification against imperialism. We do so regardless of the political regime or the immediate causes of the war.

Likewise we support the defence of degenerate workers' states at war with imperialism, even though political power has been usurped by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The false Marxists of the Socialist and Communist Parties did not simply echo the bosses' patriotic calls to die for the fatherland in World War Two. They tried to utilise Marxism's support for wars of national liberation and defence of workers states to rally workers to support the Allied war effort.

The Stalinists argued that since the USSR was allied to Britain, France and the USA revolutionary defeatism had to be suspended. Strikes and mutinies by British workers and soldiers harmed the defence of the USSR, they argued.

Refutations

One of the best refutations of this argument came from Stalinism itself, in an earlier phase.

British CP leader Emile Burns wrote:

"But supposing fascist Germany attacks the USSR; are you now in favour of the workers supporting the British and French governments in an attack on Germany? *Under no circumstances*. Such action would help the German capitalists to represent the war as one of national self-defence; it would immensely strengthen the British capitalists and weaken the British workers; it would put British imperialism in the event of victory in a favourable position for attacking the USSR; it would mean suppressing the inevitable revolt in India." (*The Labour Party and the menace of War*, 1935)

This was exactly what class peace in Britain, supported by the CP, led to. (See pg 10)

Revolutionary defeatism means agitating in every factory, regiment and ship for the class war. Such agitation begins with economic strikes or the defence of soldiers' political rights. But it is aimed at the creation of workers' and soldiers' councils which could form the basis of working class power.

Marxists do not fear the onset of war. We recognise that, despite the initial upsurge in patriotism in the first stages of war, the horrors and privations it brings and the militarisation of society lead to the re-emergence of class struggle in a sharper form.

War is an act of desparation for capitalism. The century of wars signifies it is in its death agony. War and revolution are the fundamental features of the imperialist epoch. And revolutionary defeatism is the strategy essential for turning war into revolution. ■

AFTER THE Comintern's turn to the popular front strategy in 1934-5 the British Communist Party (CP) embraced the idea of an alliance with the "democratic imperialists" amongst the British bosses. Under the guise of defending democracy against fascism it subordinated the independent interests of the workers time and again.

From the time of Chamberlain's Munich agreement with Hitler in 1938 the CP agreed to stand down its own bye-election candidates, and campaigned for Labour to do likewise, in favour of a string of anti-appeasement Tories.

Then came the Stalin-Hitler peace pact of August 23 1939. After posing as the most consistent anti-fascists the CP were required to justify Moscow's disastrous and treacherous pact with the butcher of the German workers. Only two days before the CP's paper the *Daily Worker* had been calling on Britain to enter a pact with the USSR against Germany. Not surprisingly the CP's organisers in the Jewish East End of London had to hide in their houses for days after the pact was declared. One week later the inevitable consequence of the pact took place; Germany invaded Poland and Europe was plunged into war.

Having peddled the idea of national unity, of an alliance with Russia against Germany, the CP was required to do a political somersault. Late in September 1939 the Comintern's representative arrived at the CP's headquarters to announce that the war was "an imperialist war" and that the CP should "oppose it in the classic Marxist way". The classic Marxist position meant arguing that defeat for Britain was the lesser evil than victory at the price of class peace.

After recovering from this shock the CP leaders set about implementing the U-turn, but in a classic Stalinist way.

The CP issued a manifesto which called on the British workers to:

"End the political truce. End the policy of unity with capitalism and war. Fight for the cause of the oppressed peoples—the colonial peoples of the British empire."

No matter that these were the arguments that the "Trotskyist-fascist agents" had fought for throughout the 1930s, the CP took them up as enthusiastically as they had taken up the Popular Front. In return the Coalition government banned the *Daily Worker* in January 1941.

Centrist?

Does this prove that Stalinism was after all not "counter-revolutionary" as Trotsky designated it. Had the British CP become "centrist" capable of vacillating between a revolutionary and a reformist line again? All the facts answer no.

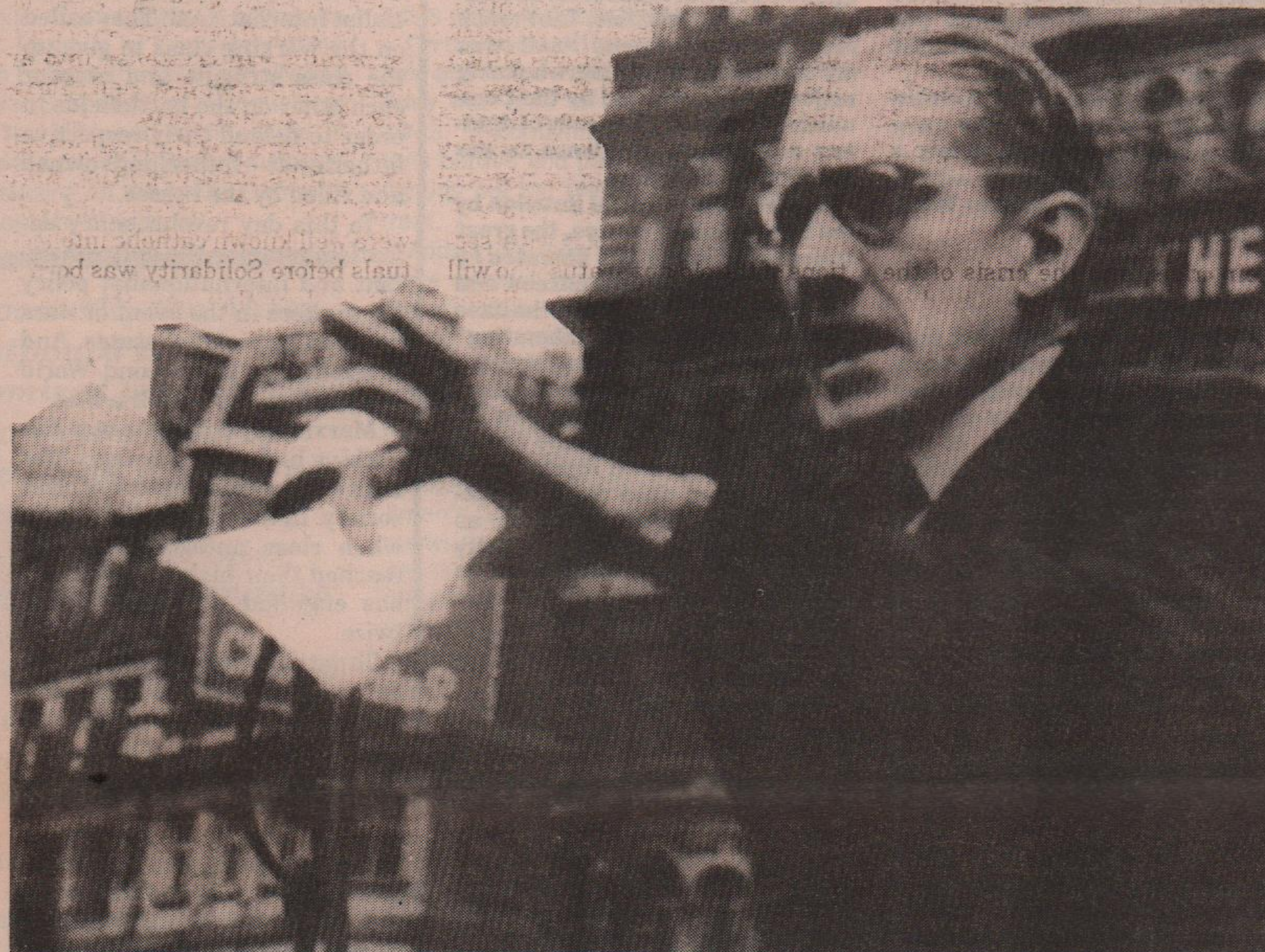
In the first place, despite its ringing condemnations of Churchill and coalitionism the CP never brought itself to fight for Lenin's slogan "turn the war into a civil war". Instead it concentrated on a series of reforms to alleviate the plight of British workers and soldiers (defence of trade unions, democratic rights, better air raid shelters) linked to the goal of "A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war". It fought, in other words, for a social pacifist rather than a revolutionary defeatist position.

In the second place the CP's sudden turn against the British war effort was purely and simply the reflection of the turn in Kremlin foreign policy. It did not require any of the Comintern's affiliates to

When "communists" were strike breakers

The Second World War was supposedly the "finest hour" of the British Communist Party (CP). It grew to 56,000 members, controlled many workplace organisations and had great influence in the unions. But throughout the war the CP acted as the puppet of Kremlin foreign policy.

The CP's working class members and supporters believed they were fighting for socialism. But the war record of the British CP is a catalogue of betrayal, demonstrating the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism.



Communist Party leader R Palme Dutt

adopt a revolutionary defeatist position with regard to Germany. Instead of clearly advocating that the workers of all imperialist countries turn their wrath on their own bosses the British CP began to apologise for both Hitler and Stalin against the "aggression" of French and British imperialism. It trumpeted the Stalin-Hitler "peace offer" to the Allies. When Germany invaded the Netherlands the *Daily Worker* had announced "Britain spreads the war to Holland". The CP's line was not a result of applying revolutionary defeatism to imperialist countries in general, but differentially to the countries at war with Stalin's fascist ally.

The CP's reluctant Leninists were put out of their misery in June 1941. Even as the current issue of *Labour Monthly* (the CP journal) informed workers "It is clear that the only way out of this present very serious situation is for the working class to end the policy of coalition" Hitler invaded Russia. Stalin signed a pact with Churchill and the Communist Parties of the whole world were obliged once again to return to the policy of "national unity" within the allied imperialisms.

The CP set about its new task of bolstering the Allied war effort with a vengeance. "The weakening of the Churchill government" said the CP's 1942 pamphlet *The Way to Win* "would mean the weakening of national unity. Therefore our aim must be the strengthening of the Churchill government".

So the CP reverted to its previous policy on elections. The La-

bour, Liberal and Tory parties signed a "no-contest" agreement whereby they refused to fight each other in bye-elections, allowing the party of the sitting MP to stand unopposed. Although this was only narrowly pushed through the 1942 Labour Party Conference the CP wholeheartedly backed it.

At Edinburgh in 1941 and again in Cardiff in 1942 the CP called for a vote for Tory candidates against candidates stood by the ILP. "A vote for Brockway is a vote for Hitler" said the CP's election literature in Cardiff. Summing up the policy of class collaboration the leaflet advised workers: "far better vote for Sir James Grigg, the honest capitalist, than a false socialist".

Criticism

During the Stalin-Hitler pact the CP had reverted to a harsh criticism of British imperialist policy in India. Just before Hitler invaded the USSR Harry Pollitt had written:

"We salute the Indian people, we hope the mighty wave of revolt that is now sweeping that great country will succeed in finding the road to complete victory over British imperialism." (*Labour Monthly* June 1941).

But by the time of the Cardiff bye-election India's freedom was deemed subordinate to British imperialism's war against Nazi Germany. The CP explained:

"Fenner Brockway wants freedom for India but does not explain that India can only be free by join-



ing with Britain and Russia in the fight against Fascism."

The CP's new policy led them to condemn the "mighty wave of revolt" which gathered strength in 1942.

The CP made little impact on the electoral front. Nor was its advice on how best to keep India out of Japanese hands greatly valued by the Foreign Office. But on the industrial front the CP's implantation and militant reputation enabled it to become an effective tool in the hands of the employers and the coalition government.

Whilst the CP and Labour parties had become the advocates of class peace the bosses entertained no such schemes. They introduced compulsory overtime everywhere, accompanied by the "dilution" of skilled labour with the lower paid work of women and youth; they introduced piece work and set about a concerted attack on working practices and local agreements. As soon as the new pro-war line was adopted the CP threw itself into local collaboration with management over every one of these aims. The CP stewards and convenors encouraged management to set up "Production Committees" where they could sit jointly with bosses to oversee speed-ups.

The level of betrayal involved can only be understood by considering the recovery of working class militancy which took place after 1941. Most class conscious workers supported their own bosses' war because they believed it to be a "people's war" against fascism.

But they saw little point in giving up the conditions and trade union rights they were supposed to be defending against fascism. In addition the recovery of industrial production and conscription removed the threat of unemployment which had subdued militancy in the 1930s. So after 1941 a series of strike movements occurred in Britain's factories, shipyards and mines. The CP responded as viciously as any boss.

When Tyne shipyard workers struck over hours in 1942 the CP organised a campaign to get them back to work. Harry Pollitt sent the CP members involved in the strike a personal telegram calling each "a traitor to his country".

In 1942 Vickers's shipyard workers at Barrow struck against terrible working conditions and piece work. The strikers issued a call for support from the rest of the trade union movement. The Stalinists meanwhile sent a team of party workers to organise strikebreaking and a return to work. When every trick had been tried and failed, the *Daily Worker* was forced to harangue the 6,000 strikers. "Barrow has become a cockpit of Trotskyist agitation" declared the CP's organ, now re-legalised after its change of line.

Throughout the war after 1941 strikes flared in the pits. From Betteshanger in Kent to Hatfield Main and Cortonwood in South Yorkshire miners took strike action against the employers' offensive. Men from Betteshanger, from Fife and from Tareni in South Wales were imprisoned for leading strikes during 1941-44. In every case the CP worked overtime to break the strikes, using the traditional bureaucrats' ploy of negotiations where possible, and direct accusations of treason where this did not work. In a leaflet entitled *Poison in the Coalfields* the CP accused striking miners of "scabbing on the Red Army and the miners of France and Belgium by disorganising coal production".

Conscription
Finally in 1944 came the Bevin Boys' strikes. In an attempt to boost coal production Labour employment minister Ernest Bevin began the conscription of young apprentices from industry into the coal mines. The labour shortage in the mines took place precisely because pay was lower and conditions worse there than in other essential industries. In response a rolling strike wave of apprentices took place in Tyneside, Teeside, Glasgow and Yorkshire. Three Trotskyist militants of the Workers International League were arrested for their role in the strikes, held incommunicado and tried in secret. The CP meanwhile fully supported the Bevin scheme, provided lists of known ex-miners in the engineering industry and raged against the "treachery" of the apprentices. The record of the British CP in the second imperialist war is one of cynical about turns, strikebreaking, scabbing on the anti-imperialist struggle in India, supporting "honest" Tories at the polls. It is a record which at every twist and turn proves that the British CP was and is Labour's counter-revolutionary twin. ■

VIRTUALLY EVERY major political force has an emergency plan for Poland right now. And they all agree on one thing—that the rights and living standards of the Polish working class must be hammered.

The Stalinists of the "Communist" Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) have their own plan, or rather two, since they are riven by factions and likely to be heading for a split in the not too distant future.

On the one side are the old hardliners who backed Jaruzelski's martial law clamp down in 1981. They may seem a spent force for now, but Party Secretary Rakowski has already signalled that he will fight bitterly to keep the Party bureaucracy's hands on the key levers of power. Such elements look to a Solidarity government quickly discrediting itself and to their control of the security and police apparatus as a means of making a political comeback. And in the meantime they have no immediate alternative to the marketisation plans of Solidarity.

Defence

The "reform" wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy wants its own form of local "peaceful co-existence" with the Catholic church and capitalism to continue under a different label. It is clear from plans already

The crisis in Poland

BY HARRY WALL

put into effect that they see no fundamental contradiction between continued defence of their own interests as a bureaucratic caste and the emergence of a new capitalist class in Poland. Indeed many clearly hope to take their place in such a class.

The political concomitant of this "capitalism" would be the splitting off of a wing of the PUWP to form a new social democratic, pro-capitalist party based on the skilled labour aristocracy and intelligentsia. As such it would be a direct rival to Solidarity in its parliamentary party form—but could make common cause with it against the hardliners.

What still unites both wings of the bureaucracy is the belief that their crisis, and the crisis of the Polish economy, can be solved on

the backs of the working class and without their direct participation, except as harder workers.

In this they stand shoulder to shoulder with the Solidarity apparatus. They too have a plan for Poland, and one that, at present, sits somewhat uncomfortably with that of the Stalinists.

Reluctant

What will make it hard for the two plans of the reluctant partners, Solidarity and the Stalinists, to co-exist for long is the speed with which the ambitions of Solidarity increase and therefore its challenge to the bureaucratic and managerial apparatus. Inevitably the Monetarism being embraced by the Solidarity leadership will lead to sharp collisions with sections of the old apparatus who will see their power and privileges under threat. The proliferation of plans for the restoration of capitalism amongst Solidarity's top advisers will accelerate that process.

The Solidarity austerity package now being touted as the "Trzeciakowski Plan" envisages a sudden transition to market forces as the mainspring of Poland's economy. It aims at the short sharp restoration of capitalism itself. The western adviser who stands behind Trzeciakowski has commented that:

"The new government should take the shock now: it can deal with the political realities later. It must show it has the will to act. The political will is the essential element in this." (*Financial Times* 26.8.89)

Faced with this kind of programme the resistance of the Polish working class will be crucial. Unfortunately the influence of Walesa and co. and the Catholic church are serious weaknesses, which threaten to cripple the ability of the workers to resist—to sap their political will.

Walesa himself has time and again demonstrated that he can and will use his authority to "extinguish" strikes in order to negotiate with the Stalinists, and now to introduce an austerity package.

This was demonstrated amply by the first strike of the new regime, by rail workers in Lodz. It was called off after Walesa urged them to "support the prime minister" and denounced the organisers as provocateurs. Now the solidarity leadership has announced a "no-strike deal" agreed with the government the entire weight of the Catholic church and Walesa will be brought to bear in order to dampen the resistance of the Polish workers.

The attempt to impose a job and wage cutting austerity package against the workers threatens to bring the divorce between Solidarity as a trade union, still looked to by millions of workers to defend them, and Solidarity as a political apparatus, to an absolute break. Hand in hand with the Catholic church a significant section of that apparatus can crystallise into an openly pro-capitalist and Christian Democratic party.

Indeed many of the leading Solidarity MPs, including Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, himself, were well known Catholic intellectuals before Solidarity was born.

It is clear that now they have drunk deep from the cup of parliamentary democracy, they have little future use for Solidarity the trade union. As Lech Walesa commented earlier this year, he wasn't too bothered that Solidarity will never again reach ten million, since it is "no longer necessary".

Perhaps not for Walesa, Mazowiecki and co, but for the Polish workers facing an austerity drive orchestrated from the west, independent, militant self-organisation is a must. This is especially true



since they face enemies disguised as friends over the border in the west too.

William Waldegrave, Minister of State at the British Foreign Office responsible for Eastern Europe, has also unveiled his plan for Poland. Along with the rest of Eastern Europe he wants Poland to become part of a block of

"... independent East and Central European countries that are not part of anybody's empire. . . That is the quid pro quo [for western aid—WP]. We are not trying to tempt them into our camp, but we want the break up of the Warsaw Pact." (*Independent* 26.8.89)

Impoverished

He claims his model is Austria, neither part of NATO nor the Warsaw Pact—but definitely capitalist. But in reality the Poland his like envisage, with closed down heavy industries and small pockets of western investment would be an impoverished semi-colony of the western capitalists.

The Soviet bureaucracy has evinced its satisfaction with events in Poland even though the Solidarity government has made no attempt to hide its restorationist intentions. Solidarity has promised to leave security with the PUWP and to stay in the Warsaw Pact. That seems enough to satisfy the Kremlin. It should not be forgotten that the Stalinists attempted to create pro-Soviet governments with representatives of capitalism in the years immediately after the Second World War.

It was only with the onset of the Marshall Plan and the cold war that this inherently unstable solution—unstable that is, with communists sharing government with representatives of capital—was resolved by the bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism.

With no significant force opposing a dramatic lurch towards capitalism in Poland the tasks facing the working class become ever more immediate.

They must resist every closure, every price rise and every wage cut that the capitalists and their agents are demanding. They must rise up to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy that bears historic responsibility for the crisis and take the planned economy into its own hands, and defend it against capitalist restoration from whatever source. ■

SOVIET NATIONALITIES

Dividing the workers

BY PETER MAIN

THE NATIONAL question is one of the most explosive in the Soviet Union. Long submerged grievances, strengthened by the consequences of the economic stagnation of the whole country, have at last come to the surface. Gorbachev's *glasnost* campaign, developments in Eastern Europe and the impact of the Siberian and Ukrainian miners' strikes have combined to give confidence to peoples whose rights have long been trampled underfoot.

For communists there should be no hesitation in opposing all forms of national oppression such as those perpetrated against the many minorities of the Soviet Union. We, therefore, support all demands aimed at removing such oppression; recognition of non-Russian languages as official languages, equal access to education and work and the right of the national republics (such as the Baltic states) to enact laws to maintain their national autonomy.

However, we oppose calls for independence in the sense of se-

cession from the Soviet Union. The reality is that it would lead directly to subordination to the imperialist powers and the status of a semi-colony.

Active support for such rights is the best defence against the dangers of resurgent nationalism, not only amongst the minorities but, ultimately more importantly, amongst the decisive Russian working class itself.

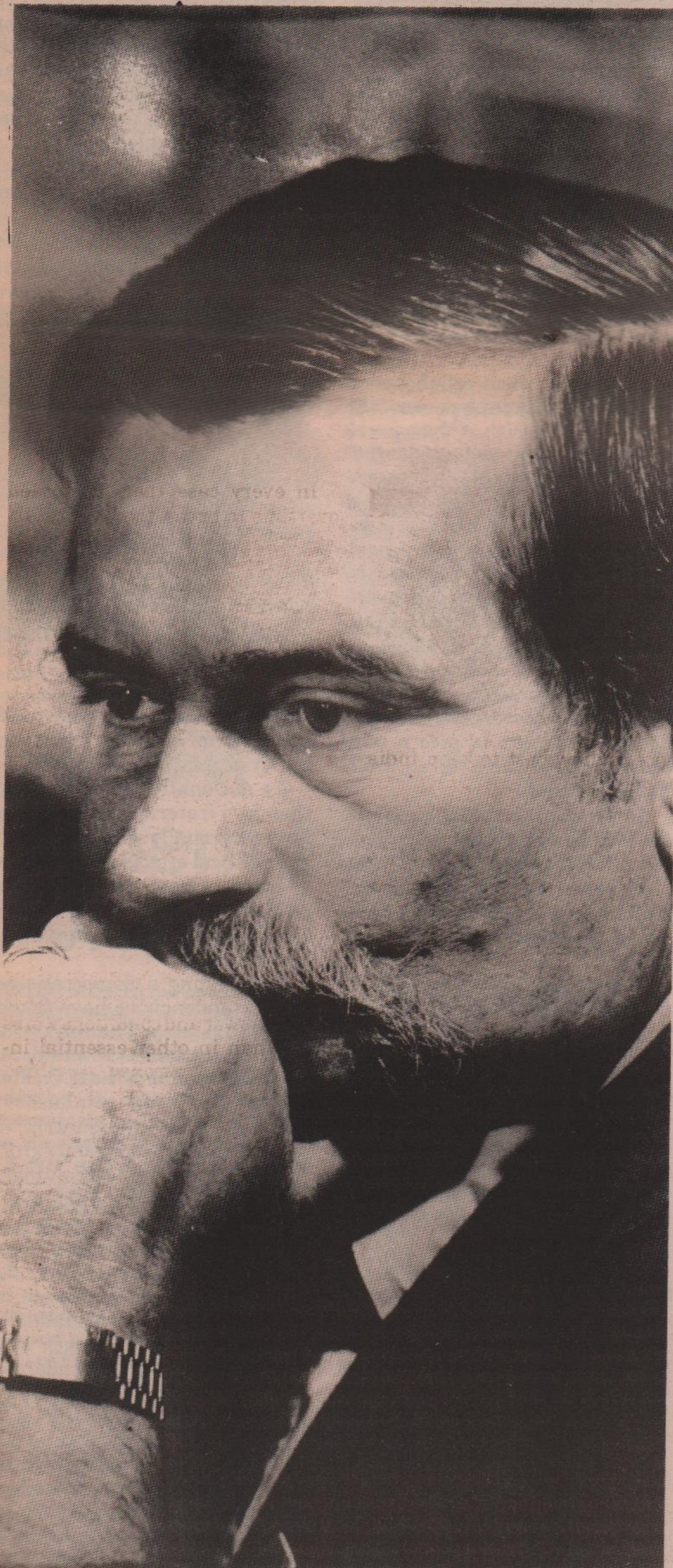
That workers are using their industrial power for political ends should not blind us to the fact that in all the non-Russian republics the KGB-organised "Intermovement" is coordinating a chauvinist campaign, which it intends to manipulate to the advantage of the most conservative wing of the bureaucracy in Moscow.

No form of nationalism, be it of the minorities or the Great Russians, can possibly solve the problems facing all sections of the Soviet working class. The task of revo-

lutionaries is to focus the new-found confidence and vitality of the working class on demands and methods of fighting which will generate mutual respect and solidarity between all the nationalities. The key questions are those concerning the control of the economy.

Against demands for either independence or the maintenance of Great Russian privilege, therefore, we campaign for the workers to use their power to win transitional demands such as the opening of the books of all enterprises and planning committees, the right of veto over all planning decisions and the creation of factory committees to enforce workers' control. The miners' strikes have already led to the creation of the embryos of such organisations.

Only by spreading their influence throughout the national republics can the poison of nationalism in all its forms be neutralised and the power of the working class be united and turned against its common enemies. ■

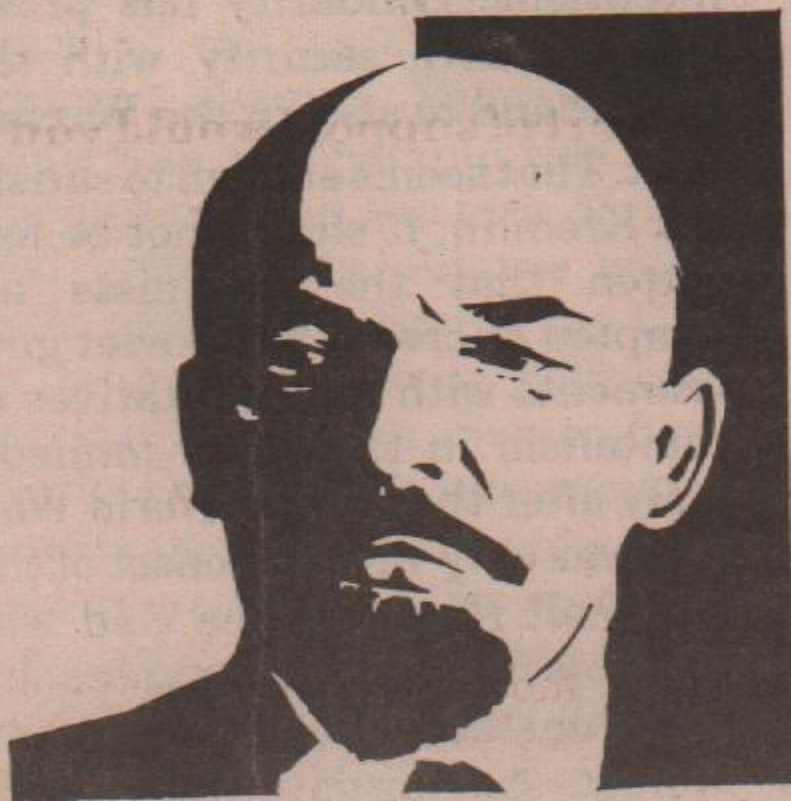


Lech Walesa: architect of Poland's pro-capitalist government

AT ITS Delegate Congress in Strasbourg last month the MRCI adopted an international programme, democratic centralist statutes and changed its name to the League For a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). The congress elected an International Executive Committee with members from each of the LRCI's sections.

Fifty years on from the founding of the Fourth International (FI) we have adopted a re-elaborated transitional programme. The preparations for this involved a six day drafting commission in December 1988, aggregates and conferences of the national sections culminating finally in a Congress lasting eight days. The Congress discussed over 400 written amendments submitted in advance plus many more formulated by the sub-commissions during the Congress itself.

In contrast the Fourth International's founding conference adopted its *Transitional Programme* in a day—with no amendments. The difference between then and now is not merely the absence of a Trotsky. It lies in the



broken programmatic and organisational continuity of the revolutionary Marxist movement.

There has been no revolutionary programme or international for nearly 40 years. On the major



the **LRCI**

League is founded!

questions of class struggle - the nature of imperialism and Stalinism's survival after World War Two, perspectives for world revolution, tactics towards reformism, Stalinism and petit bourgeois nationalism - there has been confusion amongst the centrist fragments of the FI. Opportunism and sectarianism have been the hallmarks of the various so-called Trotskyist organisations producing confusion, capitulations and occasionally disastrous betrayals of the working class vanguard.

It was out of the crisis of centrist Trotskyism in the 1970s that the groups emerged which were to form the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) in 1984.

Workers Power and the *Irish Workers Group* originated in the expelled Left Faction of the British International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party) and its Irish sister organisation. The German *Gruppe Arbeitermacht* emerged from the breakup of the Spartacusbund - itself a product of

As Stalinism slides deeper into crisis, as a vast army of industrial workers finds its strength in the semi-colonies, the LRCI addresses itself to all those seeking to avenge the betrayals and defeats of the workers and poor peasants, to all those determined to destroy imperialism and Stalinist rule.

a split within the USFI in Germany. Our French section *Pouvoir Ouvrier* was formed out of comrades breaking from the small French Morenoite group as well as comrades from Pierre Lambert's PCI.

These groups came together in April 1984 to found the MRCI on the basis of fraternal relations. We committed ourselves to the foundation of an international democratic centralist tendency. Rejecting the method of non-aggression pacts, stitched-up fusions which

fall apart immediately, and of international tendencies dominated by the politics of one big national group we argued:

"In order to examine programmatic positions and methods of work, to overcome weaknesses of national one-sidedness and to establish a recognised and trusted leadership and organisation, it is necessary for revolutionary groups to develop an organisational framework within which collaboration and private discussion can take place. Within such a framework autonomous groups of communists could test their ability to generate programmatic advance, to adopt common responses to current political problems, to create a leading cadre and organisation worthy of the trust and loyalty of the various groups." ("Declaration of Fraternal Relations", April 1984)

Between then and now the national sections have undertaken the theoretical work and internal debate necessary to give a solid programmatic basis for an international fusion.

A milestone in this process was the MRCI's agreement in September 1988 to adopt theses on nuclear power on a democratic centralist basis, abandoning the criteria of unanimity for public positions.

The process of building the MRCI involved not only fusions but splits. In late 1985 there was a split in the Austrian IKL with a small group of comrades forming the *Gruppe Arbeiterstandpunkt* (ASt) and joining the MRCI. Since then the ASt has become an important factor within the Austrian far-left, recently fusing with the Salzburg based Socialist Alternative group (SOAL).

Added impetus towards founding an international tendency came through developing relations with comrades emerging from the crisis of centrism in the Bolivian POR (Lora). This year *Poder Obrero* became the MRCI's Peruvian section. The Bolivian group *Guia Obrera* (Workers' Guide) sent its revolutionary greetings to the Congress and renewed its intentions to discuss with the LRCI with a view to joining.

Though small in number the delegates from Latin America

immeasurably enriched the work of the Congress and the final programme. The one previously existing semi-colonial section, the Irish Workers Group, had been engaged in applying the strategy and tactics of permanent revolution for years, combatting bourgeois nationalism, guerrillaism and Stalinist stageism. The Latin American comrades were able to bring to the programme their experience of work in conditions of hyper-inflation, of massive guerrilla struggles and state repression, of very sharp turns from revolutionary to counter-revolutionary situations, of mass Stalinist and nationalist movements. Their experience was able to enrich not just the sections of the programme devoted to national, land and democratic struggles, but those on the oppressed, on trade union and electoral work, on the anti-militarist struggle etc.

The resulting programme is a very large document, elaborating not just our major slogans, but our understanding of imperialism, Stalinism, social democratic reformism, centrism etc. It contains the LRCI's positions on the major revolutionary crises of the post-war period. This is not a literary or purely historical exercise. Precisely because no international party existed to draw the lessons of these crises; precisely because the centrists compounded previous errors our programme has to refresh the memory of the working class vanguard. By doing this we can spell out the lessons of the major crises for today's struggles

Although the forces of the LRCI are small at present, our programme is addressed to the masses. It is a guide to action, providing the basis for concrete



South African masses defy apartheid

IN THE run-up to South Africa's national elections on 6 September, anti-apartheid forces mounted a massive "defiance campaign". Anti-apartheid organisations and trade unions, linked in the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), organised deliberate apartheid busting. Black patients went to their nearest hospital, even if it was "whites only".

There were mass invasions of the segregated beaches and public events where banned activists and organisations—those forbidden to speak or issue statements or attend or call meetings—publicly broke their banning orders.

The campaign was met by increased repression from the National Party government. De Klerk was anxious to stem the drift to the far right amongst the white working class. This means, as it always did for his predecessor, adopting a get tough policy with the black opposition to placate reactionary white votes particularly in the run up to the elections.

But the repression was more than window dressing. The National Party has good reason to fear the renewed upsurge. The "defiance campaign" has brought the community, and the youth in particular, back onto the streets in militant protests. It has given added impetus to workers' action.

It has set the schools alight, notably in the Western Cape area, where once again "Colored" youth asserted that they see their future inextricably linked to that of the black African majority.

The danger is also that this impetus will be squandered. The "defiance campaign" is seen by the ANC as yet another pressure to force the apartheid regime to negotiate. It has unveiled a new peace initiative in which it seeks a Namibia type settlement and a transitional government with ANC participation.

It wants to use the youth once again as a stage army—although one better controlled than the 1984-86 uprising. Black workers and youth need their own revolutionary party to challenge the misleaders and place the working class at the head of the struggle.

The need for international solidarity is once again pressing. Working class organisations here must demand the release of the detained and banned leaders, an end to the political trials and the release of all political prisoners.

And, though it may be only of symbolic value, we should ensure that we answer the call of South African black sporting organisations and the MDM and continue the campaign against the racist rugby and cricket tours, now being



School student demonstrator shot by police

used to give comfort to apartheid's supporters. Most importantly the new wave of repression should be answered by an international workers' boycott of South African trade. ■

and specific action programmes for the national sections, for particular situations and movements.

As nationally isolated groups, then as a fraternal movement, we have continually struggled against the political effects of the absence of international democratic centralism, the pressure of national conditions on our programme and our priorities.

In founding a democratic centralist tendency we have taken a qualitative step. The work of the national sections is now under the formal discipline of the IEC. Whilst recognising our weakness in numbers and implantation, six small fighting propaganda groups implanted in only two continents, we are now stronger than ever in programme. United around this programme our cadres represent a pledge for the future

As Stalinism slides deeper into crisis, as a vast army of industrial workers finds its strength in the semi-colonies, the LRCI addresses itself to all those seeking to avenge the betrayals and defeats of the workers and poor peasants, to all those determined to destroy imperialism and Stalinist rule.

Read the programme, study and discuss it with us, fight for its demands and join the LRCI's fight for a new Leninist-Trotskyist International. ■

Miners strike in Peru

ON 14 AUGUST 80% of Peru's miners answered the call of the Miners' Federation for an indefinite general strike. The 70,000 strong union has showed its strength by closing the copper, silver, zinc and lead mines of Peru which are the backbone of the nation's economy. They account for half of its export earnings.

Peru is wracked by a terrible economic crisis. Inflation is currently running at 6,000% per annum. The Peruvian TUC, the CGTP, revealed that wages lost 40% of their purchasing power in the first four months of 1989 alone. Many miners earn less than £1.25 a week.

The Miners' Federation human rights secretary, Vicente Evangelista said: "The weekly wage for many miners is less than the price of a kilo of meat. We earn barely enough to subsist."

This strike is the third national miners' strike in just over one year. Strikes in July/August and October to December 1988 cost the mineowners \$500 million dollars in lost profits and reduced the annual production of copper by 27%, of silver by 25% and of zinc by 21%. The present strike is costing the employers at least five million dollars a day. In conditions of rising metal prices on the world market the enormous potential of the strike to bite hard will either force the employers and the state to concede, or it will drive them into savage attacks on the strikers.

This is all the more so as the miners' strike is part of a growing wave of strikes throughout Peru. Doctors and other health workers, construction workers and bank employees have all come out on strike in recent months and are expected to be joined by workers in textiles, petroleum and public administration as well as by the teachers. Lima has witnessed almost daily mass demonstrations by strikers, the most impressive being on 18 August.

But the government and the employers have a massive arsenal of repression open to them. The strikers' marches have been subjected to tear gas and water cannon attacks, but worse could be in

store. Amnesty International has just published a report expressing grave concern at the number of deaths and other violations of human rights involved in the state of emergency that grips large sections of Peru, and the dirty war being waged in the countryside and the shantytowns not only against the Maoist guerrillas of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) but also against militants of the peasants' organisation and the trade unions.

Back in January under threats and rumours of a military coup, APRA President Alan Garcia ap-

pointed the sinister Augustin Mantilla to the Interior Ministry. The army has been let off the leash and death squads have appeared. Prominent amongst the victims was militant miners' leader Saul Cantoral.

There is still a democratically elected government; municipal elections will take place in November, and a general election for the presidency and parliament is due next year. But in large parts of the country there is a de-facto military regime where workers and peasants have not the slightest legal or constitutional protection against

the savagery of the military or the death squads.

Barely a month goes by without the government announcing yet another economic austerity package to try to "solve" the problem of hyper-inflation on the backs of the workers, the peasants and the vast numbers of unemployed and underemployed of the shantytowns. The remorseless IMF demands ever more devastating measures which none of the ruling class parties, neither APRA nor the Thatcherite "Fredemo" coalition, wish or dare to defy.

The working class, spearheaded

by the miners, must put themselves at the head of a massive wave of protest and action against the domestic and foreign pillagers of the country. Only a general strike, organised by workers' councils and popular assemblies in the shantytowns and the countryside can halt the austerity measures, paralyse the apparatus of repression and open the road to a real solution.

That solution can only be a workers and peasants' government to replace the discredited Apristas and avoid the horrors either of the Peruvian Thatcher, Mario Vargas Llosa or a military dictatorship. With the prospect of an even more vicious twist to the hyper-inflationary spiral in the autumn the Peruvian workers do not have a mortgage on time. ■

INTERVIEW

Workers Power spoke to Victor Taipe, President of the Peruvian miners' union.

What are the demands of the national miners' strike due to begin on the 14th of August?

Victor Taipe: In the first place it's about the wages of the miners. Because of the situation with inflation in the country our wages have fallen by 40%. We want to restore and protect their purchasing power, but the most important issue is our demand for a national claim to replace the company by company negotiations which atomise the miners.

So far the private mine owners refuse even to discuss this with us. This is our third national strike and we are determined to win a national claim for all miners this time. In addition we have other demands like the nationalisation of the big private companies like the Southern Peru Copper Corporation.

Do you expect it to be a hard struggle?

VT: Certainly, we expect very strong repression to be used against the strike. The mining districts of central Peru are already militarised on the pretext of the "danger of terrorism" and the mine owners have their own armed guards. We expect violence to be used to repress our strike.

What measures has the Fed-

eration taken to counter this threat?

VT: When we voted at our Congress on the 14th June for the strike we also decided to set up self-defence brigades. These are necessary because of the repression we have already suffered. Many people around the world know about the assassination of our General Secretary, Saúl Cantoral Huamani—but we have had thirteen miners leaders murdered so far.

Who do you blame for the assassinations? The world press blames Sendero Luminoso.

VT: No. The right are mainly responsible, the employers and figures in the government. Most of the Peruvian press believes that the Minister of the Interior, Mantilla, is responsible for the actions of the death squads. Evidence of his involvement is mounting. But comrade Cantoral's death has only increased the anger and determination of the miners.

Thus our recent congress was a great success. Despite the difficulties of organising a congress in a situation of militarisation and economic crisis, over three hundred

delegates from all sectors of the industry, representing 95 mining sites, managed to assemble. It was our most representative congress so far, a very militant congress, which elected a leadership determined to achieve our claim.

What support are you expecting and seeking to get from other sectors of the working class and the peasantry?

VT: The CGTP [Peruvian TUC] says that they support us although we haven't seen many signs of this being turned into action so far. We think our struggle is linked to that of all workers against inflation, the effects of the austerity packages and the repression. Recently there have been strikes by the construction workers, health workers and other sectors. They should all join us in an indefinite general strike until our demands are met.

The mining districts are some distance from the capital. We intend to march to Lima with perhaps 30,000 miners so that they cannot silence our struggle. We will appeal directly to other sections of the working class to support us. Also our congress decided on an appeal for a Miner-Peasant

Pact to establish co-operation in our struggles. The peasant organisations have a lot of experience of struggle recently and have also had to create militias to defend themselves. We can both learn a lot from each other and strengthen the positions of both the miners and the peasants.

What sort of support would you like to receive internationally?

VT: In our two previous strikes and on the occasion of the assassination of comrade Cantoral we received many messages of support including from the miners of South Africa, Britain etc. We would like to get publicity for our strike in the press of the unions and the workers' movement world wide.

Given the terrible economic crisis of our country we have very little money and any donations would be a tremendous assistance. Also since we expect repression we hope miners and other workers internationally will protest and take action if this occurs.

We send the miners and other workers our class greetings and our thanks in anticipation of their aid.

Lima, 19 July 1989

Support and donations to
Peruvian Miners' Fund
c/o Lambeth Trade Union
Resource Centre,
12-14 Thornton St,
London SW9 0BL

Defend Partido Obrero!

Resolutions and letters of protest are needed from trade union and Labour Party branches. Financial help is also needed to fight the case in the courts. Letters/resolutions should be sent to:

The Argentinian Interests Section,
Brazilian Embassy,
Belgrave Square,
London SW1

and to:

President Carlos Menem,
Presidential Palace,
Buenos Aires,
Argentina

Send copies to:

Campaign for Argentinian
Political Prisoners,
c/o Trade Union Resource
Centre,
12-14 Thornton St, London
SW9 0BL
Tel 01-733 5135

Further information and model resolutions can be obtained from the campaign at the above address

ARGENTINA

Menem targets workers

CARLOS MENEM the newly elected Peronist president of Argentina, had loudly promised to make imperialism pay for his country's crisis. In his fiery pre-election speeches he promised to cancel all interest payments on the country's debt to the imperialist bankers.

Power and the state of emergency he has inherited have caused Carlos Menem to change tack. Argentina is suffering a monthly inflation rate of 114.5%. The country's massive foreign debt is choking the economy. The currency is collapsing under the strain.

Added to all of this is his inheritance of a society constantly threatened by outbursts of violent unrest and coup attempts by the army. The recent food riots in Buenos Aires underline the political instability that is wracking the country. Menem's response to all this is a far cry from the balcony rhetoric of his election campaign. He has turned to the imperialists he once denounced in a bid to secure new loans.

BY SALADIN MECKLED

At one stage he said that the British were the "pirates of the world" and that Argentina would get back the Malvinas "even if blood has to be spilled". Now he is urging the re-opening of negotiations on this and other questions and to open the borders and trade barriers to Britain which had been shut since the war.

State industries were to be protected from falling into foreign hands through privatisation, according to Menem's ministers and parliamentary deputies. Now the same people are handing out these national assets through the complete dismantling of the Ministry for Public Industries and the wholesale privatisation of its component parts.

The food riots, sparked by wage freezes and hyper-inflation, have been met with repression. The left has been singled out as a scapegoat for the country's ills. In particular Partido Obrero (Workers Party—PO) has been targeted.

Shortly after the riots a warrant was issued against PO, accusing it of "criminal conspiracy". Its leaders were arrested and its offices raided. The government ran an orchestrated campaign accusing "Trotskyists" and leftists of being behind the mass riots and looting. While the leaders of PO were subsequently released on bail, their political activity remains severely restricted. The government is pursuing a case in the courts under Article 213 of the Constitution with the aim of making the party illegal. If found guilty PO's National Committee could face up to eight years in prison.

Partido Obrero stood in the recent elections in Argentina, as it did in the 1983, 1985 and 1987 elections, and received 50,000 votes. It has been picked out by the government in the current period of social crisis because of its principled defence of a group of left wing militants who attempted to seize a government barracks, "La Tablada". Although not in favour of such misguided adventurism PO correctly denounced the murder and torture of many of these militants who tried to surrender to the army. Twenty of the survivors are now on trial.

Against this background of repression sections of Menem's Peronists are beginning to show an appetite for the old style dictatorship methods of Peron, their founder.

Particularly ominous is the growth in support for Jose Lopez Rega, the Social Welfare Minister. He is an anti-semitic of the worst kind, and is backed by the fascist organisation, Guardia y Hierro (Iron Guard). Already there have been around 233,000 applications from Jews for emigration, fearful of this development.

Menem has attempted to stop any splits developing in the army by calling for reconciliation and offering a possible amnesty for those military officers and generals imprisoned for their crimes during the war and their actions against the Argentinian people.

Right down the line Menem is proving himself a defender of capitalism, an appeaser of imperialism, the army and the far right and an enemy of the working class. He is living proof of the fact that no bourgeois nationalist in the semi-colonies should be trusted by the working class.

Against his attacks the working class must fight for their own revolutionary answer to the crisis: cancel the external debt; no privatisation—for state industries to be placed under workers' control and for the expropriation of all imperialist companies and property; for the defence of living standards against hyper-inflation; for an independent workers' party in Argentina committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. ■

NICARAGUA:

Sandinistas attack the masses

The Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979 remains an inspiration for much of the left. The regime established by the ruling FSLN is held out as a model of "democratic socialism". But ten years on, the regime is carrying through massive attacks on the working class and poor peasants. **Dave Green** looks at Nicaragua's economic disaster and argues for a working class solution to the crisis.

THE SANDINISTA government's austerity package means a serious attack on the living standards of the mass of the population. In its economic plan for 1989, the government has slashed 48% off Nicaragua's state budget. This means unemployment for around 17% of the public sector workforce, 35,000 out of 210,000 workers. It means cuts in education and health, plus a 40% cut in the budget of the Ministry of the Interior. And these cuts in jobs and services follow a steep decline in workers' living standards since 1981. Over the last eight years, real earnings have fallen to less than a tenth of their former level and now Nicaragua faces hyper-inflation, estimated at around 2,000%.

In addition to the cuts, the Sandinistas have imposed a virtual moratorium on state investment and have increased indirect taxation. Credit will now be granted only to the heads of capitalist firms and to those producers who can guarantee repayment to the banks. Small producers, and in particular, small farmers and peasants, will be hit hardest. The background to these attacks is a severe economic crisis.

Hyper-inflation

Revenue from Nicaragua's exports has halved since 1981. The large producers who control the land on which the main crops are grown for export have demanded, and received, subsidies from the state amounting to 10% of the country's gross domestic product. On top of this Nicaragua's debt to the imperialist banks tops \$6.7 billion. The interest payments on this debt alone exceed the value of the nation's exports. In order to meet these subsidies and payments, and to sustain the cost of the Contra war, the FSLN have resorted to printing money, causing hyper-inflation.

The main portion of the blame must be laid at the door of the principal exploiter of the whole of Latin America—US imperialism. Prior to the 1979 revolution Washington backed Somoza and exerted control over the key sectors of the Nicaraguan economy.

The FSLN's aim to develop the national economy relatively independently of the USA provoked a

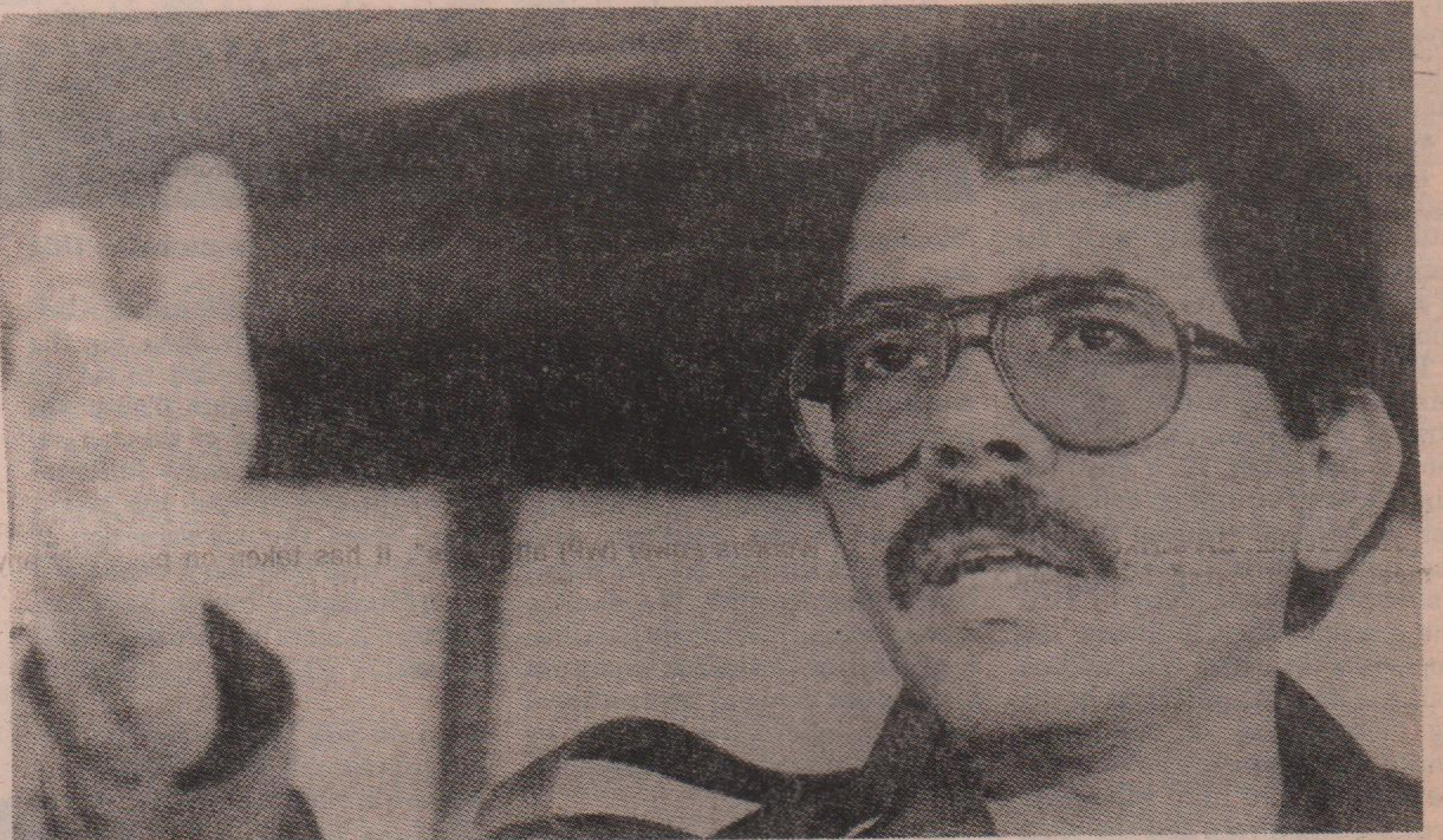
reaction from the new Reagan administration in the early 1980s. 1981 saw the USA pushing for a financial boycott of Nicaragua, which by 1985 reached the level of an economic blockade. All aid was cancelled, trade was frozen and loans to Nicaragua were vetoed due to US domination in the Inter-American and World Banks.

Not content to rely on economic muscle alone, Reagan also launched the Contra war in 1982, with counter-revolutionary armies established and funded by the CIA. Unable militarily to overthrow the FSLN, the USA aimed to put the Nicaraguan economy under an ever increasing strain through the war, exhausting and demoralising the

"The theory of scientific socialism has gone beyond the idea of associating market relations only with capitalism..."
Interior Minister Tomas Borge

masses and therefore undermining the support for the Sandinista regime. The cost of the war in economic terms has been devastating, exceeding the value of the country's exports for more than fifteen years. The economy was also dislocated by damage inflicted by Hurricane Joan in 1988.

But the crisis is not simply a result of external aggression and natural disaster. It is rooted in the continued existence of capitalism in Nicaragua. 60% of the economy remains in private hands. Organised in COSEP (The Superior Council of Private Enterprise), the employers have exerted considerable control over government. They seek to roll back the post-1979 gains of the masses and to undermine the continued expressions of working class and peasant organisation, independence and militancy. In 1979 the FSLN established a junta including the leading industrialists and bourgeois figures. Although the formal makeup of the government has altered, the FSLN have always regarded the bourgeoisie as an essential part of the nation and a commitment to the preservation of private property is written into the nation's 1987 constitution. The bourgeoisie demands the subsidies for wealthy capitalist producers,



Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega

which have fuelled the massive deficits and hyper-inflation.

The bosses take, but put little back. The 60% of the economy in private hands provides the source for only 20% of investment. Vast sums of money are spirited out of the country leading to the removal of \$1.7 billion from Nicaragua since 1977. And of the vast subsidies paid to capitalists in 1987, around \$500 million resulted in no production whatsoever.

In accommodating to the national bourgeoisie, and to imperialism through the continued repayment of the national debt, the FSLN have sought to make the working class, poor peasantry and urban poor pay for the economic crisis.

Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge has already admitted that the FSLN has "sacrificed the working class in favour of the economy", or to put it more accurately, in favour of the bosses.

The Sandinistas justify these policies as a necessary part of socialist development. Speaking on the recent austerity drive, Borge recently stated,

"The theory of scientific socialism has gone beyond the idea of associating market relations only with capitalism... We could go back to Lenin's NEP and other historical instances to show that the market and monetary relations are objective conditions."

The NEP (New Economic Policy) was an attempt by Lenin and the Bolsheviks to re-build the Soviet economy through the limited re-introduction of market mechanisms. But it was never seen as a strategic alternative to planning and state ownership, rather as a short term emergency measure. The FSLN however sees the

continued existence of the capitalist class as essential in Nicaragua in the future. Another difference lies in the fact that the NEP was an experiment within a workers' state. The Bolshevik Party held political power and Lenin's intention was that the party should lead the re-building of soviets and workers' control. The Sandinistas have deliberately gutted the workers' committees.

The Sandinista Defence Committees which arose out of mass mobilisations in the course of the revolution have been relegated to a merely consultative role. On top of this the predominance of government delegates in the committees ensures they act merely as vehicles for the transmission of FSLN policy into the ranks of the workers and peasants. The state in Nicaragua is not under the control of the working class; private property dominates the economy; the economic policy of the FSLN offloads the capitalist crisis onto the workers themselves. In short, Nicaragua is a capitalist state and no amount of "Leninist" phraseology from Borge and co can alter this fact.

Unity

In essence the austerity drive in Nicaragua is similar to those in progress across the Latin American continent. In response to these attacks, the working class needs unity against imperialism and its local agents. But as an integral part of their alliance with the bourgeoisie, the FSLN has abandoned support for the struggles of the revolutionary masses in Latin America. On the insistence of imperialism the FSLN closed all the offices of the El Salvadorean FMLN, despite their ongoing civil war against the right wing and their death squads.

In Venezuela this year, despite a massive social explosion in response to an austerity drive, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega offered solidarity to the Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez!

The Nicaraguan masses have shown a willingness to fight austerity—like the San Antonio sugar workers who protested last year against inflation and the fall in value of their wages. But in defending their interests the working class will have to break from its political support for the Sandinistas. In November last year, the FSLN minister Jaime Wheelock told a mass meeting of workers in San Antonio,

"Anyone who raises the banner of the strike will have his or her hands cut off..."

If the Nicaraguan masses take the road of struggle against austerity, they will soon discover who their friends are. They must forge an alternative to the bourgeois nationalism of the Sandinistas—a revolutionary working class party. Such a party would have to wage a consistent fight against imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, to defend, extend and make permanent the gains of 1979.

- Cancel all debts to imperialism
- For an immediate price freeze and a sliding scale of wages and hours.
- Nationalise all companies declaring redundancies, under workers' control and with no compensation.
- Seize the estates and plantations and place them under the control of the workers employed on the land.
- Stop decapitalisation. For committees of workers and consumers to inspect the books of all enterprises as a guard against corruption and economic sabotage. For a state monopoly of foreign trade.
- For the building of genuine councils of workers' and peasants' delegates. For a workers' and peasants' government resting upon those mass organisations.
- Solidarity with the masses of Latin America. Restore full support for the FMLN.
- For a workers' revolution in Nicaragua and a Socialist Federation of Central America.

Unfair to NOW?

Dear Comrades,

Clare Heath wrote a good article in *Workers Power* 121 about the fight for abortion rights in the USA, but I thought she was too critical of the pro-abortion rights movement. This needs correcting or it will give readers a bad understanding.

Clare overplayed the connection between the National Organisation of Women (NOW) and the Democratic Party.

On paper the Democrats may have "pro-choice" politics, but their record is much different. They were against the Equal Rights Amendment, they implemented the 1977 Hyde Amendment which cut off federal funding for abortions, and they gutted the affirmative action programme.

NOW activists—and leaders—are mostly miles away from that. NOW president Molly Yard is known for drawing the links between the "choice" struggle and the wider class struggle. Clare mentioned the work of NOW around the Eastern Airlines (EA) dispute.

At a Boston EA strikers' meeting last March, Molly said "We're being pushed back by the same lousy people. The Supreme Court that ruled against us on the Missouri law is the same court that works against labor. We're in the same fight."

Find me a Democrat leader who'll say that, and follow it up with work on the picket line!

But Clare also suggested that NOW only built mass mobilisations and Trades Union links over the past few months. I think she underestimates the power of American women. NOW built a march of 600,000 on 9 April in Washington DC backed by over 400 national organisations, including the mineworkers, machinists, flight attendants and other unions. No small beer. As for mobilisations—in Boston last

October NOW pulled out over 3,500 people to defend an abortion clinic threatened by anti-abortion "Operation Rescue" thugs. NOW mobilised over 1,000 people in L.A. when the same thing happened.

These are the larger demonstrations, of course, but you should not ignore them.

What Clare wrote was good, if a bit academic. But maybe she fell into the trap often found on the left—waiting for a perfect movement to drop out of the sky. It has to be built, and only socialists have the program to build it to win.

NOW has 160,000 members. At its conference a few weeks ago, it had over 2,000 delegates. It may not be perfect... but it is a good place to start.

Helen Brooks
Derby

£79 million to bankers!

Dear Comrades,

As a member of Lambeth's Housing Committee I was wading through the week 13 projections for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the year April 1989-April 1990. One item caught my eye "Debt Charges... £79,114,700", this

Apology

Last month we printed a letter from the Argentine Partido Obrero (Workers Party). This was mistakenly typed as coming from Poder Obrero (Workers Power). This is the title of the LRCI's Peruvian publication. We wish to apologise to both the Argentine and Peruvian comrades for the mix up and to correct any impression that Partido Obrero is organisationally linked to the LRCI. ■

Argentine left under attack; see report page 13

staggering amount is from a total expenditure of the HRA of £176,692,000.

Lambeth has a housing stock of 48,000. Our hard pressed tenants have to fork out over £79m to the wealthy in the City who have loaned us money in the past to build our flats and houses.

At the same time as our tenants are paying the City of London this amount they are also having to pay £12,859,200 net, or £9,783,200 after collecting charges, for keeping homeless families in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation.

My members post bag is full of enquiries from people in housing need, in need of access to fair rented housing, repairs and transfers etc. All too often I have to write letters explaining that the government will not allow us the money to do the job and other councillors were elected to do.

With confidence gained from a partial victory on the NALGO workers' pay and conditions claim, it is to be hoped that housing workers can form alliances with tenants and, together with councillors who have not completely sold out to the interests of the City, we can fight for fair rented housing for all. There is no physical reason why we cannot house everyone within a few years, the only block is a capitalist system which requires ever larger profits to the City from the pockets of Council tenants.

Rachael Webb
Councillor,
London Borough of Lambeth

Centrism to communism

Dear Comrades,

I have recently become a supporter of *Workers Power* (WP) after spending 9 years in the Labour Party supporting *Socialist Organiser* (SO). The experience of this has shown me the crucial importance of supporting an organisation with a principled revolutionary programme that does not play a dubious game of alliances and deals with the fake left.

Looking back I have seen SO abandon Troops Out Now, the demand for a democratic secular state in Palestine, support the racist law of return and, more recently, withdraw its support for the defence of the Soviet Union.

Student work became a fight to win executive places rather than a struggle to turn the NUS into a fighting union. In the Labour Party SO has too often compromised itself with the reformist left by dropping criticism, for example of the leadership during the general elections. I now find their positions indefensible.

In contrast WP has stuck to the revolutionary principle "state what is". It has taken on politically any attempts to deviate from Marxist politics by convenient centrist tactics. It has not watered down its programme to make socialist revolution sound like a left labour government.

The response to me becoming a supporter on the left has been varied, from personal abuse and sectarian banter to total incomprehension. In some ways not surprising as when WP supporters started intervening in the Manchester labour movement, I spent a great deal of time manoeuvring and organising against them, voting down resolutions and even going to the extreme of voting for a Stalinist to block a WP supporter from a delegates position.

I am now putting the centrist past firmly behind me and urge SO comrades to do the same.

Linda Mouldsdale
Manchester

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

89

A weekend of political discussion and debate

18/19 November 1989
Polytechnic of Central London
Marylebone Road, London
Admission: £5/£3 unwaged

Stalinism in crisis

China ★ USSR ★ Poland

PLUS

Women's Liberation and Socialism ★ Ireland—Republicanism at an impasse ★ Marxism and Ecology ★ Rank and File workers and the summer of discontent ★ The crisis of centrist "Trotskyism" ★ Peru—miners take on Garcia ★ Trotskyism and World War Two ★ Creche ★ Bookstall ★ Displays ★ Social ★ and more...

return to:
WORKERS POWER
BCM box 7750
London WC1N 3XX
Make cheques payable to:
Workers Power

I enclose £ for tickets
Name _____
Address _____

Fighting Fund



THIS MONTH the £70,000 Premises Fund has made good progress with £1,000 from a comrade in South Yorkshire, £5,000 from a comrade in London and £500 from a comrade in Birmingham. Birmingham supporters also raised £20. This month's total is added to a revised total for July of £7,452 taking the fund to £13,972. Unlike other tendencies on the left we do not make these figures up. They demonstrate enormous sacrifices made voluntarily by individual members and supporters. The result is that within just four months we have achieved just short of 20% of our target. ■

SUBSCRIBE!

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

- I would like to subscribe to
- Workers Power* £5 for 12 issues
 - Class Struggle* £8 for 10 issues
 - 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:
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX
or: Class Struggle, 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin, Eire

Name: _____
Address: _____
_____ Trade union _____

WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities 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 League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI 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

**PERMANENT
REVOLUTION**

89

A weekend of political discussion and debate

18/19 November 1989

Polytechnic of Central London
Marylebone Road, London
Admission: £5/£3 unwaged

Details p15

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Poland

No return to capitalism!

POLAND, FOR more than forty years under "communist" rule, is in desperate crisis. It is a crisis so deep that the Stalinist rulers have been forced to hand over governmental power to Solidarity in order to bail themselves out: an unprecedented step.

This capitulation by the Stalinists is being hailed throughout the West as "the end of communism" and "Poland's hour". It is nothing of the sort. Both Solidarity and the Stalinists are agreed on the depth of the crisis and the measures needed to recover from it. And both are agreed that only Solidarity has the credibility with the west and with the Polish masses to carry it through.

Inflation in Poland is running at around 150% and rising. Despite a record grain harvest, there is little or no bread in the shops. The economy is stagnant and the debt to the west is an enormous \$39 billion. And the cure? Bring back the market, says Solidarity. Bring back the market, echoes Jaruzelski, and bring in Solidarity to do it! What a clear testimony against those who look to Stalinism to defend "real existing socialism" against capitalism.

In truth, there is a long way to go until the restoration of capitalism is achieved. 94% of industry is still in state hands. Price subsidies still exist, although they are high on the new government's hit list of social gains to be eradicated. The market does not yet rule in Poland.

But the workers of Poland and their brothers and sisters in the British labour movement must recognise where the danger comes from. Not just from the west, from Bush, Thatcher, the EC and the IMF, but from their agents in Poland itself.

These agents are not just the obvious "friends of impe-

**The crisis in
Poland
Page 11**

rialism"—the catholic church and the catholic intelligentsia who dominate the political wing of Solidarity. Nor are they just the blind economic forces that threaten at every turn to break free in a country with an overwhelmingly peasant agriculture.

The agents of imperialism, of capitalist restoration, of low wages, unemployment and inflation include the Polish Stalinists. They have presided over an economy that has condemned millions of ordinary workers to the breadline—in the name of the working class. They have run Poland into the ground.

And now, true to their tradition, they have turned not to the working class but to the privatisers to rescue them. Solidarity's main economic advisor, Professor Witold Trzeciakowski, has been collaborating with Harvard professor Jeffery Sachs to produce a "short, sharp shock" for the Polish economy—i.e. for the working class.

In the words of Trzeciakowski, the government

"must proceed with serious budget cuts, abolish subsidies and liquidate unprofitable enterprises".

Spoken like a true Thatcherite!

And such plans need to be resisted just like Thatcher's plans for Britain.

The success or failure of

Trzeciakowski's austerity plan will depend on whether the Polish workers will swallow from Solidarity the same medicine that would stick in their throats were it to come from Jaruzelski. They have nothing to gain and everything to lose if they do.

The working class, independent of the Catholic Church, the Solidarity leadership and imperialism, must organise itself to resist these plans. It must re-assert itself as the only force in Poland that can solve the crisis in a progressive direction.

To do so it needs to re-discover the fighting strength of the early days of Solidarity the trade union. But it also needs to go beyond trade unionism and embrace the notion of working class power exercised by the working class itself, not on its behalf by the self-appointed Stalinists or self-consciously pro-capitalist catholic intellectuals.

For that, it does need its own, truly communist (Trotskyist) party. For all the hostility that the name communism provokes in Poland, the principles of communism, as opposed to the corrupt practices of the Stalinists are the only guide to a lasting and progressive way out of Poland's crisis.

Unless the Polish workers can be won, in the fight against austerity under whatever badge, to their own rule, they will be unable to stave off the further attacks of imperialism. For if they are able to beat the working class now, the government will be set on a course for the privatisation of the whole economy.

And that will make the sale of the British water industry look like a drop in the ocean. ■



Striking Solidarity workers—Walesa wants to stop them

David Stewart-Smith/Insight