

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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As the decade ends a new era opens

BURY STALINISM FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM!

TODAY EASTERN Europe is the key to the world political situation. It is the epicentre of an earthquake which is shaking the foundations of the whole world order constructed at the end of the Second World War.

Years of stagnation compelled the Kremlin bureaucracy to launch a major restructuring process—*perestroika*—to counter bureaucratic inertia. Gorbachev was obliged to rally popular support through *glasnost*—a relaxation of the bureaucracy's stifling grip on political life.

While these reforms were designed to rescue the bureaucracy's rule, they actually served to unleash forces beyond its immediate control.

Earlier this year the concessions on civil liberties in Poland and Hungary lit the fuse that was to explode the charges under the monolith of Stalinist regimes in the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.

In these countries beleaguered circles of dissident intellectuals gave way to mass movements of millions in a matter of weeks. Without the support of the Kremlin, Honecker and Jakes came crashing down from their bureaucratic pedestals.

These events reverberated in the west. German

imperialism stepped forward to voice its own project of a reunited capitalist Germany. The US administration and its British adjunct were caught without a policy beyond a gut desire to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe.

But joy at the opportunities opening up to them is tempered by anxiety. For the crisis of Eastern Europe has raised the two-fold spectre of mass workers' revolution and the re-awakening of the old rivalries within the imperialist camp that led to two world wars.

No workers should be indifferent to these historic events. They affect us all. In the semi-colonies and in South Africa they are leading the Stalinist leaderships of the liberation movements to strike even more rotten deals with the oppressors.

In the imperialist countries both the open capitalist parties and the reformist workers' parties are using the crisis of Stalinism to discredit the very idea of communism and prolong the life of capitalism. The bitter irony is that sections of

Stalinist parties of the east and west are in the vanguard of the campaign to bury "communism".

Like all converts, the "reformists" in the "Communist" Parties try to outdo the old believers in the fervour of their devotion to the "mixed economy", to market forces—in short to capitalism. Yet it is not socialism or communism that has failed, but Stalinism. And the alternative to it is not the system defended by Bush and Thatcher.

Their system guarantees mass unemployment and social insecurity. It breeds the death squads of South Africa and El Salvador. It sponsors the economic ruination of whole countries.

But real communism can only be achieved by the revolutionary destruction of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR together with the capitalist system in the rest of the world.

It can only triumph on the basis of thoroughgoing working class democracy, directing the planned economy in accordance with



human need. It can only survive if it is spread across the entire planet, destroying imperialist domination everywhere.

As the world order crumbles the masses need a programme of action for the creation of a new world order, and an international party that can lead their struggles towards the final victory. The building of such an international party is the task of the 1990s.

In the dark days of the

1930s when Stalinism seemed all powerful one voice predicted its downfall—that of Leon Trotsky. Against the combined forces of Stalinism and imperialism he and his small group of supporters championed the cause of international working class revolution. He was murdered by Stalin's assassins.

The imperialists shed no tears. Along with Stalin they thought they had killed his ideas and the threat to their

order that these ideas posed. They were wrong. Trotsky's ideas have stood the test of time. The League for a Revolutionary Communist International bases its programme on these ideas and theory. We are confident that as the world crisis deepens more and more workers will turn to that programme.

- Workers of the World Unite!
- Forward to the International Socialist Revolution!

FORWARD TO WORKERS' POWER!

Pay as you learn

BY SALADIN MECKLED

THIS YEAR'S Queen's Speech heralded a new dark age for education and the student movement. The proposed bill introducing student loans is an attempt by the Tories to put an end to free education—even in the inadequate form which exists today.

Top-up loans mean that students will have their grants frozen next year. They will no longer be entitled to benefits. They will be forced to take out a long term loan repayable over a ten year period. In addition, the future introduction of tuition fees could land students on courses like medicine with a bill of £40,000! Apart from having to repay the loans, the level will be set by the government and will mean a fall of approximately 12% in students' income.

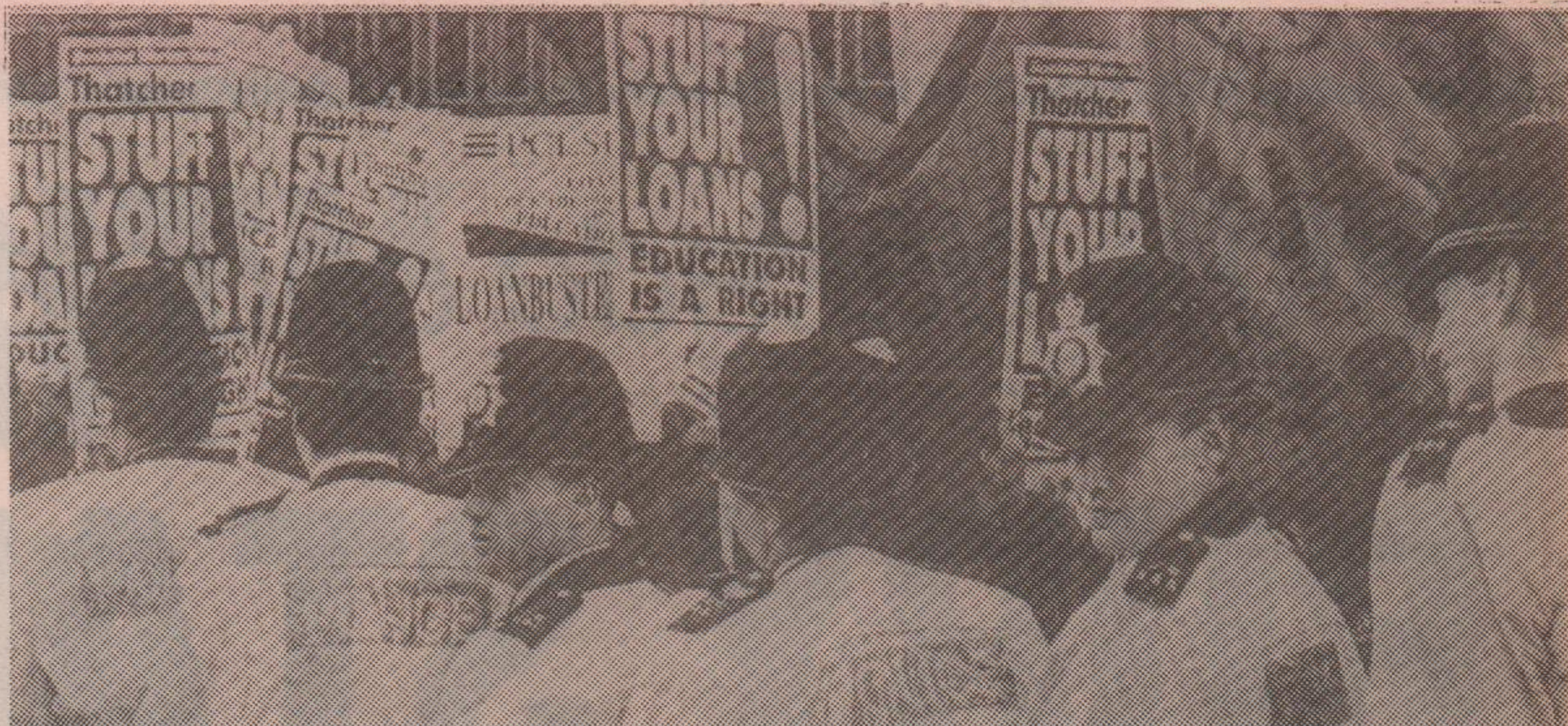
The agenda is set for the establishment of pay as you learn education. According to the Tory ideologues, this will lay the basis for removing the "dependency culture" and will result in students being

more aware of the importance of their education.

The introduction of loans will make it even more difficult for working class students to gain access to academic education. Mounting debts are already a major problem for youth. Only those with rich parents who can underwrite their loans, or those with a "guaranteed" future job and income will be able to afford an education. Women will be discouraged from going to college when they face the possibility of a future with a family to support (often alone), a low paid job and a loan to repay.

Students have been responding angrily to these proposed attacks. Local demonstrations have been large and militant. Two unofficial demonstrations in London mobilised more than 3,000 and 5,000 students without any help from the national NUS. But the present leaders of the student movement have refused to lead any serious resistance.

Their strategy is, as always, to try and win public support whilst



waiting for the election of a Labour government. Last year they hoped to defeat the loans by appealing to the interests of the bankers. This year they have come up with a boycott of the co-operating banks!

The NUS leadership have failed to really build any of the actions—the national demo they called

in Glasgow at the end of November. But despite pathetic publicity, little planning and inadequate transport, 25,000 students joined that march.

In response to the leadership's do-nothing attitude, the student movement has slowly but surely become more aware of the inabil-

ity of its leaders to organise real action. In Glasgow students stormed the platform at the beginning of the demo, and at the end they booed the NUS leaders who were protected by police and bodyguards from the crowd. The fine rhetoric of the NUS time-servers about the evils of loans no longer commands any respect as they refuse to mobilise and organise a serious response to the Tory attacks.

Under pressure from student activists, the NUS Executive has put a motion to conference calling for a rolling campaign of occupations for the next term. But one thing is guaranteed, even if the motions are passed the Executive will not organise for such actions to be anything more than a series of token protests.

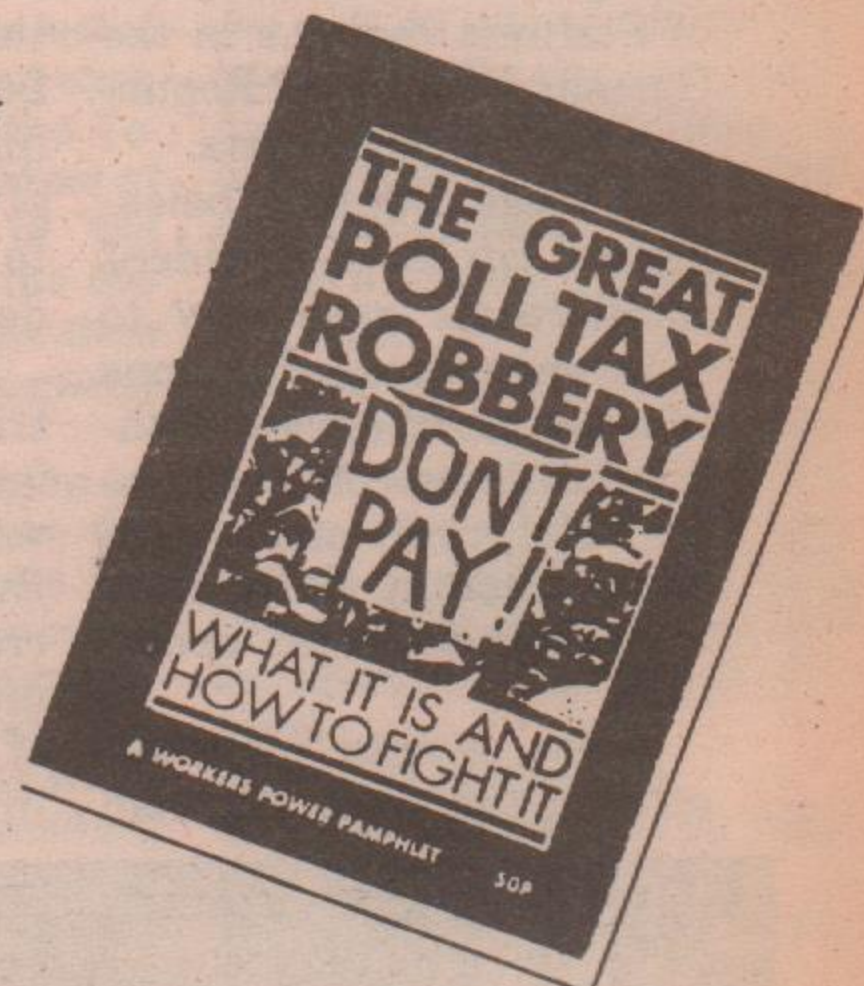
For such action to become effective it needs to be built in every college and taken out of the hands of the NUS leadership. Activists' committees should be formed to plan occupations with regional and national links to ensure that the NUS are not able to call off and squander the action.

The threats posed to education and to students over the next year are massive. The defence of free education is an issue for the whole working class, so links must be built between students and workers on the campuses and in the towns. Already students have supported ambulance workers in dispute, and received their backing in return.

At the same time, though, students cannot afford to wait before acting. Militant tactics will accelerate the building of links with workers. Links must also be made with other workers in dispute, with anti-Poll Tax unions and with workers in education.

- Smash the loans!
- Demand the NUS call an effective national campaign of occupations!
- For activists' control of the campaign!

OUT NOW!



80p inc. P&P from our box no

ABORTION

Fight for choice

BY CLARE HEATH

DURING THE last campaign against a restrictive Bill on abortion, Workers Power argued that defeating the Bill by parliamentary manoeuvres was not enough. We said then that a purely defensive struggle, even if it won in the short term, would leave abortion rights open to new and greater threats.

Now we face exactly such a threat. The amendments tabled to the government Embryo Bill will not run out of time. Clever parliamentary games and filibustering cannot talk out this Bill. More significantly, the amendments to it, which propose to reduce the time limit for abortions, will come to a vote in parliament. And, if MPs' voting intentions on the defeated Alton Bill are anything to go by, a reduction in the time limit to 24 weeks, or even less, is very likely to be passed.

So where did the last campaign leave off? The Fight the Alton Bill (FAB) campaign was dissolved once the Bill was talked out. Since then, women's abortion rights have continued to be eroded without needing any change in the law. Cuts in NHS services have left many women unable to get abortions unless they can afford a couple of hundred pounds to go private. Access to abortion and contraception have been hit by the closure of many family planning clinics. Latest NHS plans are to close virtually all of them down.

Fire bombed

More recently, women attending abortion clinics, notably one in Stockport, have faced violent pickets from the rabid anti-abortionists of Operation Rescue. These religious fanatics from the Moral Right in the USA have fire-bombed clinics, assaulted clinic workers, intimidated women going for abortions and destroyed hospital equipment.

All along it has been necessary to turn the defensive campaigns into offensive struggles to secure better rights for women. Not only is existing legislation inadequate, leaving the choice on abortion to doctors and not women, but the facilities for NHS provision are decided by local health authorities and consultants. "Defending the '67 Act", which is what FAB, and the earlier Campaign

Against Corrie, restricted themselves to, fails to tackle these defects.

Most of the members of FAB support the call for free abortion on demand, but have argued that for each attack it was necessary to mobilise maximum forces by agreeing on the minimum demands. This left many pro-choice supporters with nothing to do outside the framework of the parliamentary campaign. If repeated this will be a waste of valuable resources and support which could be used to secure greater reproductive rights for women.

Definitions

The Embryo Bill raises many issues: the right to have children with the help of infertility treatment or artificial insemination; debates about what constitutes human life and when it begins; whether abortion time limits should be determined by medical definitions of foetal viability; should embryo ex-

perimentation be restricted? All these questions cry out for the need for women to establish control over their own bodies. We must take up each argument firmly and defend a woman's right to choose whether to have a child or terminate a pregnancy.

The National Abortion Campaign has launched a "Stop the Amendment Campaign, but Fight for Choice". A little wordy perhaps, but at least it sounds positive. However, at its first meeting in London in November it decided to simply oppose the attempted reduction in time limits.

Lesbian activists present at the meeting argued that the fight should be linked to a defence of the right of lesbians to artificial insemination, another element of women's rights which is under attack. NAC refused to do this.

Yet again they seem set on limiting the campaign and losing possible allies in the lesbian and gay movement, just as they will waste the possibility of an alliance with women fighting for infertility treatment if they only decide to fight over abortion time limits.

What is needed is a campaign which fights for free abortion on demand, and therefore resists any reduction in time limits whilst arguing for better facilities and the de-

criminalisation of abortion, and takes up the call for a woman's right to choose. The latter demand is essential if we are to link the issues raised around the various amendments to the Embryo Bill.

Such a campaign needs to be oriented towards the working class, in particular building support amongst health workers. The pressure group politics of previous campaigns are not enough, faced with an attack which has parliamentary time and, for a 24 week time limit at least, government support.

Opposition

Mass demonstrations, called by the TUC if possible, but built for anyway in every workplace, are needed.

Local campaigns should be built on the basis of free abortion on demand, a woman's right to choose. They should combine opposition to the parliamentary attack with direct resistance to NHS cuts, and physical defence of clinics from Operation Rescue.

Unions and workplaces must be committed to industrial action in opposition to the amendments and fight for the extension of reproductive rights for women. ■

POLL TAX CONFERENCE

Not a winning strategy

BY G R MCCOLL

AS MANY as 2,000 delegates and visitors attended the founding conference of the All-British Anti-Poll Tax Federation in Manchester last month. For the event's organisers in the Militant Tendency the day was a resounding success, but for millions of workers facing the prospect of staggering poll tax bills the conference failed to mark a real step forward.

The worst fears of a totally stage-managed Militant "rally" were not realised. There was a genuine

debate, sparked by an amendment from Crookesmoor Anti-Poll Tax Union in Sheffield. Moved by a Workers Power supporter, it pointed to the central need for mass strike action up to and including an indefinite general strike to "sink Thatcher's flagship".

The ensuing speeches from the floor made the Crookesmoor amendment the main focus of discussion, though in the final vote it was heavily defeated. This result reflected the failure of other organisations on the left, especially the Socialist Workers Party, the International Socialist Group and Socialist Organiser to offer a coherent alternative to Militant's strategy. This consists of an almost exclusive reliance on a non-payment campaign based in the community.

Socialist Organiser did voice objections to the proposed structure of the federation. The Anarchist Workers Group, whilst expressing sympathy for much of the Crookesmoor amendment, balked at the idea of placing demands on

the Labour Party at both national and local level.

Another controversial amendment, which was eventually defeated, called for the total exclusion from the federation and its local affiliates of anyone guilty of racist, sexist and homophobic, as well as fascist, activity. Though right to stress the need for the central involvement of the oppressed in the fight, the resolution wrongly equated fascism with other reactionary ideas and practices among workers. As necessary as it is to wage war against all such social prejudice within the working class, a truly mass movement against the Poll Tax will embrace a large majority of working class people not yet in possession of a revolutionary consciousness.

The ideas contained in the Crookesmoor amendment did find a resonance at the conference among many non-aligned delegates. As a result approximately 60 copies of the new Workers Power pamphlet, The Great Poll Tax Robbery, were sold. ■

EDITORIAL

Their decade and ours

"NO ONE would remember the Good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions. He had to have money as well." The words are Margaret Thatcher's and sum up the spirit of the 1980s in Tory Britain.

The ignorant and prejudiced grocer's daughter from Grantham has championed a philosophy of money-grubbing, of inequality and injustice. For the working class it has been a bleak decade. The bare statistics of the decline in union membership from the 1979 high of 12.2 million to less than nine million today, only tell part of the story. From the steel workers in 1980 to the dockers in 1989, all the key battalions of the labour movement have lost their crucial battles against the Tories and the bosses. In the most crucial battle of the decade, the miners' strike of 1984-85, the Tories, at enormous cost, scored their most decisive victory.

These triumphs for Thatcher's offensive paved the way for a brutal reshaping of the British economy. For a time British capitalism moved from slump to feverish boom with the bosses able to make temporary concessions on pay to large sections of employed workers. For millions of others, especially the young and the elderly, the 1980s have proved a bitter decade of mounting poverty.

The balance sheet of Thatcher's "economic miracle" provides ample evidence that the capitalist system offers no real or lasting respite for workers. Her "progressive" tax cuts were supposed to line all of our pockets. In reality they handed £26.2 billion to the richest 1%, in comparison with a paltry £900 million for the poorest 10%. Moreover, increases in unfair indirect taxes like VAT ensured that after ten years the tax burden for three million of the lowest paid workers had risen.

The rich have grown richer, while the poor have been hammered—and the gap between the two has widened.

Mass unemployment has blighted the lives of millions. In the first two years of Thatcher's government unemployment rose by 88%, as manufacturing industry was decimated. Today the figures are

rising again. The numbers of children in households dependent on supplementary benefit grew from 923,000 in 1979 to 2.1 million in 1987.

To conceal the real scale of unemployment, the party that promised to put Britain back to work, has fiddled the figures. Thousands of youth were shunted into variously named slave labour schemes and no less than 24 changes were made to the method of calculating unemployment figures. Now they are busy trying to terrorise people to stop them signing on, through the "actively seeking work" law.

Already battered by years of cuts, the NHS faces the prospect of ever greater pressure from the forces of the "internal market". How much is a person's health worth? This is the question the NHS is being forced to ask.

The list of Tory targets is a long one. Lesbian and gay rights, immigrant communities, education and housing provision. At times the list seems endless.

A society with such standards is a sick and rotten one, that fully deserves to be destroyed.

The most bitter irony of the decade is that there have been many opportunities to stop Thatcherism dead in its tracks. The Tories' victories were by no means inevitable. Every major battle waged by sections of workers might well have won but for the role played by the leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions. Time and again in the steel strike, the health disputes, the NGA's battle at Warrington and decisively during the great miners' strike, when a class-wide struggle could have been launched, the union leaderships left sections of the class to struggle in isolation. Time and again they kowtowed to each new round of anti-union legislation.

As the decade comes to a close the Labour Party and union leaderships have seized on the defeats as an excuse not to fight in the here and now. They have elevated this into a whole set of ideas—"new realism"—which meets every pressing question faced by the working class with the lame answer: elect a Labour government.

Even out of office it is a party now firmly pledged

to retaining key elements of Thatcher's anti-union legislation and upholding the profitability of Britain's bosses whatever the unmet needs of its own working class supporters. If the prescription of our leaders is accepted it will spell certain defeat in the fight against the Poll Tax, for the ambulance workers and others who do want to fight to defend jobs, wages and working conditions.

The rumblings of discontent within the Tory Party about both the style and substance of Thatcher's leadership give further proof that the "Iron Lady" is far from invincible. The scurrying overboard of rats like Lawson before the economy begins to sink into a new recession, and the persistent tensions over 1992, indicate the huge obstacles facing Thatcher and her class.

The second half of 1989 gave conclusive proof that the one force actually capable of burying Thatcherism—the organised working class—is alive and kicking.

At the same time, however, the outcome of the numerous disputes of the "summer of discontent" and the ongoing fights in the ambulance service and engineering reveal the obstacles our class faces. They are obstacles that only a new leadership in the unions, battling for their root and branch transformation, can overcome. Forging such a leadership requires the conscious struggle for a new programme which is capable of addressing the immediate concerns of our class. It must answer them with solutions which challenge not only Thatcherism but the foundations of capitalist exploitation and oppression itself.

Drawing on the lessons of the past decade, *Workers Power* believes that the new realist strategy of class collaboration and conciliation can be swept aside along with their proponents in the leadership of the labour movement.

But the condition for victory is the forging of a new revolutionary party here in Britain and internationally. We urge our readers to join us and commit themselves to that fight. ■

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The Führer and I

LADY MOSLEY is a fascist. She has never renounced her and her husband's past record in the British Union of Fascists. On her "desert island" in November's Radio 4 broadcast she told Sue Lawley her life story. Asked about the six million massacred Jews she said that she really didn't believe that story. While admitting that be it six million or one million it was morally wrong, she still thought Hitler was a very charming man.

Any regrets? Not that she had been part of a pro-Nazi fascist movement in Britain, not that she was wrong about the Holocaust, not that her husband was the leading anti-Semite in this country. Her only regret was that she "got caught", and spent most of the war inside Holloway which was "dirty and disgusting".

As the writer of one of the many letters of protest to the BBC commented, if she found that disgusting, what would she have made of Dachau?

When questioned about giving a veneer of respectability to this unrepentant fascist, a BBC producer told us

that we're all intelligent enough to make up our own minds when hearing differing political views.

Curiously, such producers haven't been so keen to ensure that we hear the views of Sinn Fein representatives on radio and television. After more than one year of the Tories' broadcasting ban, when might we expect an invite to Gerry Adams to appear on "Desert Island Discs"? ■

March against apartheid

TRADE UNIONISTS and anti-apartheid activists from across the country will march through the streets of Leicester on 9 December, demanding the reinstatement of victimised TGWU members, Ross Galbraith and Gary Sherriff. Their employer, Granby Plastics, sacked the pair for their refusal to work on an order of the chemical, Nyloil, bound for South Africa (see WP123).

Granby Plastics' management, notorious locally for their fierce anti-union stance and racist hiring practices, have said that there is no possibility of Ross and Gary getting their jobs back. The campaign, however, has won an enthusiastic reception from many trade unionists in workplaces where workers have implemented their own sanctions against the apart-

IN brief

heid regime.

The demonstration assemblies at 12 noon in Cossington Park. The campaign is also in urgent need of money to keep Ross and Gary financially afloat and to broaden the attack against Granby. Further information from:

Leicester and District Trade Union Council
138 Charles Street
Leicester
Tel: (0533) 536005

Rover rip off

WITH THE television cameras in place for the second week, a number of Labour MPs have worked themselves into a self-righteous fury over the thinly disguised state handout to British Aerospace (BAe). A flustered Nicholas Ridley openly admitted that the Treasury had shelled out £38 million to BAe in order to persuade its bosses to buy Rover's car and truck plants at a bargain basement price, which won't even be paid until March 1990.

The leak of an Audit Commission report on to BAe's purchase and the promise of a European Commission inquiry into the affair, has sent

top Tories scrambling for to cover up what has been merely the norm of business during the Thatcher decade. In the meantime the likes of Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Gordon Brown can flex their rhetorical skills in outraged defense of the sorely wronged British taxpayer.

Cheering as it is to see a brewing scandal compound the Tories' mounting troubles, Labour has predictably missed the real issue—namely the re-nationalisation of Rover under the control of its own workforce, without a penny in compensation for the BAe bosses and the other capitalists already bloated by Tory "sweeteners". ■

No witches in Hulme

MANCHESTER CENTRAL Constituency Labour Party (CLP) has moved to close down Hulme Ward. This comes amid a battle to choose the candidate for the City Council elections. The ward refused to proceed with this reselection process after the City Party had disallowed all the ward's nominations for the panel of candidates.

The City Party's response was to hold "shotgun" reselection meetings, but they were defeated by the mobilisation of ward members. Three of the five nominations were then accepted on appeal through the intervention of regional office. However, the CLP has now closed the ward pending an investigation into

the activities of *Workers Power* supporters and other ward members. This means that the ward could lose control of the reselection process before it has had an opportunity to decide its response.

The ward's stand has provoked a witch-hunt of activists. To date, the new ward officers are co-operating with the witch-hunt and the Stalinist-led right wing "scint victory". The ward has been at the centre of a series of political struggles in Hulme itself, over the Poll Tax, deportations and housing, with many ward members being leaders within the tenants' association movement, with *Workers Power* supporters openly challenging the council's cuts and implementation of the Poll Tax.

A "broad right" has developed in response to *Workers Power* supporters activities in Hulme. In particular our description of the Hulme Study (a tripartite body of the Department of the Environment, the City Council and the tenants' associations) as a contract after the removal of the Housing Action Trust from Hulme has exposed and threatened the cosy relationship between the TAs and some councillors.

Their response has been a massive campaign of slander and abuse with threats of violence and the use of the police to intimidate us. A woman activist on the left has been branded for allegedly providing sexual favours in return for political ones. This has been spread by some claiming to be feminists. The left caucus in the ward has agreed a fighting response to this. We have gone on the offensive against this sexism

and other slander. We have called a ward meeting and are demanding all allegations be discussed. The following motion is being circulated as the basis for the meeting:

This ward believes there are no witches in Hulme, but tenants and workers, pensioners and unemployed, fighting for better housing, jobs and benefits.

We demand the right to freely choose our own councillors.

We demand no closures, no witch-hunts, no imposed candidates. We will continue to meet to decide the best way to defend the people of Hulme. We will refuse to expel any individual socialists or groups from the Labour Party. This ward believes there is no place for violence in the labour movement. This ward condemns the use of the police to intimidate socialists. ■

MARCH AGAINST BNP FASCISTS

THE BEXLEY and Greenwich Campaign Against Fascism has called on socialists and trade unionists to join this mobilisation against the British National Party's Welling HQ in south east London. Already this Autumn a BNP attack aimed at a meeting of anti-racists in Welling library left a dozen in hospital. This march gives a real chance to start clearing these scum off the streets.

9 December
Assemble 11am
Plumstead
(Winn's) Common

ENGINEERS

CSEU leaders drive the wrong way

THE AEU executive council is hailing the deal done at NEI Parsons as an "historic agreement". Historic compromise would be closer to the truth. It is a settlement which could mark the first step in a major sell out of the 35 hour week campaign.

The "Drive for 35" has gone into reverse at NEI Parsons. Bill Jordan said "the overall package was attractive", but to whom? It does not even grant the 37 hour week until 1992. And, of course, there are strings too in the form of the usual multi-skilling requirements and "Japanese-style" team working. NEI Parsons' workers will pay for their cut in hours by 1992 through increased productivity. No wonder, then, that 45% of members voted against the deal.

Jordan has sold a deal which gives the EEF, or at least the big firms in it, an easy way out. The reputed failure to agree on the details of a nominally shorter working week disguised how close the bosses and bureaucrats have been since the outset.

Willingness

The union leaderships agree with the employers on the "need" for increased profits. So performance and productivity must be sharply increased. At the very start of the strikes, Jordan made plain his willingness to settle for 37 hours. His talk of a 35 hour, four and a half day week has been re-

BY A BIRMINGHAM AEU MEMBER

vealed as empty bluster.

As a result of the NEI Parsons deal the bosses' servants on the CSEU executive have undermined not only those on strike who came out to fight for 35 hours with no strings, but the tens of thousands in other EEF plants loyally paying the levy while left to sit on the sidelines. Support for the levy could wither now that the CSEU leadership has retreated to a shoddy deal around 37 hours.

Initiative

Most importantly the NEI Parsons agreement has allowed the bosses to seize the initiative and declare national bargaining on the question of hours to be at an end. This has been a goal of the Tories and the more determined bosses for several years. EEF Director of Operations, Peter Bull, said:

"National bargaining is removed from the scene—the void will have to be filled." (*Financial Times* 17.11.89)

The NEI Parsons deal is seen as a model replacement.

Rolls Royce, with one plant on strike, has shown a willingness to do a deal along similar lines to NEI Parsons, itself a Rolls Royce subsidiary. Smith's Industries and BAe have also offered talks on 37 hours. The big EEF firms who can readily afford to settle will be looking to do

so, leaving the vast majority of the 600,000 manual workers directly concerned with the dispute out on a limb. Especially with the prospect of recession looming large the real danger exists of workers being left to scramble for what they can get because of the leadership's bankrupt and divisive strategy.

There remains an alternative to this sorry outcome but only if rank and file militants act swiftly to extend the selective, rolling strikes into the widest possible action—an all out national strike until a national agreement is extracted



BAe strikers face sell out

from the bosses. To achieve this means the election of strike committees at the plants now out laying the basis for a national strike committee, willing and able to

break with the CSEU Executive. Despite the setbacks a real opportunity is still there as the pressure mounts for action in the important car industry. ■

ANTI-UNION LAWS

Tories forge new chains

DURING THE wage struggles of last summer a number of strikes—on London Underground, the building sites and the oil rigs—were unofficial. These were labelled "wildcat" strikes, organised by militants without official union sanction. As such their organisers were immune to the existing anti-union laws.

Fowler fumed, and promised yet another round of legislation to shackle the unions. The "wildcats" were to be the new target. Sure enough, the Queen's Speech announced that:

"Legislation will be introduced to make further reforms in industrial

relations and trade union law".

The key planks of the new Employment Bill are the abolition of the pre-entry closed shop, the elimination of all remaining rights to take secondary action and an attack on the right to take unofficial action.

Two features of the summer struggles alarmed the Tories. First, the union leaders themselves were able to escape from punishment for the "unlawful" strikes that took place. In ASLEF the officials walked out of the mass meetings of Underground workers before votes on action were taken.

This meant that the union itself was not liable for fines or injunctions since it was clearly not responsible for any action taken.

The second spur to Fowler's outrage was the militants' discovery that, within the framework of unofficial rank and file organisation, effective action could be launched. Mass meetings, without having to go through the elaborate—and undemocratic—time wasting formal ballots dictated by existing laws, could respond to management attacks by deciding on immediate action.

The new legislation will plug both of these loopholes. Unions will be held directly responsible for the actions of their members, whether or not they sanction these actions. Worse, employers are to be given the right to selectively sack workers who take part in unofficial action. In other words, if the new law had existed in the summer, every single striking Underground worker could have been sacked by the bosses.

What are the likely results of the new law? Over the last ten years the anti-union laws have considerably strengthened the ability of the bureaucrats to police the rank and file. The ballot weapon has enabled them to delay and demobilise rank and file workers in the name of obeying the law. The tragically unnecessary defeat of the dockers thanks to Ron Todd's subservience to the laws was proof of that. The new law will further strengthen the officials' ability to do this.

Reluctance

In the summer ASLEF and NUR officials sat on their hands, while their members took on the bosses. The threat to union coffers takes away this ability to appear "neutral" when faced with unofficial action. Given their new realist reluctance to organise official strikes, the union

leaders will be ever more vigorous in clamping down on unofficial action. The instruction to TGWU stewards at Ford not to call any unofficial actions around the current pay claim is a sign of what is to come.

The power to sack participants in unofficial strikes is designed to smash any rank and file organisation capable of undermining the bureaucrats' grip on action. While it is unlikely—though not entirely impossible—that bosses will opt to sack whole workforces, they will be able to witch-hunt and victimise the militants. As managers target "troublemakers", business will be booming for the likes of the Economic League.

The union bureaucracy's response to the new attack is, in fact, a secret sigh of relief. They hate unofficial action precisely because it poses a rank and file threat to them. As for the Labour Party, there has been a deafening silence. In four days of debate not one Labour MP attacked the proposed Employment Bill. Not surprising, really, since they have just voted to keep whole chunks of the Tories' anti-union legislation. They are convinced that they too will need it, should they get elected, to contain the struggles of the 1990s.

Pressure

Workers must be clear that every last bit of anti-union legislation which the Tories have pushed through must be scrapped. The pressure to force Labour to do this must be kept on right up until the day of the election. However, the way to remove these laws is not to wait for Labour. It is the rank and file who are affected by these laws and it is the rank and file who must mobilise against them.

As long as these laws remain on the statute books they are a threat to every militant action. They are the biggest single obstacle to the ability of rank and file workers to defend their jobs, pay and conditions.

It is a crime that the TUC and the Labour Party have stood idly by while the Tories introduced round after round of them. The time is long overdue to mobilise the forces of the entire labour movement to oppose them. The new legislation will give us a new focus for getting such a mobilisation. Opposition and defiance to existing laws and a campaign against the new Bill need to be directed towards a class-wide struggle against a class-wide attack—an indefinite general strike to smash all anti-union laws. ■

SOCIALIST MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

IN SHEFFIELD last month the Socialist Movement held its first conference aimed at addressing socialists in the trade unions. The 550 delegates were told that the "main purpose of this conference is to strengthen opposition to new realism at every level and to begin to rebuild the unions through successful struggle against the employers and the government."

Yet, amid the self-congratulation at the end of the conference, a Pergamon striker introduced a sober note by saying that the needs of actual strikers had not been met, their struggles not advanced. She was right.

The whole thrust of the conference, and its Socialist Outlook/Labour Briefing supporters, was to re-organise the "Bennite left" inside the unions, based on the politics of left reformism. No policies were advanced that could have politically and organisationally armed the young militants emerging from the latest wave of strikes. Such policies would have frightened off the reformist leaders.

Guide

On pay, for example, the policy paper argues for a minimum wage of "two thirds of the average blue collar wage" and the restoration of wage councils to their pre-1979 role. Fine, we need a national minimum wage, but only set at two thirds the average industrial wage? It should be set at the full average industrial wage. Why concede to the bosses any argument about what they can afford? And why, in a period of rising inflation, refuse to organise a fight for a sliding scale of wages—a rise of 1% for every 1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by workers' price watch committees? Quite simply, because left reformists like Benn—and their centrist cheerleaders in

The way ahead after Sheffield

the Labour Party—would refuse to organise the working class in the fight to implement such demands.

Throughout the document presented to delegates there was nothing to guide workers from the struggles now confronting them towards ultimate goals which provide the only lasting answers to their needs. Instead, the whole strategy of the Conference organisers relied on winning a future "left" Labour government to a series of diluted demands.

The policy paper fails to suggest how to organise to pursue even its own inadequate demands. All our problems are reduced to the triumph of new realist ideas rather than identifying and attacking the proponents of these ideas: the trade union bureaucrats.

Thousands of militants in 1989 saw the need to control their disputes and hold their leaders to account—or replace them with new leaders who would fight. Yet the policy paper barely mentions the word "bureaucracy" and contains just one brief paragraph on "Broad Lefts and rank and file organisation" which pledges support for existing broad lefts, and urges them to be democratic "campaigning organisations responding to the needs of the rank and file".

Workers Powers supporters argued at the conference that such an

approach was wrong. We fought for a series of amendments that placed organising the rank and file as an independent force, armed with class struggle politics, at the centre of the fight for militant renewal of the unions.

Evidence

We also pointed to the experience of the "broad lefts"—the organisation the Socialist Movement touted as the answer—as electoral machines for aspiring left officials, not militant organisations of the rank and file. We listed the examples of their sell-outs (the AEU and TGWU), their cowardice (the CPSA and NCU) and their downright embrace of new realism (NUPE).

Our arguments fell largely on deaf ears. This wasn't because the rank and file spurn our views. It is because few rank and file workers were there. Of the thousands of militants thrown up during the struggle over the last four months, few found their way to Sheffield.

On the evidence of this conference, the Socialist Movement is incapable of giving a real lead to union militants. Workers Power will continue addressing such militants, offering a way forward in today's struggles and pointing to the need for a rank and file movement to bring eventual victory. ■

VAUXHALL/FORD

All out to make the links

AS WE go to press nearly 10,000 production workers at Vauxhall's two major assembly plants have entered the fifth week of one day strike action over a national pay and conditions claim. Each Friday, workers at the Ellesmere Port plant have stayed off the job. Workers at the Luton factory and its sister components site in Taddington have struck on Mondays.

To date the walk-outs have cost Vauxhall/General Motors (GM) an estimated £12 million in lost production and threatened supplies to other GM factories on the continent. Nonetheless, management hasn't budged from its "final" offer of 9.7% with a variety of productivity strings. In fact, Vauxhall bosses are digging in their heels by attempting to impose a three year deal on the future workforce of a new engine plant at Ellesmere Port.

Vauxhall is dangling the carrot of new investment in an area of high unemployment in order to force through a major attack on working conditions, with the blessing of the trade union officials. They are out to attack national pay bargaining as the company demands "continuity of supply". This means either pendulum arbitration or a formal no strike deal, the introduction of a brutal system of double day shifts to achieve 16 hours of non-stop production and the abuse of part-time and temporary workers on the new assembly line.

Caved in

These terms are even worse than those outlined in Vauxhall's "Meeting the Challenge" pamphlet, itself a licence for speed up and tighter management control of the line. Predictably, TGWU and AEU officials have already made major concessions at Ellesmere Port,

which could result in the loss of 1,000 jobs. And the signs are that the officials have already caved in to management's ultimatum to sign the engine plant deal.

Fortunately, Vauxhall workers have shown the will to resist. But their fighting spirit shouldn't be sapped by a protracted campaign of one day actions, which the bosses at the moment are prepared to sit out.

What is needed is rapid escalation of the dispute into an all out strike. It must be run from below, with mass meetings electing a recallable strike committee to challenge the current stranglehold of TGWU full timers like Tony Woodley.

Allies

Vauxhall workers must also look to their real allies in other car firms. The parallel contract fight at Ford faces many of the same obstacles, but also provides the best opportunity in years to build links across the car industry. A united fight could lay the basis for an industrial union that can take on the bosses as 1992 approaches and the competition for market share grows more vicious across Europe.



Unity on the line: Vauxhall pickets and ambulance workers in Luton

Not only have all the major plants resoundingly rejected Ford's divisive two year deal, but thousands of workers at Dagenham, Halewood, Bridgend and Southampton have already taken limited unofficial action. Sometimes, as at Dagenham, this has even been in defiance of their own stewards.

This widespread anger has led to the bureaucrats organising national ballots, but they have also made it plain that they are in no hurry to call an indefinite stoppage. Nothing less will do, however, if the unions' full claim is to be won. Ford bosses have already refused to talk about a cut in the working week, a key demand in the original claim which the union leadership now seem to have conveniently forgotten.

Contrary to press reports Ford is actually offering a lower basic rise than Vauxhall, with the supposed 9.5% increase coming only through productivity-linked bonuses and the introduction of team leaders to oversee more "flexible working".

The only way to put paid to these plans is through the weapon of the all out strike, so effective in paralyzing much of Ford Europe in February 1988.■

Civil service strikes spread

LOCAL STRIKES continue for improved staffing levels in the department of Employment (DoEm). More than 30 UBOs and job centres are now out, including two Coventry offices on strike since 7 August. In Scotland three offices have been waging indefinite action since September.

The walkouts have been triggered by acute shortages of staff, whose numbers are already 11% below "normal" limits according to a DoEm internal document. They come against the background of a drive

BY A LONDON CPSA MEMBER

towards "agency" status in the civil service—backdoor privatisation—finally confirmed by Employment Secretary Norman Fowler on 1 December. The UBOs and job centres face the brunt of the attack, with up to 50% of offices facing closure and thousands of jobs on the line.

In order to soften the resistance and further demoralise staff who suffered a real pay cut this year, DoEm management have staged a

systematic rundown of staffing levels.

The pioneers of new realism who run the CPSA's national executive have responded in a predictably pathetic way. While general secretary John Ellis has been forced to sanction limited action, he has been meeting behind closed doors with DoEm chief Sir Geoffrey Holland to "discuss" the agency proposals.

The Stalinist-dominated Broad Left '84 (BL'84) make up the leadership of the DoEm section, but so far they have done little more than call for selective strikes at three or four offices at once. To date this has wrung minor concessions from local management, but not begun to answer the national issue of chronic under-staffing.

The Militant-dominated official Broad Left is still shrinking despite the new level of struggle and was even outflanked by BL'84's call for a day of action on 15 November. Neither in elections nor in the current round of strikes is the Broad Left capable of mounting a serious challenge to Ellis' unabashed right-wing leadership.

The current strikes must give heart to activists in the Civil Service. They should see them as the potential basis, along with recent action in London offices against co-operating with Poll Tax registration demands, for a real fightback against management and its friends in the union bureaucracy. As a first step in the right direction the CPSA's Socialist Caucus has called an unofficial conference to hammer out a strategy for stopping the agency threat. A struggle must be built in the local sections for a national strike against the agency plans and for staffing levels to be set by the workforce itself.■

Class fighters released

SOCIALISTS EVERYWHERE will be delighted at the recent news of Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland's parole. Dean and Russell were the last prisoners still in jail for acts committed during the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85.

They were imprisoned for killing a taxi driver by dropping a concrete block onto his car as he drove a scab to Merthyr Vale colliery.

Life sentences for murder were commuted to eight years for manslaughter after large demonstrations and strikes at the men's pit.

Dean and Russell return to a South Wales coalfield very different since the defeat of the strike.

British Coal have butchered the area, slashing the number of pits from twenty-eight to six. The South Wales NUM Executive has been as useless in fighting for Dean and Russell's release as in defending its pits from closure.

South Wales has paid heavily for the defeat. Few have suffered more than Dean and Russell. Workers Power joins in sending warmest fraternal greetings to Dean and Russell and their families. We hope that they will soon be able to rejoin the fight to put an end to the system which has so ruthlessly exploited their class and robbed them of five years of their lives.■

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY****Whose time is it anyway?**

"THE WORKING day . . . has, by itself no constant limit. It is the constant tendency of capital to stretch it to its utmost physically possible length, because in the same degree surplus labour, and consequently profit resulting therefrom, will be increased." (Marx, *Wages, Price and Profit*)

When Marx wrote this in the 1860s industrial capitalism had already lengthened the working day and week for nearly one hundred years. A 59 hour week was the norm in engineering. If Marx had shopped at Sainsbury's, the grocers, he would have been served by workers forced to labour behind the counter for 79 hours a week.

For the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, a ten hour day was the norm. But with the Industrial Revolution the capitalists had pushed the limit forward and in whole sectors of manufacturing the 18 hour day was commonplace. Little wonder then that the length of the working day and week became an object of struggle between the bosses and workers.

Strike wave

In the time of Marx the First International launched a campaign for the eight-hour day. But it was not until a huge strike wave in 1919 that most British workers secured the 48 hour week. With engineering workers striking for the 35 hour week the issue of working hours is once more an important issue for the manufacturing sector of the working class in Britain.

So if we return to Marx's quote it is clear that the general trend in Western Europe during the twentieth century has not been for capitalism to stretch the working day to the "utmost physically possible length". Yet capitalism has not gone bust, and indeed since World War two many of the most powerful and rich capitalist nations have combined a reduction in the working week with massive profitability. How has this been possible? To answer this we need to look at the nature of the working day.

Essentially, the working day is divided into two parts. In the first part of the day workers undertake what Marx called "necessary labour". During these hours the value created by their toil is enough to cover the costs of all the goods and services the worker and her/his family need to maintain themselves. It may not be a rich and especially pleasant life, but the bosses are not interested in that side of things. As long as minimum levels of health and education are preserved so that the workforce turns up fit enough to work hard each day, then that is all the bosses really care about.

But it only takes a worker a few hours in the average day to create the value that covers the cost of these "means of subsistence" as Marx labels them. So what of the rest of the day?

This Marx called "surplus labour". The greater the surplus labour in comparison to the "necessary labour" the greater the rate of exploitation and the possibility of more profit. That is why in the nineteenth century the ruthless rich tried to push ever upwards the length of

the working day, so that each worker produced more and more surplus for the bosses.

Eventually, two factors combined to restrict and reverse the process. The first and most important was the struggle of the working class. The gradual strengthening of trade union organisation from the 1860s allowed workers to combine their strength and struggle for an end to this degradation before the altar of profit.

But it was also becoming clear to sections of the ruling class that the "constant tendency of capital" to lengthen the working day was ruining the mental and physical condition of the very source of the capitalists' own wealth—the workers themselves!

So capitalists turned to another way of increasing the amount of surplus labour relative to necessary labour without extending the absolute boundaries of the working day. This involved reducing the hours spent in necessary labour.

The huge advances made in technology and science have created new production methods and machinery which have enhanced the productivity of labour. By increasing output in the same time period the capitalist economises on the use of labour. Thereby the time it takes to reproduce the "means of subsistence" goes down considerably.

Hence the capitalists have pulled off the trick of conceding, under pressure, a reduction in the working week whilst at the same time increasing surplus labour time over necessary labour time.

Exploitation

Those who introduced new machinery could increase exploitation without lengthening the hours, whereas those firms without new technology could only do the same and concede shorter hours by making their workers intensify their effort. Because of this increase in the intensity of labour a shorter working week is not always necessarily a boon. As Marx noted:

"If the increase in the intensity of labour or mass of labour spent in an hour keeps some fair proportion to the decrease in the extent of the working day, the working man will still be the winner. If this limit is overshot, if he loses in one form what he has gained in another, ten hours of labour may then become as ruinous as 12 hours were before."

Many workers have paid for a reduction in hours by an increase in stress and tiredness. Many more have "shortened" their day by conceding shorter breaks. Only if the cut in the working week is accompanied by no loss of wages and no productivity deals does the working class gain completely from the struggle.

This all serves to demonstrate that while the engineers are right to fight for the 35 hour week, it must be won without any of the productivity strings the bosses are pushing for. Only if we win control over the length of the working day—determining it within the framework of a maximum 35 hour week—will we be able to counter the bosses' drive to increase their rate of exploitation.■

"BACK DOOR socialism" . . . "inspired by Marxism and the class struggle" are just two examples of the rhetorical bile which the European Community's (EC) Social Charter has caused Margaret Thatcher to spew forth.

The phrases are for press consumption, but behind them lies genuine concern. The Tories believe that the Social Charter poses a threat to their whole project of the last ten years: bashing unions, dismantling the "welfare state", privatising the state sector and more generally "killing socialism".

The venom of Thatcher's reaction, however, has as much to do with divisions among the Tories and Britain's bosses about the implications of 1992 in general, as with the specific proposals in the Charter. The Thatcherites have raised ever mounting objections to an intergrated European capitalism in which Britain could easily become a bit player.

Outpost

Second fiddle to West Germany and France might be enough for the likes of Michael Heseltine and David Owen, but Thatcher remains firm in her commitment to Britain as the principal outpost for US imperialism and as a welcoming host to investment by Japan's bosses. The effort to be the junior partner of Reagan's, and now Bush's, United States has been accompanied by an attempt to impose US standards of welfare provision and legal shackles on trade unionists.

Having few original ideas of their own, beyond attacks on Thatcher's authoritarian personality, Labour's leadership and the TUC bureaucracy have enthusiastically embraced the European Commission President, Jacques Delors, as a champion of workers' rights. Delors' speeches about the need for "social dialogue" must be sweet music to the top brass of the unions, frozen out of the corridors of power for more than a decade.

Wait

To accompany the refrain of "wait for Labour" the likes of Norman Willis and Bill Jordan are increasingly telling workers to "wait for 1992" and the implementation of the Social Charter, which will supposedly cure all the woes inflicted by Thatcherism. This sudden enthusiasm for European solutions is, in reality, very much in tune with the message being peddled by many a Labour politician and union bureaucrat. According to them, the working class is in no position to achieve anything this side of a general election.

The idea that the European bosses are our saviours is laughable. Even under existing agreements the bosses' economic might has proved stronger than right. Late in 1988 EC bureaucrats, charged with drafting guidelines for a detailed order on noise levels in the workplace, agreed on a West German standard not exceeding 85 decibels. In response the British government and the CBI led several other European bosses' federations in a successful campaign to overturn the ruling.

Defiant

As a result the EC standard is now 90 decibels, in spite of medical evidence that shows 40% of workers exposed to such noise levels on a daily basis are likely to lose their hearing. The CBI justified its defiant lobbying with the claim that meeting the original standard would have cost its members £500 million.

For all the pious bleating about health and safety at work in the

Western Europe's heads of government and state gather in Paris this month with the Social Charter high on the agenda. **G R McColl** looks at why Thatcher despises the Charter, examines what it really says and argues that it paves the way for class collaboration.

European con-trick

Charter, this example highlights the hypocrisy of employers who are not willing to cough up if it threatens to eat into their profits. It also goes to the heart of Thatcher's opposition to the Social Charter. Given the ever more fragile state of the British economy in particular, the Tories don't want to pay any price for class compromise which could damage Britain's competitive position in the world market. Especially not after spending a decade of determined class war seeking to rebuild it.

Needs

However, this shouldn't persuade workers that even a fully intact version of the Charter would begin to answer their needs. On issue after issue among the twelve major areas considered, the document does little but advance vaguely worded compromises. A "decent wage" for all workers is to come through either collective bargaining or legislation. The EC's definition of a "decent wage" is roughly 68% of a nation's current average. This may be too much for the Tories to stomach, but it is far too little to enable the continent's 30 million or more low paid to enjoy a reasonable standard of living.

The Charter mentions a right to take industrial action and even strike. But it goes no further than the hollow guarantees provided in the French and Italian constitution, guarantees that do not prevent the heads of workers being broken by the riot police of these countries the minute they try and picket or demonstrate.

More ominously, the Charter encourages resort to ACAS-style conciliation and the establishment of forms of worker representation on managerial bodies. These have long proved effective in incorporating union officials and factory representatives and defusing militant class struggle.

At the moment, UNICE, an umbrella organisation for European bosses, is pushing for the deletion of even these proposals. But workers certainly have no interest in fighting for the right to participate in decisions to sack themselves or cut their own wages.

To counter the Thatcherites'

In the face of the Tories concerted campaign against a charter for class collaboration, British and other European workers must strike out on a different path.

fierce opposition to the Social Charter, our so-called leaders issue unpublicised calls to attend passive lobbies and release red balloons over Brussels at the behest of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). The ETUC has named the implementation of the Social Charter as the price for organised labour's participation in making a "success" of the single

European market.

In the words of ETUC Secretary, Peter Coldrick:

"The ETUC prefers . . . to stay on the internal market train. Better to try to influence developments than be left behind in the station."

What sort of influence do the EC's union bureaucrats hope to wield amid the mad rush to "re-structure" by the multi-national bosses? Their answer lies in the "action programme" for the enactment of the Social Charter. One snag is that this document does not yet exist and won't be unveiled before the summer of 1990 at the earliest.

Its eventual production assumes that all twelve member states pledge their solemn support later this month for the Charter itself. At the moment there is little prospect that Britain will drop its opposition to the document even though the leading social democratic lights of the EC appear happy to dilute this vague declaration of principles still further.

Indeed, Delors' recent meeting with Thatcher led him to declare that there was plenty of room for compromise on the Charter to harmonise it with Tory policies.

Hint

French President Mitterrand has gone so far as to hint that elements of the Charter might be dropped in exchange for an early British entry into the European Monetary System. The EC's Commissioner for Social Affairs, Vasso Papandreou, has also beat a retreat from defending the extremely timid package of reforms for which

she is partly responsible. Such naked appeasement of Thatcher has led the Socialist Group of MEPs to threaten Commissioners with the sack. Nobody should be fooled by this reformist gesture.

When faced with stiff opposition from the British government to any mildly progressive measure, the EC has proved itself powerless. The Tories have continued to refuse to implement any changes in law to bring Britain into compliance with the Equal Pay Directive of 1975. The refusal to give women a statutory right to equal pay for work of equal value has driven workers such as Julie Hayward into the courts right up to the House of Lords.

In the face of the Tories' concerted campaign against a Charter for class collaboration, British and other European workers must strike out on a different path. They need to forge organisations capable of confronting the bosses continent-wide. The employing class is everywhere determined to slash jobs and attack wages and conditions. Genuine combine committees of democratically elected and accountable representatives are urgently required to confront the power of the multi-nationals.

Unity

Such committees are essential to ensure that workers are not pitted against each other by foot-loose bosses threatening to transfer production to ever cheaper locations.

These workers' organisations must form the basis for international trade union unity and a co-ordinated fightback against the bosses' offensive. Beyond this, they must be won to a programme that begins to address our class' real needs and fundamentally challenge the power of capital.

The basic demands of such a programme would include the opening of company books to scrutiny by workers and their chosen experts and equal provision for all workers to learn other EC languages, equal to that now being made available to senior management.

The call for workers' control over all key aspects of production must be raised and fought for as the only real assurance of our health and safety at work. This is the surest way to force an "upward harmonisation" of conditions across the whole of Europe.

Centre

Issues beyond the confines of the factory or office must also be at the centre of a working class programme for Europe. Work or full pay for all at a level to be determined by the labour movement itself, not by civil servants or the bosses, is the only answer for the jobless and low-paid.

Free, 24 hour childcare must be made available, while the reproductive rights of women must be defended and extended against the bigots' offensive across Europe. The right of all workers to migrate without restriction must be won against the vision of Thatcher and the rest of "Fortress Europe".

On the eve of 1992 Europe's workers are at a crossroads. They face the twin prospects of another recession and bosses' offensive in the West, and fully fledged capitalist restoration emerging from the wreckage of Stalinism in the East.

To ensure that this nightmare doesn't become reality means both struggle in the here and now and a conscious fight for a programme, for a real workers' charter, which could begin to lay the basis for the only long-term solution: the Socialist United States of Europe. ■



Delors—guest of honour at the TUC

Porn and sexism

BY JENNY SCOTT

WOMEN FACE a serious assault on abortion rights. Yet instead of organising against this very real attack the Labour MP, Clare Short, is organising a diversionary and reactionary campaign in favour of the censorship of pornography.

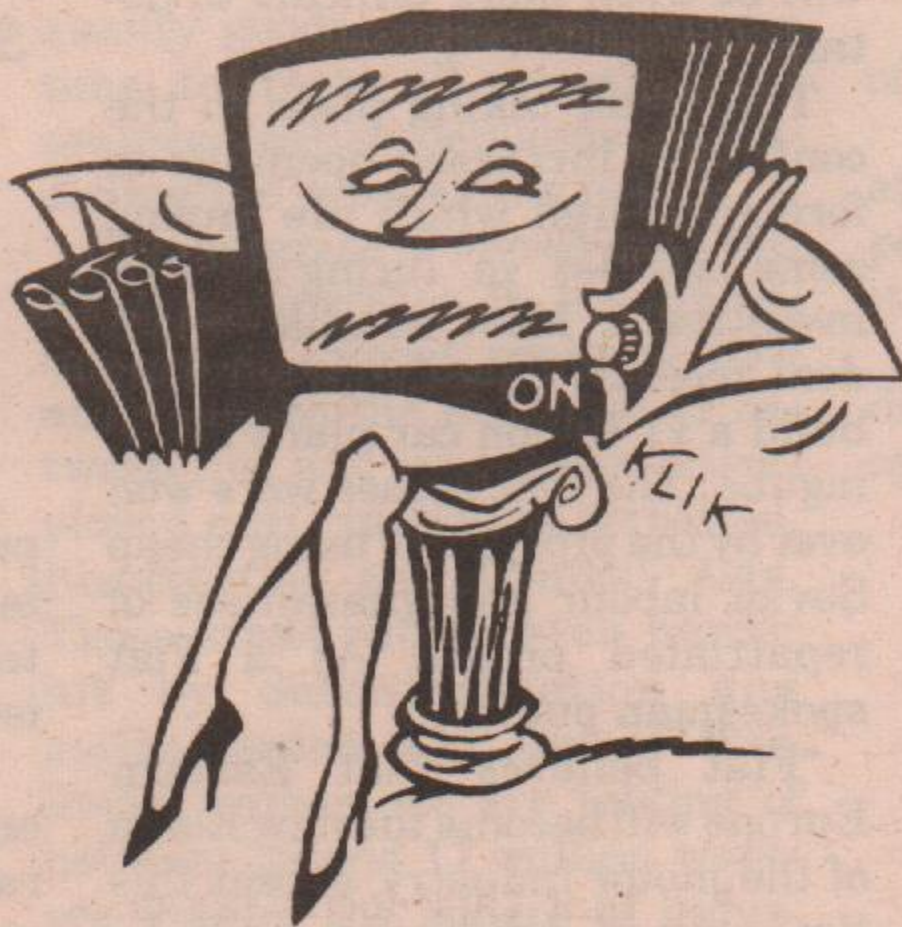
Along with the misnamed Campaign Against Censorship and Pornography (CAPC), Short is wandering around W H Smiths stores raising the slogan "Off the shelf". The targets were various soft porn magazines.

Another example of the anti-porn mood sweeping the ranks of the (ever less) radical middle classes was the attack on Dennis Potter's TV play, *Blackeyes* by Maria Lexton of the London magazine *Time Out*. She joined ranks with the *Daily Star*, a paper which denounced the programme as sick, while raking in thousands for its chat-line adverts with such subtle titles as "Cream in my mouth" and "Come with me darling".

Lexton suggested that Potter's sexual "sickness" was caused by his years of physical suffering from a destructive form of arthritis. She argued that his supposed sexual frustration and inadequacies were behind what she claims was a misogynist play.

Prejudice against people with disabilities is often focused into a

fear and then stigmatisation of their sexuality. But we are not here to discuss Lexton's own sexual hang-ups. Dennis Potter is unashamed about his own exploitation of alienated sexuality and oppression which *Blackeyes* attempts. To suggest that artistic representation of such issues is a major cause of women's sexual oppression is absurd.



The clear implication of all this bilge is that Potter's work should be banned. Both this and the "Off

The Shelf" campaign underline quite how dangerous and wrong the feminists' crusade against pornography is.

It bases its analysis on the idea that pornography is either the cause, or at least the most important manifestation of, sexism. Ignoring the fact that what they would define as pornography is a relatively recent phenomenon, whereas the oppression of women and the sexist attitudes that it engenders is not, they get cause and effect completely the wrong way round.

But the problem is not merely one of theoretical analysis.

So determined are they to target porn as women's number one enemy that they end up calling on the state to censor it. And this is the state that makes a hobby of prosecuting lesbian and gay bookshops for importing gay literature; the state with *Allo, Allo* fan and god-fearing puritan Rees-Mogg as the arbiter of what we can and can't see on TV; the state that introduced Section 28. To hand it more power to censor is to strengthen its reactionary role.

Just as bad, in the interests of getting porn banned the new feminist zealots have teamed up with right wing and religious bigots. Never mind their common

cause with the despicable Mrs Whitehouse, the CAPC list of supporters includes the racist Tory Jill Knight. Have they forgotten that she was the one who instigated the amendment that became Section 28?

The working class must resolutely fight sexism. But it must have no truck with any calls on the state for the censorship of pornography or anything else.

Even with fascists we are in favour of workers' denying them a platform, not calling on the state to ban them.

Censorship

Neither do we support the direct action censorship by the feminists who raid bookshops and picket cinemas. The sexism of *Penthouse*, *Playboy* or even *Health and Efficiency* (which CAPC have targeted) is no more the root of women's oppression than the sexism contained in virtually every magazine, paper or film.

Cosmopolitan, magazine of the "liberated" female, has thrown its weight behind CAPC. Alongside a diatribe against the evil, degrading, stereotypical images in pornography it carried an advert for some cosmetic product.

Reinforces

It showed a woman, with transparent shimmering gold lurex draped over her breasts. She looked inviting and "available". Such imagery, which *Cosmopolitan* is full of, reinforces sexism just as much as *Penthouse*, with its marginally more blatant portrayal of women as sex objects.

If sexist images are to be banned, by the state or by direct action, there would be little left on the shelf in W H Smith.

Thankfully not all of the feminists agree with the CAPC. A group called Feminists Against Censorship has been set up. Whilst we disagree with aspects of its analysis of women's oppression we do regard its opposition to the CAPC as justified and correct.

Socialists should defend FAC against the slurs of the censorship lobby who have already accused it of being a pornographers' front organisation.

Information from:
Feminists Against Censorship
Panther House
38 Mount Pleasant
London WC1X 0AP

IF THE broadcasting authorities revealed that there had been a dramatic increase in viewers for *Westminster Live*'s main rival, the test-card showing the little girl holding a balloon, nobody would be surprised.

Let's be honest, even the £300 a throw course at a charm school that MPs from both sides of the House went to has done little to entice most people to tune in to the "Mother of Parliament's" proceedings.

One reason for this is that parliamentary debates themselves have been victims of the Thatcher decade. While the contributions of the parliamentary grandees, like Foot, Wilson and Heath were never the examples of oratorical genius that their perpetrators believed, they were considerably more lively than those on offer from Thatcher, Howe, Kinnoch and Smith.

The Tories are humourless. Labour are, generally, colourless. There are exceptions, but they don't get

Prime time TV?

Arthur Merton reviews
Westminster Live
BBC 2, weekdays

much of a look in.

For all this if you can struggle to keep awake and watch the "highlights" of the day it will demonstrate the truth of something we Marxists have always insisted on.

Parliament is a talking-shop. Nothing ever gets done there. People prattle, bellow, throw bits of paper in the air and pick their noses (though the code of conduct for the camera crews dictates that we are not allowed to see that). *Westminster Live* is the latest chatshow to hit the screens.

For much of the time the chamber is almost empty. The real business

of governing capitalism is carried on elsewhere—in Whitehall, in Cabinet meetings, behind closed doors. The executive does things and makes decisions. Parliament talks about things and rubber stamps decisions. The long overdue democratic reform which allows us to see this fact of capitalist life has, therefore, done some good.

What is more, come the day when we get revolutionary MPs, televised proceedings will strengthen our ability to use Parliament. Not as the mechanism for bringing about fundamental social change, but as a tribune to attack capitalism and rally mass support for the communist programme.

And we won't need to go to a charm school to know how to do this. ■

Jane Sanderson reviews
Women and Perestroika
by C Rosenberg
Bookmarks 1989, £3.95

Women and perestroika

THIS SLENDER volume from the stable of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), should not figure too highly on anybody's Christmas reading list. At best it is modestly useful as a catalogue of woes that women face in the USSR.

Rosenberg describes in detail the failure of *perestroika* to alleviate the worst aspects of women's oppression. They have to queue for the basic essentials of life, endure physical abuse and suffer lower wages than men. They lack safe contraceptives, undergo crude abortions and generally bear the main brunt of shortages and bureaucratic corruption.

The book's main value, however, lies in exposing quite how useless the SWP's state capitalist analysis of the USSR. It does not, and cannot, guide working women in the USSR towards their own liberation as part of the struggle for socialism. It leaves the SWP with

a simplistic "it's the same the whole world over" approach to a variety of concrete problems that require sharply focused answers.

So, Rosenberg lumps Britain, India and Brazil together as part of the "western camp" and argues that the USSR, like these countries, is capitalist and therefore poses essentially the same problems for women. Only socialism can overcome these problems. Thus, in the USSR:

"A triumphant working class would take up where Stalin's counter-revolution forced the Bolsheviks to leave off, introducing with far more advanced technical resources, all the material conditions for off-loading from women's shoulders the yoke of their double burden. Only then will women be

truly equal and free." (p.111)

There's no mention of how women might organise around their demands for better housing, health care, job security, political equality and childcare. No consideration is given to how revolutionaries would seek to win the leadership of women's struggles as part of an attack on the bureaucracy and the police and army who keep it in power.

Yet under *glasnost* and *perestroika* concrete measures on these issues are vital if proletarian women are not to be misled by the forces of reaction, like the powerful Orthodox Church, which is growing in influence in the USSR today. They are vital if we are to win women to opposing the re-introduction of the market as the

Torture in Turkey

Sam Lowry reviews
Torture and Unfair Trial of Political Prisoners in Turkey
by Amnesty International
November 1989, £1.50

THE "emerging democracies" of Eastern Europe could do a lot worse than take Turkey as their role model if they are to develop healthy ties with the European Community (EC). That was Margaret Thatcher's opinion in mid-November. Perhaps she had in mind Turkey's human rights record. Here is an example of it:

"Then there was the car tyre torture. First they passed our legs through the same hole. Our backs were on the wet concrete cellar floor, the rubber tyres were raised so that our feet reached straight up and our testicles were in an exposed position.

"Clubs were applied with full force to the soles of our feet. Then they put on gloves and squeezed our testicles. Then they beat our genitals and testicles with clubs. By this time the pain had become unbearable: to try to describe such pain is not possible."

This was the testimony of a detainee interviewed for Amnesty International's report *Torture and unfair trial of political prisoners in Turkey* published in November. It makes grim Christmas reading.

The report details dozens of cases of extended detention, maltreatment, torture, rape and death in custody. Imprisonment on the basis of confessions extracted under torture is common. So is the death penalty. Torture is "widespread and systematic" and "any person detained in Turkey for a suspected political offence is in danger of being tortured".

Deaths

The Turkish government recently conceded that forty deaths due to torture in prison have occurred—more than twice the number previously acknowledged. Ten have died between January and August of this year alone.

Amnesty say they have not received satisfactory explanations of 170 other deaths in the last ten years. And the report only covers the more well documented cases of political prisoners.

The report was released days after Turkish president elect Turgut Ozal made a speech to the Council of Europe, the purpose of which was to smooth the way for Turkey's application to join the EC. Margaret Thatcher is a keen advocate of its early entry. It seems that for her, opposition to human rights violations is a matter of convenience. With pro-imperialist Turkey it is convenient not to notice such violations!

The report concludes that the Turkish Criminal Procedure Code must be reformed. Revolutionaries, while supporting these measures, argue that legal and constitutional solutions will not end repression in Turkey.

The Turkish state has used brutal repression as a response to any working class dissent—and also against the Kurdish minority—both before and after the coup of 1980, despite being the signatory to a variety of declarations against torture. That state must be smashed.

The report is a valuable document for anyone concerned with the plight of Turkish and Kurdish refugees in Britain and elsewhere, providing plenty of ammunition to expose the true nature of the Turkish state and its practices. ■

driving force of the economy.

Rosenberg's silence on such questions is testimony to the uselessness of state capitalism as a theory. It is a theory that has reduced the SWP to sending open letters to Lech Walesa asking him not to welcome Fords into Poland. If capitalism already exists in Poland why worry about Ford moving in, and why on earth appeal to Lech Walesa, an open proponent of the market and deals with imperialism?

One final objection to the book is Rosenberg's insistence on referring to the USSR as Russia throughout. Russia is one, albeit the dominant, republic in the USSR. Surely the explosion of national struggles has proved that much. But then again the SWP's long time leader Tony Cliff did call his book on the USSR, *State Capitalism in Russia*.

Either this means that he, and Rosenberg, believe that the rest of the USSR is not state capitalist, or more seriously, they are both still using the language of the old cold war which their rotten theory was a capitulation to. ■

THE SOVIET media right now is rife with rumours and counter-rumours. Talk is of impending strikes and greater shortages, of trains crammed with goods which workers are bribed not to unload and even of imminent civil war.

But one thing is established as truth by all, from the women in the queues to the ministers at the top: Gorbachev's *perestroika* has led to a worsening of material life for the mass of the population and to a deepening crisis in the economy. As Gorbachev himself put it recently:

"The situation is such that we can, and have already started, to lose control".

Affected by this summer's miners' strikes, industrial production lags behind expectations. In September it is reported to have grown by 0.3% but economics chief, Abalkin, admits that in ten of the fifteen republics output was lower than in 1988. There are very real signs of stagnation and even decline.

The budget deficit has been revealed as standing at 15% of the GNP, putting it on a par with some of the most debt laden economies in the world. Hard currency earnings are dropping as oil and gas prices fall on the world market.

Most significantly we are witnessing the partial dismantling of the old system of centralised allocation and control without its replacement with any coherent alternative. Hence, as Abalkin put it:

"Before we speak of radical transformations and transition measures, we must stop the collapse of the economy".

Under *perestroika* enterprises, republics and regions have been formally encouraged to take their own decisions, to become self-financing and profitable by 1990. Many of the prerogatives of the old ministries have been withdrawn or restricted. This is serving to increase chaos in the spheres of exchange and distribution in particular.

On the one hand it is stoking up bureaucratic resistance to change as the vast leaden rump of the bureaucracy sees its powers and privileges under threat. On the other, it is serving to fuel speculation,

inflation and dramatic shortages of every day goods.

Popular consensus has it that life is harsher now than in the Brezhnev years of stagnation. Certainly the state shops are bare now than at any time in the last twenty years. Even in relatively well stocked Moscow, sugar is rationed. Six essential products are rationed in Leningrad and in a Siberian town like Irkutsk everything is rationed from meat—one kilogramme per person—to vodka and soap.

This exists alongside stark shortages and long queues. Even in Moscow supplies of cheese in the state shops were intermittent this autumn. Soap was unobtainable—hence the bitter joke that Gorbachev is trying to build socialism

able underestimation because it is based on state prices. But Gorbachev's *perestroika* has seen more and more buying and selling outside the state sector in order to get higher prices and reach the goal of self-sufficiency and profitability.

As the economy becomes less regulated, more chaotic and less able to provide the basic necessities of life, so the chief architects of *perestroika* are looking for solutions that are likely to further increase the daily problems of the mass of Soviet workers. In order to deal with the state's budget deficit they are openly discussing the abolition of food subsidies in a move that would increase state prices by 40%. This is a basic component of the platform of the dominant economic ideologues who are becoming ever more stridently in favour of full marketisation of Soviet economic life.

What they are not agreed upon are issues of pace and tempo, symbolised by a current debate on whether the rouble can become a fully convertible currency within three years or nine.

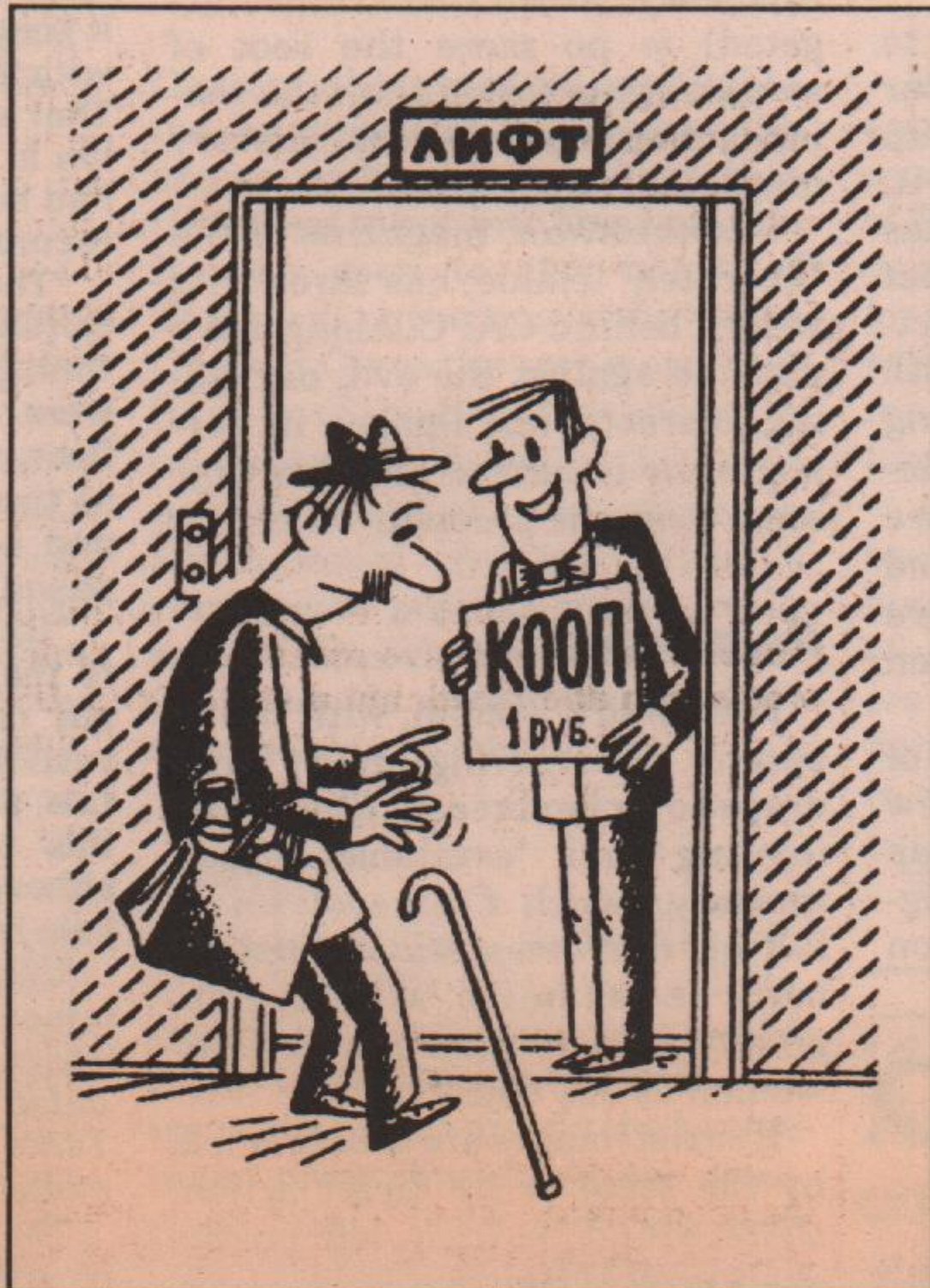
In the meantime there have been a series of ad hoc measures of a marketising character. Over the last years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of licensed co-operatives. In reality the vast majority of the so-called co-operatives are small scale private businesses and cause considerable popular resentment.

Their prices are high and they flagrantly speculate through buying up deficit goods from the state sector and then selling them at marked up prices.

In pursuit of the market the state has taken a series of steps to devalue the rouble. Officially it ex-

changed at one rouble to the pound until November when the regime announced that the rate would be ten roubles to the pound for cash exchanges. In addition the regime announced that it will auction much needed hard currency to individual enterprises. It is also offering farms that overfulfill their delivery quotas the prospect of bonus payments in hard currency.

All this will mean that already expensive and scarce imported goods will become even dearer and scarcer and the imported tech-



КООП (co-op)— the new breed of private enterprise in the Soviet Union: in this cartoon now charging a rouble for a ride in the lift!

with a "dirty face". Filter cigarettes are extremely hard to come by.

But the limited range of goods available in the state shops only serve to fuel both speculation and inflation. The state reports a 25 billion rouble increase in the value of retail trade for last year but admits at least half of that was due to a rise in prices. Economists are now openly talking of Soviet inflation as standing at around 10% and increasing.

The mass of the population would claim this to be a consider-

Perestroika prog

John Hunt has recently returned to stay in the USSR. He was able to observe the effects of a centrally planned economy disintegrating. Here he describes Soviet workers' disillusionment and their first stirrings of independence.

problems of the Soviet economy, but it will serve to exacerbate the tensions and imbalances that exist.

The truth is that the Soviet economy needs massive infrastructural investment not the licensing of street corner co-ops. Television and the press regularly report crops destroyed by an absence of storage space and the delays caused by the hopelessly congested Soviet transport system.

As Abalkin told the Supreme Soviet, "entire trains with goods stand weeks and months on stations". Marketisation is not going to solve that. It will divert funds in the search of profit and at the

techniques necessary to re-equip plants will be even more difficult to obtain.

This is all taking place in the context of increased openings to foreign capital which are having some success in luring foreign investment. Most notable is the deal recently struck with Fiat to build a £1 billion car plant at Yelaguba. The Fiat bosses were won over by the prospect of using cheap Soviet labour and guarantees of repatriated profits. As a Fiat spokesman put it:

"Fiat believes that Eastern Europe will become the new Korea of the motor industry, except this time cheap production will be available on our doorstep."

But such measures have barely scratched the surface of the Soviet economy, even less have they turned it round. Most of the old bureaucracy is still in place and capable of obstructing or dragging out change. And the type of change that is being talked about by the most ardent *perestroika*-ites not only cannot tackle the deep rooted

THE SOVIET Minister of Metallurgy is not a happy man. He recently complained that:

"Extremists have been using improper measures, discipline has dropped, a strike committee has been set up at enterprises. They write too much, there have been thousands of appeals."

This is testimony from a frightened bureaucrat to the mushrooming of independent workers' organisations in the USSR over the last two years. So too is the fact that the first serious dispute within the new look Soviet Parliament was over a proposal to ban strikes.

The reviving Soviet workers' movement is taking on a number of forms. Most immediately visible is the activity in the coalfields. The miners returned to work this summer after a deal which gave the regime some time to improve social and working conditions and the provision of essential supplies.

Understandably sceptical about the promises being met, the miners kept their strike committees intact during the period of the strikes' postponement. In Vorkuta they were ready to lead the workers out again when conditions did not improve. In the Siberian Kuzbass they linked up with other workers to form workers' committees.

The leader of one of them recently told the Independent that "we have the power here". As Yuri Butchenko editor of the *Kuzbasskie Vedomosti* (an independent Kuzbass miners' paper) told *Workers Power* recently:

"The third conference of the Kuzbass strike called for an all-Union independent miners' union. Delegates were there from the Donbass, Karaganda and other regions. The delegates from the other regions agreed that there will soon be an all-Union independent trade union."

In November a Union of Workers of the Kuzbass held a conference to formalise its principles and aims. Its declaration stated,

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"We will welcome another party, loyal to socialism, but defending the interests of the workers".

The official union structures were eclipsed during the summer strike and still are in the coalfields. A group called Sotsprof has issued a call for a new independent socialist trade union, while workers' committees throughout the USSR have issued similar calls.

In Sverdlovsk, to take but one example, an independent workers' union has been formed called Unity (Edinstvo) from workers at 16 of the town's enterprises and five from the region. It has its own paper named *Solidarnosc* and amongst its demands is a call for wages to rise in strict accord with the rate of inflation and a plea for a cut in the price of vodka!

Faced with this situation, the official unions have had to get their act together. They have just put forward a draft bill which would give the unions power to veto closures, lay offs, price increases and influence the distribution of profits. They also want to have the power to control the activity of the co-ops. The union bureaucracy is forced down this road in order not to lose touch with its membership altogether. As Yuri told *Workers Power*:

"Gorbachev's reputation is not that high amongst the workers, there are many words and few deeds during *perestroika* and enthusiasm is at a low point."

Strikes are continuing the length and breadth of the country, not simply in the coalfields. August and September saw threats of "Italian" strikes (occupations) on the Novosibirsk railways. Lithuanian museum



Striking Siberian miners in Prokopyevsk

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expense of transport, health and education.

The Soviet economy cannot be turned round by open admirers of Milton Friedman and a small band of co-operative entrepreneurs. It needs the energy of the mass of workers, taking the plan into their own hands and remoulding it to meet their own interests; it needs a workers' political revolution not bureaucratic market reform.

In the period ahead *perestroika* will mean even greater hardship for the mass of Soviet workers. It will mean continuing inflation and attacks on subsidies. As Abalkin put it candidly:

"How is it possible to demand

satisfaction of market requirements and the output of high quality goods, and, at the same time, to freeze all prices? These are incompatible demands, contradicting the present day policy"

The progress of *perestroika* will mean an increase in unemployment. The Soviet press is now admitting to the existence of between five and six million unemployed, particularly in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Those areas will be even harder hit by decentralisation and marketisation. On top of this, Soviet economists are talking of between 15 and 17 million workers leaving the sphere of industrial production by the year 2000.

Nor is there an end in sight to the shortages. In order to sweeten the pill of higher prices Schmelev has recommended a massive purchase of commodities on the world market. But that could only be done at the expense of incurring a massive debt to the world banks. Therefore, other economists are openly advocating rationing all the

bare necessities while lifting price restrictions on everything else.

The Soviet economy is set for a convulsive 1990s. The increased marketisation cannot solve its deep problems. Neither can the bureaucratic obstructors do so either. History has shown that they cannot plan a dynamic economy that efficiently and effectively meets human need. The drive towards the market may meet their passive resistance, but they have no alternative to it.

Only the working class, seizing power from the bureaucracy and the speculators has the possibility of freeing the plan from the grip of the bureaucracy. The reawakened Soviet working class must do just that in the 1990s.

Gorbachev recently commented of wholesale market price reform: "I know only one thing. That after two weeks of such a market people would be on the street, and it will smash any government."

This pinpoints the bureaucracy's dilemma . . . and the workers' opportunity!■

ПЕРЕСТРОЙКА



ПОБЕДИТ

"Perestroika victorious"—more wishful thinking!

Russian towns as well as in the national minorities, the working class must jealously guard its political and organisational independence.

There is a crying need for a workers' action programme that comes out clearly against speculation and privatisation, defends the national minorities, protects jobs and opposes bureaucratic privileges. Such a programme would allow the working class to overthrow the bureaucratic caste without finding itself inadvertently opening the door to the marketeers.

The fight for that programme requires the construction of a Leninist-Trotskyist party. Such an idea is not immediately popular in the USSR at present. The workers are looking to their unions and committees to defend their interests. The intelligentsia, given the historic experience of sixty years of Stalinism, is also shy of parties and more fond of confederations, clubs and fronts.

Those who consider themselves "left" are most influenced by forms of social democracy or the traditions of Russian anarchism. Hence there is the need for revolutionary Marxists to battle to rekindle the traditions of Lenin and Trotsky, of real soviet democracy in the Soviet working class.

A key test will be posed next year in the scheduled local elections. The party bureaucracy is terrified of even worse results for it than in this year's all-union elections. In many towns the workers' committees have declared they will stand their own candidates against corrupt party chiefs.

What is vital is that they are workers' candidates, answerable and recallable to workers, and that they stand on a clear programme of defending workers' interests.

This could be a vital step in the development of the political consciousness and independence of the Soviet workers, all the better to take on and beat its enemies in the period ahead.■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Caste adrift

THE CURRENT crisis of the Stalinist regimes is a complete vindication of Trotsky's analysis that the ruling group in the USSR is a bureaucratic caste, not an exploiting class. The same label describes exactly the rulers of the degenerate workers' states that came into being after the Second World War.

Every ruling class in history has had an essential role to play in the mode of production. Under capitalism wage labour cannot exist without its opposite, capital. One is the condition of the others existence. From this fact arises the idea that the capitalist class is a legitimate part of the system of production. Most workers, outside of revolutionary situations, consider that profits are the bosses' reward for their role in the system of production.

This is not, and has never been, the case for the bureaucracy in the USSR. This caste arose as a distinct parasitic growth on the property relations established after October 1917. Over the subsequent years not only was private property in the decisive means of production abolished, but a state monopoly of foreign trade was put in place and planning mechanisms were established to allocate resources between different sectors of production.

In short, the operation of the law of value in the USSR as the determining mechanism for the allocation of resources was broken.

The extensive development of the economy in such a state, alongside the diminution of inequality would require that the mass of producers and consumers are actively involved in the planning process.

The triumph of the bureaucracy under Stalin in the 1920s meant a decisive political defeat for the working class but it did not result in the abolition of the economic conquests of post-1917. Rather, this caste fed off them. It drew its obscene privileges from plundering the produce of the planned economy. In the 1930s Trotsky argued that this caste, in the state, party and economic apparatus, consumed up to a half of national income. But it acquired this income not as the "normal" reward of an exploiting class. Rather, as Trotsky noted:

"Embezzlement and theft [is] the bureaucracy's main source of income".

This does not, he argued: "constitute a system of exploitation in the scientific sense of the term." (*Collected Works 1938/39 p325*)

It flows from this that: "the bureaucracy enjoys its privileges under the form of an abuse of power".

In turn this leads to a situation where the bureaucratic caste "conceals its income; it pretends that as a special social group it does not even exist."

In other words the caste, unlike a ruling class faces a constant crisis of its own legitimacy.

It is no accident that the present crisis of the caste is worse at its weakest link—Eastern Europe. It is here that the crisis of legitimacy is sharpest. At least in the USSR there was a genuine proletarian revolution led by a party in whose name the Stalinist caste (mis)ruled.

But in Eastern Europe the working class did not overthrow capitalism. It was liquidated bureaucratically by a caste sponsored by the Kremlin and backed by the Soviet armed forces. The move against capitalism was only begun once the revolutionary challenge of the workers had been crushed. The notion that these ruling parties were therefore an alien imposition arises much more easily.

In all of these states the caste has no legal title to the means of production. The state owns the property in the name of the workers, but the caste does not own the state. As Trotsky observed:

"The bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations of its own. The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus."

They do their best to make up for it by putting their sons and daughters in positions within the bureaucracy. But their privileges exist only so long as they are appointed. Sacked from your job and you do not retire to enjoy your independent social wealth; you are more likely to end up chopping trees for a living in the back of beyond, the fate that befell Alexander Dubcek.

These regimes were never a necessary part of the development of the productive forces but rather a drain upon them. Of course, in the USSR of the 1930s major economic growth did occur as the USSR mobilised the immense natural resources of the country and hauled itself out of backwardness and laid down the foundations of infrastructure and heavy industry.

But the bureaucracy, through its lavish privileges and its destructive attacks on many workers, was a brake on what was possible even in these years. Since the war, when quantitative targets have increasingly given way to qualitative ones, and when the consumer goods' industries have become ever more central, the dysfunctional nature of this caste has become ever more revealed. By deliberately excluding the working class from the process, planning has been blind, a mixture of guesswork and bluster.

For years now the consequence of bureaucratic command planning has been stagnation. Harsh discipline and exhortations to work for the "motherland" have all failed to raise productivity. This failure has been compounded by the fact that the bureaucracy itself has no real compunction to develop the economy so long as it has enough for its own defence and consumption needs. In the absence of the main-spring of profit or the creative drive of the toilers themselves, those in charge of the levers of the economy lapse into conservatism, inertia and corruption.

Given the lack of organic cohesion and self-confidence natural to a ruling class, the bureaucracy has relied upon discipline, even terror, imposed on its own ranks from without. Stalin's bonapartist clique did this until his death. Freed from such discipline it more easily fragments, as it is doing now. It feels the pressure of the decisive forces upon it: capitalism or the working class.

Now in Eastern Europe the complete lack of confidence in its own rule (what ruling class in history ever abandoned its own system voluntarily?) has led key sectors to seek an embrace with capitalism. Its utter bankruptcy as a historical force is thereby displayed; its essentially transient and unstable character, as Trotsky explained, is revealed. Under these conditions the diagnosis is as Trotsky laid it out in the *Transitional Programme*:

"Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back into capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."

iant stirs

workers struck against low pay and censorship. In Lenkoran in Azerbaijan there was a two week general strike which included ecological issues in its demands, and a call for monthly unemployment pay.

This activity has to be seen against the background of the new laws on strikes. Desperate to avoid the very real prospect of power cuts this coming winter, Gorbachev proposed a ban on all strikes for 15 months. He was granted a ban in a broad series of categories of industry—transportation, communication, defence, power, chemicals, steel and against any strike that constitutes a

necessary to be very clear about the pitfalls that confront the reawakening Soviet working class. It needs to establish its own political and organisational independence from all wings of the bureaucracy and from the liberal intelligentsia. The United Front of Working People, for example, is promoted by the most conservative wings of the bureaucracy. As well as their opposition to the rights of national minorities they call for the abolition of the co-ops and the expropriation of the 100,000 "underground millionaires".

Given inflation and speculation, such demands are immediately popular amongst large sections of workers. But, in posing the problem only in terms of the illegal speculators and in whipping up Great Russian chauvinism, this front attempts to divert workers away from the struggle to overthrow the bureaucracy.

The inter-regional group of "radical" MPs—Sakharov, Afanasyer, Yeltsin and co—present the workers with another problem, one sharply posed in their call for a two hour general strike against the leading role of the Party. They are the ones who most obviously appeal to the best democratic instincts of the workers. But the MPs also want the strike aimed at opposing constitutional limits on private property, as well as the leading role of the party. The working class must not allow itself to become the footsoldiers of either the marketeers or the bureaucratic conservatives.

Either way workers would be lining up with those who will attack them in future. Within the popular fronts of democrats that are springing up in

"All power to the soviets"—just another hollow official slogan unless the working class organises itself independently

"threat to people's life and health". Yet there is no sign that this law has deterred strikes or that Gorbachev has dared implement it. Yuri told us:

"After the decision to outlaw strikes in several branches of industry for a given period, we've had several strikes in the Kuzbass. There was no attempt to repress them and the authorities ignored them. With regard to strike committees, I do not think they will immediately try to destroy them because they now have broader social support and it would create such a reaction that I think just now that the government will not try to do it. Doubtless many local officials would love to do so."

The ban quite clearly failed to deter the Vorkuta miners as well. It is



THE LONGEST WAR

Irish workers in Britain

"I BELIEVE that in this case, as in the Birmingham case, it was an example to the Irish community and a method of terrorising the Irish community." The words are those of Paul Hill, one of the Guildford 4.

Prior to the 1974 introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), the Irish working class in Britain played an active role in organising support for the Irish struggle for self-determination. The Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 frame-ups sent shock waves through the Irish community in Britain which sharply curtailed its political involvement.

Almost every month throws up another example of the brutality of the British state towards the Irish in Britain. In Farnham, Surrey on 3 April, police were called to a small guest house on West Street. At 8.30 am they burst in and made three arrests under the PTA.

Local newspapers ran headlines such as: *Police Surveillance After "Terrorist" Alert*. A day later, all three had been released. Three months later, banner headlines announced the capture of "Three IRA Men" in Stoke-on-Trent. All newspapers managed to agree that these were the *Tern Hill Bombers*.

All were later released without charge. In a statement to the press, Detective Chief Superintendent Malcolm Bevington said that:

"Due to the circumstances surrounding the arrest and the nationality of the people involved, it was decided to treat the incident as potentially subversive."

The pretext for the arrest was the presence of an IRA unit which had attacked the nearby Tern Hill barracks three months earlier. The failure to find the IRA gang had become an active embarrassment for the security forces. Under pressure to deliver a result they picked up the first Irish workers they could get their hands on. Their ordeal could have happened to almost any Irish household.

The British state believes it can haul Irish people out of their houses at gunpoint, strip them naked, beat them, terrorise them and destroy their homes. In British imperialism's 20 year war against the Irish resistance, an Irish accent has been enough to brand ordinary Irish workers as threats to the British public.

British imperialism's exploitation and occupation of Ireland has had other effects on the Irish working class in Britain, which are less dramatic but no less significant.

Some 40,000 workers emigrate each year from the 26 Counties, many of them to Britain. In Kerry and Sligo, young people are offered IR£29.50 towards their one way fare to London. It is estimated that 250,000 have emigrated from

the six counties since the start of the decade. Once in Britain, Irish workers have to run the guantlet of anti-Irish chauvinism.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the thousands who came to Britain faced poor housing, low paid jobs and signs which read; *No blacks, no Irish, no dogs*. Today things are worst for the rising number of Irish families coming to Britain. Those local authorities which accept the families "homeless" put them in cramped bed and breakfast accommodation. In 1987, Camden Council caused barely a ripple of controversy by giving a ticket back to Ireland to a homeless mother and child.

Irish immigrants are three times more likely to suffer from mental illness than English adults. In addition 50% of the victims of on-site accidents in the construction industry are Irish.

In London today there are 20 Irish centres, 32 county associations, 80 district associations, 18 centres teaching the Irish language, as well as various bookshops and cultural societies. Sales of *An Phoblacht* reach 5,000 a week in the capital, all testimony to the tremendous capacity for self-organisation and political activity the Irish working class. And this despite its marginalisation by the British labour movement, which has failed to challenge the repression of British imperialism, or fight discrimination.

The International Working Men's Association, the First International of Marx and Engels, established an Irish section in Britain which drew its membership primarily from exiled Fenians. During the War of Independence 1919-21 the Irish Self-Determination League had a membership of 100,000 amongst Irish workers in Britain with over 200 active branches.

Fifty years later, the Anti-Internment League, an organisation located primarily in the Irish working class in Britain, was able to win construction workers to strike action against Britain's presence in Ireland. Irish workers in Britain have borne a special burden, but have shown an exceptional capacity to fight back as well, most recently when riot police charged the London Irish Festival at Kilburn's Stonewood Park.

Irish workers do not need to be patronised by radical cheerleaders who would see them substituted for the difficult task of challenging social chauvinism in the British Labour movement. They should come forward and take their place as part of the revolutionary vanguard in the fight not only to smash the PTA and drive Britain out of Ireland, but in the quest to crush the source of their exploitation and oppression, the capitalist system itself.

GDR

How to unite the left

The weekend of 25-26 November saw the first open, unofficial socialist conference in the history of the German Democratic Republic. Peter Main participated and here reports on the United Left and its project for a socialist transformation of the GDR.



AS THE "refugee flood" reached its height in September, a number of left wing opponents of the Stalinist regime met in the town of Boehlen. The "Boehlen Appeal" outlined the basis for a new oppositionist movement, the United Left.

The essential planks of the platform were: recognition that the bureaucracy had brought the economy to a dead end; that the post capitalist property relations should be maintained; that only a democratic socialism based on rule by workers' councils could realise the potential of a planned economy.

The November event was a working conference whose task was, in the words of the introductory speech, "not only to work out a concept of the revolutionary remodelling of the political system and economy of the GDR that can achieve the best consensus among the left, but also to use it to present a realistic and credible perspective to all members of society".

The strength of their perspective was immediately obvious. Some 500 comrades from all over the GDR conducted themselves in a democratic and open manner. Work groups discussed and debated a range of political and economic ideas. There was room to discuss both the history of the communist movement and the role of the ecological struggle.

Plenary

Plenary sessions heard reports from the work groups. In all the sessions there was a tension between attempts to develop a general perspective on, for example, the future role of workers' councils and the demand for "practicable" proposals for immediate action.

There were detailed proposals, for example, on the ways in which workers' councils might relate to each other in the context of decentralised planning. Much thought was given to how trade with the "third world" might help to offset pressure from the imperialist west. However, as one speaker put it, "None of this tells us how to get through the winter".

This gulf between, as it were, maximum and minimum positions was perhaps inevitable at this stage in the formation of an independent socialist movement. The weakness of the conference lay in the fact that it was never successfully bridged. Missing entirely was any consideration of the immediate problems facing the working

class and how these problems could be addressed in such a way as to lead towards the "maximum" positions summed up in the call for workers' councils. How, for example, should workers deal with the problems caused by the massive loss of skilled labour to the FRG which will inevitably lead to production losses and intensified pressure on those who have stayed to make good the plan targets?

The Trotskyist programme of political revolution focuses on the need to form factory committees, embracing both union and non-union workers, since many have left the official unions. Moreover, demands to "open the books" and reveal the true state of economic affairs provide a basis upon which the workers themselves can impose their decisions on the managers. Once established in individual factories there is an obvious need to link the supplier and customer enterprises. Workers' control of the planning mechanisms at local, regional and national levels would be imperative.

Opposed

A diametrically opposed method was much in evidence at the conference. To get over the immediate economic problems a "short term" programme to achieve "economic stabilisation" was called for by several speakers. Among them were some who believed that western assistance could play a role in this.

Once stability had been achieved it would then be necessary to undertake more far reaching structural transformations. Such an approach would be extremely dangerous at the present time. It would play straight into the hands of Kohl and company and it would also lend credence to the plans of the Stalinist bureaucracy which also relies on western aid.

The organisers of the conference hope to build the United Left through consensus decision-making and the holding of a "workers' congress". It has to be said that there are great dangers in this.

"Consensus" can only mean that all concerned compromise on their own positions in favour of the minimum that all can agree upon. As the bulletin published by the Gruppe Arbeitermacht put it, "Programmatic compromises always operate to the advantage of those who wish to depart the least from the status quo". If the United Left is built in that manner it will

be built upon sand and will not last out the current crisis, never mind play a role in overthrowing Stalinism.

The legacy of the past in the GDR is an all pervasive lack of political organisation and, therefore, of programmatic differentiation. The sinking of differences between comrades, in the interests of consensus, will serve only to maintain this lack of clarity. Far better that those with differing ideas and programmes organise themselves separately even if this means the formation of a number of different groups. Only joint practical activity alongside discussion will prove which is right and, thereby, recreate a united organisation at a higher political level.

Danger

There is also a danger that the "congress" will turn into the opposite of what is intended. Instead of an authoritative leadership of the working class it will turn out to be a self-selected and non-representative minority. Instead of a workers' congress, it would become another meeting of the United Left.

A workers' congress, like a workers' council, will only be built in struggle. Workers will not build either simply because they look logical on paper. Such organisations will be built in struggle against the bureaucracy or not at all.

Within all genuine fighting organisations of the working class revolutionaries should, of course, propose the convening of a national conference of elected delegates to take forward the task of building a working class leadership. At first they may well be a minority and will recognise themselves as such. But that will be worth any number of conferences of those who only represent themselves.

The United Left is symptomatic of the current situation in the GDR. Of all the opponents of Stalinism in Eastern Europe it is probably the most theoretically advanced and most conscious of its objectives, just as the GDR itself is the most developed of the degenerate workers' states.

The whole tenor of November's conference confirms both the potential of and the need for the development of a political revolutionary leadership in the coming struggle. The LRCI and its sections will continue to ensure that the voice of unfalsified Trotskyism is heard within the opposition. ■

NO MORE BLOODY SUNDAYS!

Demonstrate Sat 27 January

12 noon

Marble Arch, London

Troops out NOW!

Self Determination for the Irish people as a whole!

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Another domino falls

STALINISM IN CRISIS

Three million Czechoslovakian workers joined a general strike to give their verdict on the Stalinists' brutal regime. **Clare Heath** looks at what the new reformists have in store for the working class and argues the need for an independent road to proletarian revolution.

HAVING DEMOLISHED the Berlin Wall the mass tide of opposition to Stalinism in Eastern Europe has now broken down the protective barriers surrounding the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCS).

The ruling regime of Milos Jakes, which began the year cracking open the heads of demonstrators, has ended it in headlong political retreat. The turning point came in mid-November when Prague party chief Miroslav Stepan sent the militia in, batons flying, to disperse student protesters.

Within days 500,000 people, nearly a third of Prague's total population, were out on the streets demanding an end to the dictatorship. Within twelve days the CPCS had caved in to a series of demands: the resignation of the Politburo, the promise of a new government and free elections, the lifting of censorship, the opening of borders and the end of the guaranteed leading role of the party.

But now the opposition movement, crystallised around the Civic Forum (CF), has reached the end of the first phase of the revolt. Just as in the GDR—even if they have

reached this point more quickly—the opposition has secured the end of the party's guaranteed monopoly of government office, established a dialogue with that party, removed the most hated and discredited of the bureaucrats and established a certain freedom of organisation.

But what next? As leading CF figure Jan Urban put it: "We were united because we knew what we were against but we have to decide now what we are for, exactly."

As the mass demonstrations subside and the bargaining begins the greatest danger facing the Czech workers is that a convergence takes place between the right wing of CF and the reform wing of the CPCS.

Although only officially launched during the first week of the demonstrations, the essentials of the CF's programme had been worked out long before by leading intellectuals around the Charter 77 dissident movement.

Denying that it is a party, and refusing to participate directly in any transitional government that is formed, it nonetheless has a clear basis around which to group the



legal opposition. Its programme is for a thorough-going marketisation of the economy and social democratisation of political life; that is, it amounts to a restorationist platform similar to that of the "reformists" in the CPCS. The programme states:

"We want to create a developed market which is not deformed by bureaucratic intervention. Its successful functioning is conditional on the breaking up of the monopolist positions of today's large enterprises and the creation of true competition. This can only be created on the basis of a parallel, equal existence of various types of

ownership and by a gradual opening up of our economy to the outside world."

It is precisely this kind of programme, being carried out in Poland and Hungary, which leads to price rises, unemployment, speed-ups and closures of "unprofitable" enterprises.

The workers would be called on to "tighten their belts" for an austerity programme whose beneficiaries would not be the working class, but the emerging class of capitalists and their imperialist backers. As one of Civic Forum's economic advisers, Vaclav Klaus, so succinctly put it, "we need Margaret Thatcher here".

The danger for the workers is that this project fits entirely with that of Dr Valtr Komarek—the new darling of the mass movement and touted as the next prime minister.

Komarek is head of the Independent Institute of Economic Forecasting and has very close links with Gorbachev's economic advisers.

Convergence

He remains a CPCS member and symbolises the possible convergence between the CF and the bureaucracy. Within the CPCS, a broad reforming trend is represented by the Democratic Forum of Communists. It claims over 15,000 supporters and aims to win the party to a Hungarian style transformation into a social democratic party at the special congress in January.

It is likely that many workers will look to reforming the CPCS—they have a traditional allegiance to the party from its healthy foundation in 1921 when it split the majority of class conscious workers away from social democracy. The popularity of the CPCS was shown by its 38% vote in the last "free" parliamentary elections in 1946. This traditional allegiance to the CPCS was again confirmed in the orientation of workers towards the party during 1968.

Meanwhile the Civic Forum leaders will do nothing to develop

the activity and independent consciousness of the working class. Their attitude was well summed up in the general strike. The two hour strike was clearly a "protest" with Civic Forum leader Vaclav Havel repeatedly assuring the managers that it was not going to damage production.

Workers were even encouraged to make up lost production by working overtime. Now the strike is over, Havel has urged that the strike committees be transformed—not into workers' councils or independent trade unions, but into local Civic Forums.

The leadership the working class needs in the next period remains to be built.

Building upon the healthy aspirations of workers and students for greater freedom and democracy, revolutionaries must argue for a thoroughgoing political revolution which places power directly in the hands of the workers.

Workplaces

This revolution starts on a number of fronts. In the workplaces, workers should fight to dismiss all officials and managers who have profited from corruption or persecuted workers. It is vital to establish factory councils, rather than local Civic Forums, and develop inter-factory links which are crucial to the establishment of workers' councils.

In an atmosphere heavy with the talk of "free elections", it is to this kind of body that elections should start. If the call for "free elections" produces only a parliamentary body to which deputies are elected every four to five years, the workers will have no ability to recall and replace elected representatives who try and make the workers pay for the crisis.

Instead, workers' councils must be built, where direct workers' democracy exerts control over elected representatives through a permanent political mobilisation of workers who can debate issues and recall or re-elect deputies at any time.

Factory committees

The factory committees must also establish workers' control of the plan. All talk of marketisation of key enterprises and whole industries—even if covered up with fine phrases about "market socialism"—are a snare.

Against privatisation, against joint ventures with the West or accepting the poisoned chalice of IMF money, Czechoslovakian workers must seize control of the centralised planning mechanisms. Then the plan can be thoroughly revised in the workers' interests, not dismantled.

The student leader Monika Baterova said recently that despite the recent reforms, "Power remains with the party. Their apparatus is still intact".

This truth stands before the working class as a challenge. Only they, not the courageous students, have the power to smash the apparatus. If they do not, then the alternatives are stark. Either the convergence of the Civic Forum with the reformers in the CPCS will direct the democratic aspirations of the masses towards the unbridled "freedom" of the market.

Or the Husaks and the Jakes of the bureaucracy, presently discredited and marginalised, will plot their revenge and use the apparatus of terror to end the current celebrations in Wenceslas Square in the same bloody way that their Chinese counterparts did in Tiananmen Square. ■

Which road to the market?

THE ECONOMIC problems facing Czechoslovakia are enormous. Like the other states in Eastern Europe which were turned into degenerate workers' states in the image of the USSR after the war, the economy bears the deep scars of subordination to the Soviet plan.

In the post-war period, production was re-oriented away from light consumer goods towards heavy engineering and raw material extraction, primarily for export to the USSR. Declining demand from the USSR, in part due to reduced arms production, forced them to turn to the world heavy industry market. But their goods were of too poor a quality for the imperialists. Their market is therefore the "third world", which has bought their inferior plant and machinery.

But these customers frequently default on payment and Czechoslovakian products are now competing with low wage economies producing similar goods. A growing hard currency deficit has occurred as they are forced to import consumer goods they cannot produce.

Their advisers agree that the economy needs a radical turn towards producing high quality consumer goods both for export and to meet growing demands from Czecho-

slovakian workers.

But the command planning structure has been unable to shift enterprise managers towards these areas quickly enough. To do this by "market mechanisms" would mean massive shedding of labour to improve productivity, closure of many enterprises and the loss of bonus payments for many managers. Fear of workers' and managers' opposition to such changes has modified the plans for reform.

During the 1980s, there have been divisions within the Communist Party over the pace and extent of both political and economic reform, but until now the initiative had remained with the hard line leadership.

Jakes wanted snail's pace economic reforms with no political liberalisation. He wanted to retain the central planning role of the state over major economic questions whilst "encouraging" the role of the market—direct trading between self-financing enterprises, greater trade and investment links with Western Europe and more entrepreneurs in consumer goods industries.

Jakes argued that with such an approach the economy would be reformed without the inflation, unemployment and falling living

standards which had occurred in Hungary and Poland.

Fear of social unrest clearly tempered the pace of social reforms. With a power resting largely on repression and policing of the working class, Jakes and his ally President Husak wanted to avoid big price rises. Food remains highly subsidised with the state paying for 70% of the cost of meat. Their collective memories of 1968 and the "socialism with a human face" of Alexander Dubcek, warned them off any *glasnost*. They had witnessed then the dangerous mobilisation of workers and intellectual oppositionists the moment that their bureaucratic tyranny was even partially eased.

In contrast to them, Ladislav Adamec, Federal prime minister, who now openly aims to be head of the new government, has been urging more reforms for some time.

Pressure from Gorbachev, the daring initiative of the students and the strike action of the working class has for the moment put winds in the sails of the "reformers". Quite how far down the marketising and restorationist road they get will depend on the actions of the working class and the resistance of hardliners in the Communist Party. ■

the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

PODER OBRERO

Miners' leader seized

COMRADES FROM Poder Obrero, Peruvian section of the LRCI, report that daily clashes are taking place in the centre of Lima between striking workers and the para-military police. Under the state of emergency striking civil servants and post office workers have been attacked. The left has also suffered repression. Raul Castro Veva, General Secretary of the PRT (Peruvian section of the IWL) was arrested under the state of emergency and charged with the possession of two left wing magazines—*Cambio* and *Poder Obrero*. He was later released after his home was raided and searched by police.

Victor Taype Zuniga, President of the National Federation of Miners, has also been seized in the city of Huancavelica where he was visiting the Julcani Mine. Victor Taype is one of the most militant union leaders in the country and has been critical of the role of the Peruvian TUC, the CGTP, in the miners' strike that took place this summer. The CGTP bureaucracy has done little so far to secure his release, beyond placing an advertisement in a national paper protesting the arrest.

Under the state of emergency, there must be the greatest anxiety for the comrade's legal rights, his health and even his life. Leaders of the miners' union have been repeatedly subject to beatings at the hands of the police and some have been murdered by army linked death squads. All trade unionists and socialists especially in the worlds mining unions should protest immediately demanding Victor Taypes' immediate release to:

The President, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza de Armas, Lima

Copies of the above letter and financial donations to:

Federacion Nacional Trabajadores Mineros, Jr Apurimac 463, Of 301 Lima, Peru

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

The LRCI in East Berlin

IN THE building of the LRCI and, before that, the MRCI, democratic centralism figured primarily as a political and programmatic goal: the achievement of fundamental political agreement among groups of communists from different traditions and countries. However, with the founding of the LRCI this year on a new programme, the organisational advantages of Lenin's model of democratic centralism have also immediately become apparent.

The need to respond to the rapidly evolving situation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) demand that the League develop positions, co-ordinate the work of different sections at short notice and mount an intervention in a new area of work. The years of collaboration in the MRCI ensured that initial responses to the crisis by the League's sections in, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Austria and Britain proceeded from the same programmatic assessment.

The implications of the "refugee crisis" were discussed at a meeting of the International Executive Committee in early November. On this basis, the International Secretariat (IS) formulated the first public statement on the GDR on behalf of the whole League. Even before this could be published, both the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (GAM - FRG) and the ArbeiterInnenStandpunkt (Ast - Austria) had reported to the Secretariat the initiative of the United Left of the GDR to hold a conference on the basis of defence of post-capitalist property relations and the removal of the bureaucracy in the GDR in favour of a workers' council state.

A delegation of members of the GAM, the Ast and Workers' Power was organised to attend the Berlin conference and the GAM was detailed to produce a German language bulletin outlining the principal programmatic positions of the LRCI with regard to the GDR.

The delegation attended as many of the separate working groups of the conference as possible. The political profile of those attending the conference became clear and enabled us to locate individuals and groups with whom further discussion appeared worthwhile. At the same time, the GAM Bulletin and the resolution on the GDR published by the IS provided a basis upon which to intervene and to explain the programmatic positions of the LRCI.

Over 500 copies of the Bulletin were distributed along with copies of the IS resolution and a wide range of literature from the different sections of the League. In addition to establishing a regular exchange of materials with the organisers of the conference, contacts were also made with other tendencies, organisations and individuals interested in pursuing a longer term discussion.

This includes not only on the issues raised in the GDR but the key questions of working class and international politics such as party-building, the woman question, assessment of anti-imperialist struggles and relations to nationalist and democratic movements around the world.

The contacts made, the literature received and the discussions already held now provide a basis for further development of the work of the LRCI both in the GDR and in the other Stalinist states. ■

The LRCI

ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)

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

EL SALVADOR

ON 11 November some 1,500 guerrillas of the FMLN launched a new offensive against the extreme right wing government of ARENA in El Salvador. Within a week they occupied a third of the working class suburbs of the capital, San Salvador.

This prompted the government to declare martial law and a curfew. Planes and helicopters have been firing indiscriminately in these areas. Heavy fighting also occurred in the central La Paz province and in the northern town of Nueva Concepcion.

The FMLN initially declared that the aim of the offensive was to get "negotiations in good faith" and partially retreated from San Salvador.

By the end of November the guerrillas moved back into the western suburbs, encircling the army base and declaring that this was "the final stage of the war".

This dramatic escalation of the conflict with Cristiani's government comes eight months after it was elected. All that time Cristiani's ARENA party, including the notorious Roberto D'Aubuisson, organiser of the death squads, went into low key talks with the FMLN/FDR. These were delaying tactics by ARENA while it consolidated its own position.

The FMLN continued to offer talks and even a total ceasefire in September. But the ARENA death squads responded by bombing the trade union Fenestras building on 31 October killing nine people, among them the leader Febe Elizabeth Velasquez. This atrocity drove the FMLN to pull out of the talks, and a new battle for San Salvador was opened in earnest.

The FMLN are engaged in a high risk campaign. They have shown tactical ingenuity and

"The final stage of the war"?

immense courage in this offensive. The workers and poor peasants are undoubtedly with them. But if the FMLN are routed or withdraw then the unarmed workers could face the unleashing of a massive murder campaign by the ARENA death squads. This was what happened in 1981 after the last failed "final offensive". What are the prospects?

The biggest danger is that the FMLN will use its military successes to negotiate a political compromise. It will leave the decisive power of the El Salvadorean bourgeois and landowning classes intact.

The General Command of the FMLN issued a manifesto two days into the offensive. Reflecting the changed balance of forces, it called for a general strike, "a general uprising of our people" and a "popular armament enabling them to defend themselves and strike the enemy". It declared liberated territories in several departments and appealed for "people's governments in all the towns".

Revolutionary Marxists can only welcome any serious moves to arm the workers and poor peasants. A guerrilla army of 1,500 cannot secure victory. The San Salvadorean working class must create their own, democratic organisations with elected and accountable representatives. They must cease being the passive beneficiaries and victims of the various waves of the FMLN's struggle.

Most urgently the working class needs its own party, based on a clear anti-capitalist programme.

The need for this is underlined as the FMLN threatens to defuse the present struggle by insisting on an alliance with the whole non-ARENA bourgeoisie. The Manifesto calls on, amongst others:

"Private businessmen in our country to assume the historic role of promoters and builders of a national-democratic solution that will bring lasting peace to our country."

This utopian perspective has already been played out for ten years in Nicaragua. The "patriotic" bourgeoisie will identify with the revolution only when the game is up and political change is unavoidable. They will then begin a war of attrition not a "lasting peace". They will insist on their right to exploit El Salvador's workers who made the sacrifices and laid down their lives. They will continue to obstruct social justice and agrarian revolution.

From the present uprising the workers and poor peasants of El Salvador must press on to the total destruction of capitalist rule.

Any compromise on this goal will be paid for with the blood of workers and poor peasants.

A determined fight must be waged for:

- Nationalisation of industry, distribution and banking under workers' control
- Land to those who work it or who have been robbed of it
- No alliances with the bourgeoisie
- For a workers' and peasants' government



FOLLOWING LAST month's first round presidential elections in Brazil, a straight contest between the two front runners is now scheduled for 16 December. The contest has been dubbed as the aristocrat versus the worker, with Lula, the candidate of the Workers' Party (PT) standing against the rightist, Fernando Collor de Mello of the National Reconstruction Party (PRN).

In the December poll the workers and peasants who constitute the majority of Brazil's 82 million voters, should support Lula. Collor is a fervent Thatcherite. His programme will spell yet further misery for the forty million who live below the poverty line, for the thousands of landless peasants, for the workers who are ruthlessly super-exploited in Brazil's vast industrial cities.

Support for Lula against the chosen candidate of the Brazilian and imperialist bourgeoisie should, however, be critical. A victory for Lula will not mean that a workers' and peasants' government has been elected. Far from it. The PT has moved far to the right since it emerged in the late 1970s (see WP124). It is fast becoming a reformist party, and Lula is a reformist workers' candidate, not a revolutionary one.

Having got through to the second round Lula is now busy trying to secure an alliance with the capitalist rivals he defeated in the first round. In particular Lula is offering a deal to Lionel Brizola, of the bour-

BRAZIL Put Lula to the test

geois nationalist (and totally misnamed) Democratic Workers' Party (PDT).

The PT's revolutionary rhetoric has been ditched in favour of the call for a "democratic people's government", based not on the organisations of the masses but on the severely limited 1988 constitution and on the presidential office itself.

The PT's *Governmental Action Programme* argued that the presidency:

"... concentrates so many resources and so much constitutional power that controlling it will make it possible to start changes of such scope that they can alter the entire conjunctural picture."

In a continent haunted by the ever present threat of military coups, in a country for so long brutally ruled by the military, the spreading of such electoral illusions is criminal.

The PT's explicit abandonment of the demands to repudiate the foreign debt, nationalise the banks

under workers' control and establish a sliding scale of wages to protect workers from hyper-inflation, is designed to reassure the bosses. Their abandonment of radical land reform is designed to reassure the landlords. And their refusal to countenance a programme that includes arming the mass organisations of the working class is intended to pacify the military.

Nevertheless, if they attempt even minor reforms to redistribute wealth in Brazil away from the ostentatious rich and towards the impoverished masses, they and their followers will be rounded on by the capitalists and their army.

For these reasons revolutionaries must fight, in the context of a critical vote for Lula, for the PT to break with all the bourgeois parties and use its organisation and support to build independent workers' and poor peasants' committees of struggle and a militia. The key demands of a revolutionary action programme must fought for. Today such demands must centre on expropriating imperialist and big indigenous capital, instituting a regime of workers' control, defending and protecting jobs and wages, carrying through the agrarian revolution, repudiating the foreign debt and breaking up the armed might of the capitalist state.

The creation of a real workers' government in Brazil will be the result of the successful realisation of these demands. ■

THE BOURGEOIS press is full of praise for the results of the Namibian election process. The imperialists, ably supported by Moscow, have indeed pulled off a coup in Namibia with their United Nations run imperialist peace plan. They have delivered a SWAPO victory which poses no threat to South African or western imperialist interests.

The main nationalist party SWAPO gained 57% of the votes of the enormously high turnout (95% of those eligible to vote). This was the best possible result for the imperialists and the one they had been working towards. Under the UN "peace plan", SWAPO needed a two-thirds majority to decide anything in relation to the future government of Namibia. SWAPO now has to win the consent of at least two of the smaller parties for any of its proposals and has a built in excuse for its supporters as to why it "has to compromise" on its previous commitments.

Not only were the Namibians deprived of the basic democratic right of deciding their future government by a simple majority but they faced a barrage of propaganda and intimidation designed to bolster the favoured South African party, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), which floated on a sea of South African Rands and achieved 28% of the votes. The South West African Broadcasting

Break with SWAPO!

Organisation remained under South African control and fed Namibians a diet of anti-SWAPO propaganda, while South Africa's Administrator, General Louis Pienaar, remained in charge throughout the election period. While the majority of the South African troops were withdrawn, the notorious Koevoet security force, responsible for massacres, torture and repression during the South African occupation, was "disbanded" only to re-appear as the police force (SWAPOL).

But judging from the pronouncements of the SWAPO leadership in the run up to the elections neither the major imperialist powers nor Pretoria have much to fear from a SWAPO government. SWAPO'S manifesto promised to preserve a "mixed economy", that is, a capitalist Namibia, and quickly backedpeddled on its previous commitments to major land reforms. SWAPO leaders have been increasing their guarantees to business and it appears that Sam Nujoma is set on emulating Zimbabwe's



Robert Mugabe in offering the post of Minister of Agriculture to one of the biggest white landowners, Jannie De Wet, leader of the all white Action Christian National.

SWAPO is not challenging the restrictions placed on the Constituent Assembly by the UN peace plan, which includes a block on nationalisation without "just compensation" to the looters of Namibia's wealth. Rather, SWAPO is in fact preparing to become a fully fledged bourgeois government. To do this it needs to persuade the South

Africans and the imperialists that it can be trusted to hold the reigns of power. SWAPO has even accepted that General Pienaar remain in control of Namibia until he and the UN decide that the constitution is acceptable.

SWAPO'S election results, which included 92% vote in the most densely populated area of Ovamboland, clearly shows the support it has amongst the masses of Namibia. These workers and peasants, having experienced the long struggle against South African imperialism led by SWAPO, have placed their faith in this petit bourgeois nationalist movement to liberate them from the oppression of imperialism.

In the coming period they will be cruelly disillusioned. It is vital to mobilise these masses, especially the trade unions in Namibia, who gave SWAPO overwhelming support, to stop a sell out to imperialism. They must demand that SWAPO immediately declares the sovereignty of the constituent assembly and the full and immediate independence of Namibia. The South African "governor" must be thrown out and with him the UN troops.

This means immediately dissolving the SWAPOL and arming the workers and peasant organisations to fight for the following demands:

- Mobilise the trade unions to organise workers' and peasants' councils as organs of struggle against the South Africans! End the South African occupation of Walvis Bay!
- For a general strike to drive the imperialists out and re-unite the country!
- Call for immediate support from the South African Trade Unions. For a united general strike against the continued occupation of Namibia!
- Repudiate the debt run up by the South Africans which the imperialists now expect the Namibian people to pay!
- The constituent assembly must declare its full support for immediate land occupations of the big estates!
- Land to the tiller! End the privatisation of nationalised industries, for re-nationalisation! For the expropriation without compensation of all the imperialist monopolies like Rio Tinto Zinc which have exploited the workers of Namibia. For the establishment of full democratic rights, freedom of speech, assembly etc. For the freedom and independence of trade union organisation.

Around these key demands the mass of workers and the rural poor, many of them SWAPO supporters, can be split away from the SWAPO leadership and won to a revolutionary socialist alternative, to the building of a Trotskyist party. ■

Don't vote for "military democracy"

ON 14 DECEMBER the Chilean people go to the polls to elect a new president and parliament. Three candidates are standing for the Presidency: Francisco Javier Erraruriz, a conservative "business" candidate; Hernan Buchi, the "official" candidate of the military and Patricio Aylwin of the Concertacion por la Democracia.

Aylwin of the 17 party Concertacion opposition is predicted to gain at least 58% of the vote. This long time leader of the Christian Democracy was the main civilian figure behind the 1973 coup against Allende.

How is it possible that this unsavoury figure will receive the overwhelming mass of the popular anti-Junta vote? Because the Socialist Party fragments and the Communist Party support him — in the CP's case despite being excluded from the Concertacion.

Privatisation

But what programme are these parties underwriting? The Concertacion's economic strategy is admirably frank:

"The market is indispensable for articulating the preferences of the consumers and the relative scarcity of goods; the market allows for the taking of quick and decentralised decisions that facilitate an efficient allocation of resources."

This might have been copied from a Milton Friedman textbook. In an equally candid manner the opposition programme declares that the government will implement "a policy of austerity in public expenditure and in state development and investment." In the economy the new government will acknowledge that "the private traditional and non-traditional enterprises are the principal direct agents".

The main economic pillars of Pinochet's neo-liberal economy will be kept in place. Only a civilian democratic facade will replace the old dictator's military one. The consequences for the long-suffering Chilean proletariat will be dire.

Pinochet's regime has kept real wages at the lowest level in the



On 14th December the Chilean people go to the polls to elect a new president and parliament. Diego Mocar looks at the choice facing the working class.

country's history. The 17 party alliance promises that "pay increases have to be linked to an increase in productivity".

Aylwin promises to raise the minimum wage to the princely sum of 25,000 pesos and pensions to 15,000 pesos per month at a time when the World Health Organisation and the UN Commission for Latin America calculate the minimum income to provide the basic

necessities of life for a family of four is 44,320 pesos per month.

At the same time as it plays the tight-fisted monetarist with the people of the shanty-towns and the industrial areas it promises the army a complete modernisation of its weapons and equipment!

Last but not least it promises nothing to the thousands upon thousands of victims of torture, to the families of those murdered by the

army. Pinochet himself has warned: "if any of my men are touched, that will be the end of the rule of law". Clearly, after 14 December "democracy" in Chile will be just as democratic and will last just as long as Pinochet wishes it too.

Chilean workers and peasants thus face a formidable alliance to deceive and swindle them out of any real fruits of the restoration of democratic rights that they have fought so hard and so long for. The voices of all revolutionaries, of all class conscious fighters, must be raised against this monstrous act of class treason by the social democrats and Stalinists.

Break

There should be no vote for the workers' enemy Patricio Aylwin — still stained with the blood of the victims of 1973! Workers should vote only for candidates of the workers' parties (SP and CP) whilst at the same time denouncing their present policy of betrayal and demanding that they break the shameful popular front with the Christian Democracy and the other open bourgeois parties.

They must demand a complete break with "military democracy", with Pinochet's Bonapartist constitution and with any social contract with the bosses and the military.

Power

All working class militants must fight for a return to the road of mass struggle — for a general strike, for the disintegration of the armed forces, the arming of the workers and popular masses and for the convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly. Only power in the hands of the workers, peasants and the unemployed can assure the real programme that Chile needs:

- A massive programme of public works.
- The nationalisation of all the major banks and industries under workers' control.
- An agrarian revolution against the latifundists and agribusinesses.
- Workers' justice for the torturers and murderers.
- The complete repudiation of the foreign debt.

In short, the programme of socialist revolution and the creation of a state based on workers' councils. Only when power is in the hands of the proletariat can the evil shadow of Pinochet and his successors be finally lifted from Chile for good. ■

ERNEST MANDEL has been writing about Stalinism in Eastern Europe for as long as the degenerate workers' states have existed. At their birth Mandel failed to recognise the significance of the events he was witnessing. He insisted that capitalism still existed in these states several years after it had been bureaucratically liquidated.

Today Mandel is equally disoriented. But whereas after the war he could not see the liquidation of capitalism when it stared him in the face, now he risks being blind to its restoration. Earlier this year he said:

"Contrary to what a superficial glance might indicate, the European bourgeoisie... has no hope of recovering Eastern Europe for capitalism." (*International Viewpoint* 159)

This was after Solidarnosc, elected as a majority in the Polish government, had made clear its determination to re-introduce capitalism.

Dissolve

Since then we have seen the Hungarian CP dissolve itself and the Berlin Wall crumble. Chancellor Kohl stridently sets out West Germany's stall for capitalist reunification and the Hungarian bureaucracy hawks a portfolio of the country's top fifty companies around Europe to see if there are any buyers. And yet Mandel still insists that:

"The main question in the political struggle underway is not the restoration of capitalism." (*International Viewpoint* 172)

Mandel's argument is that the real threat of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe and the USSR would come from a growing petit or middle bourgeoisie inside these states cementing an alliance with international big capital to unseat the bureaucracy. Survey-

USFI

Mandel: blind to the danger signs

BY M. IRK ABRAM

ing the scene in the USSR today he confidently asserts that:

"... this convergence will be insufficient to impose any restoration of capitalism in the short or medium term." (*International Viewpoint* 172)

Catching himself for a moment he argues:

"The only minimally realistic possibility for arriving at such a result [i.e. capitalist restoration] is relying outright on the 'reform' wing of the bureaucracy." (ibid)

But to assume this possibility: "... means assuming that [the bureaucracy] is ready to commit hara-kiri as a crystallised social caste." (ibid)

Mandel predicts that, consequently, most bureaucracies will defend the existing social foundations and their own privileges. China in June points the way.

Cautious

Whilst Mandel is right to be cautious about the scale and tempo of the restorationist tendencies in the USSR, he is profoundly wrong about Eastern Europe. He comforts himself with generalisations about the bureaucracy's role at a time when we are witnessing a

profound and historic crisis of the Eastern European ruling regimes.

These regimes imposed "really existing socialism" on the working class. They have never established their own legitimacy. In the 1970s and 1980s most of them became dangerously indebted to imperialism. Their economies passed from austerity to stagnation. Key sectors of the ruling bureaucracies lost their faith in command planning. Now Gorbachev has undermined, even forbidden, the use of military force to shore up their authority and rule.

The truth is that Mandel's

"minimally realistic possibility" that the "reform" wing of the bureaucracy could be the agent of social counter-revolution, is a concrete perspective.

None of this implies that the bureaucracy as a "crystallised social caste" is committing collective "hara-kiri". It is to suggest that the bonds that unite the bureaucracy are unravelling fast—precisely because they are a caste, not a class.

Faced with the pressure of imperialism, the USSR, and, finally, the working class on the streets, the makeshift cement that holds

this illegitimate caste together, is crumbling.

Mandel has argued that: "The main fight is not between pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist forces. It is between the bureaucracy and the toiling masses." (*International Viewpoint* 172)

Glasnost

This is a dangerous simplification of reality. It leads Mandel to suggest that as the bureaucracy is being forced to undertake political reforms—free elections, multi-party democracy, freedom of association and so on—the key task of revolutionaries is to deepen this *glasnost*.

Mandel's focus on *glasnost* and the minimising of the threat of restoration will lead him inexorably into an uncritical stance with regard to the opposition movement in Eastern Europe. It will blind him to the Social Democratic market capitalism of the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia and the even more pronounced pro-imperialism of sections of the Democratic Forum in Hungary. It will do so because Mandel empties *glasnost* of its class character.

Free elections to parliaments, freedom of the Polish catholic intelligentsia to run the mass media; these aspects of *glasnost* are part of the pro-capitalists' and imperialists' programme to loosen the grip of the *nomenklatura* on the apparatus of the state. They are preparing a decisive challenge for control of the whole machine, not in the interests of the masses, but in the interests of capitalist restoration. Revolutionary Marxists must warn the masses against such an outcome of the current struggles.

Crises

The real point is not to "deepen *glasnost*" but to take advantage of the crises of the regimes to build new independent working class organisations—the independent trade unions and factory councils. It is essential to make propaganda now for workers' councils to challenge and smash the bureaucratic caste.

For all Mandel's bluster about, "conscious political action—either by a bourgeois class or the working class—will have to overthrow the bureaucracy" (*International Viewpoint* 172), we look in vain for any call by him on the working class to build the workers' councils and militia that can carry through this overthrow.

Mandel has to minimise the threat of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, because to face up to it would question his whole strategy of deepening *glasnost*. But posing the political revolution (or rather misrepresenting it) in this way allows Mandel to uncritically tail the spontaneous demands of the opposition movements. And this, after all, is the hallmark of Mandel's "Trotskyism", and that of the centrist organisation he leads, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. ■



Mandel sees no danger from capitalist restorationists like Hungary's Imre Pozsgay

CPGB

The Great Moving Right Show—the last act?

BY ARTHUR MERTON

EARLY IN the 1980s the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) organised a weekend of debate called "The Great Moving Right Show". We Trotskyists joked at the time that the title referred to the CPGB itself. Never were truer words spoken in jest.

Last month's CPGB Congress confirmed the Party's stampede towards a brazen policy of new realism. The *Manifesto for New Times* that was adopted is an explicit disavowal of Marxism, the class struggle and any form of commitment to socialist transformation.

Of course, there is nothing new about the CPGB peddling right wing, class collaborationist and reformist politics.

Like all of the Stalinist parties, it has, since the 1930s, urged the workers to form alliances with "progressive" capitalists and subordinate their own class interests for the sake of such alliances.

Past

The latest twist in this history of betrayal, however, represents something new. It is "a break with, not an evolution from, the past", as one CPGB member declared to the

Congress.

For many years the Stalinists concealed their identity of interests with the social democratic reformists by using the language of Marxism-Leninism. They pointed with pride to the gains of "really existing socialism" in the states their parties ruled, from the USSR to Vietnam.

But no longer. Stalinism is to be denounced, Leninism discarded and Marxism redefined solely in terms of the Second International. Not the Second International which had in its ranks Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, but that of the reformist traitors who, after the revolutionaries split in 1914, supported the imperialist slaughter of World War One and joined ranks with the counter-revolution after 1917.

The CPGB opens the final chapter in its history in a parlous state. It has suffered a whole series of splits in the last 13 years, its membership has fallen from 25,000 to around 7,000 and in the process its once formidable base in industry is all but gone.

At the same time the middle class clique, led by Martin Jacques and Nina Temple, who run *Marxism Today* have increasingly shaped the party in their own image.

The virtues of barbedued lobster,

the problems of selecting a good wine and the very latest in radical chic fashion have all been given prominence in the publications of the CPGB.

In the face of the defeats suffered by the working class under Thatcher the Jacques' group first despaired at the invincibility of her "authoritarian populism" and then began to attack the workers as a privileged, white, male special interest group.

The other factor shaping the party's new turn is the crisis of Stalinism in the workers' states. The Gorbachev reforms, the break up of the Eastern Bloc, the massacre of Tiananmen Square have all pushed the CPGB, along with other Stalinist parties, rapidly along the road towards total social democratisation.

Denounced

Those very same people, who today welcome the dismantling of the planned economies in the name of "democracy", have attacked Trotskyism for decades. We Trotskyists were seen as enemies of socialism, agents of fascism, worse than Hitler. And why? Because since 1923 we have denounced the bureaucratic tyranny of the USSR and later the degener-

ate workers' states. Because we stated the obvious—that these states were a million miles from socialism. Because we fought to uphold a communism that was based on real freedom and equality for the masses.

Now, seizing the opportunities presented to them by Gorbachev, the man who has banned strikes in the USSR and could yet unleash the army against the masses, the CPGB are busy reviling not merely Stalinism, but the whole Marxist-Leninist tradition.

As Jacques explained:

"Stalinism is dead, and Leninism—its theory of the state, its concept of the party, the absence of civil society, its notion of revolution—has also had its day."

This intellectual minnow is wrong on both counts. Stalinism is sick, but not dead. The bloodstains around Tiananmen Square are tragic testimony to that fact. And Leninism, the rock solid belief that the mass of the working class, led by a revolutionary party, can destroy the old order and build a new one that is founded on proletarian democracy, is yet to have its day on an international scale.

The only good thing to come out of the Congress was growing pressure for the dissolution of the party itself. As CPGB member Jon Bloomfield put it, "Communist parties have no divine right to exist". Too true! For the communist parties worldwide are bureaucratic and treacherous obstacles in the path of socialist revolution.

As they plunge deeper into crisis, the working class must turn its back on them. Far from grieving over the crisis rayaging Stalinism, we say, let it bleed. And to any working class militants trapped in its ranks, we have a simple message: turn to genuine Marxist-Leninism—Trotskyism. ■

Victim of PTA

Dear Comrades,
 Nick Mullen, a London-based Irishman, is set to become the latest victim for what passes as "justice" in Britain. Mullen was holidaying in Zimbabwe when he was arrested, detained, denied legal representation and served with a deportation order. He was then forced at gunpoint to board a flight bound for England.

On his arrival at Gatwick Airport he was met by Special Branch detectives and arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. He was held for seven days at Paddington Green Police Station before being charged with conspiring to cause explosions. Nick Mullen is now on remand in Brixton Prison's top security wing where he will remain until his trial in April 1990.

The trial, originally scheduled to begin on 4 September, has now been deferred twice, at the request of the Crown Prosecution Service, who claim they need further time to construct (need we say fabricate) their case.

The Mullen case is connected with the discovery of an "IRA bomb factory" in Clapham, South London in December 1988. He is accused of knowingly providing members of an active service unit with premises from which to operate, hence the charge of conspiring to cause explosions. But the whole "Clapham Bomb Factory" furore was no more than an excuse for the press to whip up anti-Irish hysteria, allowing the real terrorists of the British state to get on with their job of smashing the Irish resistance.

We are expected to believe that while an initial raid (and effective demolition) of the Clapham flat revealed nothing, subsequent searches yielded a passport and a cache of secret documents (including *Who's Who*—which means every librarian is probably a "master terrorist" with a "secret death" list!) The as yet untraced "master bomber" and "trained assassin" seems to have littered the country with packets of semtex, from North London reservoirs to Scarborough.

Equally "careless" have been the Special Branch who have mysteriously abandoned their established

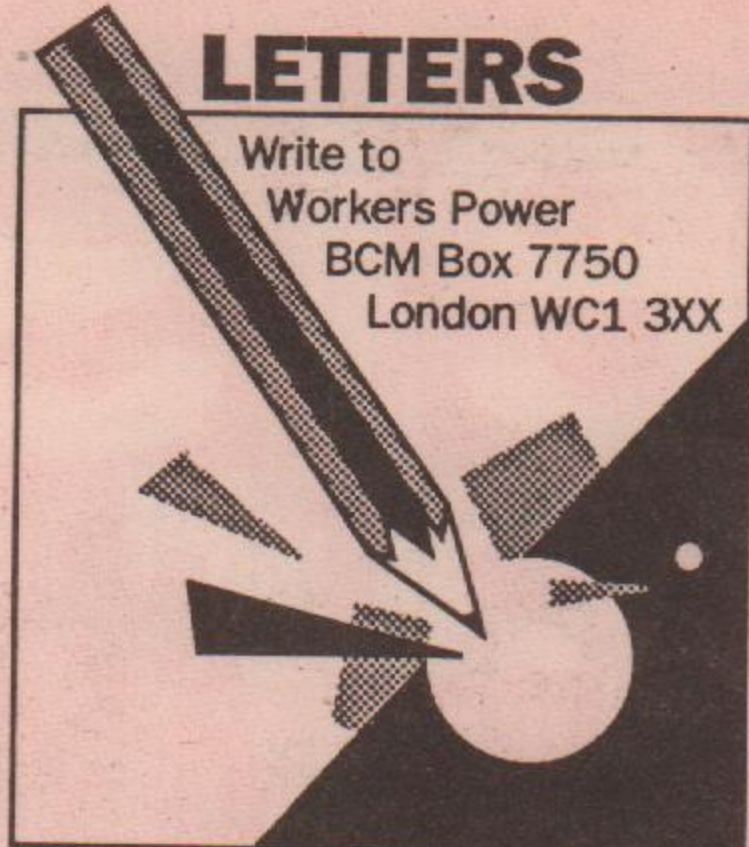
practice of staking out a cache of explosives in order to plaster their "finds" all over the press at the drop of a hat. If the whole thing sounds wholly implausible, the results have been horrific for Nick Mullen and his family.

If we are to avoid a repeat of the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Winchester Three outrages, we must take the campaign to free Nick Mullen into the labour movement immediately. For as long as the British working class allows the British ruling class to prosecute its class interests in Ireland, so it is weak-

ened in the fight against the bosses in every workplace and housing estate at home.

Paul Marley

Resolutions etc to:
 Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid
 265 Seven Sisters Road,
 London N4



Write to
 Workers Power
 BCM Box 7750
 London WC1 3XX

In memory of Derek Ivor Hughes 23.2.52 - 6.11.89

A committed fighter for lesbian and gay rights and the working class, Derek was a founder member of the London Gay Teachers' Group (later to become Lesbian and Gay Workers in Education). He was also a keen activist in Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, building vital links with Welsh miners and their families. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

In comradeship,
 Workers Power

Racism and religion

Dear Workers Power,

In Britain there have been a number of debates about religion and education. Some of these have caused confusion on the left, over state funding for Muslim schools, for example. The left in France have had similar problems when faced with such issues in recent months.

In October, the head of a school in the working class town of Creil sent home three immigrant girls for wearing headscarves, a sign of their Islamic religion. Under the French education system, all religious education and the wearing of political or religious badges or signs in school is forbidden.

From this relatively minor beginning, a massive debate on immigration and Islam has broken out. The fascist Front National, led by Le Pen, has used the question to leapfrog back into the headlines, and topped the poll in the first round of a recent by-election. Racism is firmly back on the political agenda.

The head's action, and the support for it from across the political spectrum, has a clear racist aspect—no Christians have been sent home for wearing crucifixes, and the defenders of secular education have said nothing about Alsace-Lorraine where religious education is institutionalised!

Despite our profound opposition to all organised religion, we must defend the democratic right of individuals to wear headscarves, veils, turbans or whatever behind the school gates. We combine this with intransigent arguments against all religion, in particular its oppression of women and girls.

Many on the left, however, have let themselves be carried away by a wave of "public opinion" which is full of racist preconceptions. Notably, Lutte Ouvrière (LO), one of the main centrist "Trotskyist" organisations, has swallowed the racists' arguments hook, line and sinker.

Hiding behind the smoke-screen of the struggle for women's liberation, LO have made no mention of

the need for solidarity with an immigrant community under attack. Rather, they direct their fire against the Islamic fundamentalists and the need to keep religion out of the schools—by which they mean immigrant girls wearing headscarves!

This outrageous behaviour is nothing new for LO. They are extremely sensitive to the twists and turns of the French CP which, in turn, consciously panders to some of the more base chauvinist and racist attitudes within the French working class.

LO have never taken the threat of Le Pen seriously; they have never been prepared to organise to confront the fascists physically. Today, faced with a clear wave of anti-immigrant feeling they have followed the PCF and swum with the racist stream.

Far from being the intransigent revolutionaries they like to portray themselves as, LO are yet another centrist group which systematically adapts to the reactionary politics of a major reformist party. As the "headscarf affair" dramatically shows, they are unable to offer the French working class a revolutionary answer to the major problems of the day.

In comradeship,
 Emile Gallet
 (Pouvoir Ouvrier)

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 success

WHEN COMRADES from *Workers Power* first began planning Permanent Revolution '89, they could not have foreseen exactly how immediately relevant the focus that they had chosen for the weekend's discussions and debates would be. With monolithic regimes collapsing throughout Eastern Europe, the reality of the "Crisis of Stalinism" has entered the minds of tens of millions of workers globally.

In all 170 people attended the two day event which explored the

challenges and dangers confronting workers in the Stalinist states, while debating with members of *Socialist Organiser* and the Revolutionary Communist Party the very nature of those states.

This debate revealed that neither of these organisations have any answers to offer workers seeking to resist both Stalinist tyranny and the horrors of market restoration. In the eyes of many attending the discussion, it vindicated the essentials of Trotsky's method

of analysing events in the USSR.

A real highlight of the weekend came on Sunday morning, when John Hunt, just back from the USSR, painted a fascinating picture of the reality of *perestroika* and the first stirrings of a real workers' opposition.

In later workshops the participation of comrades from other LRCI sections enlivened the discussion and shed light on women and abortion rights in Ireland, the environmental crisis and prospects

for the Latin American revolution. An LRCI rally set out our answers to the international crisis of leadership and a closing plenary outlined the tasks of revolutionaries in the British labour movement.

By any standard the weekend was a success with a number of comrades being persuaded to either join Workers Power and the LRCI or move into closer political discussion with us.

Virtually everyone agreed that PR must now become an annual event. If you didn't make this year's watch out for details of PR '90.

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 £6 for 12 issues
- Class Struggle £8 for 10 issues
- Permanent Revolution £6 for 3 issues
- Trotskyist International £5.50 for 3 issues

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

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

The Trotskyist Manifesto

OUT THIS MONTH!

The new programme adopted by the League for a Revolutionary Communist International at its founding conference this summer will be published this month, price £2.95 per copy. All cheques (made payable to Workers Power) received by the end of December will entitle the sender to a free copy of the new *Trotskyist International* due out in January 1990 (current subscribers to TI will receive one extra copy).

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

SOLIDARITY WITH THE AMBULANCE WORKERS!

THE TORIES are trying their hardest to beat the ambulance workers and impose their 6.5% pay offer. This offer, to an already low paid section of workers is an insult. With inflation on the way up, it represents a pay cut.

It is vital that the Tories are beaten. And there is every chance that they will be. Massive support for the ambulance workers exists. Opinion polls consistently show over 80% are in favour of the crews. In London, shoppers are literally queuing to offer money and sign petitions. Even the usually rabid anti-union *Sun* has told Maggie to put more money on the table.

Ambulance workers in London have faced suspension for working to rule. They have stayed "on station" and answered calls, but still had their pay docked by management. They have faced a barrage of abuse from Health Minister Kenneth Clarke, including a lying advertising campaign against them in the national press costing a cool £200,000. And Clarke has the nerve to say there's no money available!

While Clarke has tried to assemble a catalogue of horror stories about the "callous" crews, ambulance workers themselves have evidence of:

- Keys removed from ambulances by management.
- Vital equipment taken from working ambulances for army and police vehicles
- Hopelessly inadequate responses to emergencies from the police and army scabs

In London the whole operation has cost £1.25 million over the first three weeks alone. This is the equivalent of an extra 1.5% for ambulance crews.

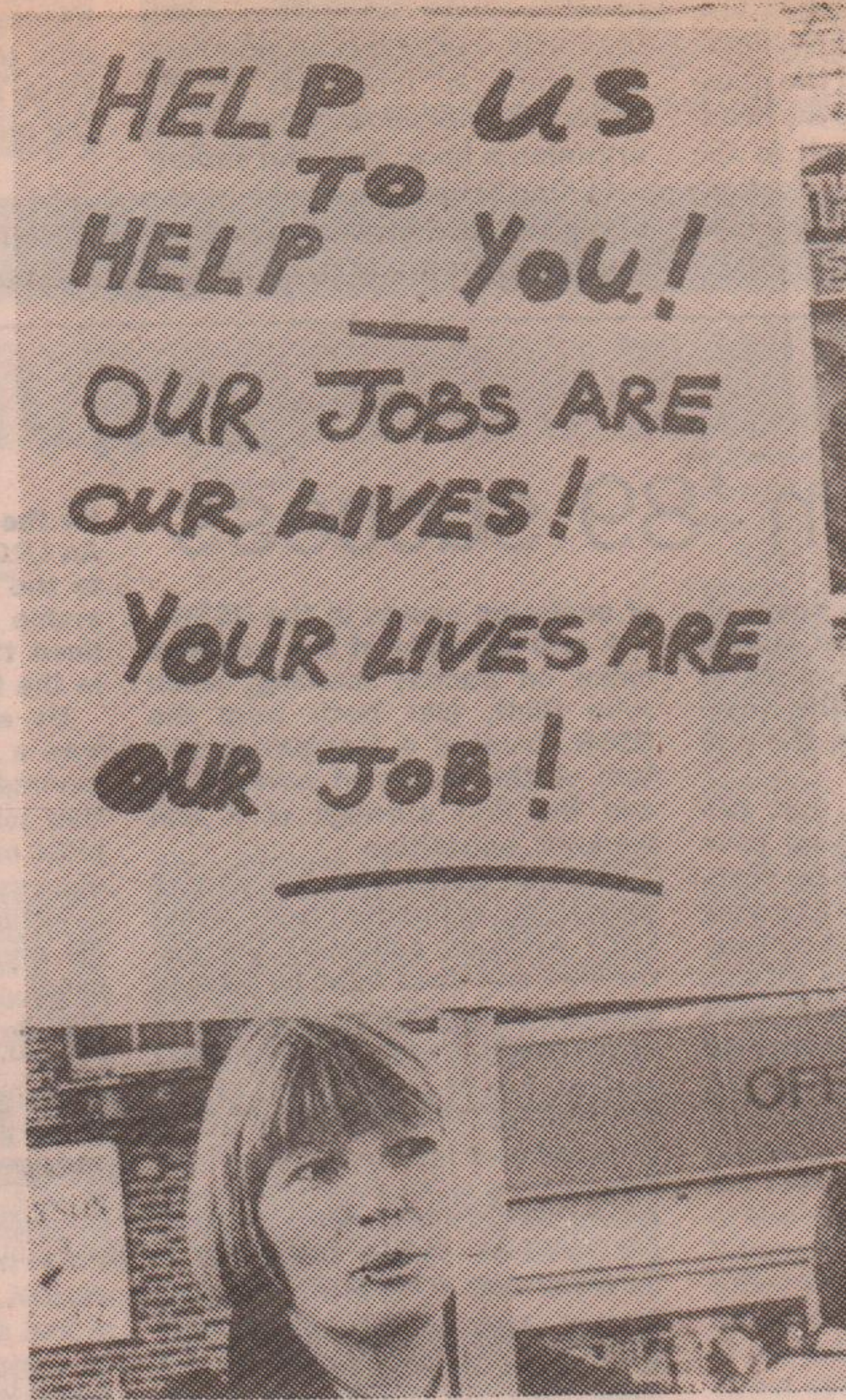
Ambulance workers' outrage at this treatment has been shown by walkouts by crews in Scotland and controllers in London.

But a stalemate has been reached in the dispute. Escalating action from the crews must be backed by active solidarity from other workers—the widespread sympathy must be turned into action!

Such solidarity is not just because the ambulance workers have a good case for their pay demands. The dispute affects us all!

In London there has been no adequate emergency service for weeks. Injured people get bundled into the back of police cars, patients who have had heart attacks have had to walk out of army ambulances into hospital. Workers must demand that this dispute is settled on the ambulance workers' terms.

The troops must be forced off the streets. Their scabbing is not only undermining the dispute, it is endangering lives not saving them. And if the troops successfully bust this dispute, they will be on hand to scab on the rest



of us.

All workers should organise regular levies for the crews, invite speakers to union and workplace meetings and demand that the national unions and the TUC call solidarity strike action.

Of course, thousands of pounds donated to the crews is welcome, but money is no

substitute for solidarity strike action. It helps to sustain the dispute but does not lead to victory.

Some workers are giving a day's pay to the bucket collections. Far better to lose a day's pay by striking and marching on Downing Street!

Strike in support of the ambulance workers!

INSIDE

- Eyewitness account from the USSR
- EC Social Charter
- Civil war in El Salvador

How to win

WHOSE SIDE is Roger Poole on in the ambulance dispute? Clearly not ours! His two main aims seem to be to become a media star with his daily TV slot, and to oppose any effective action by the crews and controllers.

When Glasgow crews walked out without emergency cover, he worked overtime to pressure them back to work. Union officials were the first to call for crews to return to work "however frustrated they are". Under such attacks from their own leaders, Glasgow workers went back after one day.

Ambulance workers in North London, together with the Hackney Council Joint Shop Steward's Committee, called a day of strike action for 6 December. Rank and file support rapidly spread for their day of action in workplaces right across the capital. The official response? NUPE refused to give any backing to the call and some NUT associations were threatened with suspension—by their own union executive—if they struck in support of the ambulance workers.

Poole argues that 80% public support is enough to win the dispute. Any escalation of the action, he insists, will risk losing the "sympathy" of the people. He thinks that "public opinion" can be used to pressure the government into arbitration and he has made it quite clear that he will concede on every issue of the claim! Demands for better hours, holidays and retirement provision can all go out of the window of the ACAS office as far as he is concerned. Even on the pay claim itself he has long ago abandoned a fight for the full 11.5%.

The only leaflets and stickers put out by the union leaders during this dispute show their aim: support the Arbitration Claim of Ambulance Staff. And not one leaflet, badge or poster has been produced by the TUC since the troops went in. Not one leader was present at the 18 November demonstration in London, itself called by NUPE members. NUPE leader Rodney Bickerstaffe ran away when faced with his own members lobbying the TUC for support.

The actions of these leaders show the key weaknesses of the dispute. The exclusive reliance on protest and sympathy will not budge the Tories. They are past-masters at ignoring the views of the "people". The longer the dispute drags on the harder their propaganda campaign against the crews will hit.

The tactic of waiting to be suspended will not win the dispute either. It allows the management to take on areas one at a time. The management will hold back on suspensions in some areas while selectively hitting the militant areas. Or as in Manchester, where crews said "we are doing everything possible to

get suspended", the initiative will be kept in the hands of a regional management. Because their "sympathetic" controller will not suspend them, the Manchester workers cannot raise the stakes in support of their London colleagues.

At present there is such frustration that individual ambulance stations have begun to refuse emergency calls unless the controller guarantees payment. But this is still inconsistent and uncoordinated. Other crews, overwhelmed by public support, have spent a lot of time collecting money on the streets, but have not participated in the agitation for a day of solidarity strike action on 6 December.

All of these weaknesses in the dispute will enable the Tories to ride it out. What we need is an offensive that tackles these problems in one stroke, one that will unite the efforts and action of ambulance workers all over the country in a co-ordinated struggle. Only one course of action can do this and bring about a quick and victorious settlement—an all out, indefinite, national strike now! This is what rank and file workers must fight for.

Emergency cover should be provided but only under workers' control. It is false to suggest that the present tactics—sitting on station waiting to be called by controllers—represents a form of workers' control. It is management who have the whip-hand whilst the workers are receiving no money for the time worked.

Real workers' control of the emergency service would involve crews and control workers deciding which calls were emergency and it would be conditional on the withdrawal of the police and army scabs.

This leads on to another major problem in the dispute: who is running it? It is vital that the dispute is taken out of the hands of the union leaders and run by those who face suspension and a Christmas without pay. Armed with a correct strategy the ambulance workers can win a victory not just for themselves and the NHS as a whole, but for every worker in Britain.

In the first place we must demand that the union leaders call an all-out strike and that the TUC calls for solidarity strikes, instead of refusing to back them as has happened on 6 December.

But if the union leaders will not fight, then the crews at the militant stations must organise rank and file strike committees at a regional and national level to build for and launch a national strike: with the union leaders if possible but against them when necessary!

- All out strike now!
- Rank and file must take control of the dispute!
- Victory to the ambulance workers!