

Workers power

The decade opens with Ceausescu dead and Stalinism in massive crisis throughout Eastern Europe. This month we examine in detail the issues raised by these events.

**STALINISM
IN CRISIS**

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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ROMANIA



Forward to working class power!

ROMANIAN WORKERS saw out the old decade in heroic style. Their uprising put paid to the brutal and corrupt Ceausescu regime. Their sacrifice puts workers' revolution on the agenda for the new decade.

A vicious police state maintained the rule of Ceausescu and his fellow bureaucrats. Romanian workers, students and soldiers faced a desperate battle against the Securitate. They have cleared out much of the old gang and forced the army to join the side of the masses. But now they face new dangers.

In their revolution, the Romanian masses set up factory committees to oust the hated managers. They organised the beginnings of a workers' militia which fought alongside the army. These must become the basis for creating real workers' power—with factory com-

mittees and workers' councils at all levels. These should decide how to run not only individual factories but the whole economy. Workers' and peasants' democracy could ensure that production was planned for the benefit of all—not the parasitic bureaucrats whose mismanagement squanders precious resources.

The army chiefs, and the many bureaucrats who remain, are terrified by this prospect. The army leaders were quick to demand a monopoly of armed force. A new government, the National Salvation Front, was rapidly assembled. If the army chiefs remain in control, they will move against the Romanian workers' attempts to deepen their revolution. They will try to disarm the factory committees and prevent the formation of a real workers militia.

Masters of hypocrisy, the western politicians hastened to wash their hands of Ceausescu and welcome the Romanian people's fight for freedom. They were anxious to dis-

guise their own role in bolstering the hated dictator. European and US governments had showered honours and praise on the Ceausescu family for two decades. They had seen Ceausescu, who was relatively isolated from the other bureaucratic regimes, as "their" man in Eastern Europe.

Now these imperialist leaders are hoping that the ousting of the old Party bosses will allow greater western influence and the re-introduction of capitalism. The bosses are keen to get their hands on the resources, the cheap labour and the investment opportunities.

But for that reason they want a peaceful transition. Romania's revolution has them worried. British Foreign Office minister William Waldegrave cautioned the new Romanian government to establish law and order as quickly as possible to avoid "the tremendous temptation of a bloodbath of revenge". What this hypocrite really fears is workers

establishing their own power and control. This would act as a spur to workers everywhere—east and west—to take control of their own destiny.

As the prospect of civil war opened up, necessitating armed mass action by the workers to smash the Securitate, President Bush signalled to Gorbachev that the USA would not protest at a Soviet military intervention to "restore order". After all who wants to buy a factory where the workers are armed and they control production?

The Romanian workers must thwart the plans of Gorbachev and Bush. The sacrifice of thousands of lives must not be in vain. Arms in hand the Romanian workers must now put in place an order based on their own class interests.

That is the greatest fear of Gorbachev and Bush alike. And it is our greatest hope. ■

● Now turn to page 3



TV Bill means rich pickings for Murdoch

Bosses' blacklist

MOST WORKERS in Britain have been appalled at the revelations about the surveillance techniques of the East German Stasi and Ceausescu's Securitate. But how many know about the secret surveillance carried out by many of Britain's bosses? The National Council for Civil Liberties has produced a timely account of the employers' shady intelligence unit—the Economic League.

Nigel Pickford, a sacked miner from Betteshanger Colliery in Kent retrained as a bricklayer. In February 1989 a sub-contractor asked him to report for work on the Channel Tunnel. On his first day, Pickford handed in his name and national insurance number and worked all morning. Then at 12.30pm he was suddenly escorted from the site by security men and told not to return to work. When his friend asked management why he had been sacked he was told: "The problem is that Mr Pickford has not cleared with security."

Ken Martin, a labourer in Newcastle, applied for work with a major construction company. His application form was returned to the site office with the following note:

"Communist Party member. This man is politically unsuitable. Inform all our site agents in the region that under no circumstances is he to be offered employment."

His wife and daughter have also been refused work at a local factory, and his nephew, also a labourer, has been listed as a Communist Party member. Neither Ken nor any of his family have ever been CP members.

Sydney Scroggie, a blind pensioner in Dundee, wrote a letter to *The Scotsman*, defending Edinburgh City Council's decision to buy a painting of Nelson Mandela. He has never been an anti-apartheid activist, but this action was enough to get him onto a list of political subversives.

These are just three examples of the work of the Economic League. It scours the left press, steals address lists from meetings and sends moles to infiltrate radical organisations and trade unions. The official aims of the

Economic League are:

"To assist the development of widespread understanding of the value and importance of profitable industry and commerce within the United Kingdom's mixed economy. To fight subversion and to keep members informed of the activities of those who are hostile to productive enterprise in industry and commerce."

The League was founded in 1919 during widespread industrial unrest and growing militancy inspired by the end of the war and news of the Russian Revolution. Since then it has been maintained by the British bosses in collaboration with the police, the security forces and funded by the big companies. Fifty-seven of its sponsors also fund the Tory Party.

Its methods are unscrupulous and the information it keeps is totally free from any monitoring. In two of the examples given above, the "evidence" upon which the League bases its lists of subversives is threadbare and frequently wrong. It is used by the bosses, particularly in construction and in the car industry to vet people applying for jobs. This is easier than sacking militants later on. As the League itself said in 1987:

"The Employment Protection, Redundancy Payments, Equal Op-

More TV choice?

IT IS not often that a third of all Tory MPs publicly admit serious worries about a major piece of government legislation. And yet a recent Gallup poll shows that 33% of them think the Broadcasting Bill will lead to lower standards on television.

The original White Paper claimed that it would "open the doors so that individuals can choose for themselves from a much wider range of programmes and types of broadcasting". But it is more likely to be a question of choosing which game show or repeat you want to break up the adverts with.

The Tories argue that the changes brought about by new technology—cable, satellite etc—need a new regulating system. The name of that system is "the market". Franchises will be sold to the highest bidder.

How will this affect what we watch? When Australian channels were recently sold off in this way it led to the so called "winner's curse". Companies put so much money up front to win the franchise they had none left to produce programmes! Now these companies are frantically cutting staff and increasing

advertising time while programme standards plummet. Similar problems have been experienced in France, Italy and the USA.

- **ITV and Independent radio sold to the highest bidders.**
- **A new 5 Channel sold off in the same way.**
- **Channel 4 board to be vetted by Home Secretary.**
- **BBC funding cut.**
- **Cable and satellite stations to be allowed to buy exclusive rights to Wimbledon, Cup Finals etc, denying them to viewers without right equipment.**

There will be more channels relying on the same advertisers for revenue and therefore competing harder with each other for ratings. In the light of this even the Common's Home Affairs Committee was forced to say:

"Television can all too easily become dominated by the need to deliver audiences to advertisers rather than offering programmes to viewers."

The commercial channels and advertising agencies are already well on the way to this. Pro-

grammes like *Capital City* and *Thirtysomething* which are about Yuppies and aimed at Yuppies are wrapped around advertising aimed at the same audience. There are so many computers, photocopiers, posh cars and stripey shirts in the adverts that its hard to tell when the actual programme has begun.

But this is nothing compared to the level of advertising and the gearing of programmes to adverts that goes on in America. If you want a vision of the future of TV, imagine your worst local radio station broadcast in glorious technicolour. The new franchise awards will take no account of specified broadcasting standards. But pressure to cut costs hits precisely programmes which refuse to believe that the average viewer is an idiot.

TV drama costs about £350,000 an hour to make. "light entertainment" on the other hand costs the BBC £137,000 per hour. With pressure on to cut costs this is bad news for workers in all sections of the industry and bad news too for the viewer—if you are not mad keen on re-runs of *I Love Lucy* and *The Waltons*.

Many of the Bill's critics claim to be worried about quality. What they are really worried about is the end of the broadcasting "ethos" created by Lord Reith, founder of the BBC.

Reith's "non-party political", "responsible" BBC is held up as a force for national unity and the maintenance of a common British culture. In fact it is a tradition of pro-imperialism, racism and the maintenance of family values.

Once the White Paper is passed the BBC will come under renewed attack. By cutting funding and creating greater competition for ratings it is being softened up in preparation for a major restructuring when its Royal Charter runs out in 1996. It could then be turned into something more like the USA's Public Broadcasting Service limited to producing minority audience programmes which commercial channels would not bother with.

This would diminish its credibility as an authoritative information source and weaken its ideological importance. But the Tories realise that TV's role as an instrument of social control is far better served by a televised version of the *Sunday Sport*.

Finally there is very little provision in the Bill to stop Murdoch and his cronies from owning even vaster swathes of the British media. He already publishes 30% of all daily newspapers in circulation and controls 98% of the satellite market of one million viewers. He could still own 20% of a major C3 channel plus 5% of any other he chooses.

Whether the Reithians or the free marketers win the day we are clear about the primary functions of broadcasting under capitalism. The BBC and ITV are run for and by the capitalist class as an ideological as well as money making tool.

We should fight all attempts at deregulation, the handing over of broadcasting to the privateers. But we must also fight for workers' control over a nationalised broadcasting industry, with the right to reply guaranteed by the workers, not scorned by business tycoons and government officials. Access to the airwaves for all representatives of the working class and the oppressed! Only through these measures can we begin to develop a broadcasting system which can challenge capitalism not help perpetuate it. ■

Social service sell-off

STAN DECKER, a deputy manager in Bromley Social Services, will probably be self-employed next year. He'll be running three children's homes, two day nurseries and a foster parents' scheme if, as looks likely, his tender for privatisation is accepted by the council.

Contracting out for a whole variety of social services will soon become the norm as the government's new white paper and bill on community care come into effect.

They were published in December 1989 after over a year of foot dragging, yet the government expects local authorities to come up with budgets for a totally new "marketised" system of social services by the end of February 1990 this year.

Talk of "cost effective care choice" and a "mixed economy of care" put the gloss on measures aimed at cutting expenditure on services for the elderly, disabled, mentally ill and mentally handicapped etc. The Bill will hand over financial responsibility for many of these services to local authorities, while imposing strict spending limits. Financial incentives and

penalties will force councils to contract out much of their residential and other care to the private sector.

Social workers will be expected to "design" individually tailored "care packages" for clients (or "customers")—provided cash is there. If there are more homeless than homes budgeted for then tough luck.

The 1983 Mental Health Act, noted for its emphasis on community care, significantly boosted the psychiatric wing of cardboard city. No doubt more of the same can be expected.

The Bromley "management buy-out" (which involves only one staff member plus a private contractor) is a trail-blazer. Staff who wanted to keep the services "in house" were stopped from putting in a bid.

Thatcher launched her campaign for "Victorian values" in the mid-1980s. Unless the White Paper is defeated the 1990s could turn out to be the decade when the private orphanages, workhouses and lunatic asylums of Dickensian England return to make this vision a grim reality. ■

opportunities and Race Relations Acts can be used as sticks with which to attack employers. An allegation of unfair dismissal or discrimination can be extremely expensive in management time and disruption."

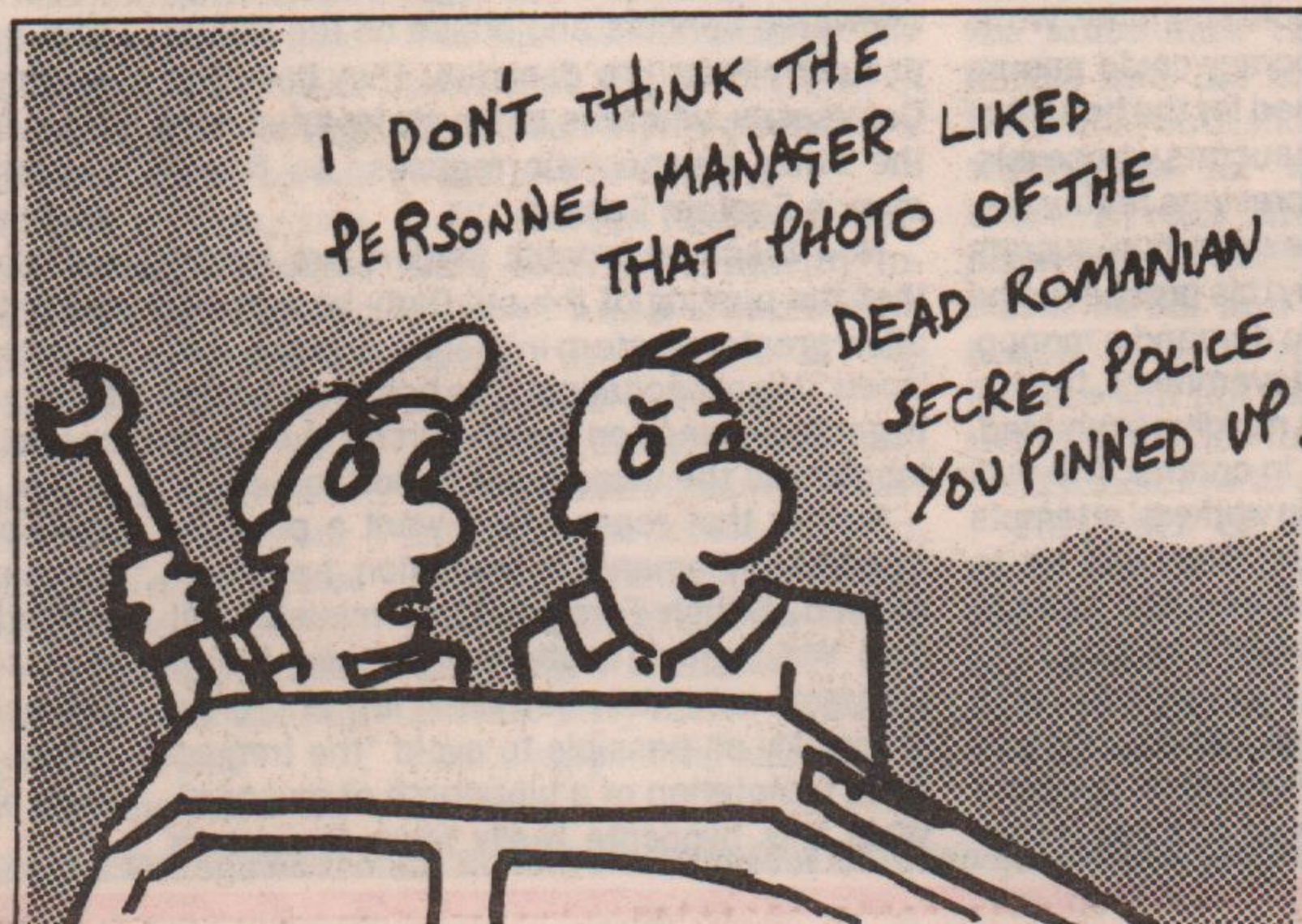
In Fords it is likely that the Economic League was behind the victimisation of Mick Gosling, Paul Davidson, Denny Fitzpatrick and other militants and supporters of the left paper *Socialist Action*. The League

arranges for information to be obtained from previous personnel managers, information on workers' union activity which never appears on the official references.

During the campaign against some of these victimisations at Ford's Dagenham plant, the then TGWU branch vice-chair Mick Gosling had his flat broken into. Nothing was stolen. Branch secretary Steve Riley's plant was burgled six days later. A few items were stolen, papers strewn everywhere and five sheets of paper with about one hundred names of trade union contacts had been taken.

The NCCL's report on the Economic League provides an excellent account of the methods which the bosses use in their war against the "enemy within". Once limited to members of the Communist Party, their enemy now extends to trade union activists, CND and AAM members, animal liberationists and even Labour MPs.

This is an exact parallel to the proliferation of MI5 departments dedicated to surveillance of the left since the 1970s. It underlines the extent of unofficial collaboration between the League and the state intelligence services. ■



EDITORIAL

In praise of revolution

A REVOLUTION has happened in Romania. A decade in which it became fashionable to speak of the "Thatcher revolution", the "technological revolution" and even the "style revolution" has ended with a real, armed and bloody revolution.

Beamed by live TV into the homes of workers throughout the world it is a living confirmation that the poor and downtrodden have the power to change society. And it has only just begun. The smashing of the Securitate and the execution of Ceausescu have opened the road for the working class to impose its own rule in Romania.

That is why capitalist and Stalinist rulers alike are united in their fear and loathing, not just of this but of every real revolution.

Yet revolutions have shaped the world we live in. The English Civil War opened the way for capitalist development in Britain. The French Revolution of 1789 opened up Europe to capitalism. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 proved in practice the possibility of working class power.

The rulers themselves are well aware of the significance of these revolutions. But in their anniversary "celebrations" they do everything possible to cover up their mass and violent character.

In 1987, the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet bureaucrats managed to omit all reference to the independent mass actions of the workers and soldiers from the celebrations.

Last July Paris hosted a bi-centenary celebration of 1789 that was even more grotesque. The masses were organised like clockwork dolls to dance and drum in a parade through the streets whilst the world's leaders watched from behind the bullet proof glass of a top hotel. How they must wish real revolutions happened that way.

But they don't. Revolutions, in Trotsky's words, mark "the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny". The countless thousands of Romanians who defied Ceausescu's repression and poured onto the streets were a living embodiment of Trotsky's words. They refused to go on in the old way. They took matters into their own hands.

Today, the bosses and bureaucrats are replacing their messages of praise to those who fought and died with appeals for calm and a return to "the rule of law". Gorbachev and Thatcher alike call for restraint. No more revolution thank you!

Marxists take the opposite view. We welcome the destruction of the "order" and the rule of law used by the bosses and bureaucrats to maintain their own power. We fight for the extension of revolutions beyond the initial moments of armed struggle and beyond national boundaries. We fight for permanent revolution.

Does this mean we advocate permanent violence, confusion and disorder? Not at all. For us the key to the success of any revolution is the permanent involvement of the mass of ordinary workers in the running of their own lives.

The Romanian events have demonstrated all the key lessons of revolutionary struggle:

- All the military hardware and security apparatus in the world cannot save a tyrant when the mass of workers are united in their determination to win.
- Only armed revolutions succeed in sweeping away the old regime. Mass demonstrations and even general strikes can only bring the situation to the point where an uprising is necessary.
- The working class is decisive in any revolution. The workers are often derided as "passive" and "self-centred" by the intellectual opposition in the Stalinist countries. But from China to Czechoslovakia and Romania it has been the workers strikes and mass demonstrations which tipped the balance.
- Revolutions are festivals of the oppressed. Young people spearheaded the Romanian uprising. Millions of women escaped the isolation of the home to take their place in the revolutionary struggle. The Hungarian national minority in Romania, which had its culture derided and trampled by the Ceausescu regime, was the detonator of the revolution. Thousands of ethnic Hungarians sacrificed their lives in the struggle to liberate all Romanians.

- Like all revolutions Romania was confused and chaotic, with rumours and mass panics sweeping the cities several times a day. But it demonstrated more than any other modern revolution the way the masses can take over and use the broadcast media. Normally used as the bosses' propaganda machine, the TV and radio can become, in the hands of the workers, the most effective means of co-ordinating action and spreading accurate information. And the air-waves, as frightened rulers east and west will note, do not respect national borders.

Revolutions do more than simply mobilise the masses. They strip away in days all of their preconceived ideas. The misery accepted as an unchallengeable fact of life for forty years by Romanians is now seen as a nightmare that must never return.

Such rapid transformations of consciousness are the lifeblood of progress. They unleash the creativity of the masses that is harnessed and crushed completely in normal times. Workers whose horizons have been limited to the cramped world of their families suddenly find they have the capacity to run their own factories and communities. The tasks which are held to be the preserve of the rulers and their specialist representatives are quickly grasped by thousands of ordinary people.

All this explains why Marxists hail revolutions. They are not the breakdown of law and order but the imposition of new laws and a new order by the mass of people.

The world's workers are marvelling at the live TV pictures of the dead dictator, armed detachments of young civilians and workers' control committees in the factories. But a spectre is haunting the world's rulers. It is the spectre of workers' revolution and its decade has arrived. ■

Now turn to page 7

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"The US is not here to obey other people's laws"

General Maxwell "Mad Max" Thurman, head of US forces in Panama.

"It's a screw-up!"

President Bush, after the same US forces ransacked the Nicaraguan ambassador's residence in violation of international law.

Justice for Kitson



DAVID KITSON spent twenty years in a South African jail for his role in the struggle against apartheid. Following his release he came to Britain in 1984 where TASS (MSF) had agreed to fund him at Ruskin College. But David and his wife Norma Kitson were suspended from the ANC after refusing to support witch-hunts in the British anti-apartheid movement. The union then withdrew its financial support. The Kitsons are now living in Harare, Zimbabwe where they continue to be active in the liberation movement. The Justice for Kitson Campaign is calling for their reinstatement by the ANC. ■

Martin Foran

MARTIN FORAN was imprisoned in 1984 for eight years following a robbery at a Birmingham pub. The publican described the robbers as three youths, two black and one whose face was covered but who had a pronounced Birmingham accent. Martin, convicted of this crime, has a strong Irish accent. He has 15 alibi witnesses. No ID parade ever took place.

In 1988 he was given a further six year sentence when he took a warder hostage in order to compel the prison authorities to give him proper medical treatment as a colostomy patient. While recovering from a subsequent operation he was viciously beaten by prison staff.

Three key pieces of evidence supporting his case have been suppressed: a document signed

Conference
Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc
★
Saturday 27 January
11:00—5:00
University of London Union,
Malet St, London WC1
★
Details from CSWEB,
56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5

by an inspector revealing a contradictory arrest time, a statement by a WPC and the Prisoner in Custody Book. Martin is now on hunger strike. Resolutions and messages of support to: Martin Foran Defence Campaign c/o Box 7 190 Alum Rock Road Saltley Birmingham B8

Thatchergate!

THE IRON Lady of Number Ten takes her nickname very seriously. So much so that at a massive cost, which cannot be disclosed since it is an official secret, she has had huge iron gates installed to seal off Downing Street from intruders.

The new ten foot high fence and gates means that a street which has been a public right of way for 200 years is now Thatcher's private boulevard. A touch of the Ceausescu method of street planning!

The access for the new eyesore

les complains about this!) is terrorism. Rubbish. The real reason is that after ten years Thatcher knows she is getting mighty unpopular. So, as the infamous "iron curtain" in Europe comes down, a new one in Downing Street is going up.

But the workers' militia that has the job of seizing Thatcher when our revolution comes need not worry too much.

The gates do not lock properly and are being held together by makeshift padlocks that will not last a minute under pressure! ■

DES WARREN was jailed in 1972 on a trumped up charge of conspiracy after his role in the building workers' strike. During his three year sentence he refused to co-operate with the prison authorities and demanded political prisoner status.

In response he was given the "liquid cosh"—compulsory administration of a powerful tranquillising drug. As a result

he developed Parkinson's Disease and severe valium addiction.

Eventually he received £3000 compensation from the Home Office. But Des needs 24 hour a day attention—facilities the NHS will not provide.

We urge all readers to contribute to the Des Warren Trust Fund which has helped Des in his battle against

addiction and to raise donations and collections in their union branches.

Donations and messages of support to:

Des Warren Trust Fund
c/o Durham Mechanics
PO Box 6
Miners Hall
Red Hill
Durham

Des Warren appeal

BIRKENHEAD WITCH-HUNT

BIRKENHEAD'S RIGHT wing Labour MP Frank Field is certainly a sore loser. Last month Birkenhead Labour Party refused to reselect Field as its parliamentary candidate for the next general election. Field has even threatened that if the Labour NEC endorses Paul Davies, who won the reselection contest, he is prepared to force a by-election and stand against the official Labour candidate.

This is nothing new. Field is fond of calling on workers to oppose Labour candidates. In the last general election, he publically opposed Lol Duffey, a left wing candidate in

BY JULIAN SHAW

neighbouring Wallesey, helping the Tory to win a narrow victory.

Field has accused the Birkenhead party of being "infiltrated" by *Militant* supporters and has prepared a dossier which he will present to the NEC. He also criticises the "local electoral college" system of voting in reselections. The electoral college allows affiliated union branches to have up to a 40% share of the vote in reselections, individual party members having 60%. Field wants the trade union vote to be scrapped and replaced by a total

individual membership vote.

Field's cause has been championed by the Tory press, followed close behind by Kinnock and Labour's NEC. The Labour leaders are terrified at the prospect of Frank Field carrying out his threat and standing in a by-election against a Labour candidate, with Field getting the full backing of the media.

Hence Kinnock has been quick to make clear that any evidence of "*Militant* infiltration" in Birkenhead will result in a re-run of the reselection procedure. Also, he has promised Field that one member one vote will be put to the next party conference.

Furthermore, while having few political differences with Paul Davies, Kinnock and Co will even consider quashing his candidacy on the basis of rumours about Davies once threatening violence against a GMB official.

If Field carries out his threat to force a by-election, the local party has nothing to fear in taking him on. Moreover, if Kinnock decided to back Field against the local party then it should stand in defiance of the leadership against him. He should be fought on the basis of his rotten political record.

Recently he has supported schools opting out of the state system as well as hospitals opting out of the NHS! He supports the present government's policy of depriving unemployed people of benefits, unless they can "prove" that they are "actively seeking work". In Birkenhead this means 7,000 unemployed people chasing 700 mainly casual jobs.

The central question now, however, is Field's open attempt to whip up support for a new witch-hunt within the Labour Party coupled with his attack on the union block vote. He made this clear when he said:

"I am sure more people will now be willing to make statements about the activities of some trade unions and party members in the Wirral."

Field hopes to organise a purge, particularly of *Militant* supporters, in his own locality as an example to other local parties to witch-hunt socialists in theirs.

Any attempt to witch-hunt socialists from the Labour Party must be fought. Furthermore all Labour Party activists should oppose the NEC should it try to re-run the reselection procedure in order to get Field back in, up to and including Birkenhead Labour Party refusing to accept any NEC imposed decision. ■

BLOCK VOTE

BY PETE ADAMS

THE LABOUR Party leadership is trying to steal Norman Fowler's thunder. They want to prove that they are even more willing than this Tory employment minister to see the rights of trade unions legally curtailed.

Before the latest Employment Bill was published, the Labour leadership had renounced the party's support for the closed shop as it was "an instrument of trade union power". This is the very reason it should be supported!

While the closed shop has dwindled from a peak in 1978, when it covered over 5 million workers, to only 1.3 million workers today, it is still hated by the bosses. Why? Because it represents a gain for workers; 100% trade union membership in a workplace has forced employers to grant better wages and conditions.

Kinnock and his spokesman on these matters, Tony Blair, justify their denunciation of the closed shop on the basis of Labour's support for the European Social Charter as agreed at the last conference. The Charter includes the right to join a trade union but it does not support the closed shop. While the right of every worker to join a trade union would be an important gain—particularly for workers in small, unorganised workplaces—this shouldn't be an alternative to the closed shop. Labour must be forced to fight for both.

Of course, we fight for democratic practices in workplace union organisation—mass and section meetings, election and accountability of all stewards and representatives—so that all voices can be heard. But we are against the right of would be scabs, outside the discipline of the union, to undermine the collective action of the workers. The bosses' opposition to the closed shop is in line with their increased use of scabs in the 1980s. Our defence of it must be based on fighting this trend.

Labour's abandonment of the closed shop is part and parcel of their attempt to destroy the image of their party as the unions' plaything. We must begin the fight to prevent the leadership from getting away with this by campaigning now, at every level of the party, and the unions for a commitment from any future Labour government to the total and unconditional repeal of all the Tories' anti-union laws. ■

Labour right on the march



POLL TAX

BY BRIAN THOMAS

WITH THE "Great Poll Tax Robbery" now well underway in Scotland and spreading to England and Wales in April the Labour Party is out to prove its fidelity to the rule of law. The party has repeatedly stated that it will not lead a fight against the Poll Tax, it will merely protest against it strictly within the law. The Labour councils, even the so-called left ones, are proving just as useless in the campaign to sink Thatcher's flagship.

The rolling campaigns of such councils have done little to stop the Tories pressing on with their plans. Measures like delaying funding approval for Poll Tax computers have had little effect. Indeed the whole preparation for implementing the Tax has revealed that much of the real power in the councils lies with the unelected officers rather than the elected councillors. They have been able to press ahead with preparations regardless of the policies passed in the council chamber.

A small victory has been claimed by the leading force in the Scottish anti-Poll Tax campaign, *Militant*. On 8 December Strathclyde councillors tried to bureaucratically frustrate pointings (valuation of the assets of non-payers) in the face of public pressure. A week later, however, *Militant* were forced to admit defeat when these same councillors did an abrupt U-turn after being told by the council solicitor that such action was bound to attract a

charge of incompetence.

The pressure of the non-payment campaign has not been enough to prevent over 100,000 Sheriff's officers' warrants from being sent out demanding payment (the first step in legal proceedings). Lothian, another Labour stronghold and well organised area, has been one of the authorities showering the community with these warrants.

Labour knew full well that it would be doing the bosses' bidding when it came to implementing the Tax in Scotland. It is now doing the same in the rest of Britain. In London, Lambeth Council declared its refusal to prosecute people who didn't register. Accordingly, Walworth Road directly intervened in the local party's internal affairs. In Hackney, three councillors were expelled from the Labour Group for opposing the spending of £361,000 to convert a local hall into a Poll Tax Collection Centre. In Camden, four left councillors face expulsion for "conduct prejudicial to the Party" after the right collected a 114 page dossier stretching back to 1987. Margaret Hodge in Islington used the local press to smear activists as "fools" for supporting non-payment.

The struggle so far shows that we cannot rely on left councillors to block implementation of the Tax. It also shows that the pressure of the non-payment campaign on its own has not been able to stop the

councils and defeat the Tax in Scotland.

Only if a mass campaign of non-payment is successfully linked to industrial action against the Tax, will we be able to stop it altogether. This means fighting now for a policy of non-implementation of the Tax by local government workers and all others who will be used to deliver or process Tax demands.

It means recognising the class wide nature of the attacks and fighting in every union and workplace now for general strike

action on 2 April as a step towards an indefinite general strike to smash the Tax once and for all.

- Don't Pay!
- Don't Collect!
- Strike Against the Poll Tax!

The Great Poll Tax Robbery

A Workers Power Pamphlet

80p from Workers Power, BCM
7750 London WC1N 3XX

CLOSED SHOP

FOR SOME time now the Kinnock leadership has been working on methods of weakening Labour's links with the unions. The latest proposal is to reduce the union block vote from 89% to 50% of conference votes, and introduce one member one vote for both the reselection of MPs, the election of conference delegates and the election of constituency party officers. As usual, these changes have little to do with democracy. They are designed to undermine union leverage in the party and reassure the bosses that Labour is fit to govern capitalist Britain.

Indeed the new rules include proposals to destroy the vestiges of democracy at annual conference by scrapping debates on resolutions and amendments from local

parties. In their place, there will be controlled debates on Policy Review style documents. The conference will become even more like a rally at which the leadership can impress the public via the media.

There are real problems with the trade union block vote as it is currently organised. Conference votes are dominated by trade union bureaucrats wielding millions of votes and there is little say for the constituency parties. But the answer lies not in weakening or scrapping the block vote, but in democratising it. This means full and democratic debate at every level of affiliated unions, with the final vote at conference weighted according to the vote in the union as a whole. This would give a real voice to all union members in de-



Tony Blair

ciding Labour Party policy as well as bringing more political debate to union branch meetings.

The fact that most of the left in the party supports a diminished role for the unions in policy making demonstrates just how bankrupt their ideas are. Rather than fight the leadership on this crucial question, they are willing to go along with moves that threaten to bring forward the day when Labour breaks organised links with the trade unions completely. ■

Disputes in danger ENGINEERS

THE "drive for 35" is being turned into the "settle for 37" by the right wing leaders of the CSEU.

In his New Year message Jordan insisted that the campaign for a 35 hour week had won because the "principle" of a 37 hour week had been established and:

"Having established the principle we must now establish the practice everywhere."

This means attacking those strikers who oppose the sell-out of their struggle.

This became clear when the workers at the Roll Royce plant at Hillingdon voted by 10-1 to reject an offer of an average 37 hour week, tied to productivity concessions. Jordan and Laird praised this offer—which would mean a nine day fortnight with a 42 hour week alternating with a 32 hour week. When strikers rejected it before Christmas the AEU leaders threatened to cut strike pay from £125 to £60 a week. It was a blatant act of sabotage and it got them acceptance of the offer they wanted.

This incident highlights all of the dangers that confront the engineers. By limiting action to selective strikes backed by a levy run by the CSEU leadership, the bureaucracy is keeping a firm grip on the action. Strikers are at their mercy and solidarity and commitment are easily undermined.

Once a number of firms settle for 37 hours—in every case tied to massive concessions on productivity—the pressure to treat this as the best that can be achieved grows. After NEI Parsons, Smiths Industries, Rolls Royce and many others stitched up such deals, it became clear to workers on strike and to those paying the levy, that they were not going to win their objectives. So contributions to the levy have been falling off and scabbing has started at the Preston British Aerospace plant.

This will continue as a result of the willingness of the leaders to go for

BY A BIRMINGHAM AEU
MEMBER

local deals. A national agreement, together with the 35 hour claim with no strings, are both being thrown out of the window by Jordan, Laird and co.

In the face of this sell-out, the Broad Left are actually helping the right wing. In the *Engineering Gazette*, the Stalinist Jimmy Airle has hailed the CSEU campaign, telling his followers that the settlements for 37 hours mean the campaign for a 35 hour week is getting through (good Stalinist logic that) and that the "employers are clearly on the defensive".

This is claptrap. The rank and file in the CSEU and particularly in the AEU, must now strike out on a different course. They must organise to take the dispute out of the hands of the bureaucracy and spearhead a national fight for the full claim.

The 7,000 workers on strike at

British Aerospace (BAe) are the key to launching such a struggle. They are faced by a hard-nosed management using lay-offs to undermine the strike. It is bad enough that the bureaucrats are cutting strike pay, but far worse that they are refusing to give any money at all to those laid off. Workers are in effect being encouraged to either scab or withhold payments into the levy.

A strike throughout BAe could reverse this. To get this the BAe strikers need to organise strike committees elected by mass meetings and go to address workers in the BAe plants still working, picketing them out if necessary. On the basis of an all-out BAe strike the campaign for a national engineering strike would begin in earnest.

Rolls Royce workers were driven back to work. They can be brought out again. The "drive for 35" with no strings can be put back on the agenda. Workers so far kept out of the firing line can be won to a fight that takes its goals seriously. Mass meetings, mass pickets, lobbies and demonstrations—all of the things that new realists like Jordan hate—can rally thousands more engineers to action.

The target of such a campaign of rolling action must be the creation of a national strike committee, elected by and accountable to the strikers in each of the regions. A national strike run on such lines can stop the rot in the dispute and win the engineers' just demands, and secure a national agreement. ■

CARS

THE UNION leadership in Vauxhall have caved in to the bosses over pay.

They are accepting a deal which includes substantial attacks on working conditions and negotiating rights. It guarantees the bosses a boost in productivity. All this is despite the clear willingness of Vauxhall workers to take on the bosses and win a decent wage settlement.

This experience must serve as a warning to Ford's 32,000 manual workers who have just delivered an 81% vote in favour of strike action. They have rejected the company's miserable two year deal, mindful that their bosses have been raking in massive profits (£673 million last year) thanks to their graft.

The problem is that the union negotiators, Jimmy Airle (AEU) and

Jack Adams (TGWU), are refusing to say what deal they are asking for. This leaves them with plenty of room for a sell-out, accepting the essentials of the company offer plus a few pathetic sweeteners.

The way to prevent this is to organise in the plants now, through mass meetings and strike committees, to determine a claim based on what Ford workers and their families calculate they need. Such a claim must include protection against inflation, with a 1% rise for every 1% in the cost of living as determined by Ford workers and their families, not government appointed price watchers.

To win such a claim there must be no delay in launching the action, no waiting for a new round of negotiations, no re-runs of the ballot. The strike must start now! ■

AMBULANCES

OVER CHRISTMAS the ambulance workers more than held firm in their struggle against the 6.5% pay offer. They began to step up their action. After four months they could see that more needed to be done to change the Tories' minds.

In London, action was escalated as ambulance controllers refused to scab on suspended crews and other controllers. They too were suspended. In Manchester crews have refused to use their radios or to transfer patients from hospital to hospital.

More and more militants are beginning to see the need for a national indefinite strike as the means to break the log-jam. They are absolutely right—and all moves in this direction, including the development of unofficial crews committees—need to be supported and built upon in the campaign to get such a strike off the ground.

We need to organise meetings of stewards in every region and win them to the perspective of fighting for an all-out indefinite strike. Emergency cover should be under workers' control and with a recognition of the need to withdraw it if

management use scabs to break the strike. Such a strike must be run by strike committees, elected from and accountable to regular mass meetings.

The action of the union leadership, especially NUPE's Roger Poole, underline the urgency of building such a rank and file initiative. He has made clear that he sees his principal role in this dispute as fending off militants, not defeating the Tories. He has wasted the time of ambulance workers by getting them to lobby the Conservative Party conference. His proposal to the 4 January joint unions meeting on the dispute is to employ professional lobbyists to talk to the rednecks on the Tory backbenches. When the Manchester crews discussed strike action after Bury management used scabs on Boxing Day, he got his local henchman David Owen to tell them "it was against union policy".

In keeping the dispute as a public relations exercise he is getting the full backing of the TUC. They have turned what could have been a mighty display of working class support for the ambulance

workers on 13 January into a passive assembly.

The presentation of ambulance workers and firefighters as "special cases", a divisive idea when most workers face attacks on their living standards, is to be made by barring other workers from the demonstration on 13 January. Not even other health workers are to be allowed to march!

The TUC have made clear, and Poole echoes this, that there is to be no solidarity action with the ambulance workers. Instead, workers are being asked to give "gestures of support" such as observing five minutes silence or holding lunchtime rallies! Giving up a lunch break is not going to do a lot to change Clarke's mind.

The whole running of the dispute is wrong. It is time to switch tracks. If we don't then the four months of struggle so far will come to nothing. That must not be allowed to happen. The time to fight is now. The time to strike is now.

- For a national ambulance strike!
- For solidarity strikes alongside the ambulance workers!



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Who profits from mortgage misery?

THE INTEREST rate rises of the last 18 months have massively increased the cost to homeowners of keeping a roof over their heads. They have effectively slashed hundreds of pounds from the buying power of wages. Mass home ownership, which the Tories hoped would turn workers into a comfortable "propertied" class, has turned out to be the biggest rip-off of the Tory decade. It now spells misery for millions.

Interest rates rose from 7.5% in mid-1988 to 15% in October 1989. In other words the cost of borrowing money doubled. The Tories pushed up interest rates for two reasons: to damp down inflation and to keep the pound high on international money markets. The question of which reason was most important led to the public row in the Tory Party and the resignation of Nigel Lawson.

Whatever the reason given by the Tories the effect of the rise is to make working class people pay through the nose for the economic problems created by the bosses.

Lawson's last interest rate rise alone—from 14% to 15%—added £23 a month to the cost of a £30,000 mortgage. Some working class families in London, saddled with a mortgage of £60,000 due to massive house price increases in the mid-1980s, face repayments of £645 a month, £55 a week more than in June 1988.

The misery does not stop there. The doubling of interest rates has made it impossible for many working class families to take out new mortgages. Combined with almost no new council house building, the sale of council houses and rising rents in the private sector, the result is more and more young couples living with parents, growing families trapped in accommodation that is too small for them and a dramatic increase in homelessness.

Last year there were over 40,000 mortgage defaults, the highest ever. The fate of families whose houses are repossessed is worsened by the fact that they can be classified as "intentionally homeless" by the DSS and forced into cramped bed and breakfast accommodation or onto the streets.

All this makes a mockery of the much vaunted benefits of "greater home ownership". Two thirds of households in the UK are "owner occupied". But the fact is that the bank or building society owns your house until the mortgage is paid off. With last year's steep interest rate rises many young families have yet to pay a penny of the thousands of pounds they have borrowed—their monthly mortgage payments are simply paying off the interest

on the loan.

Who profits from the mortgage misery?

First of all anyone with a lot of money in the bank or building society. But since the savings of both workers and middle class people are at an all time low (4.5% of disposable income) that just leaves the rich and powerful. The very people who tell us that high interest rates are "good for the country" are the ones who can sit on their backsides whilst their money in the bank earns them a massive yearly income.

Added to this the banks and building societies themselves have creamed off fat profits from the mortgage business. Last year Nationwide Anglia, the second largest building society, made a profit of £293 million. Halifax, the biggest mortgage lender, made pre-tax profits of £238 million in the first six months of 1989. This was an increase of 6% on last year despite sharp losses in its estate agency business and the disappearance of a £26 million loan to a bankrupt Docklands developer, Kentish Property Group.

The profits made from mortgage repayments have been boosted by turning a blind eye to the house buyers' practice of lying about their income. As house prices rocketed in 1988 some buyers claimed they were earning double or treble their actual salaries to get the money needed to buy a home. They have been amongst the first to default and lose their homes. Meanwhile Halifax's Chief Executive described the society's situation as "very satisfactory".

In other words high mortgage repayments are the lifeline to increased profitability handed to money lenders at a time when every other aspect of their business is looking "much more competitive"—or in plain words—doggy.

So mortgages are one of the biggest ways open to the Tories to attack workers' living standards. The irony is, for a government committed to market forces, that interest rate rises are pure unadulterated state intervention. 15% interest rates are like a giant spanner hurled into the "market mechanism". In fact Lawson's last two or three interest rate rises were aimed solely at preventing world market forces from devaluing the pound.

The fact is that when it suits the bosses to countermand market mechanisms they can and will do it. And right now millions of workers are being forced to scrimp and save, to find second jobs, to be debt owners not home owners, in order to bail out the bosses' system and line the pockets of the money lenders. ■

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Fascism in Britain

David Ford examines the recent upsurge in British fascism

IN 1976 the National Front (NF) won 44.5% of the vote in a council election in Deptford, South East London. This depressed inner-city area, with a Labour majority going back years, suddenly witnessed an upsurge in support for open fascist candidates.

The National Front was the major fascist organisation in the 1970s. Its growth as an electoral force owed a great deal to the strategy, pioneered by aspiring führer John Tyndall, of reducing its policies to a single theme—racism. On the basis of simple slogans such as “stop immigration, start repatriation”, the NF deliberately appealed to a wider audience than the circles of committed Hitlerites it had been previously preoccupied with.

Deptford was one of its more spectacular results, but in numerous places a pattern of increased support for the fascists emerged. It was a pattern of white voters, often working class, lower middle class and lumpen, in inner-city areas with large black communities, switching their allegiance to the fascists. The failure of the Labour government to meet their needs pushed these people towards a party that offered them a simple solution and a visible scapegoat. Get rid of the blacks and there will be more jobs, was the answer that the NF presented to such voters.

Labour's own rotten record, of immigration controls, of police harassment, of virginity tests on Asian women, had done much to fan the flames of racism. Yet its patronage of the race relations industry made it appear to many of the whites, who had been made more desperate and more racist by its policies, unable to take the sort of vicious measures they were increasingly demanding. The NF profited from this.

However, two factors worked against the NF triumphing. The first was that in the same period anti-fascists, generally to the left of the Labour Party proved up to the job of mobilising at least sections of the working class and the



BNP führer John Tyndall (right) with former ally Colin Jordan, later to become leader of the British Movement

black communities, to physically smash the fascists when they attempted to march and organise. The pounding the NF received in the streets of Lewisham in August 1977 was the high point of these mobilisations.

The second factor though, was the election of the Thatcher government. When she told television audiences that she would protect whites from having their culture “swamped” by immigrants, she signalled her willingness to go a lot further than Labour. White racist voters, and indeed a whole number of NF members, took heart from such promises and switched their allegiance to the Tories. And, for a whole number of years Thatcher was as good as her word.

The Nationality Act, the endless waves of deportations and the tooling up of the police to terrorise black communities during and after the inner-city uprisings, all helped bolster Thatcher's credibility as a racist.

However while the anti-fascists dealt blows to the fascist attempts at a public presence and while Thatcher made off with their electoral clothes, the fascists were not destroyed. Indeed, after Lewisham one of the principal forces in the anti-fascist movement, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), set about diverting anti-fascists from physically smashing the NF.

Through the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) the SWP ensured that mass mobilisations were for pop con-

certs and carnivals, not confrontations. They concentrated on the Nazi aspect of the NF, refusing to take a clear stand on key issues facing the black community, such as immigration controls. Both of these aspects of the SWP strategy were designed to preserve the “broad front” of the ANL with its assorted Liberal, showbiz and establishment supporters.

It was a criminal policy that not only resulted in the sabotage of attempts to smash the fascists (Brick Lane 1978), but also in them being able to survive organisationally at a time when, especially after Lewisham, they could have been put well and truly on the run.

The fact that the fascists have split and in some cases become completely politically disorientated in the 1980s is largely down to Thatcher's racism and not the ANL's brand of festive anti-fascism. State racism has indeed become the main problem confronting the black communities. Nevertheless the principal fascist organisations are showing signs of renewed activity today. They remain intact and ready to cash in on any new tide of racism that emerges.

Murders

The signs are that such a tide is growing as the decade ends. In the mid-1970s a number of racist murders heralded the surge in NF support. Today many more such murders are taking place. Even that bastion of state racism, the Metropolitan Police, has been obliged to admit that racist attacks are dramatically increasing.

In places such as Bradford, Leicester, Oldham, East and North London the catalogue of brutal assaults on black people makes horrifying reading.

Underlying this trend is the fact that Thatcher's economic miracle has not solved any of the problems of poverty, poor housing and unemployment, for thousands of inner-city whites. Thatcher's racism is no longer seen as enough for such people. And, abandoned by the cowardly and reformist leadership of the Labour movement, these people are once again falling prey to the fascists' racist demagoguery.

White racism has been fuelled by the failures of the Labour councils. These reformist authorities have pioneered equal opportunities at the same time as introduc-

ing cuts. The net result has been to redistribute inequality thereby antagonising many white workers. This resentment has occasionally exploded into a racist backlash around issues such as education and the Rushdie affair. The cry of “rights for whites” has gone up, a cry of despair, as well as of racism, and exactly the sort of sentiment that fascism thrives on.

In this context, and with the electoral triumphs of fascist parties in Western Europe to point to, a regroupment of the fascist forces and a resurgence of their activity could still be on the cards. The cracks in the Thatcher monolith will aid such a process.

In this situation we need a clear anti-fascist response. There must be no re-run of the diversionary ANL carnival brand of dealing with the threat. We must begin the fight now for a workers' united front to smash fascism. In practice this means mobilising for a physical confrontation with the fascists every time they try to march or meet. Already Workers Power, Red Action and the Direct Action Movement have shown that it is possible to act in a unified and disciplined way within Anti-Fascist Action (AFA).

This must be extended by building AFA as a real workers' united front. Motions should be put to every union branch urging affiliation to AFA and pledging support to all anti-fascist mobilisations. Argument about the nature of fascism and the grave danger it poses to working class organisation must be taken into every workplace. It must be combined with a clear policy of anti-racism and a commitment to building links with the black communities.

Confrontation

However even a mass movement pledged to physical confrontation will need its defence organisations. As in industrial disputes the old days of push and shove have gone. The miners' strike showed that thousands of workers and their supporters unprotected and ill-disciplined were no match for a police force tooled up for the job. And nobody should forget that the fascists themselves have developed military organisations, such as their “honour guard”, for demonstrations.

To meet such a threat we need to build workers' self-defence squads and commit the labour movement to support all black self-defence initiatives. Only if we train ourselves, act in a disciplined fashion and co-ordinate our efforts, will we be able to deal with the threat the fascists pose. And if any worker doubts the need or importance of organising in such a way so as to smash the fascists, they need only consider the centrality of marches and public displays to the fascists. As führer Tyndall put it:

“I believe that our great marches, with drums and flags and banners, have a hypnotic effect on the public and an immense effect in solidifying the allegiance of our followers, so that their enthusiasm can be sustained.”

Our job is to mobilise in sufficient numbers, organise in a disciplined fashion and confront with an iron will every attempt the fascists make to have this “immense effect”. We must smash the fascists as part and parcel of our struggle against the capitalist system that breeds such vermin. ■

Know your enemy

IN WHATEVER guise it appears, fascism is a mortal threat to the working class. In power in the 1920s and 1930s in Italy, Germany and Spain, fascism totally destroyed the independent political and trade union organisations of the working class, carried racism to its barbarous conclusion with the extermination of millions of Jews, and propped up the rotting edifice of capitalist society with the methods of state terror. The British fascists will do the same.

The more bizarre fragments of the fascist movement who have gone in for Odin worship, catholic fundamentalism and, via magazines like *Scorpion*, environmentalism, should not serve to lull us. These cranks can and will take their place in any born again united fascist organisation. This will come from the main forces of British fascism, and we must know our enemy.

- **The National Front—Flag Group:** Despite its decline and splits this remains the best known fascist outfit. The Flag Group represents a continuation of the NF's 1970s style crude racism and anti-communism. It claims 3,000 members and is led by Ian Anderson, through whom it has links with various Ulster Orange organisations.

- **The Political Soldiers:** Led by Patrick Harrington, once the subject of a major anti-fascist campaign when he was a student at the Polytechnic of North London, this “faction” of the NF is the most bizarre. Basing itself on the “neither capitalism nor communism”

Third Position originating in modern Italian fascism, the “soldiers” pride themselves on their radical nationalism and separatism.

This has led them into alliances with “fellow” nationalists like Gadaffi and the US black separatist Farrakhan. They have infiltrated the Welsh Nationalist movement and also the green movement, standing as “Green-wave” candidates. Nobody should be fooled. The soldiers' nationalism is racism. Their radicalism a deceitful form of populism designed to appeal to white working class youth.

- **The British Nationalist Party (BNP):** Led by Führer Tyndall, this group is both the Flag's main rival and potential regroupment partner. Like the NF of old it comprises three layers—a hard-core of Hitlerites around Tyndall, a layer of respectable racists with whom it has links, and young white street-fighters who are the backbone of its marches.

For many years Tyndall has used his links with South African and eccentric reactionaries like Dowager Lady Birdwood to give him a hearing on the far right of the Conservative Party. Indeed a series of known fascists have stood as Conservative candidates in elections—Ken Henderson (ex-BNP) who stood in Littleborough and Anthony Jones, a former NF organiser stood in Ashton-under-Lyme.

The BNP also have links with the Freedom Association led by Baroness Cox and Norris McWhirter and have been able to exploit the racism whipped up by

this group around issues like “alien” religions in schools (Newham), and “free” choice of schools (Kirklees) etc.

However if this is the overt “respectable” side of the BNP there is also the covert physical force element. Tyndall has managed to regroup some of the main fascist thugs around him. One of the caretakers at the new BNP headquarters in Welling is Mark Anthony Lecomber, the man who tried to bomb the WRP offices in 1987. A recent recruit was Joe Short, a Satan worshipper who has been convicted for firebombing a synagogue.

- **Blood and Honour:** This is the “cultural” wing of British fascism, organising largely skinhead youth via gigs into a more coherent fascist following. The leader, Ian Stuart Donaldson, fronts the band Skrewdriver. It includes groups with delightful names like Brutal Attack, No Remorse and Combat 84 etc. They started as a split from Harrington and Holland's “White Noise” Club and are avowedly National Socialist in the Hitlerite tradition.

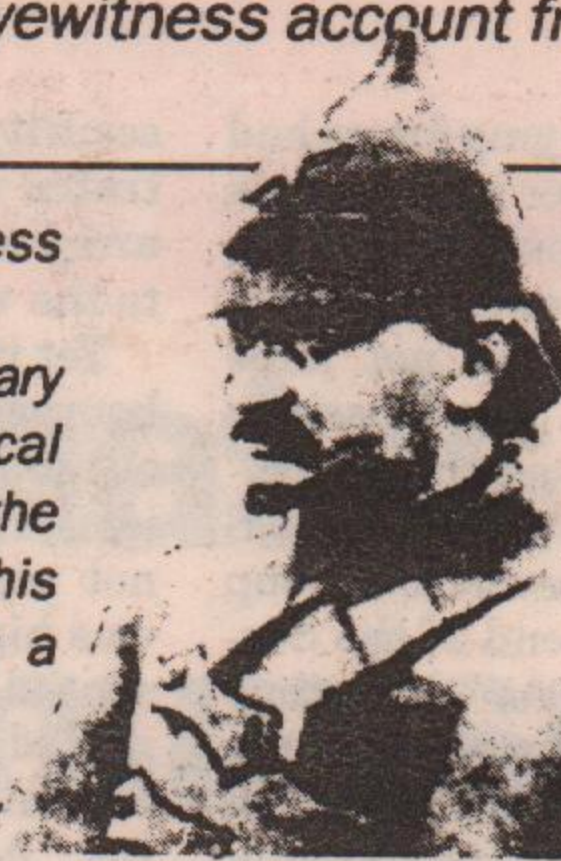
They are probably the most crude variant of the fascist tendencies and are virulently racist and homophobic with links to the Ku Klux Klan and more recently Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance. They suffered a set-back on 27 May when a large number of their supporters who had come to Hyde Park for a gig got a pasting from anti-fascists, but have certainly not given up organising the more lumpen elements in society.

Fifty years ago this August a paid agent of Joseph Stalin buried an ice-pick in the head of Leon Trotsky. Stalin heaved a sigh of relief. Trotsky had tirelessly fought the ruthless regime of the USSR.

He denounced the seizure of political power by Stalin's monstrous bureaucratic regime and defended the true legacy of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—workers' power, exercised through democratic councils, the spreading of the revolution

internationally and the transition to a classless and stateless society, genuine communism.

Today Stalinism is gripped by a mortal crisis. A revolutionary storm is sweeping all before it in Eastern Europe. The political revolution Trotsky struggled for until his death has begun. In the pages that follow we explain the origins and nature of this revolution, explain the dangers that confront it and chart a course for its victory.



Days of hope

REVOLTS AGAINST Stalinist tyranny have peppered the history of the degenerate workers' states. Isolated, they have been repeatedly crushed by the tanks of the USSR or its faithful servants in the ruling Stalinist parties. Today the situation is different.

The synchronised upheaval of 1989 has swept across the whole of Eastern Europe. Gorbachev has been unwilling to implement the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of using military might to crush the opposition. The explanation for this lies in the crisis of the USSR itself arising from years of economic stagnation.

The emergence of Gorbachev in the 1980s as a champion of economic restructuring (*perestroika*) opened up a new period in the USSR and in its relations with imperialism. The keystone of Gorbachev's programme was retreat. On a world scale he renegotiated the terms of peaceful co-existence by conceding to the imperialists' demands. Soviet troops left Afghanistan, while their Cuban and Vietnamese counterparts withdrew from Southern Africa and Kampuchea. These moves paved the way for reductions in military spending in the USSR.

Internally Gorbachev's programme envisaged a retreat from central planning and the introduction of market mechanisms as a means of stimulating economic growth.

To overcome the resistance of the vast army of bureaucrats who stood to lose from such reforms, Gorbachev sought to enlist popular support through his policy of openness (*glasnost*). Limited democratic reforms were introduced, certain crimes of the past were admitted and a campaign against corruption was launched.

Gorbachev's programme was always a profoundly risky one for the bureaucracy. In the USSR itself the reforms have not resolved the fundamental problems. Prices are rising, the black market is expanding and this winter has seen the worst shortages in the cities of the USSR for thirty years. The miners strikes of the summer showed that the workers will not tolerate such *perestroika* at their expense.

At the same time *glasnost* has unleashed widespread protests by workers, oppressed nationalities and the intelligentsia against the rule of the bureaucracy itself.

But it is in the states of Eastern Europe that the repercussions of Gorbachev's programme have been felt most acutely. They are ruled by regimes imposed on them by Stalin's armies and suffer from varying degrees of economic crisis thanks to the bungled planning efforts of self-serving bureaucrats. The masses of these countries have seized the openings provided by Gorbachev's reforms, while their rulers have fragmented into warring factions, unable to continue in the old way.

The resulting revolutionary crises have opened the door to three possible outcomes: the restoration of capitalism, a retrenchment of bureaucratic power by the Stalinist parties or the victory of proletarian political revolution.

The danger of full scale capitalist restoration is most clearly shown in Poland and Hungary. The bureaucrats were unable to overcome their economic stagnation through limited marketisation. Even Jaruzelski's crushing of the workers' opposition in 1981 proved insufficient as a long term solution. Sections of the bureaucracy have turned ever more openly to the re-introduction of capitalism as the means of salvation.

In Poland, following the trouncing of the Stalinist party in the semi-democratic elections, a government dominated by restorationists has emerged. While the Stalinist PUWP and Jaruzelski still control the repressive apparatus, Solidarnosc—no longer a real trade union but an evolving Christian Democratic party dominated by catholic intellectuals and free market economists—control the government. They and the Stalinists are agreed on the need to see through a programme of economic reform.

It is a programme that should serve to warn every worker of the threat that capitalist restoration poses. Following the dictates of the IMF the Polish government is set to introduce an austerity package that will decimate the living standards of the Polish masses. Prices will soar as subsidies are cut. Wages are to be legally stopped from matching the price rises with the aim of

cutting real incomes by 25%. Closures and redundancies will be introduced across industry as a prelude to privatisation. The currency is to be devalued by two thirds and control over foreign trade is to be scrapped. If these measures are successful the Polish workers—who have a proud record of defending their living standards with their lives—will have suffered an enormous defeat.

In the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Romania the danger of capitalist restoration also exists. Mass mobilisations toppled the Stalinist governments of these countries, extending to civil war in the case of Romania. Reforming sections of the bureaucracy have secured a degree of control, but are sharing it with forces of the opposition many of whom are overtly pro-capitalist such as the economic advisers to Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum.

In each of these countries the development of a "Polish" scenario is possible after the elections in the spring. The hatred of Stalinism felt by the masses could well produce popular front governmental coalitions which would eventually also open the door to the restoration of capitalism. In the GDR the pressure for restoration also arises from without, from the imperialist German reunification drive of Helmut Kohl.

Although the pace of developments will vary it is this potential for widespread moves towards the restoration of capitalism that raises the spectre of the alternative outcome of bureaucratic retrenchment.

The revolutionary crises have opened the door to three possible outcomes: the restoration of capitalism, a retrenchment of bureaucratic power by the Stalinist parties or the victory of proletarian political revolution.

The Stalinist bureaucracies derive their power and privilege from their political control over the planned economies. They maintain that control by their hold on the repressive apparatus in each country. Under the current conditions of crisis they are fragmenting. And against those who favour self-reform and restoration stand elements who will fight to the death to save their own skins. Ceausescu and his Securitate were an example of this. In the face of actual restoration other sections of the bureaucracy would go along a similar path.

But their ability to carry through a retrenchment, with all the repression that it would entail, depends to a considerable extent on the USSR. For his own purposes Gorbachev has been prepared to go along with reform and large scale marketisation and even capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe. But Gorbachev's condition for tolerating "reform" is that the security of the USSR itself will not be threatened. For Gorbachev himself is not a restorationist. He is a Stalinist Bonaparte attempting to rescue the Soviet Union's economy by striking a balance between command planning and marketisation.

When his security has come under threat he has carried out his own form of bureaucratic retrenchment. His banning of strikes, his crushing of national revolts, his defence of the "leading role of the party" all illustrate this.

If capitalist restoration is to take place in Eastern Europe it would mean not merely imperialist economic penetration of those countries, but ultimately imperialist domination of them. In turn this would necessitate the destruction of Stalinist control over the repressive apparatus in each country. It would result in the transformation of each country into a puppet of imperialism, with the probable exception of the GDR which would become part of imperialist Germany. Imperialism would then be at the very door of the USSR, threatening its security.

In the face of such a threat combined with growing restorationist and separatist nationalist movements within the USSR, Gorbachev may, as Stalin did in the 1940s, attempt to resist the interventions of imperialism through bureaucratic crackdown in Eastern Europe. The condition for such a move will be that each and every gain the masses have made in struggle, principally their independent organisations, are destroyed. The Chinese bureaucracy showed that Stalinism is capable of such a retrenchment. And Gorbachev, while regretting their actions, did not condemn it. The warning was clear. He may need to use such methods and will not rule them out.

Against capitalist restoration or bureaucratic retrenchment the masses must be won to a revolutionary alternative; to the programme of political revolution. In the struggles of 1989 the working class have demonstrated again and again their power and their capacity to make revolutions. In Czechoslovakia the general strike was pivotal in the destruction of the old regime. In the USSR the miners' strikes shook the regime to its foundations. In Romania the workers entered the fray with arms in hands, and forged in a day organisations which they had been deprived of for forty years.

It is inevitable and quite understandable that the years of Stalinist misrule have turned such workers against "communism". The communism they have endured has been a foul concoction of repression, bureaucratic privilege and the denial of political freedom. Under such circumstances the proponents of capitalist restoration and bourgeois democracy are gaining a hearing. They come in different guises—the church, the christian democratic parties, pro-capitalist social democracy. These forces are striving to win the leadership of the working class with false promises of freedom.

Against these advocates of capitalism revolutionary parties of the working class must be built in the months ahead. Trotskyism has no need to be shy in unfurling its banner before the masses of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Unlike the capitalists who tolerated the enslavement of the masses by Stalinism when it suited their purposes, we have always stood four square for the independence of the working class, its organisations and its rights. Unlike the Stalinists who stole power from the masses of Eastern Europe and the USSR we have stood for real workers' democracy, a plan geared to the satisfaction of human need and against all national oppression.

Today we stand against capitalist restoration and bureaucratic retrenchment. We stand for a thoroughgoing political revolution that alone can open up the way to real freedom—freedom from vicious capitalist exploitation as well as from bureaucratic tyranny. In the months ahead we will fight for the building and consolidation of genuinely independent workers' organisations—factory committees, trade unions, workers' councils and a workers' militia.

Faced with elections in spring we will fight for workers' candidates committed to opposing the sell-off of the workers' states to imperialism and to any return to Stalinist rule. In Poland and Hungary we will call for organised opposition to the austerity packages which seek to starve the workers so that a handful of parasites can reap rich profits. Everywhere we will urge working class internationalism, the spread of revolution and the destruction of all tyrants. The revolutionary Trotskyist party can and must be built in the course of the struggle around this programme.

To the extent that Trotskyism succeeds in these tasks then the victory of the political revolution will become possible. And such a victory, beginning even in only one country, will light a new beacon of hope for workers everywhere, will inspire countless millions to take the road of revolutionary struggle, will plunge our rulers—both bureaucratic and capitalist—into panic and disarray. Such a prize is worth fighting for. Such a prize will be the only worthy reward for those who, like the Romanians, have given their lives in the cause of revolution.

- Forward to proletarian political revolution!
- Forward to the world socialist revolution!

The occupying forces had the power in the areas where their arms were present and each knew that the others could not force things to an issue. The Russians had the power in Eastern Europe."

These were the words of US President FD Roosevelt to a group of senators at the end of the Second World War. At that time Roosevelt and Stalin could agree what to use the Russian power for, namely, to crush a common enemy. Yet that enemy was no longer German imperialism, but a tide of often revolutionary mobilisations of the urban and rural workers and peasants throughout Europe.

Ironically, the advance of the Red Army had aroused the expectations and activities of the masses. Everywhere the possibility of replacing the collapsed power of the bourgeoisie with genuine proletarian power existed. Yet such an outcome could have delivered a death blow to the Kremlin Stalinists and ruined their strategy of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism.

Since the triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy after 1924 the Kremlin had sacrificed all revolutionary challenges to capitalism on the altar of this strategy. This itself flowed from a reactionary idea of trying to build "socialism in one country". In order to obtain the peace to embark on this utopian endeavour the Kremlin aimed to reassure the so-called democratic imperialists of the world that no threats to bourgeois rule would be tolerated.

So from 1944 onwards, the defeat of German imperialism by the Red Army was accompanied by the deliberate destruction of the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist movements of the East European masses. Everywhere the Stalinists protected, and in some cases reintroduced, the rule of the bourgeoisie in the economy and prevented the seizure of private property by the workers and peasants. As the worthy Swiss publication, the *Geneva Journal*, crowed with regard to Hungary:

"Wherever they can do so, the Russians block and oppose the taking over of large industrial enterprises under a new statist system."

While the workers had already seized factories then the Stalinists used nationalisation as a means of taking direct control away from them. In the occupied countries of Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia, nationalisation was the only way, short of terrible blood letting, of defusing the revolutionary situation. Nationalisation did not represent the expropriation of capitalist private property in factories. On the contrary, as the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (CPCS) put it in 1945:

"By nationalisation we understand the transfer of the property of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators to the hands of the Czech and Slovak nation."

In short, putting it at the disposal of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie. Drafting one nationalisation decree the government was very explicit, stating that the enterprises were to be administered in line with the principles of commercial business, independence, profit making and free competition.

In the process of destroying the working class threat in Eastern Europe the Red Army served to stabilise and in some cases reconstruct the forms of administrative and repressive state apparatus associated with bourgeois rule. The government, for example, was centralised into the hands of a distant and unaccountable executive. The internal and external

security services were concentrated in the hands of a standing army unaccountable and opposed to the working class.

Yet it was not enough to have a bourgeois state apparatus without representatives of the capitalists. Their representatives were not numerous and the economy was highly stultified. So it was essential that the Stalinists integrated, on their own terms, the capitalists into the state apparatus. Accordingly, the Stalinists formed coalition governments with the representatives of the bourgeoisie in high, if not crucial, places.

In Romania the first government after the German defeat was made up by the National Peasants and National Liberals in September 1944, the only Stalinist representative being the Minister of Justice Patrascanu. The machinations and brutal force of the Red Army over the next months in Romania were designed to remove the two major bourgeois parties (The National Democratic Bloc) and replace them with a government of the National Democratic Front, consisting of Stalinists, Social Democrats, the Union of Patriots and the Ploughman's Front. Such a government was an extremely malleable one for the Kremlin.

A similar struggle took place in Poland. The USA and Britain backed a group of Polish nationalists based in London, headed by Peasant Party leader Mikolajczyk. The Kremlin supported the Lublin Committee and this side won out. The purges, intimidation and liquidation of prominent bourgeois figures did not signal the complete elimination of bourgeois rule, but they were measures designed to crush bourgeois parties with strong roots in the national population and replace them with other bourgeois figures who would have little base from which to resist the designs of the Kremlin.

At the same time they could be relied upon to administer the economy in a way that would also serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie and even solicit aid from imperialism.

While the capitalist figures were kept in important economic ministries there was one decisive lever of the reconstructed state apparatus that the Stalinists kept firmly in the grip of the Red Army and its local allies and agents. The leading Hungarian Stalinist Rakosi spoke for all his ilk in Eastern Europe in this period when he remarked:

"There was one position, control of which was claimed by our party from the first minute. One position where the party was not inclined to consider any distribution of the posts according to the strengths of the parties in the coalition. This was the State Security Authority. We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment."

The result was a dual power situation that reflected the balance of forces between the world bourgeoisie and the USSR as it manifested itself in the East European area. Political power was split, or rather shared, between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. Dual power does not necessarily mean that both sides are equal and balanced. The Soviet army and police apparatuses meant that repressive power lay exclusively in the hands of the Stalinists. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie were re-integrated into the political superstructure via their control of the highly stultified economy.

This pact was necessary for the bourgeoisie because they were weak and depended on the Stalinists to maintain private property. It was necessary for the Stalinists because during the period 1945-47

In the years 1945-47 the armed forces of the Kremlin swept the Nazis from Eastern Europe, destroyed independent workers' organisations, and rebuilt shattered capitalist states and with a renewed offensive of imperialism to dislodge them from power, the rule against the bourgeoisies they had installed and liquidated capitalism.

In this edited extract from the *Degenerated Revolution*, written by Workers Power Group in 1982, we look at the origins of "really existing socialism" in Eastern



Soviet infantry march through Kraków, Poland in 1945

The birth of Eastern Bloc

they wanted to maintain private property to fulfil their deal with imperialism and in return secure economic aid. Dual power was also necessary for the Stalinists because it was a means of crushing any independent activity of the working class.

Popular front and bourgeois workers' government

It is clear then that during this period of dual power, the states in Eastern Europe can be described as still, essentially, capitalist. Profit regulated the economies, even if industry was in the hands of the state. Because it was in the hands of the state, it was essential to insert capitalists into governmental office. Nevertheless, this was a highly unstable situation.

Relative to any of the East European countries, imperialism remained stronger than the USSR. The Stalinists could not hope to rule this way indefinitely. The national economic power of the bourgeoisie, itself drawing on the power of imperialism through its thousands of ties, would be marshalled to unseat the "alien body" of Stalinism in the bourgeoisie's state. A bourgeois political counter-revolution would

sooner or later have destroyed the political rule of Stalinism. For this reason the Stalinist project of consolidating capitalist states was necessarily utopian.

The only reason that the Stalinists could even attempt to maintain this joint power for any length of time was due to the economic and political dislocation arising from the war and its aftermath. Most of the East European countries occupied by the Red Army had been weak capitalist nations throughout the 1930s. Their economic and political ties with imperialism were severely disrupted during the war. The contraction of world trade continued right through the 1944-47 period. Relations between Anglo-American imperialism and the national bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe were virtually non-existent during this time.

This reduced the power of the national bourgeoisies to resist the enforced direction of the Stalinists. This fracturing of the relations between imperialism and its national agents was a highly conjunctural factor which temporarily offset the contradiction between Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. But this strategic contradiction reasserted itself during 1947-48 when the long expected "united front" of the successful imperialisms was directed at the Kremlin's role in Eastern

Europe. The tactical united front between imperialism and the bureaucracy, put together to deny the possibility of a European revolution, now subsided along with the threat of a revolution itself. Relations between the USSR and the western Allies had deteriorated with increased rapidity during the course of 1946.

The reasons which underpin the gradual change in ideological stance in 1946 are not hard to find. The Yalta and Potsdam conferences had come to an agreement over "spheres of influence" which basically covered Europe and the Balkans. But the Kremlin's refusal to take its troops out of Northern Iran in February 1946, Molotov's claim to the "trusteeship" of Libya in North Africa and the USSR's fiery insistence on having the right of access to a warm water port in the Dardanelles in August, convinced the imperialists of the urgent need to contain the USSR.

The imperialist offensive was led by the USA; the western nations, such as France and Great Britain, were in the midst of economic crises and were thus unable to relaunch a vigorous round of accumulation on their own.

Stalin's hold in Eastern Europe and the spectre of revolution in the west, called forth the "Truman Doctrine"—the doctrine of contain-

Eastern Europe, crushed all economies. But then, faced with Stalinist parties moved power and the Irish Workers Europe.



the OC

ment. This ruled out an immediate war against the USSR, but it did involve a new political offensive backed up by massive economic aid for anti-communist governments.

This aid package, called the Marshall Plan, was announced in June 1947. It was not a programme of relief but of reconstruction, entailing some \$17 billion to Europe in return for massive US influence in domestic and foreign policy. Sixteen countries had applied and accepted its terms within three months.

With this twin attack the USA codified its Cold War stance: to draw the line on USSR influence in Europe, to burden the Kremlin with sole responsibility for reconstruction in its own "spheres" and to eradicate its influence in the imperialist spheres.

In Eastern Europe, where the levers of political power were in their hands, the Stalinists were compelled to choose whether to confront the imperialist offensive or retreat and concede to it. Consistent with their attempt to construct a strategic alliance with capitalism several of the national communist parties were prepared to accept Marshall Aid. The Czech and Polish Cabinets showed a positive response to the Plan, including the Stalinists. But they were soon forced to decline by USSR pressure.

If the road of the Marshall Plan had been accepted then sooner or later Stalinism would have lost complete control in Eastern Europe and imperialism would have stood knocking on the door of the USSR itself. The Kremlin and Stalin were not prepared to risk this fate and so risk their own necks. Stalin tightened the reins of power and ordered the elimination, from above, of the economic roots of the bourgeoisie and their political representatives in the state who could have been a potential point of departure for rebuilding their power in the future.

The social overturns in Eastern Europe

A preparatory and necessary step to the bureaucratic liquidation of bourgeois power in Eastern Europe was the complete bureaucratic control of the national communist parties over the working class. Primarily this meant the destruction of the influence of the Social Democratic parties over the working class which rivalled, and in most cases outstripped, that of the Stalinists. This was especially so in Poland, Hungary and in what was to become the German Democratic Republic. The method was usually the same; intimidations, purges and forced fusions.

In September 1944 a new pro-Stalinist leadership was foisted on the Polish socialists (PPS) with a view to securing unification. The rank and file continuously refused to endorse this so in December 1947 it was done anyway, with a further twelve leaders being removed and 82,000 members expelled. Persistent resistance from the Hungarian socialists (SDP) was finally overcome in February 1948 when the pro-Moscow minority in the SDP convened a Congress without the centre and right under the protection of the secret police, and in June the merger was announced.

Despite the risks this policy held for the future of *détente*, the Kremlin feared its own destruction if it did not take this road. Not only would the USSR have had to give up its continuing economic plunder of Eastern Europe, but it would have seriously threatened the continued existence of the bureaucracy itself. Faced with this extremely disadvantageous turn in the relationship of "peaceful co-existence" the Kremlin decided to destroy the bourgeoisie in these countries.

Everywhere the pattern was the same. Leading bourgeois figures were arrested or executed and opposition gradually banned. In Poland, the opposition leader, Mikolajczyk, fled from the tightening hold of the Stalinists in 1947. In Romania King Michael was deposed in December and in early 1948 the now Stalinist dominated United Workers' Party took control.

The leader of the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, Petkov, was arrested in June 1947 and executed in September. 20,000 were arrested and opposition papers closed for good. In Hungary, Kovacs, the former Smallholders leader, was arrested in May by the Soviet army. The Prime Minister fled to the USA in May.

Only in Czechoslovakia did the Stalinists mobilise forces outside their own security apparatus to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The period of dual power came to a decisive end after 20 February 1948. A dispute then over cabinet control of the police resulted in twelve non-CPCS ministers offering the bourgeois head, Benes, their resignations.

It was understood that they would be refused, and was designed

as an offensive against the CPCS. But the CPCS staged mass demonstrations culminating in marches of armed trade union militia on 23 February. No independent organisations were thrown up; the demonstration was kept within strict limits designed to put pressure on Benes to accept the resignation, which he did.

The CPCS was asked to form a government which it did, comprising only the CPCS and its allies. The May elections went ahead under great repression, with one slate of candidates and a decree that a blank ballot paper was "tantamount to treason". The results gave a juridical seal to the "coup".

In other countries demonstrations and rallies were used merely to legitimise the bureaucratic overturn in the eyes of the Stalinists' base. Nowhere was the government one of struggle based on independent workers' organisations, militias and soviets. Instead the overturn was the work of a Stalinist bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government.

It ensured that the masses were so disorganised, and that the state force at its own disposal was so considerable that it prevented the working class carrying out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie itself and replacing it with the forms of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers' councils and a workers' militia.

The transformation of these states into a bureaucratically degenerate form of the dictatorship of the proletariat finally took place at that point when the regimes, having expropriated the bourgeoisie economically, established a monopoly of foreign trade and began to organise their nationalised economies on the basis of command planning.

With the introduction of five year plans in the Buffer Zones (Bulgaria 1948, Czechoslovakia 1949, Hungary 1950, Poland 1950, Romania and the GDR 1951), the process of the creation of bureaucratically degenerate workers' states was complete.

Under these exceptional circumstances the strategy of *détente* with capitalism on a world scale led to its overthrow in certain countries. This was not because the Kremlin wanted to abandon the strategy of "peaceful co-existence". Rather, it was done in order to achieve it on a more stable basis on a world scale when the balance of *détente* had become very unfavourable to the Stalinists. It did not indicate that Stalinism had in any way become a revolutionary factor in events.

Wherever it occurred and whatever form it took, Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions were counter-revolutionary. As Trotsky noted:

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."

Thus "really existing socialism" in Eastern Europe was a forcible implant. It involved a bureaucratic-repressive limitation of the independent action of the working class. It devalued the very notion of "revolution", "socialism", "workers' state" and the planned economy in the eyes of the oppressed masses. ■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



What is communism?

"ROMANIA REJECTS communism", "the crowd chanted anti-communist slogans", "the communist symbol was torn from the national flag". With headlines and reports like these the media has been hammering home the message—communism is dead, discredited, consigned to the rubbish bin of history.

The Stalinist parties, east and west, are doing their best to confirm this. They are rushing to ditch their remaining vestiges of Marxist symbols and phraseology. The British CP wants to be a "Socialist Society", the Italian CP a "Labour Party", the German Stalinists have become a "Party of Democratic Socialism".

Why do revolutionary Marxists who support the workers' revolutions under way in Eastern Europe, insist on retaining the title "communist"? What is the difference between socialism and communism? Why don't we just ditch the lot and find new words to express our aims?

In the first place there is nothing "communist" about the Stalinist parties or the countries they rule. In Russia, where workers overthrew the bosses' government and replaced it with a regime of workers' councils, power was subsequently usurped by a bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy exists on the basis of the existing gains of the revolution. But it could not use them to advance towards "socialism" or "communism" in the scientific sense. Despite proclaiming the actual existence of socialism in their states the Stalinist rulers there have blocked that transition.

Marx and Engels chose to call themselves "communists" because this word expresses most clearly the goal of working class struggle. It is an irony that the word which today denotes the inhumanity of Ceausescu and Deng Xiao Ping originally embodied the most fundamental human goals.

For us communism means a classless, stateless society with no national boundaries and no social oppression; a society where people work not in order to eat, but for the good of society as a whole, and where their work is not rigidly specialised or repetitive but varied and fulfilling. It is a goal Marx summed up with the slogan "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need".

Opponents

Opponents of Marx accuse him of being a dreamer, a romantic or utopian. But Marx and Engels were certainly not dreamers—they developed scientific socialism. They discovered and explained how the working class had both the interest and ability to bring about communism.

All history, Marx explained, is the history of class struggles. One after the other newly emerging classes have overthrown decrepit ruling classes. They have replaced one form of property with another, one mode of exploitation with another.

But capitalism created a class—the working class—which had no form of property or exploitation of its own. Marx did not mean workers do not own anything. But they cannot own the means of production except collectively.

Whereas every previous revolution had replaced one form of private property with another, the workers could only abolish private

property in the means of production. They cannot abolish their own exploitation without abolishing exploitation in general. The workers' rise to power as a ruling class could only be the prelude to the abolition of class society altogether. As class society is abolished so too is the need for a state whereby one class rules over the others.

Marx and Engels called themselves "communists" to express this goal. They never liked the name "social democratic" adopted by the mass workers' parties of the 19th century. Lenin returned to this designation in the struggle for a new workers' international during the First World War.

But revolutionary Marxists have never rejected the word "socialism" or counterposed it to "communism" as our goal. Marx explained that there would be two stages in the creation of this communist society. In the first phase, he wrote society will exist: "... just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is therefore in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it comes".

Abolished

For Marx and Lenin, socialism is this stage in which the working class has abolished the rule of the capitalists but not yet rid society of the workings of capitalism's economic laws.

The factories, offices and transport systems would be socially owned, but in the sphere of distribution of goods, certain features of bourgeois society would remain: the right to own individual property, the unequal distribution of wealth—reflecting the unequal value of work performed by different individuals. And, Lenin wrote: "This inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state... without the bourgeoisie".

Even socialism however does not spring into existence ready made on the day workers seize power. There must be a transition period during which the working class struggles against the bosses' economic laws of capitalism in the sphere of production.

The nationalisation of the means of production, the state monopoly of foreign trade and the beginning of planned production are the first and most basic steps of this transition period.

It is because these steps were taken in Russia after 1917, and again in Eastern Europe after the war that we call the Stalinist states post-capitalist economies. The workers of Eastern Europe should not give up these gains as the western capitalists would like. They need instead to overthrow the bureaucracy which has blocked the path to socialism and liberate the economy and society from the shackles that the bureaucracy imposed.

Communism remains inscribed on our banner at a time when the Stalinists are erasing it and the capitalists cheering them on. It describes the truly human goal of a "free" society, where humanity is free from all want, coercion and ignorance.

A generation of youth have entered a revolutionary struggle against Stalinism and for freedom from drudgery and tyranny. To them we offer revolutionary communism as the only strategy able to make these dreams a reality. ■

STALINISM IN CRISIS

Revolution in Romania

Eastern Europe's most repressive regime has fallen. Its most hated Stalinist dictator is dead. But the Romanian revolution is not over, as the bourgeois rulers of the west would like to believe. Only its first phase is at an end. The most important tasks lie ahead.

The workers must retain their arms. The bourgeois democratic counter-revolution must not succeed. Close the door to the social counter-revolution! The workers and peasants must take power into their own hands!

The revolution and civil war between 1989 and 25 December 1989 was the most courageous uprising against Stalinism since the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Beginning with the mass demonstration in support of the persecuted pastor Laszlo Tokes and ending with the formation of the Provisional Government of the National Salvation Front, there were indeed ten days that shook the world.

The hypocrisy of the imperialists in their rejoicing for Ceausescu's downfall is staggering. For years, decades even, they toasted and feted Ceausescu. The man who demagogically denounced the USSR's invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan was the west's favourite communist.

Knighted

He was hosted by the President of France and knighted by the Queen of England. His wife was given honorary degrees for bogus scientific talents. All this cant was tolerated out of pure political calculation that the Kremlin's enemy must be the west's friend.

And all the while, from the moment of his "election" as Romania's despot to the moment of his flight from Bucharest, he killed and imprisoned those who even voiced support for democratic rights. Where were the imperialist preachers of "democracy" then?

Since 1965 Ceausescu has ruled Romania in an increasingly autocratic and brutal style. It was this as much as anything that underpinned the country's stability in the 1980s.

The bureaucracy ruled through terror, it could allow of no dissent, not even of the most sanitised kind. Its ubiquitous internal security force (Securitate) spied and harassed, tried and murdered its enemies whether at home or abroad. No larger machine of terror per head of population existed in any eastern European country.

This level of repression flowed entirely from the project of the Ceausescu-led caste since the 1970s. On the one side they eschewed military pacts with the USSR and fashioned a political independence from it. On the other side, Ceausescu drew Romania back from its growing indebtedness to imperialism, fearing a Polish-style reaction from the working class.

Reactionary

Consequently, Ceausescu embarked on a more autarchic path. Clinging firmly to the reactionary theory of socialism in one country the bureaucracy cut back its debt and set out for self-sufficiency. In a country of few resources this inevitably involved a great increase in labour discipline and an even more heavy handed attempt to boost agriculture and direct it increasingly to export markets.

Ceausescu's assaults on the workers' standards of living undercut any support for him. His policies of forced destruction of villages and the creation of "agro-industrial complexes" fatally alienated still further the peasantry. In recent years the bureaucracy became an isolated caste relying on naked repression alone to rule.

In his final years Ceausescu's

Statement by the
International
Secretariat of the
LRCI:
29 December 1989



Armed workers' militia on guard outside the former central committee building in Bucharest

repression was increasingly directed against sections of the bureaucracy itself. The inner clique grew narrower with Ceausescu's family playing an ever more central role. They displayed all the traits of the Stalinism of the 1930s: cult of the personality and a failure to comprehend the reality around them. By the end the Ceausescus lived in a world of "Potemkin villages"

Vilified

Although they vilified Gorbachev's process of bureaucratic reform after 1985, the Ceausescu's went to the wall on Christmas day its indirect victim. Slowly but steadily the effects of *glasnost* in nurturing oppositional movements throughout eastern Europe penetrated the borders of Romania. The efforts of the workers of the GDR and Czechoslovakia in particular gave hope where none existed before.

But the first mass protests of the Romanians did not result in the strengthening of the hand of the reform wing of the Romanian bureaucracy and the relatively peaceful eclipse of the Ceausescu dynasty.

Unlike in the GDR or the Czechoslovakia, such a reform wing barely existed, still less did it form a silent majority. All key "reform" figures in the ministries or the communist party (CP) had been expunged by the mid 1980s.

Unlike elsewhere in eastern Europe Romania was not subordinate to the command structure of the Warsaw Pact and had no Soviet Armed Forces on its soil.

Therefore the Moscow bureaucracy had little control over events. In the GDR Gorbachev had restrained the "hardliners" from a violent and bloody clampdown on protests. In Romania Gorbachev's political pressure on the Ceausescu dynasty was barely felt. The Kremlin could not hope to stay the hand of the Bucharest executioner. Rather, civil war ensued, precipitated by a split in the bureaucracy and above all the armed forces.

It was natural that the gather-

ing storm should first appear in the border areas of ethnic Hungarians, a population with more grievances than many. The students of Timisoara played a vanguard role. Then the workers moved into action.

Together, they made the first and heaviest sacrifice for the revolution. They rose in mass support for a local dissident pastor. The security apparatus moved in to quell and isolate the movement between the 16 and 18 December; at this stage the army joined the fray against the workers and students.

Soon the 500 on the streets turned to 5,000. The Securitate tried desperately to drown the rebellion in blood. But on the 19 and 20 December the workers in the factories around Timisoara went on strike, some threatening to destroy their factories. Some 80,000 took to the streets, stole their first few arms and stood firm.

Faced with this resolve the first units of the mainly conscript army refused to shoot the workers any more. Disaffection spread like a bushfire. At last Bucharest rose and once again the students initiated the action and led the storming of the key installations.

Ousting

Under pressure army chiefs agitated for a return to barracks. The army saw its own caste interests as lying in the ousting of the Ceausescu clique and making a pact with the process of "reform".

Faced with the "fight to the death" stance of the security services loyal to the clique, reforms could only materialise by the army chiefs siding with the revolution from below. On 22 December Milea, the Defence Minister, agreed to withdraw troops from the fighting. The Securitate promptly murdered him.

This act finally provoked the bulk of the 140,000 strong army into open revolt against the ruling regime as they sided with the workers and peasants. Open civil war raged the length and breadth of Romania. Dual power was es-

tablished, especially in the provincial towns and cities, where the workers and peasants set up armed revolutionary committees to fight alongside the army.

The final days of the civil war witnessed the most tenacious and vengeful actions of the security services loyal to Ceausescu, as the leader and his inner clique fled the retribution of the proletariat.

Thousands died in the course of eliminating the rats of the Securitate from the underground passages where they infested Bucharest. Ceausescu was tried and executed by a military tribunal and a new Provisional Government announced, formed from within the National Salvation Front (NSF).

Incoherent

The NSF had no existence prior to the uprising and is at present a loose, politically incoherent coalition of purged bureaucrats, members of the bureaucracy outside the Ceausescu clique, workers and sections of the intelligentsia. It is reported as aiming to establish a free market economy and multiparty (bourgeois) democracy out of the ruins of the Stalinist dictatorship.

The new government is led by President Ion Iliescu, a Minister under the old regime up to the mid-1980s. He is a well-known Gorbachevite. The imperialist powers are even now seeking to develop political leverage within the NSF through swift recognition of this unelected government and the deployment of their agencies of international aid.

The Kremlin, by contrast, was cautious in the midst of the storm. In order to prove itself to Washington and Europe it observed its "non-interference pact" even in its own "backyard". It was willing to risk the possibility of a victory of a vicious Ceausescu backlash.

Both the Kremlin and the White House can agree: the Romanian revolution is over. Should it refuse to lie down, however, and the workers take the offensive against the new government, then the

Kremlin has already been given the green light by the imperialist powers to intervene and establish a stable, reforming pro-imperialist government.

The new government's final physiognomy is not yet decided. Although all factions are keen to end the remaining elements of dual power and to disarm the workers and students, it is to be expected that the most pro-capitalist elements will seek to strengthen their position via the manipulation of popular protests.

The Romanian workers must not be deprived of the fruits of their sacrifice! They must stop the bourgeois-democratic counter-revolution in its tracks! The second phase of the revolution, the proletarian political revolution must now begin in earnest!

The most urgent task for the revolutionary committees is to refuse the calls to give up arms to the forces of "law and order".

The armed power of the workers is the only guarantee of further success: of implementing the promised reforms; of rooting out every last agent of the security services now that they have gone to ground. The workers must spread the distribution of arms to the revolutionary committees and form militias attached to them.

Crucial

In the civil war rank and file soldiers played a crucial role in defeating the armed resistance of the Securitate. The officer corps, now in open conflict with the inner clique, tolerated this situation.

But this corps is itself part of the state bureaucracy. Having removed the dictatorship over themselves they are calling for a return to law and order. This will involve a clamp down on dissent within the army itself. They will seek to ensure that the crimes of the officers carried out in the past remain undetected or unpunished.

It is therefore urgent that democratic soldiers' committees are built with the right to elect their own officers, to investigate and punish the misdeeds of the officers.

LITHUANIA

The right of every nation?

"A sovereign party within the CPSU is like being a sovereign goldfish in the belly of a whale."

Algis Cekuolis, Lithuanian CP member

ence for the Baltic states. Gorbachev's programme of economic reform (*perestroika*) includes separate economic plans for each republic. Although the three Baltic republics have been granted economic autonomy from the beginning of 1990, the Kremlin will not allow total economic separation. The Baltics are relatively wealthy and their income has been important to the growth of the whole Soviet economy.

Secondly, the Lithuanian government has voted to remove the constitutional guarantee of the "leading role of the Party". It can only do this in defiance of Moscow. Gorbachev's programme for restructuring society requires the maintenance of a bureaucracy which itself will carry out reforms.

Whilst he has recognised the need for greater democracy and a more credible party, to allow for the complete freedom of different parties and competing programmes would open the door to both capitalist restoration and mass pressure for freedom of parties in all the republics of the USSR. Both of these threaten to destroy the very existence of the bureaucracy itself.

The situation in Lithuania and the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia is threatening to seriously undermine Gorbachev's po-

sition. The hardliners of the Lenin-grad and Russian CPs want him to intervene to stop the growing independence movements. Gorbachev knows that such a move would torpedo the goodwill and assistance he needs from imperialism if he is to drag the USSR out of its stagnation.

The Soviet working class has nothing to fear from the end of the official recognition of the "leading role" of the CPSU. On the contrary, it is essential if independent working class parties are to emerge and grow. These parties—above all a Trotskyist one—will fight the influence of chauvinist and pro-capitalist ideas every inch of the way.

A Trotskyist party will endeavour to fight every manifestation of national oppression of the Baltic peoples, seeking to overthrow the bureaucracy and thereby make the

"The present party and state leadership will not allow the break-up of the federal state. Nowadays, to exercise self-determination through secession is to upset the union, to pit peoples against one another and to sow discord, bloodshed and death."

Mikhail Gorbachev

planned economy work in favour of the workers of all the republics.

Against Gorbachev's opposition to independence, Soviet workers must fight for a free and voluntary federation of the Soviet republics with the right to self-determination up to and including secession. But they must fight also against those who see the answer to Lithuania's problems as secession and capitalist restoration.

- For a Workers' Republic of Lithuania voluntarily federated to the USSR.
- For an end to the "leading role" of the CPSU.

"EVERY NATION has the right to choose its own way of development."

With these words President Gorbachev reassured western imperialists that he would not be interfering in the affairs of Eastern Europe.

But such words come back to haunt the architect of *glasnost* when the oppressed nationalities and republics within the Soviet Union itself take up the struggle for self determination.

The Baltic Republic of Lithuania has become a multi-party state, against the wishes of the Moscow leadership, with three parties likely to contest elections in February. All three parties will favour some form of independence. The Democratic Party and Social Democratic Party are likely to call for full independence and secession. The Communist Party (CP) favours greater sovereignty but short of secession. Lithuanian CP Secretary Justus Paleckis explained:

"All Lithuania is striving for sovereignty and independence. We aren't afraid of that word."

In order to be able to contest the February elections with any hope of getting support from voters the local CP has decided to break from the CPSU and become an independent party. As one CP member said, "It is the only way for [the CP] to remain a social force."

The split has happened firstly because the CPSU in Moscow will not and cannot sanction independ-

Arms in hand the workers must continue the unfinished business of the first phase of the revolution: the crimes of the old regime must be brought fully to light! No-one will grieve over the summary trial and execution of the Conductorat and his wife.

To the grave

But those figures from the past who remain, including many in the army and NSF, hope that the Ceausescu will carry their secrets to the grave. The workers and poor peasants must not let the crimes of the bureaucracy be buried along with the bodies of its leaders!

The revolutionary committees in every town and village must establish elected tribunals to investigate the activities of party bosses and local bureaucrats. Peoples' courts need to deliberate and judge any charges. Uproot the corruption! Reveal the tyranny! Punish the guilty!

After many years of savage repression the first signs of political crystallisation of parties and programmes is emerging. The result is an acute crisis of leadership. None of the competing leaderships which have so far appeared can lead the workers and poor peasants to power.

The workers, having achieved so much, must not stand aside and let the intelligentsia and discredited CP bosses form the political parties of reconciliation, pro-imperialism and social counter-revolution. The working class needs a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party that can consolidate the gains already won and establish proletarian power in Romania.

Already there are signs that the Romanian workers are taking the talk of democracy seriously. While the NSF appoints from within itself a government to speak for the people and promises elections next April, the workers in the factories are beginning now to oust hated managers and elect new factory committees. Once again, the workers of Timisoara are in the vanguard. For elected and recallable

factory committees in every enterprise! For new and independent trade unions.

It is essential that the urban workers develop and lead the revolution in the countryside. Ceausescu began to tear up the villages and herd their population into "agro-industrial complexes", both to destroy the homogeneity of the dissident national communities and raise agricultural output for export.

The workers must help organise the peasants into their own revolutionary committees with their own militia in alliance with the workers and soldiers. For workers' management in the state farms; in the co-operatives there must be genuine democracy and the ousting of the managers. In the large number of co-operatives there must be new elections.

The Romanian workers must not be deprived of the fruits of their sacrifice! They must stop the bourgeois-democratic counter-revolution in its tracks! The second phase of the revolution, the proletarian political revolution must now begin in earnest!

The peasants' own organisations must be won to the drawing up of a plan for the modernisation of the villages and agricultural production itself. This plan must be integrated into a workers' plan for the entire national economy.

Factory-based organisation of the workers appeared only after the workers and students were on the streets, arms in hand. It is essential that these are linked up with the local revolutionary com-

mittees at town and especially, regional and national level. This organisation of the workers must be independent of the Provisional Government.

That is the key to further progress in the proletarian political revolution. Workers' and poor peasants' councils must urgently be built in every village and town. Do not leave politics to the politicians, do not entrust the running of the economy to the "professional administrators".

Stalinism has only been partly smashed, the revolution stuck half way. The workers and youth, having spilled their blood to down Ceausescu, are excluded from the Provisional Government. Instead, purged ex-bureaucrats now emerge from their bunkers to claim the spoils of victory.

These enemies of the working class want to maintain their rule behind the facade of parliaments and the promise of elections every few years for representatives that cannot be made to account for their actions. The Romanian workers must hold the full power; for a government not of the NSF or National Christian Peasant Party but of the sovereign workers' and poor peasants' councils. No support for the Provisional Government! No return of King Michael to the republic of Romania!

While this government remains in office the revolutionary committees must demand that it recognises their authority and organise an election for a government based on these committees. The government must submit itself to the will of the workers and peasants. It must immediately repeal all the hated laws of the old regime.

It must take measures to improve the position of women who, amongst many features of oppression, have been subject to the death penalty for abortion. Romanian women must have full access to free contraception and abortion; for the right to choose.

Ceausescu tried to eliminate religion by bulldozing churches. The only effect was to ensure its survival in the workers' and peasants' homes. Socialists must insist

on the full freedom of religious observation, but without any privileges or subsidies by the government for any religious institution. For the strict separation of church and state!

Luxury

The Romanian proletariat and poor peasants know only too well what a sick joke the statistics of socialism were in their country. Pampered luxury for the Ceausescu dynasty, vast privileges for the hired killers, court poets and servile propagandists. For the majority of toilers, only punishing work norms, lengthening queues and empty shelves. But this was not the fault of "communism" or "socialism" because these have never been reached and were never even the goals of the bloated bureaucrats of Bucharest.

The economic shortages were not the fault of trying to plan the distribution of Romania's economic resources. The objective of the bureaucrats' plan was primarily to maintain their rule and their social privileges.

Such planning could never create a genuine socialist society. Deprived of the real democracy of the toilers the plan degenerates into a farce. It becomes only planning of the plunder of the workers. All this was the direct result of the strategy of "socialism in one country", the attempt at autarchy and the resultant destruction of peasant agriculture from above.

The road from starvation and autarchy must not lie through opening up Romania to the blood-sucking Western banks. From these institutions we demand aid without strings, not further rounds of indebtedness.

Demand of the USSR unlimited material aid without strings. The government must demand emergency and unconditional aid from the west, the USSR and eastern European states to fill the shelves with basic foodstuffs and other goods.

The rural and urban workers must seize control of the factories, offices, banks and means of com-

munication from the bureaucrats. There must be no privatisation of industry, no sell-offs to imperialists or exiled Romanian bourgeoisie.

The workers must take control of the central planning organisations. They must draw up a new workers' plan whose objective is to meet the consumption needs of the masses, to increase equality and to open the road to genuine socialism and communism.

The Romanian degenerate workers' state came into existence without the participation of the workers themselves. The borders were carved out in such a way that national minorities (Germans, Hungarians) were imprisoned inside its confines. Ethnic Romanians were moreover forcibly incorporated within the USSR in 1940.

The political revolution in Romania has had a major effect on all these groups. The legitimate grievances of many, incapable of public expression before, are coming to the surface.

Self-determination

Romanian workers must grant autonomous region status to the oppressed national populations, including the right to be educated in their languages, the right to cultural facilities. For the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination. For the right of areas in the USSR (Moldavia) with a Romanian majority to unity with the Romanian nation if they so wish!

The heroic actions of the Romanian workers and peasants have shown the path for liberation of all republics of the USSR. Not fratricide between the national groups, but unity against the hated Stalinist bureaucracy. Such must be the lesson for all the peoples of eastern Europe and the USSR.

- No to social counter-revolution!
- For proletarian political revolution throughout eastern Europe!
- For a free Federation of workers' states on the road to a Socialist United States of Europe!

Socialism is dead . . . long live socialism!

AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

“When I got to East Berlin I headed straight for the Fernsehturm (TV Tower) a vast structure dominating the skyline. At its foot lies the Treibhaus, or “forcing house”, a circular gallery now given over entirely to the opposition. Its walls are covered with posters, murals and photographs depicting the breathtaking events of November when mass mobilisations brought down Honecker and Krenz, shaking Stalinism to its very foundations.

Slogans attack the hypocrisy and privilege of the bureaucracy, raising calls for democracy and an end to the terror of the Stasi. They argue against racism and pan-German nationalism, and for the liberation of women.

There is no sign here of crude anti-communism, despite forty years of Stalinist dictatorship over the working class. One slogan stuck in my mind as representing the aspirations of many who do not wish to see the horrors of Stalinism replaced with capitalist exploitation: “socialism is dead . . . long live socialism!”

East Berlin is alive with political activity. Numerous meetings take place every night in an explosion of debate after decades of repression. In the flats of opposition activists people constantly arrive with reports and documents; the telephones seem never to stop ringing as a flurry of leaflets, meetings and demonstrations are discussed and organised.

At the Treibhaus, after distributing Trotskyist material from the LRCI, I was invited to attend a meeting of the East Berlin Youth Anti-Fascist Committee. Previously I had not considered fascism to be much of a threat in the GDR, but this illusion vanished as I was told of the growth of the far right Republican Party, which has built a 250 strong branch in one district of East Berlin alone. Nazi skin-heads were present in large numbers on a recent Monday night demonstration in Leipzig, calling for immediate re-unification of the German nation and raising anti-semitic and racist chants.

Hundreds of youth attended the anti-fascist meeting. There was much discussion of the growth of fascism and democratic decisions were taken regarding the groups participating in, and the stewarding of, an anti-re-unification demo.

At the Treibhaus I had been able to get first-hand knowledge of the political positions of the various oppositional currents. In addition to New Forum, organisations like Democracy Now and Democratic Awakening (which describes itself as a “social-ecological” movement) favour re-unification with West Germany. This is not posed as a way of spreading revolutionary developments beyond the borders of the GDR, but as a way of increasing ties with the more prosperous capitalist West.

The social democrats have established a party in the GDR, which also calls for an end to state monopoly in the economy and supports close ties with the west. They see the elections in May as a way of preventing any further working class upheaval, raising the slogan “Our country must become governable again!”

By far the most interesting and

In the aftermath of the historic opening of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Egon Krenz, the LRCI has been intervening in the growing left opposition movement. Richard Brenner of Workers Power reports on his discussions with opposition groups during a recent visit to East Berlin. Below, we print a translation of an LRCI leaflet distributed to a demonstration against a capitalist re-unification of Germany.

The bankrupt Stalinists of the SED and the gloating capitalists of Bonn are agreed: the only answer to the crisis of the GDR is to sell it to the highest bidder! West German capitalists are queuing to buy up the advanced sectors—optics, textiles, printing. For the workers in those industries this will mean “rationalisation”—speed-up and redundancies. For those in the other industries it will mean the scrap heap.

But capitalist restoration would not only mean lengthening dole queues and social insecurity, but preparation for a new division of Europe—the economic enslavement of Eastern Europe by the imperialist powers. The working class of the GDR and Eastern Europe must not pay the price of Stalinist mismanagement and crisis! No surrender to the class enemy! No German imperialist re-unification!

REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS

Capitalism was not destroyed by the workers of the GDR but by an army of occupation and an imposed bureaucracy. Together they have plundered the resources of the country and led it to disaster. Karl Marx insisted that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the class itself. That is what has been missing. Only independent workers' organisations can prevent the return of the capitalists.

The working class is not just one part of *Das Volk*, its power cannot be exercised by a handful of individuals in an uncontrollable parliament or in the private negotiations of a “round table”. Although the working class might use parliamentary elections to make its voice heard, it cannot use them to take power. As Luxemburg said, “Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken”. The basic strength of the working class lies in the factory: for factory committees elected by and recallable to sovereign mass meetings. The workers themselves must decide who will represent them!

FOR WORKERS' DEMOCRACY!

For the full right to organise politically and in trade unions for all who accept the sovereignty of mass meetings and workers' democracy! Only open discussion and experience will clarify who really stands for the working class and who is really a confused or concealed supporter of capitalism. Genuine revolutionaries, those who stand by the unfalsified principles and programme of Lenin and Trotsky, do not fear political argument and disagreement within the workers' organisations. We are confident that time will prove us right! But we do not recognise any democratic rights for those who will only use them to prepare another defeat for the workers! No free speech for fascists! The working class knows already what the Nazis will do if allowed to organise! The arguments they need are made with heavy boots and iron bars!

FOR AN ECONOMY PLANNED BY AND FOR THE WORKERS!

Bureaucratic planning has proved itself incapable of running an efficient economy and meeting the needs of the working class. The workers themselves must take control of the economy! Their organisations can and must impose their priorities at every level of production and distribution. Factory committees must not be talking shops! Their task is to lead and organise the fight against Stalinist dictatorship and economic disruption. Revolutionaries demand that factory committees impose workers' control in the workplace. That does not mean accepting responsibility for the chaos, but insisting on the right to veto management decisions, to open the books of management, state-controlled unions and planning ministries, for workers' control of the plan and production! Only then will there be no possibility of corruption and privilege for a bureaucratic caste living off the backs of the working class. To win these rights we rely on the weapons of working class action: occupations, strikes, militant demonstrations and organised physical self-defence!

FOR AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT!

Factory organisation alone is not enough. Within the working class

encouraging development is the initiative for a United Left (UL). Unlike the other groups, the UL stands for the defence of planned property in the GDR, combining anti-Stalinism with a call for a system of workers' councils to administer society. The UL plans to hold a Workers' Congress this year, with delegates to be elected from each state enterprise. However, like the other opposition movements the UL did participate in the closed “round table” discussions with the Stalinists.

I met with Marion Seelig, a key figure in the UL, who explained that the UL is not an independent party, but seeks to develop a broad left movement in the GDR. But this heterogeneity, and its consequent lack of a clear programme, will prevent the UL from achieving mass influence. At a lively joint meeting of the UL and the SED, the large audience expressed dissatisfaction with both groups. Although most scorn was reserved for the cautious and embarrassed representatives of the Stalinist

GDR: Not for sale!

we especially need independent organisations of women who have the double burden of work and the family. They must take their rightful place in the struggle, they must insist that unions and parties organise to make possible the full and equal involvement of women at all levels. The youth too, need their own organisations and representation. They can be relied upon to provide the most enthusiastic and energetic fighters for their class—if they are treated as equals!

At city-wide, regional and national levels the workers need their own class organisations. Democratic election, accountability and recall must be the rule throughout. For workers' councils in every town, for a national congress of workers' councils and a workers' government responsible only to that congress!

The workers' councils must take control of society, supervise the total revision of the plan to meet the needs of the workers, keep order on the streets and defend the democratic rights of the working class.

The workers' government will reach out to the workers of the FRG and of all of Europe to support it, to defend it, to join with it in the European revolution! For the revolutionary re-unification of Germany! For the united socialist states of Europe!

SMASH THE STALINIST DICTATORSHIP!

The old gang have been forced out of office but much of their machine is still there. The power of working class mobilisation has demobilised the Stasi. Good! But the working class has not yet imposed its own law and its own order on society. When capitalists and Stalinists both talk of the need for “stability” they mean preserving and re-grouping the forces of repression that they both hope to use in the future against the working class.

Consistent revolutionaries will never forget that the state is “essentially special bodies of armed men” as Engels said and Deng Xiaoping proved once again in Tiananmen Square. The Stalinists' “armed bodies of men” must be completely disbanded and broken up by the workers' organisations. Break down their discipline. For soldiers' committees in all barracks and soldiers' councils in all regiments and divisions, for the election of officers, the ending of privilege and for maximum wages to be based on those of a skilled worker.

For a workers' militia of rank and file men and women to defend the factories, the working class organisations and meetings. Hunt down the Stalinist parasites and spies, keep out the capitalist speculators, disband the repressive apparatus, impose working class control of the plan, of production and distribution!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

Since 1933, open working class organisation has been outlawed. Even under Weimar, the Stalinisation of the KPD and the class collaboration of the SPD prevented the growth of a consistent revolutionary party based on the unfalsified programme of Lenin and Trotsky.

Such a party must be built now, while the opportunity lasts. The most class conscious and militant workers, those willing to accept the responsibility of leadership must organise themselves as a genuine communist party. This means a party united by its dedication to the overthrow of Stalinism, to the defeat of capitalism, and to the building of the international revolution. It must have real democracy within its ranks to determine its tactics and strategy, but it must also be disciplined and centralised in action, both leadership and membership must be accountable to the party. This is democratic centralism, not the bureaucratic centralism of the Stalinist parties.

As Stalinism crumbles across the globe, as imperialism prepares its offensive, as the semi-colonies groan under repression and starvation, it is more obvious than ever that only a global defeat of capitalism can open the way to socialism. The revolutionary party, too, must be international like the revolutionary Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky!

- Down with “socialism in one country”!
- For permanent revolution!
- For a new revolutionary communist International!

party, many felt that the UL were unable to provide clear answers to the political crisis.

As soon as the debate was thrown open to the public, an elderly man rose to his feet and exclaimed that “neither the SED nor the UL have given us what we want to hear—a programme”. Another heckler roared out in frustration, “Can the United Left tell us in two sentences just what they stand for?” He received no adequate reply.

In such a climate I was left with no doubt that the ideas of

Trotskyism could gain massive support in the GDR. A brief conversation I had with a worker in a cafe developed into an impromptu meeting as others joined us to discuss the ideas of Trotsky and the need for a new party. Complex arguments that normally require weeks of patient explanation are grasped and won literally in minutes, a feature of a thoroughgoing political crisis which provides ideal conditions for the rapid growth of revolutionary ideas.

DEIFYING THE media pundits who had dubbed him the paralysed President, George Bush sent 12,000 troops into Panama on 20 December to topple dictator Manuel Noriega. Even this decisive action was something of a flop for Bush's image building: the US forces found themselves bogged down in a costly and protracted campaign against Noriega's supporters while the bird himself flew to the Vatican Embassy for safety.

The US invasion represented more than a lame duck President's attempts to assert himself. It was a grim reminder—if the Latin American masses needed one after US action in Grenada and Nicaragua—that the old Munroe Doctrine, "Not in my backyard", is still alive and well amongst Washington policymakers.

Recruited

US imperialism regards Central America as its fiefdom. The invasion task forces were joining the 13,000 troops already stationed in Panama guarding the strategic canal. What had Manuel Noriega, once the chosen agent of US imperialism, done to upset the White House? After all, this was no "pink" regime, threatening to spread revolution. The problem could hardly be Noriega's criminal activities in themselves. When the CIA first recruited Noriega in the 1960, he already had a record as the result of the rape and beating of a prostitute. Nor has the US made a habit of objecting to dictatorial rule. Those who backed the bloody regimes of the Shah, of Pinochet or who now prop up the government of El Salvador, are no friends of democracy.

The real problem was that Noriega's criminal regime, with its massive and flagrant drug running and financial laundering operations, was no longer a stable ally for the US. As far back as 1976 Noriega was taken off the CIA payroll when the White House discovered that he was buying tape recordings of conversations from

25,000 troops blasted Panama to oust former CIA protégé Manuel Noriega—and then failed to capture him. Joan Mayer looks at the background to Bush's invasion.

US stamps on Panama



US forces bomb Panama

military intelligence. He also worked for Cuban, Israeli and Taiwanese intelligence services.

The Reagan and Bush administrations had tried over two years to remove the Noriega regime. It hoped to do this either by engineering an internal coup or by encouraging a limited middle classed version of the "people power"

that toppled the equally unreliable Marcos. But these attempts failed. Last May Noriega declared the results of the election null and void when defeated by Guillermo Endara, whose election campaign the US had funded to the tune of \$10 million. From then on the White House moved closer to open intervention.

Their claim to want to bring Noriega to trial for drug offences is merely a smokescreen—in the past the US has actively blocked investigations into his drug links. And Noriega has threatened to reveal uncomfortable truths about the US administration itself if he is brought to trial. Thus the US de-

Noriega has threatened to reveal uncomfortable truths about the US administration itself if he is brought to trial

ecided to opt for the Rambo "shoot first—ask later" style invasion, presumably hoping Noriega would be one of the casualties and thus take these "secrets" to the grave.

Their need for a stable ally in Panama is increased by the provisions of the 1977 treaty which stipulates that the US will hand over the canal to the Panamanians by the year 2000.

Panamanian workers and *barrio* dwellers are shedding few tears for the dictator Noriega, whose brutal techniques of murdering oppositionists were learned in the schools of the military academy of Peru and in the CIA. But there have been few welcoming demonstrations for the conquering Yankees.

The strength of the pro-Noriega resistance was not only due to the dictatorial control of the bureaucratic and military apparatus. It was also helped by the ability of Noriega's forces to hole up in some working class areas where Nori-

ega's anti-Yankee rhetoric had gained him some support, at least against the US.

The US forces wasted little time in proving who was master. Working class areas such as San Miguelito in Panama City suffered aerial bombardment. The wooden shanty town round Noriega's HQ was reduced to cinders. Civilians in Panama City who followed the US example of uninvited entry and went on a pre-Christmas looting spree, shouting "Viva Bush", found themselves facing 1,000 US MPs. The new "civilian" President Endara was sworn in by a US army general at a US army base!

The prospects for democratic rights look none too healthy. The Cuban Embassy was blockaded by the US forces, foreign journalists were kept incommunicado, and the headquarters of the People's Party, Panama's Communist Party, was raided.

Control

While there is talk of elections at some point to "legitimise" the Endara government, Panama's workers and peasants have no chance to carve out their own destiny while US imperialism remains in charge. Panama was a US creation. The isthmus was made "independent" of Colombia at the turn of the century so that the US could build and control the canal and occupy the ten mile strip of the "Canal Zone". Panama does not even have its own currency, it uses the US dollar. For close on a century, the US has shamelessly exploited the region.

Panama owes its creditors \$2.4 billion and has not made a payment in two years. Yet US imperialism continues to profit from its use of the canal, even though direct freight has slightly diminished its importance.

Panama's shattered economy, which contracted by 20% last year, could be temporarily helped now the US will lift the trade embargo it had imposed to shake Noriega. But a new IMF/World Bank package complete with "structural adjustments" will inevitably hit the poorest. A resurgence of banking facilities, for which Panama had become an international centre, will put funds in the hands of only a tiny minority.

Real benefits

To throw out the US imperialists and gain the real benefits of the agricultural and mineral assets, alongside those of the canal itself, Panama's workers' movement will need to maintain independence from all the bourgeois politicians, whether pro-US "democratisers" or fake anti-imperialists of the Noriega brand.

The fight for democratic rights, against price hikes, for proper facilities in the *barrios*, to oust the plantation owners—all these aims need to be fought for by independent workers' and peasants' organisations.

The real allies of Panama's poor are their fellow workers and peasants in Latin America, especially in Colombia. A united fight against both the local corrupt politicians and the US imperialists could be part of the continent wide overthrow of the US's shackles. ■

Chile's new government

BY DIEGO MOCAR

ON 14 December 1989 the Chilean people went to the polls to cast their votes in Presidential and parliamentary elections. The Christian Democrats were the clear victors.

Patricio Aylwin, the leader of the Christian Democrats and one of the major instigators of Pinochet's coup against Allende, is the new Chilean President. Aylwin won 55.2% (3,842,887 votes) against 29.39% (2,046,580) obtained by Hernan Buchi, the Junta candidate, and 15.43% (1,074,210) obtained by Francisco Javier Errazuriz, a right winger.

Aylwin was supported by a 17 party coalition, the Concertacion Por La Democracia, including the socialist parties. The Communist Party stayed outside the coalition but endorsed Aylwin's candidature. They got little return for their class collaboration, going down to heavy defeat and getting only one MP. The socialists did rather better, but the Christian Democrats won 40 of the coalition's 72 seats in the lower house and an even greater proportion in the Senate.

What can Chilean workers expect from the new government? The programme of the coalition is designed to reconstruct bourgeois democracy under the guardianship of the military. It will maintain the key planks of Pinochet's economic

policy, letting private capital shamelessly exploit Chile's workers. Shares went up the day after the poll! Besides leaving private industry intact, the coalition's programme promised:

"A policy of austerity in public expenditure and in the state's development and investments".

After 16 years of sharp repression of the workers' organisations, with few wage increases, Aylwin's programme plans new industrial relations' laws and there is talk of modest wage increases. But these will be part of a modernisation and improvement of Chilean capitalism, not for the benefit of the workers.

The programme of Aylwin and co says that the new industrial relations' laws will be "in the spirit of consensus and co-operation between entrepreneurs and workers" and that the "pay increases have to be linked to an increase in productivity".

The planned minimum wage level of 25,000 pesos per month is well below the 44,000 pesos recommended by the World Health Organisation.

The coalition's programme recognized the damage caused to Chile's production by the external debt, but instead of canceling it, plans only a "renegotiation". And for the peasants that were expelled from their land by the big landowners and agribusiness companies,

the future government is going "to distribute some land that belongs to the state through a system of saving and loans".

While the elections confirm an end to the Pinochet dictatorship's direct rule, the new government will be operating in a constitutional framework laid down by the Junta. While the government and opposition parties may be able to agree to such changes as abolishing the non-elected seats in the Senate, they will have a harder job ousting Pinochet from military power. The Constitution gives General Pinochet the right to the job of Commander-in-Chief for eight more years, in his self-appointed role as Guardian of the Constitution. As the New Year arrived, Pinochet made clear to



Pinochet

Aylwin that he was not budging.

Meanwhile five hundred or more political prisoners continue to languish in jail with release promised only to those "not involved in bloodshed". By contrast, the murderers in the military have already been given an amnesty by Pinochet.

The socialist and Communist

parties have done more than strike a bad bargain on behalf of the working class—their decision to support Aylwin was an outright betrayal of the workers' and peasants' interests. They have tied the workers' organisations to a new bourgeois government, even before the last vestiges of the Junta have been removed.

The popular front alliance with the Christian Democrats means an alliance with a section of the Chilean exploiters, the agents of US imperialism, those who shamelessly oppressed the workers when they themselves were in office from 1964 to 1970.

The Chilean masses cannot easily forget the perfidious role played by the Christian Democrats, despite what the leaders of the workers' organisations have done to mislead and disorientate the Chilean proletariat. Today the workers have illusions in the popular front but sooner rather than later the Chilean masses will begin to fight for their demands and in the course of the struggle they will see that today's "friends" are their real enemies.

- No amnesty for the criminals of the Junta, they should be judged by Workers' Tribunals
- For an immediate general wage increase decided by the workers
- Abolish all the anti-union laws
- For the right of all workers' parties to operate freely
- Repudiate the foreign debt
- Break the big latifundi and expropriate the agribusinesses
- Reverse Pinochet's privatisation
- For a programme of public works under workers' control
- Nationalise the multinational and key industries without compensation
- No to any social contract in the name of "democratic recovery"

WRP and SWAPO

John McKee examines the politics of the Workers Revolutionary Party which stood in the recent Namibian elections

IN THE recent elections in Namibia one group claiming to represent Trotskyism, the Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia (WRP(N)), stood candidates. This group is affiliated to the Preparatory Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. The British based WRP, a prime mover in the Preparatory Committee, has been supporting the WRP(N). It has concentrated on denouncing SWAPO's record of detentions and torture and campaigned against a SWAPO victory in the election.

The WRP and the Preparatory Committee have developed a seemingly straightforward position: because SWAPO is responsible for detention and torture, socialists and workers should deny it any support even against imperialist South Africa. In fact this position is profoundly wrong.

Many returning exiles, including a number who are now leading figures in the WRP(N), have testified to their arrest, detention and torture by SWAPO Security. This "purge"—which SWAPO Security tried to justify on the grounds that their organisation was being infiltrated by South African spies—resulted in hundreds, possibly even thousands of deaths and disappearances of SWAPO militants.

Various organisations of the returning detainees correctly demanded that the torturers be called to account before the people of Namibia. While the SWAPO leadership formally distanced itself from the detentions and declared its disapproval of the mistreatment of SWAPO members, no action was taken against the torturers.

Workers Power has no truck with the idea that the issue of the detentions should have been swept under the carpet during the SWAPO election campaign, or that it should be ignored now in the interests of national unity. Ex-detainees and relatives of the dead and "disappeared" all have a right to justice. The criminals responsible should be exposed through a workers' and peasants' inquiry and sentenced by a people's court.

Starry-eyed

But Trotskyists, unlike liberals and other starry-eyed fellow travellers of the anti-imperialist liberation movements, were not surprised by these revelations. SWAPO was a petit bourgeois nationalist movement heavily influenced by Stalinism and its organisational methods. It is no surprise either that the purge was aided and abetted by both the Cuban and Angolan security apparatuses. At least part of the reason for the detentions was an attempt by the leadership of SWAPO to crack down on dissent within the organisation which they felt threatened their control. Such methods are the stock in trade of Stalinism, and its petit bourgeois imitators throughout the world.

However the politics and internal regimes of these liberation movements should not alter our position of unconditional, but critical, support for them against imperialism. This means supporting

them in their struggle against imperialism while at the same time making clear our political differences with them, criticising their popular frontist politics as well as their guerrillaist strategy.

The WRP(N), urged on and encouraged by the Preparatory Committee, abandoned this basic Marxist position, effectively refusing support to SWAPO in a period when South African imperialism was doing its utmost to thwart the wishes of the Namibian people in its struggle for independence.

Denunciations

In the months leading up to the elections the British WRP's paper, *Workers Press*, was full of denunciations of SWAPO, exposures of the torture camps and the activities of the detainees' organisations. Virtually nothing was to be found on the methods used by the South Africans to ensure a maximum turnout for their own favoured party, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). This was necessary because the WRP had to justify its abandonment of any form of support to SWAPO by ignoring the South Africans' attacks on the organisation.

Indeed Cliff Slaughter, a leading member of the British WRP sent out to campaign with the WRP(N) in the election period, goes so far as to declare in "An urgent Appeal to the Working Class movement":

"SWAPO has degenerated into

The logic of the Preparatory Committee's position—that SWAPO was the main enemy in the election, led their Namibian section straight into a totally unprincipled electoral bloc . . . In no sense did it offer a socialist or revolutionary alternative to SWAPO.

a mere instrument of these interests of imperialism and Stalinism".

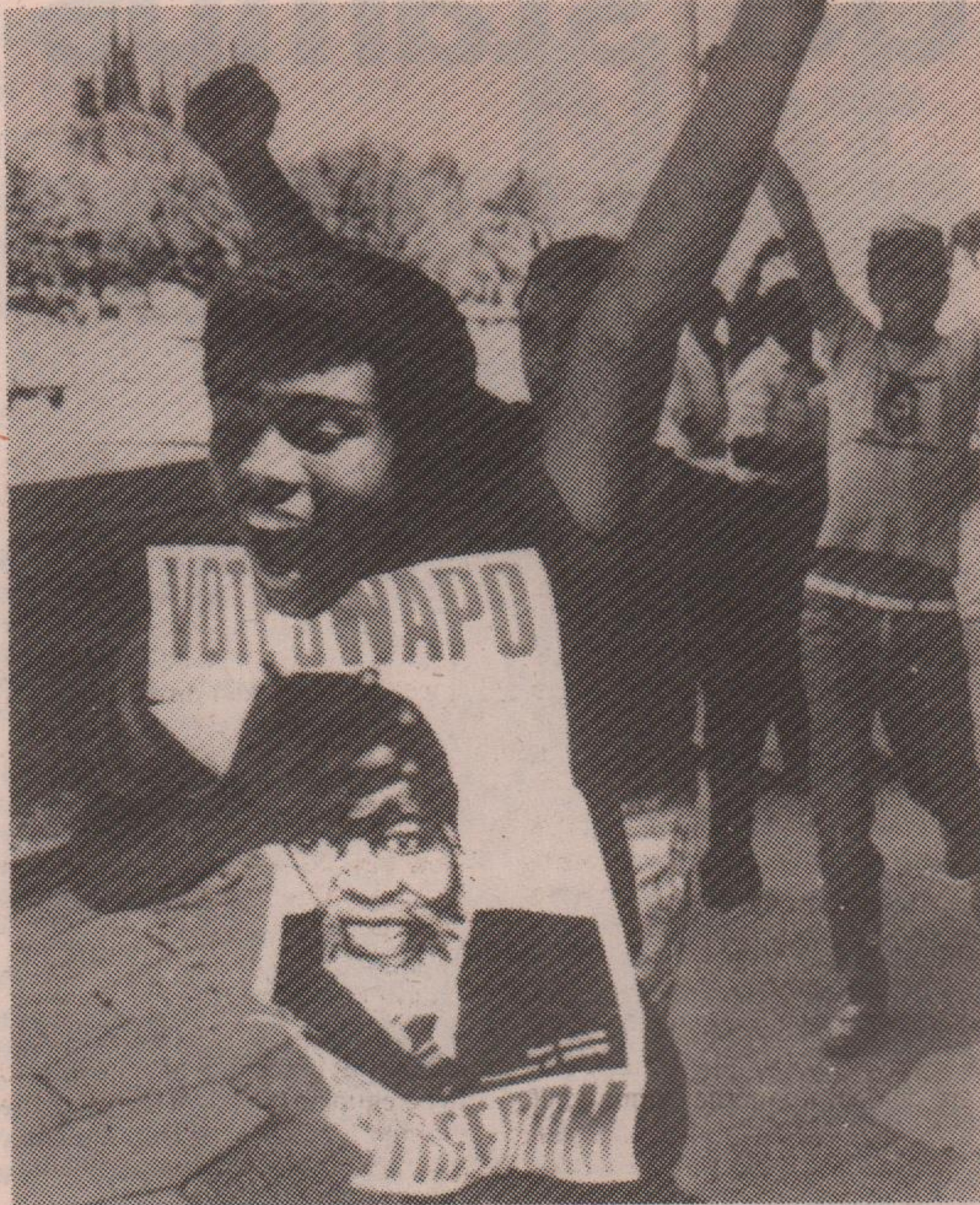
And how does he explain the enormous support for SWAPO in the trade unions, among the masses?

"The SWAPO leadership is imposed on a section of the masses by murder and torture."

So 57% of the electorate in Namibia and 93% of the most populated area of Namibia, Ovamboland, is intimidated into supporting SWAPO! The appeal ends by declaring:

"The task is not to support SWAPO, but to give real international solidarity to the working class of Namibia."

How? By assisting them to "deal with their treacherous leaders". Indeed, but the question is how best can this be done? Was it best done by refusing to support SWAPO at a key point in the struggle with South African imperialism, by referring to SWAPO as a "killing organisation" as the October paper of the WRP(N) did? Rather than allowing revolutionaries to relate to the workers and peasants committed to support-



SWAPO supporters: how can revolutionaries break their illusions?

ing SWAPO which they saw as leading a real struggle against imperialism, the WRP's position cut them off from those workers and peasants.

What was the situation facing Namibian revolutionaries in the period leading up to the Constituent Assembly elections and what tactics should have been advanced in such circumstances? On the one

the same time as seeking to win those masses to fighting against the betrayals which the leaders are preparing.

What should have been the tactics of Trotskyists in the elections to the Constituent Assembly which was charged with drawing up the constitution? If they had been strong enough to stand independently under their own banner and party against SWAPO they should have done so. In the absence of such strength communists would have fought for the trade unions to stand workers' candidates committed to an action programme, as outlined in *Workers Power* 125.

In the situation as it developed, where SWAPO won the overwhelming allegiance of the trade unions and the anti-imperialist forces, it was necessary to call for a critical vote for SWAPO.

Criticism

Trotskyists would have made clear that this meant no support for the programme of SWAPO, nor for it forming a government. But in the context of obstructing Pretoria's plans a vote for SWAPO was a vote against South African imperialism.

Only this position would have allowed revolutionaries, in the absence of either their own or genuine workers' candidates, to win a hearing for their criticism of the SWAPO leadership and for a socialist programme for Namibia.

Having advanced such criticisms and demands and won that hearing, revolutionaries would be in a better position now to raise the necessary call "Break from SWAPO!". While maintaining the need for joint action with SWAPO against the imperialists, and maintaining the demands on SWAPO to carry out its promised reforms, revolutionaries must seek to win worker militants and SWAPO supporters to an independent path. But whatever is said now by the WRP(N), they have lost an opportunity to win that hearing.

Betrayals

It was—and remains—vital to warn the Namibian masses about the betrayals that lie in store. It is vital to develop independent organisations of the working class and peasantry—the trade unions, factory committees, workers' and peasants' councils, a militia and crucially a revolutionary workers' party—to mobilise the masses against those betrayals.

The method of the united front allows revolutionaries to stand with the masses, and their organisation, against the imperialists at

The logic of the Preparatory Committee's position—that SWAPO was the main enemy in the election, led their Namibian section straight into a totally unprincipled electoral bloc—the United Democratic Front. This was formed by the Patriotic Unity Movement (ex-detainees), the Damara Council, the "coloured" Labour Party and some smaller parties—including the WRP(N). In no sense did it offer a socialist or revolutionary alternative to SWAPO.

Indeed two of its member parties, the Labour Party and Damara Council, were collaborators, along with the DTA, in the South African puppet regime based on a version of apartheid. It was in this company that the "Trotskyists" went before the Namibian electorate! Hardly a recipe for advancing an independent revolutionary programme for the workers and peasants!

Obligated

As a result of throwing its weight behind these positions of the WRP(N), the Preparatory Committee has found itself obliged to break relations with the Editorial Board of the independent South African journal *Workers Revolution*. The Preparatory Committee accuses the Editorial Board of "denying the centrality of the fight against Stalinism and then avoiding an all-out fight against it". Here, as elsewhere in the WRP's writings on the Namibian question, their Stalinophobia is revealed. Stalinism becomes the central problem—as much or more of a danger to the Namibian masses than the imperialist occupiers!

Having said this, however, in our view the comrades on the Editorial Board have made a serious political adaptation to petit bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism by arguing that a revolutionary socialist leadership in Namibia can only be built inside SWAPO. This position means that they failed to raise the need for building a revolutionary party. They have argued for "transforming SWAPO into a genuine fighting organisation of the masses".

Such a position holds terrible dangers for Namibian workers. It effectively ties them to a movement which is now in the process of constituting itself as a bourgeois government. Of course it is necessary to use the action programme to mobilise militants inside SWAPO against their own leaders, to help them break from the betrayers.

The method of the united front that we have advanced puts revolutionaries in a position to do this. To argue against the formation of independent organisations and only for the transformation of SWAPO peddles dangerous illusions and leaves Namibian militants politically disarmed.

Perhaps the comrades of the Editorial Board do not seriously believe that SWAPO can be transformed. Perhaps they know there will have to be a split. In that case they should say so openly. Failing to do so leaves workers unprepared and less equipped to deal with the disorientation which will occur as SWAPO begins to attack its own base.

The whole experience reveals that only by avoiding sectarianism stemming from Stalinophobia and opportunism stemming from petit bourgeois nationalism, can the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front be utilised as a weapon against both imperialist occupiers and false leaderships of the masses. ■

THE MOST determined opponents of abortion rights are religious fundamentalists. Through their well organised lobbyists in the "Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child" (SPUC) and its sister organisation Life, the religious bigots moralise about the sanctity of human life.

The essence of their opposition to abortion is the assertion that the fertilised egg, the embryo and then the foetus are all human beings. As such they must be granted "human rights", and therefore any wilful destruction of the embryo or foetus is murder.

Their case for proving that the foetus is a human person rests on emotive, often purely visual, appeals which compare the magnified image of the foetus with that of a baby. They show that the foetus has a heart-beat, a circulation, brain tissue and, most effectively, tiny hands and feet.

This is strong stuff. In an attempt to be even more heart-rending, they claim that the foetus feels pain. They show scans of foetuses withdrawing from "painful" stimuli within the womb.

Propaganda

Such propaganda is clearly designed to shock people and, in particular, to make women feel that the very thought of abortion is repulsive. The result of such propaganda is rarely to dissuade women from having an abortion, but it frequently increases the feelings of guilt for some.

But are the placards and videos right? Is the embryo or foetus really a human being? The presence of a heart beat, a reaction to a stimulus—do these confirm the SPUC case?

Not at all! First of all, every mammal foetus has the organs described by the anti-abortionists. So does every fully developed animal. But this does not mean we consider that each monkey, cat or dog is a human being.

Does the foetal response to stimuli indicate that it experiences emotions which denote its humanity? No, this argument too is false. Response to a stimulus indicates the development of a functioning central nervous system. It does not mean

Is abortion murder?

that the foetal brain is developed enough to be conscious of its own existence and of the distinct and separate environment within which it survives.

These characteristics of a foetus are shared by many other forms of non-human life. Of course, there is a difference between a human embryo or foetus and an animal. That difference is not that it is already a human being, but that it is a potential human. That is why when a woman wants a child and is pregnant, she will feel very much that the foetus is "her baby".

If she has a miscarriage she will feel a sense of loss, of "mourning" for her child-to-be. But nonetheless, the foetus whilst inside the womb only exists as a part of her body, it has no inter-relationship with others except as part of her.

Marxists argue that human beings are distinct from other forms of life, including the human foetus, because we are bound together in a set of social relations. Through this network we strive—in an antagonistic way under present class society—to self-consciously fashion our surroundings and transform nature for our own purposes.

Cultivating land, rearing animals, conquering new scientific frontiers to improve the quality of life—that is the distinct human condition. And that condition is based on social organisation and collective labour.

A human foetus cannot be said to share those features of the human condition until it ceases to be part of its mother's body and becomes an independent social being. At that point, its development comes to depend not only upon its mother, but upon the wider social relations which

exist.

If it is a premature birth survival is possible in some societies with the aid of the latest medical technology. The foetus then becomes a child and subject to the range of oppressive features of class society that we all experience.

In another part of the world where such technology is not available, a foetus at the same point in its development would not be able to survive. It would never exist as anything distinct from its mother.

In contrast to the Marxist materialist understanding of the distinct features of the human being, the religious propagandists of SPUC and Life regard human life as something god-given, which commences the moment the egg is fertilised and the "soul" enters the embryo.

From that moment on the right to life of that tiny group of cells is held to be equal to the "right to life" of the mother, which is why they argue for the outlawing of abortion even where the mother's life is in danger.

Contradiction

Of course, the pro-lifers' case stands in an uncomfortable contradiction with nature itself. Of every four fertilised eggs three will abort spontaneously. Unfortunately, the anti-abortionists refuse to let science tamper with fertilised eggs to improve this ratio even though it might lead to the saving of a few more souls!

Religious people are entitled to their private opinions, even if they are reactionary. But what we must always resist is their attempt to impose them on anyone else either through legislation, judge made law

or even state-backed religious propaganda.

The foetus is a part of the pregnant woman. If it is her wanted child-to-be, then she must be given all the support (ante-natal care, financial aid) she needs to help it develop into a healthy baby.

Rights

But if she does not want to be pregnant, then it must be the right of the woman to decide to end the pregnancy. A foetus becomes a person with independent rights only when it is born and enters social life. Up to that point all rights should belong to the person whose body the foetus is part of—the mother.

So if murder is defined as the deliberate act of taking the life of another person and the foetus is clearly not a person, then the claim that abortion is murder is ludicrous.

The current attacks in Britain on the limited abortion rights that women have must be met with an opposition which is firmly committed to women's right to choose whether to continue the pregnancy or not. And the only way to give women that choice is by enshrining the right to free abortion on demand in law and ensuring that the state funding is channelled into the NHS to make it a reality.

Chris Peace, a Militant supporter and long time activist in Cardiff Labour Party until his recent expulsion, was tragically killed in a New Year's Eve road accident. Workers Power sends its condolences to his family and friends. He will be missed by his comrades in the labour movement.

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

Fighting Fund

£15,804

We have had to hold over news of our fund drive for the last two issues. We had to use the space to bring you news of our activities and new publications. But this only adds to the costs and makes our move into new premises even more urgent. So thanks to the comrades in the following areas for the donations received:

- South London - £230
- Leicester - £92.80
- Birmingham - £20
- Belfast - £20
- Reading - £100

Also at PR89 £370 was collected to help finance our Eastern Europe work.

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Public Meetings
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Ireland
Thursday 1 February
Unemployed Workers Centre
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- Central London:**
Public Meeting
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Friday 12 January 7:30
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REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY
Volumen 2, No 3 Autumn 1989

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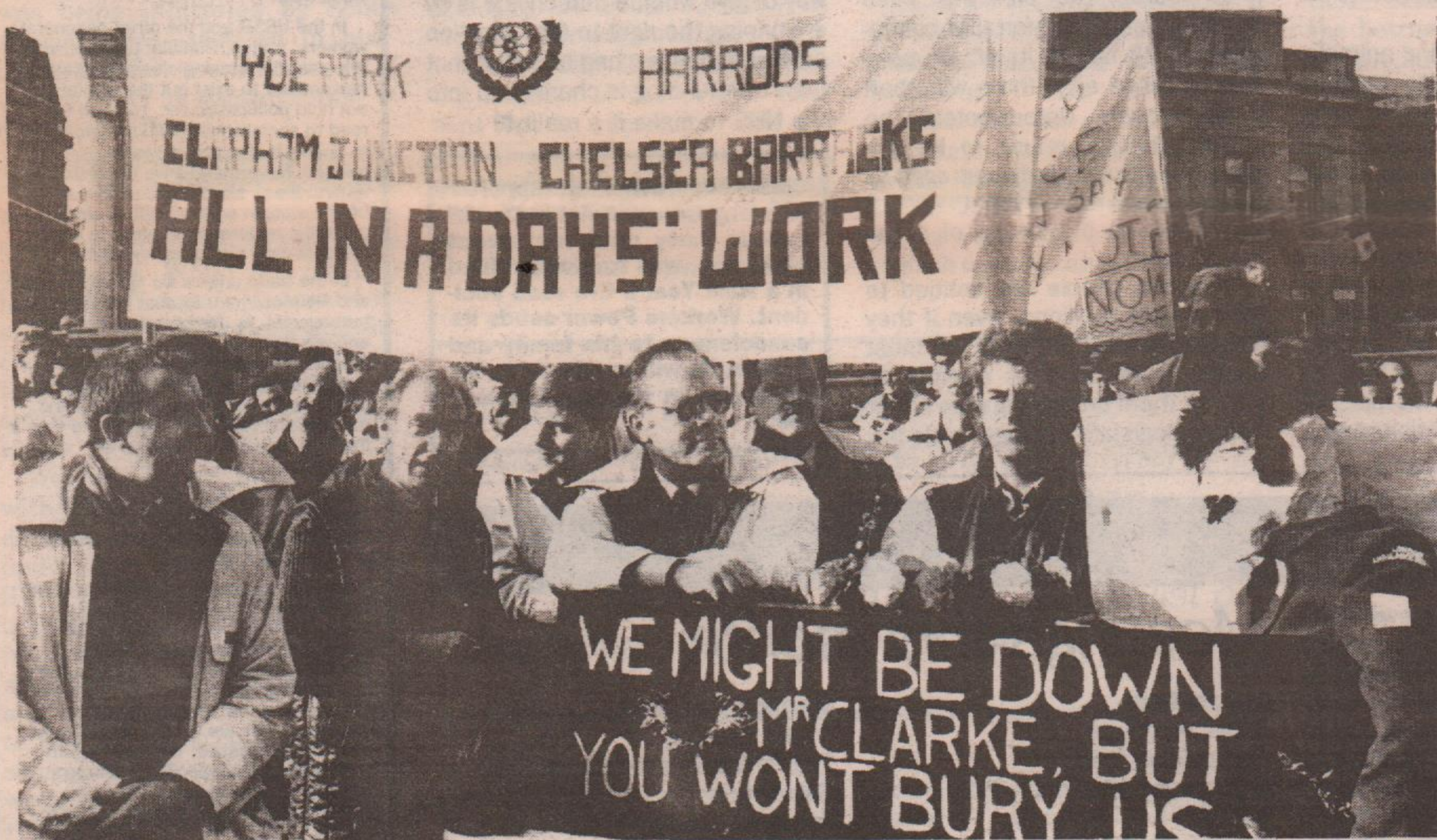
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Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

AMBULANCE WORKERS MUST WIN!



KENNETH CLARKE'S new year message to ambulance workers was simple enough: get stuffed! The man charged with turning a service that saves lives into a money spinning "business" is standing firm in pay offer of 6.5%.

Four months of industrial action, short of a strike, has not budged him an inch. The massive public sympathy for ambulance workers—4.5 million signed a petition supporting their case—has been treated with contempt. Even the NUPE leaders, who have done little to try to win this dispute, have been described as nasty extremists by Clarke.

He has given local management the green light to jeopardise people's lives in his campaign to beat the crews. Crews and now controllers have been suspended. Ill-trained and ill-equipped scabs in the army, police and the St John's Ambulance Brigade have been used, even where ambulance workers have offered to respond to

emergency calls. Needless deaths have occurred as a result.

A sinister dimension has been introduced in Clarke's war against the workers. Activists and militants in the service have had it confirmed by telephone engineers that their phones are being tapped, their calls monitored.

In the face of this, two things are needed to break the deadlock in the dispute. The ambulance workers themselves must come out on indefinite strike with emergency cover under their own control. As Mike Thornycroft, chair of an unofficial crews' committee, put it:

"We are at the stage where we must either take the pay deal or go all the way"

He is arguing that the

workers should go all the way. He is right.

But the ambulance workers will need solidarity action from the rest of the working class. We need to turn the sympathy that exists into strike action. The unofficial day of action in London on 6 December shows what can be done.

Workers in health, education, local government, industry and construction struck in support of the ambulance workers.

A large delegation of steel erectors from Canary Wharf attended the demonstration, halting work on the prestigious dockland site for a day. They knew their safety was at risk. They knew why they had to support the ambulance workers.

While one day actions will not win the dispute, they can and should be used as stepping stones towards building effective solidarity with a national ambulance strike.

The moves for a strike from the ambulance crews committee and the action on 6 December both show that the willingness for a fight is there. The rank and file must press now for their leaders to call a strike and solidarity action with it. And if the leaders will not do this then the rank and file must organise themselves to do it.

This sort of action can make Clarke think again. It can put paid to his tough talking, bully boy tactics and bring the dispute to a speedy and victorious conclusion. ■

● Now turn to p5

BLOODY SUNDAY DEMONSTRATION

Saturday 27 January
12:00 pm

Marble Arch, Hyde Park, London

**TROOPS OUT NOW!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE
IRISH PEOPLE!**

HONG KONG

*They're all
welcome here*

THE RABID racists of the Tory right are on the war-path. They want to stir up public outrage over Thatcher's plans to give 150,000 Hong Kong Chinese the right to live in Britain. At the same time they are urging Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd to go full speed ahead with the forced repatriation of the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. Their sickening campaign has been aided and abetted by the Labour Party.

Why are Hong Kong Chinese people demanding full British citizenship and the right of entry?

Britain has ruled Hong Kong for 150 years without a single election. British capitalists have made fortunes out of exploiting the labour of Hong Kong Chinese. Now they think they can make even more money by handing over Hong Kong to Stalinist China and using it to spearhead investment in the Chinese mainland. But the 5.4 million Hong Kong workers and small traders are wary of being handed over to the butchers of Tiananmen Square.

Thatcher wants to give the families of just 40,000 businessmen, civil servants and police the right to live in Britain. She is seeking to avert a "crisis of confidence" amongst Hong Kong's middle classes in the run up to 1997.

Meanwhile the Tories are busy overseeing the deportation of Vietnamese boat people from the squalid concentration camps of Hong Kong. Despite promises of "no coercion", the Hong Kong riot police have been wading into the camps with batons and tear gas to stamp out preparations for resistance by the families there.

Why do the boat people risk their lives to flee Vietnam? The majority are desperately poor peasants fleeing economic crisis and starvation. Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in the world but receives no aid from the west.

The destruction wreaked by the war with the USA following decades of colonial rule by France has been compounded by Stalinist mismanagement. Now after years of failing harvests the Stalinists have brought in strict anti-inflationary policies designed to make workers and peasants pay for the crisis.

The Tories say the boat people are not worthy of help because they are "economic migrants". But what is an economic migrant? Economic migrants are

families who find poverty and starvation so unbearable that they are prepared to uproot themselves and leave what little they have in order to keep on living. What are the thousands of East German refugees who Thatcher welcomed to the west if not "economic migrants".

What are the starving millions who migrate to the feeding centres of Ethiopia if not "economic migrants". The Tories have no problems with economic migrants, it seems, as long as they don't come here!

Even migrants recognised as genuine political refugees, such as the thousands of Kurds and Tamils who have fled from torture and repression, are subjected to harassment and deportation in Thatcher's Britain.

"Our services are stretched. Its a small island, we haven't the room, we haven't the jobs" claims Tory racist John Carlisle MP.

But it is not immigrants who stretch services. It is Tory cuts. It is not immigrants who cause overcrowding, but Tory housing policies. It is not immigrants who cause unemployment but the capitalist system which even in the middle of an economic "boom" cannot find work for nearly two million people.

We say let all the Hong Kong Chinese have full British citizenship. Give full citizenship rights to all the boat people and let in all who want to come to Britain.

The bosses' money and capital is free to roam the markets of the world. We say give the workers who produce this wealth the same rights. Against all bans and quotas on immigration we say remove all immigration controls. Stop all deportations.

Scandalously Labour has fallen in behind the Tory right. Of course Thatcher's quotas discriminate against workers. They should be opposed. But instead of proposing legislation to let all Hong Kong Chinese the Labour leaders have echoed the arguments of the Tory right.

When racists are let off the leash in Parliament and in the "respectable" press their arguments always unleash a wave of racist violence and abuse on the streets, in the factories, in the pubs and on the terraces.

Unlike Labour's spineless racist leaders, every workers' organisation must brace itself to fight against racism in all its forms, for an end to immigration controls and all deportations. ■